

LITTLE BOXES OR RAMBLING HOUSES:

HOW DO BUILT ENVIRONMENTS HELP US EMPOWER CHILDREN?

IECS, 2017

WHAKATAUKĪ

Nā tō rourou, nā taku rourou - ka ora ai te iwi

With your food basket and my food basket
the people will thrive

POSSIBILITIES & REALITIES OF REVISED TE WHĀRIKI



Today

My research

Te Whāriki: Agency

Your physical space

- Teachers as choreographers
- Diverse rhythms / agency
- Younger children's 'collaborative mobility' / agency



Aubert ECE centre, Island Bay (building now demolished)

BUILT ENVIRONMENTS

What are your burning questions?

What do you want out of this workshop?

Groups 10 min

Introduce, share



RESEARCH INTEREST

What's it like to 'live' in all-day ECE centres?

- Everyday experiences
- NZ 2.5 m² is 31st (lowest) of 36 OECD countries ([OECD, 2012, p. 50](#)).
- Little boxes & big houses [“activity space”]
- Market driven, diminishing space?
- ECE & Schools: open, flexible, complex, MLE (or ILE)



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

How does the size and spatial configuration of 'indoor activity space' in ECE centres shape young children's lived experiences?

Two sub-questions address this question:

- How does the interplay of teachers' conceptions of indoor spaces and images of children shape children's lived experiences in all-day centres?
- How do children inhabit indoor activity spaces, transform them, and engage socially in spatially diverse ECE centres?

LITERATURE: FRAME

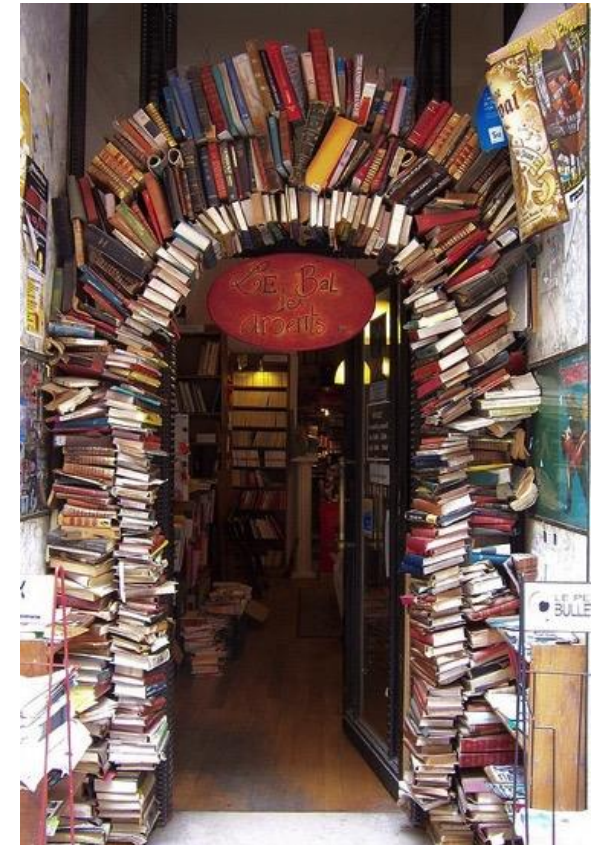
CHILD-FRIENDLY PLACES (CHATTERJEE, 2005; KENNEDY, 1991)

Habitable - offering emotional shelter, freedom of movement, territoriality, and places for personal well-being, such as eating and sleeping.

Transformable - offering accessibility, choice, and opportunities for engagement, interaction, and personal initiative.

Varied – offering places of attachment, seclusion, and quiet. (Kennedy, 1991)

Focus on children's lived experiences. Need to balance home and institution = balancing the 'personal and the collective'.



LITERATURE

Childhood studies; Architecture, environment & behaviour

- Summarised in: Pairman, A. (2012) The relationship between the physical environment and learning: A blind spot in New Zealand early childhood discourse. *New Zealand Annual Review of Education*. (Includes Greenman, Olds, Curtis & Carter, Moore, McLaren...)

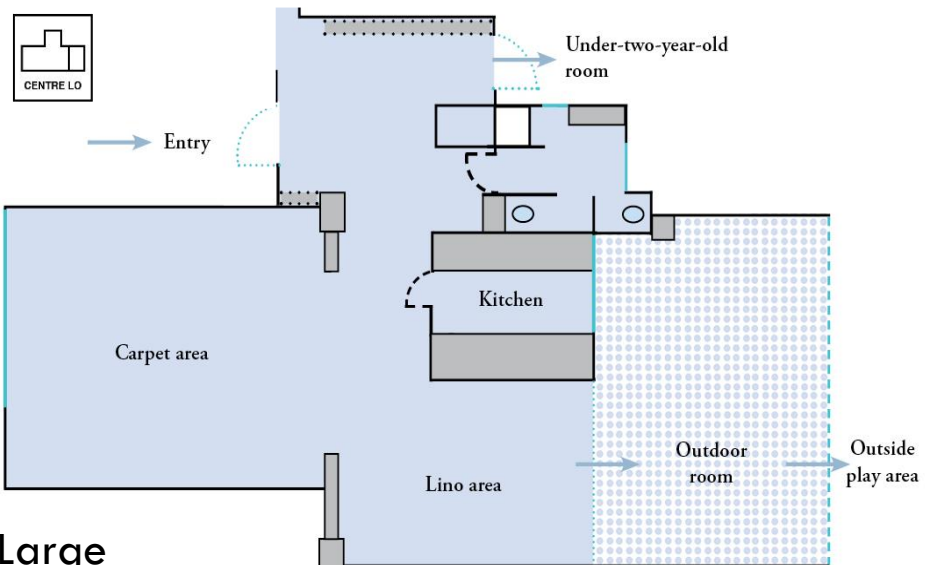
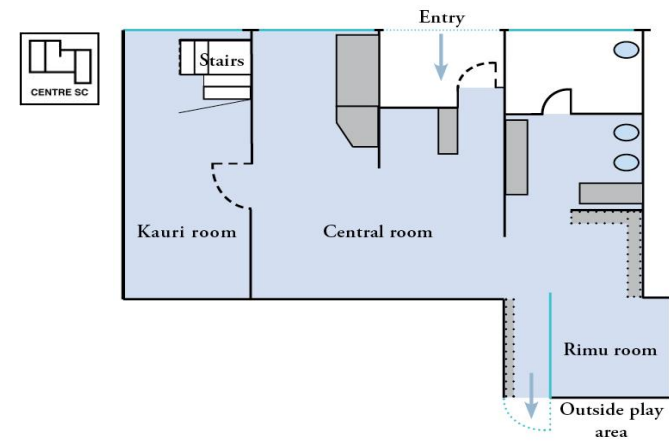
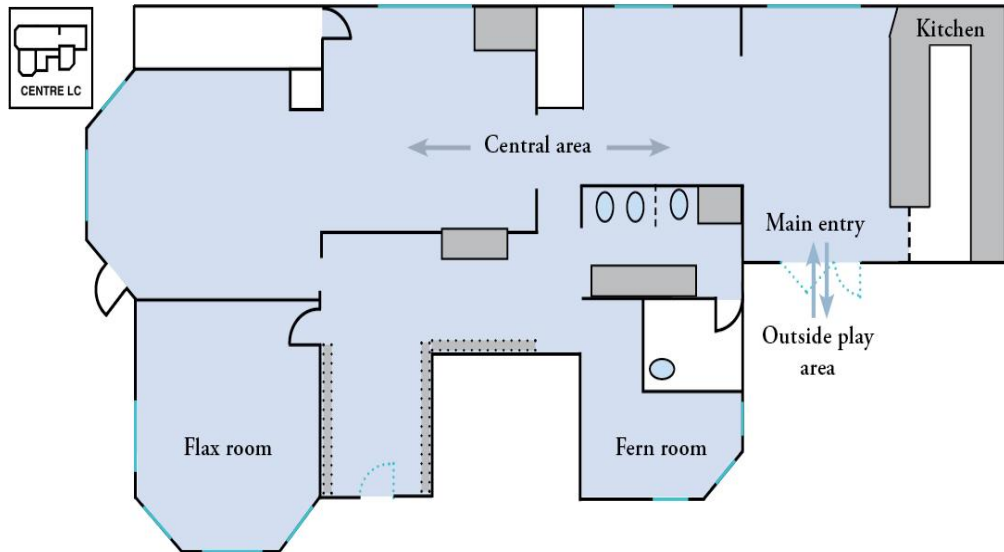
Childhood studies; Children's geographies

- Bodily, sensory, and affective experiences of space (Horton & Kraftl, 2011)
- Interactions between pedagogical values and children's spatial experiences (e.g., Rutanen, 2012; Vuorisalo, Rutanen, & Raittila, 2015;)
- Power dynamics & negotiations in space-time (e.g., Gallacher, 2005; Stephenson, 2009).
- Vecchi (2010) Reggio Emilia: environments based on relationships 'L shaped' & 'clusters of rooms.
- Einarsdottir (2005) Icelandic children "*close the door and play without adult interference*" (p. 470)

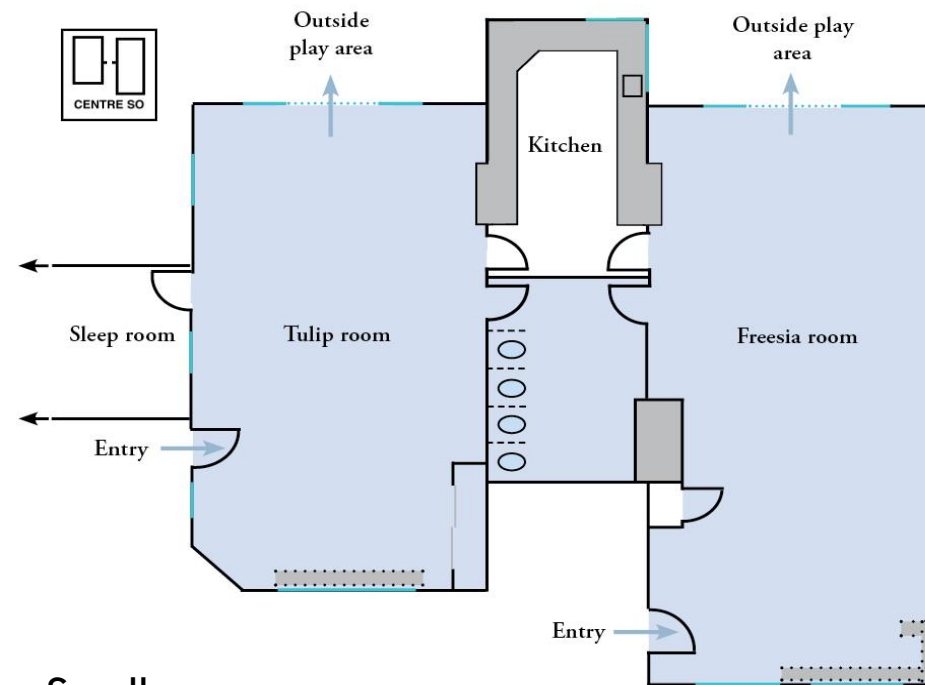
RESEARCH STRATEGIES



- Multiple case study
- Four spatially diverse all day centres
- Qualitative data: observation, photographs, video, conversations, Gruffalo's child, spatial mapping, teacher focus groups.
- Quantitative data: noise meters
- Foreground children's perspectives



Large



Small

BIG PICTURE

Size and configuration shaped how people used and negotiated space.

Complexity & large size enabled *harmonious coexistence of diverse rhythms and activity*.

Size & configuration “thickened or thinned” teachers & children's agency (Klocker, 2007).

Point of analysis: **line-of-sight, noise transfer, density** (people and things)

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Strand 1 - Wellbeing | Mana atua

Goals

Children experience an environment where:

- their health is promoted
- their emotional wellbeing is nurtured
- they are kept safe from harm.

Learning outcomes

Over time and with guidance and encouragement, children become increasingly capable of:

- keeping themselves healthy and caring for themselves | te oranga nui
- managing themselves and expressing their feelings and needs | te whakahua whakaaro
- keeping themselves and others safe from harm | te noho haumarū.

... children become increasingly capable of:

keeping themselves healthy...

managing themselves...

keeping themselves...



STRAND 1 - WELL-BEING

The health and well-being of the child are protected and nurtured.

Goals

Children experience an environment where:

their health is promoted;

their emotional well-being is nurtured;

they are kept safe from harm.

WELL-BEING

Goal 1

Children experience an environment where their health is promoted.

Learning outcomes:
knowledge, skills, and attitudes

Children develop:

- increasing understanding of their bodies and how they function;
- knowledge about how to keep themselves healthy;
- self-help and self-care skills for eating, drinking, food preparation, toileting, resting, sleeping, washing, and dressing;
- positive attitudes towards eating, sleeping, and toileting.

... children develop:

increasing understanding...

knowledge about...

self-help and self-care skills..

positive attitudes...



“A curriculum for all children” Page 12

In Te Whariki children are positioned as confident and competent learners from birth. They learn by engaging in meaningful interactions with people, places and things – a process that continues throughout their lifetimes.

This curriculum acknowledges that all children have rights to protection and promotion of their health and well-being, to equitable access to learning opportunities, to recognition of their language, culture and identity and, increasingly, to **agency** in their own lives. These rights align closely with the context of mana.

5 minutes: What is agency?

AGENCY

Rather than agency being a characteristic “within and integral to individual people”, and dependency being a state of powerlessness, agency and dependency arise from their interplay - they need each other (Alderson, 2001, p.24)

Agency is the effect of the connections made between materials, bodies, and social interactions within the child’s sociocultural environment (Prout, 2000; Guo & Dalli, 2016; Hodder, 2014)

AGENCY

‘Thin’ agency: decisions and actions carried out in highly restrictive contexts

‘Thick’ agency: contexts in which a person has a “broad range of options” available to them

(Klocker, 2007).

AGENCY: WELLBEING MANA ATUA

From your experience in ECE, share an example of:

- a routine that thickened children's agency
- a routine that thinned children's agency

How (if at all) did the physical space contribute?

10 minutes



Wellbeing |
Mana atua

Messages
about centre
design?

CONSIDERATIONS FOR LEADERSHIP, ORGANISATION AND PRACTICE

A culture is created that values and promotes the health and wellbeing of children. Kaiako model positive attitudes towards hauora, healthy eating and activity.

Policies, procedures and practices ensure that children are kept healthy and safe and that they feel secure in an environment where signs of danger or abuse are promptly recognised. Any suspected harm or abuse is dealt with in association with support agencies and families.

Daily routines respond to individual circumstances and needs and allow for frequent outdoor experiences, regular rest times, and a variety of group and individual interactions, with one-to-one attention from adults every day.

Kaiako ensure the provision of protected spaces, both indoors and out, to which children can retreat for quiet play, either alone or in small groups.

Frequent communication between all those who work with children and whānau ensures consistent, reasoned responses to children's changing needs and behaviours and sharing of information on health issues, such as nutrition and inoculations.

Kaiako understand the progression of and variations in children's development and provide time for the gradual growth of independent skills, such as feeding, toileting and dressing.

When kaiako have concerns about a child's development or health they work in partnership with parents, whānau and relevant services to gain appropriate early intervention or medical advice and treatment.

Kaiako anticipate children's needs for comfort and communicate positive feelings in an environment that is calm, friendly and conducive to warm and intimate interactions. They are mindful of all learners when planning the social, sensory and physical environments.

Kaiako build relationships of trust and respect children's rights by acknowledging feelings and individuality, explaining procedures, taking children's fears and concerns seriously, and responding sensitively.

Kaiako recognise the importance of spirituality in the development of the whole child.

Kaiako recognise that, like the children, they need emotional support, some flexibility in their routines, and the opportunity to share and discuss their experiences in a comfortable setting.

Policies procedures
and practices ensure...

Daily routines
respond..

Kaiako ensure..

Kaiako understand..

POSSIBILITIES & REALITIES OF REVISED TE WHĀRIKI



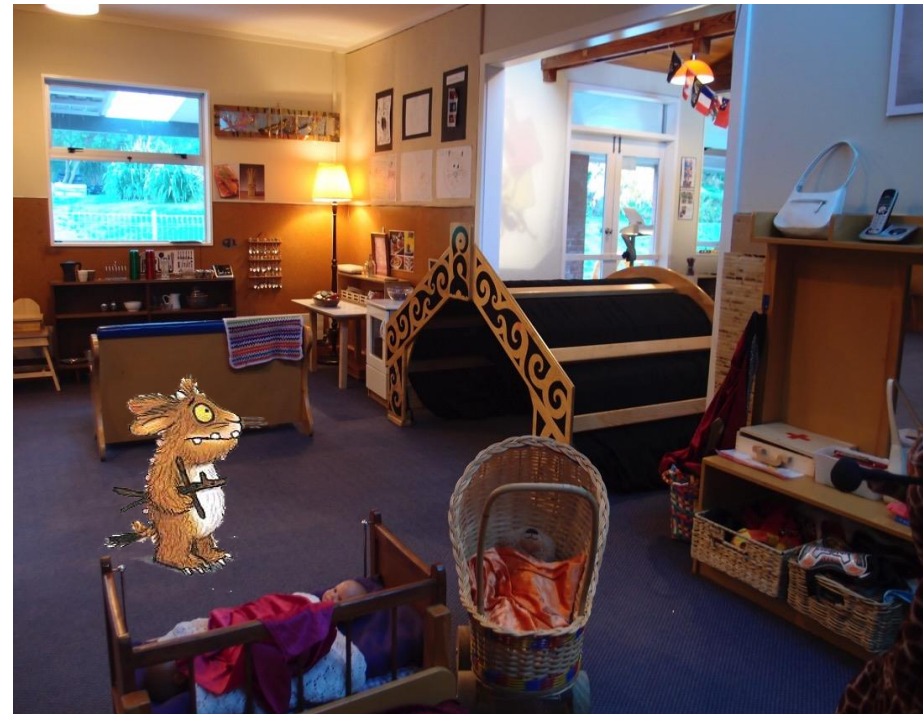
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POSSIBILITIES & REALITIES OF REVISED TE WHĀRIKI



Toddlers

- » Sleeping, eating and toilet-learning routines are flexible, calm, familiar and positive. Toddlers are offered a wide range of healthy food options. Self-help in washing and eating is encouraged.
- » There are opportunities for toddlers to be independent in a supportive and encouraging environment. Toddlers' communication and increasing independence is responded to and supported.
- » Toddlers have opportunities to make choices, take risks, and engage in a wide range of play, both inside and outside, with the support of kaitiaki.



Young children

- » Comfortable, quiet spaces and opportunities for rest and sleep are provided, with some flexibility around routines.
- » Young children have opportunities for independence, choice and autonomy, and they learn self-care skills.
- » Plenty of time is given for children to practise their developing self-help and self-care skills when eating, drinking, toileting, resting, washing and dressing.
- » Children are assisted in ways that support independence and competence and do not engender shame or embarrassment.
- » Although young children are increasingly able to wait for attention, they can be confident of ready responses to indications of hunger, pain and fatigue.

TEACHERS & CHILDREN AS CHOREOGRAPHERS



The rhythms of everyday life arise from the interplay of repetitive socio-spatial practices, including human groupings, interaction, movement, rest, and activity (Edensor, 2010).

These practices becomes “choreographed” over time (Haldrup & Larsen, 2006, p. 278)

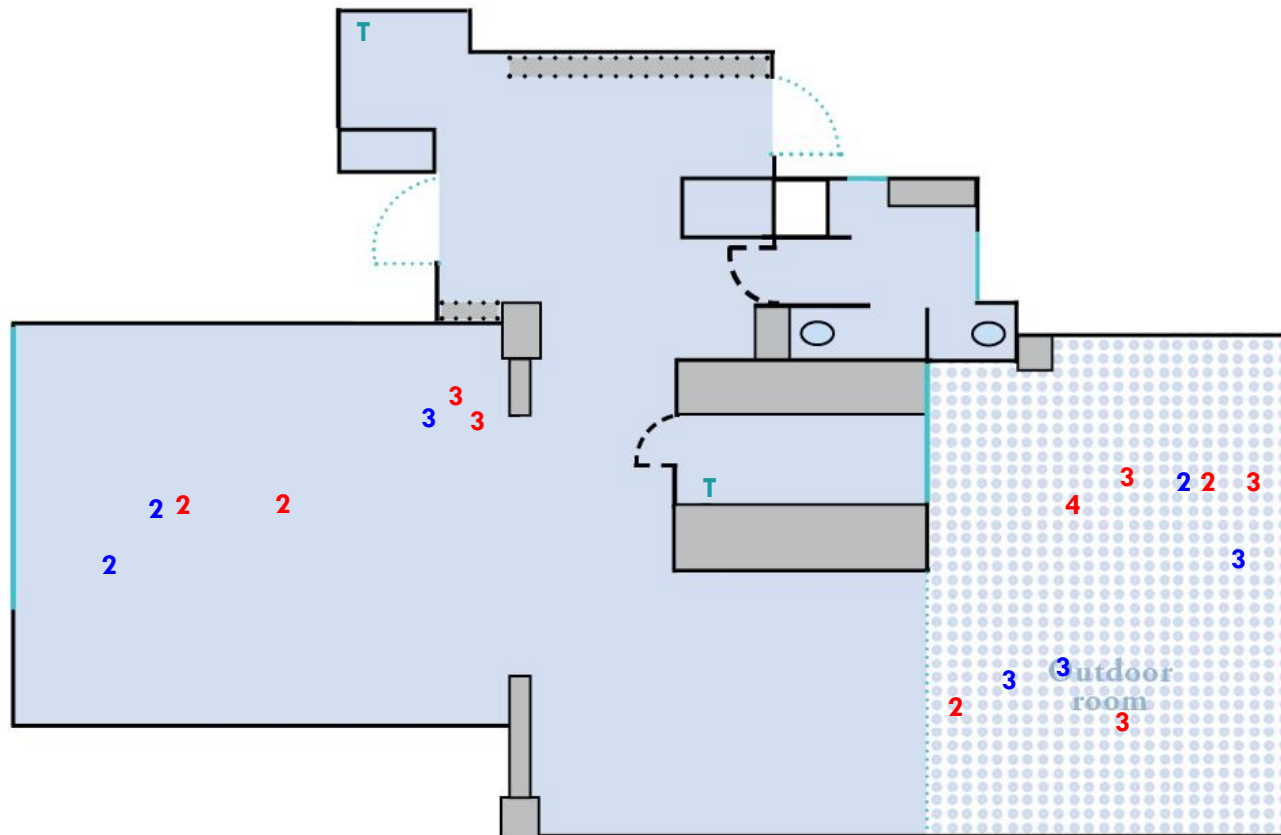
Each ECE centre’s situated rhythms contribute to, a kind of ‘place ballet’ (Seamon, 1979).

SPACE / TIME BALLET

Schedules that reflect a dominant discourse of 'being a member of a collective' can impose socially constructed rhythms on children that conflict with their 'natural' bodily rhythms (Markstrom & Hallden, 2009)

Children "selected, directed and controlled" during sleep-time routines". Children's individual autonomy undermined (children interviewed). (Nothard, 2015) (Australia)



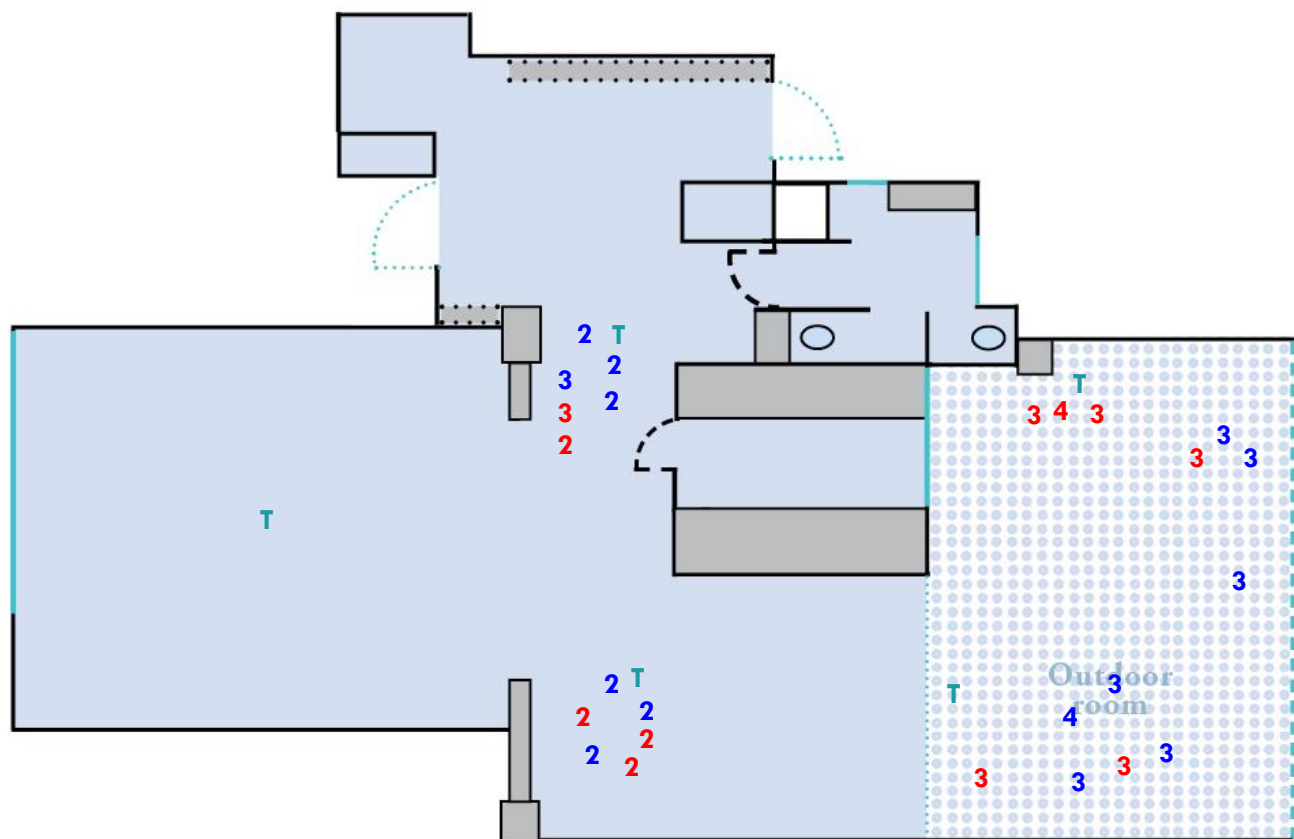


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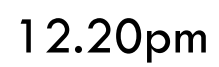
11.20am



11.40am



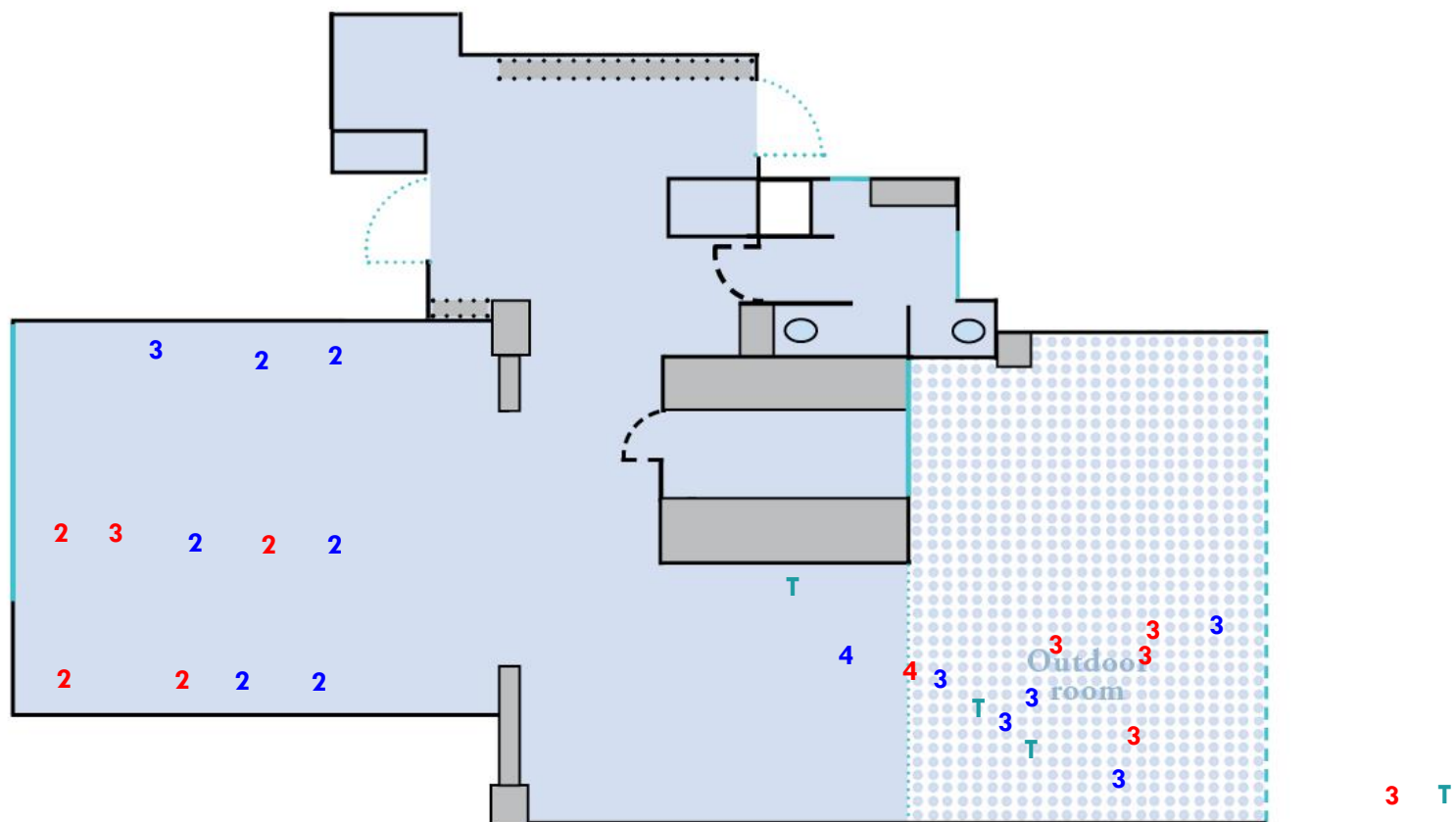
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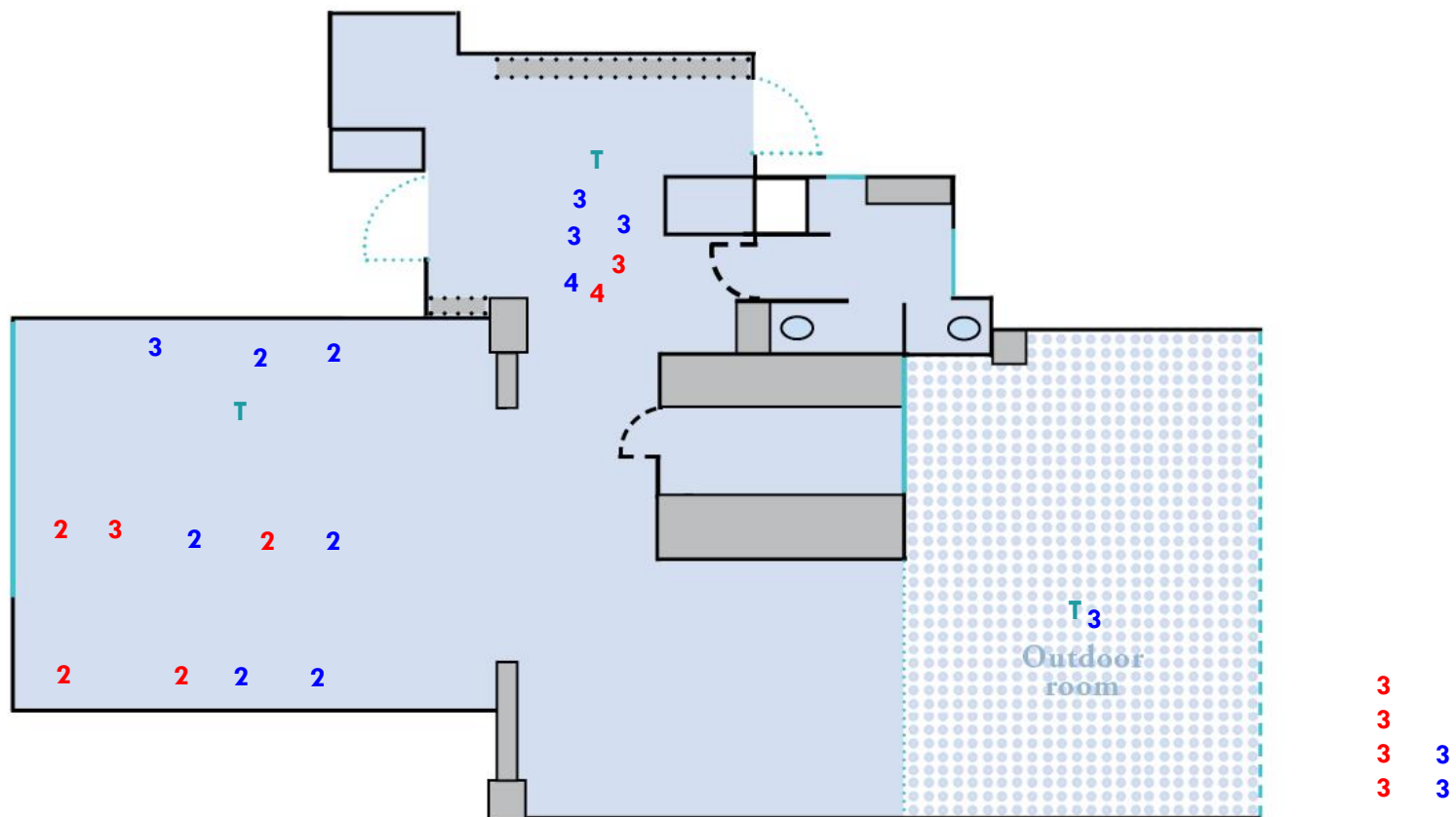
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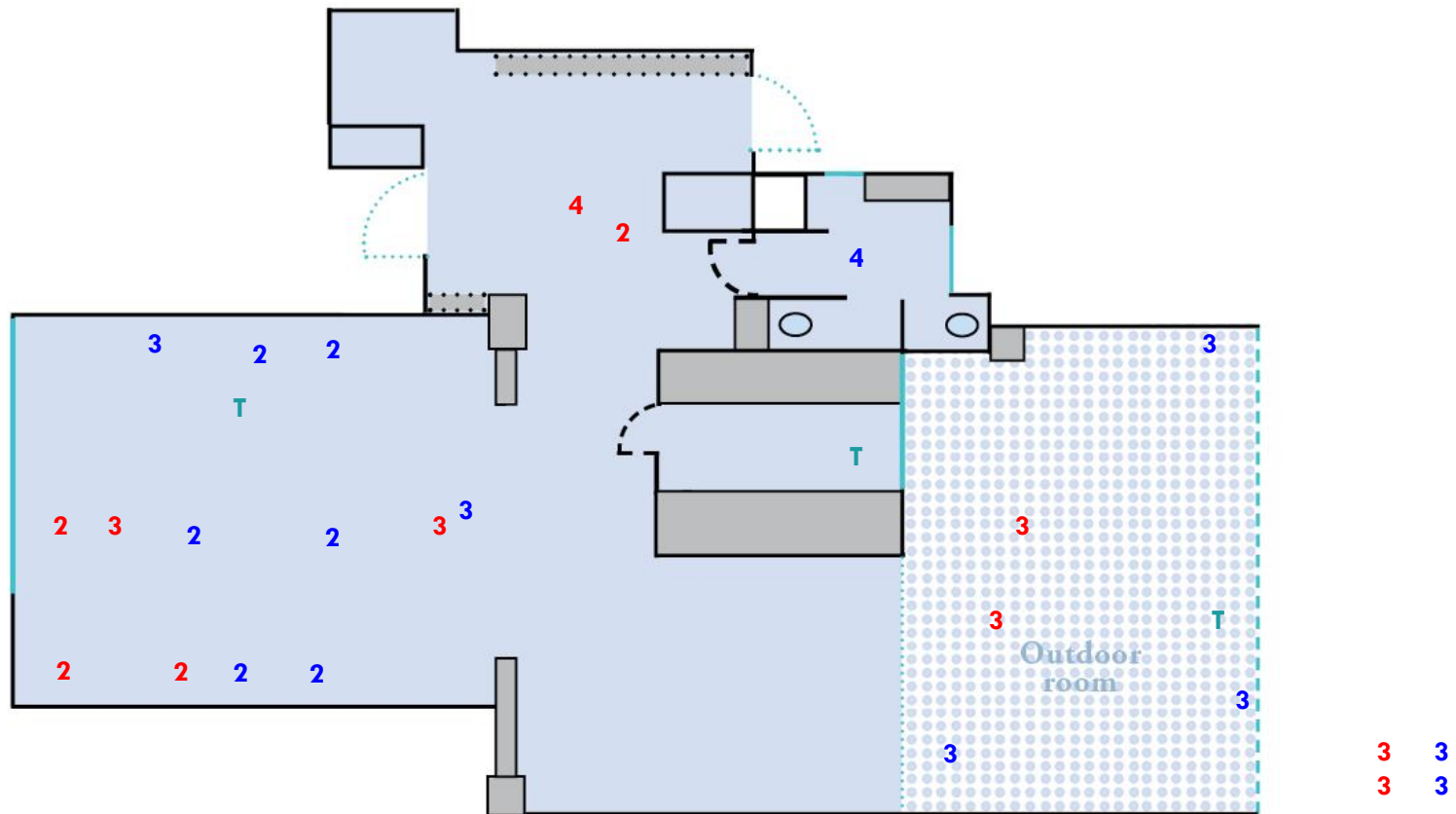




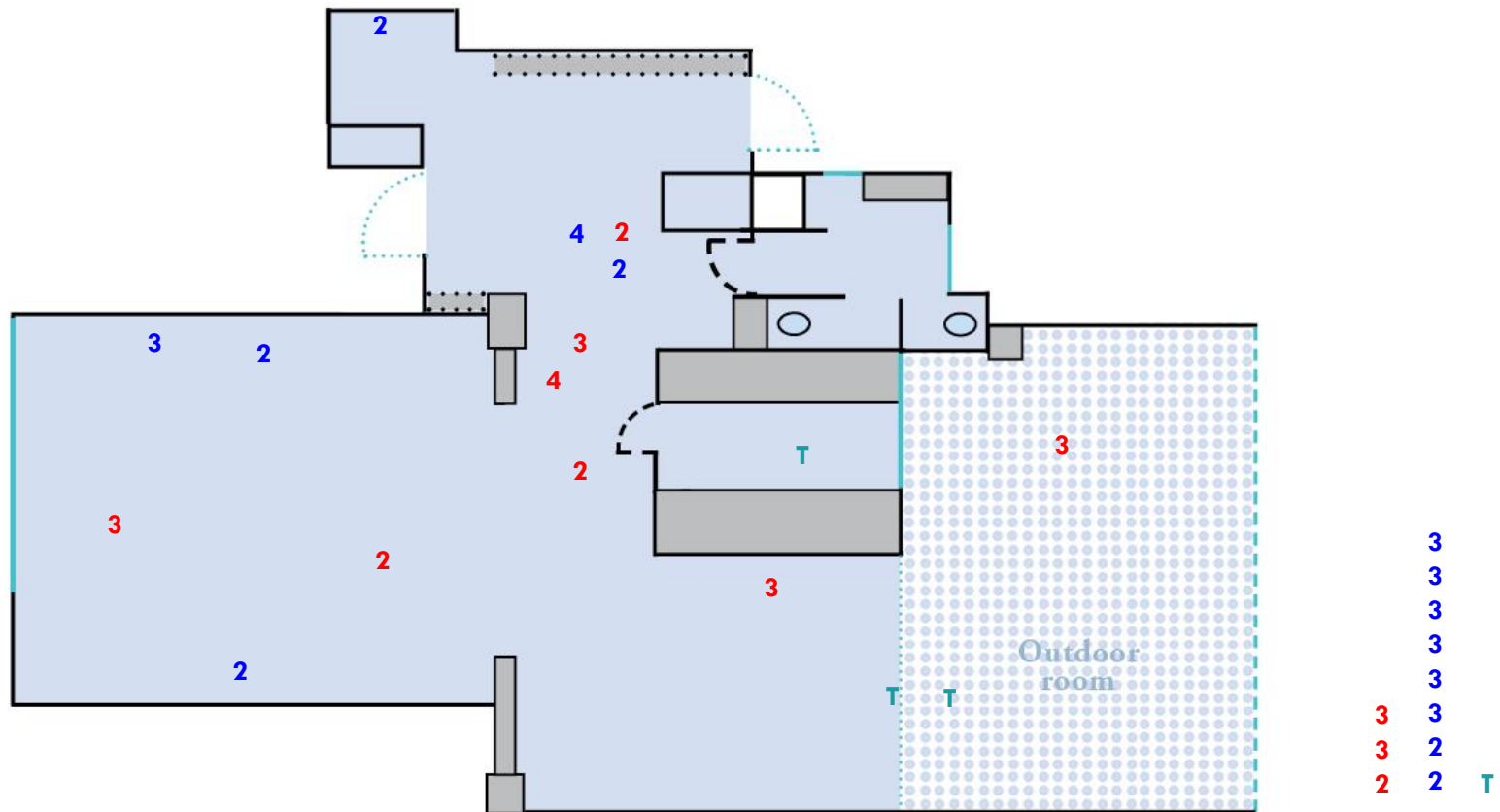
1.40pm



2.00pm



2.20pm



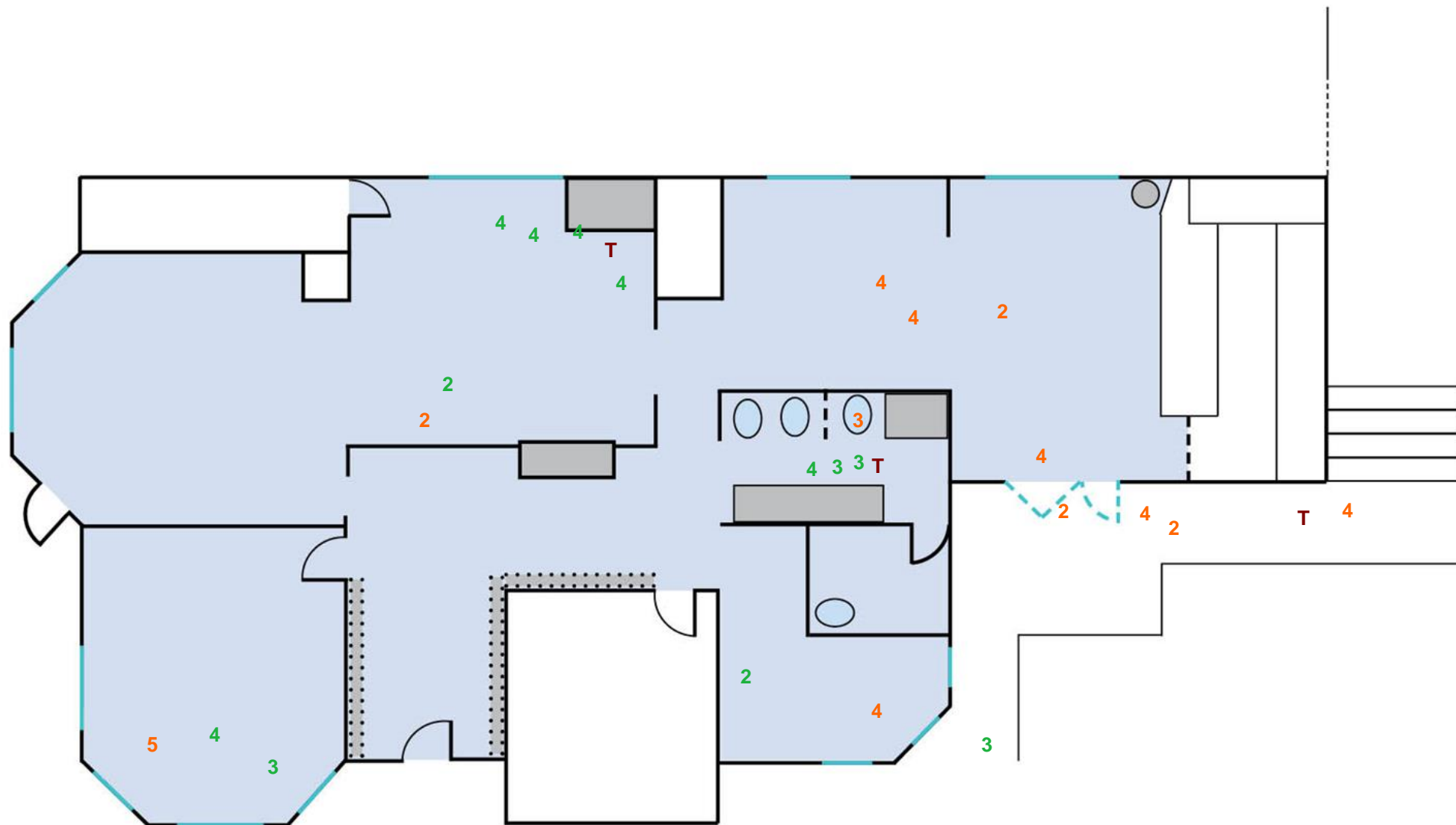
2.40pm

SPACE / TIME BALLET: PHYSICAL SPACE MATTERS

I struggle ... it's very difficult. One, because we have to be kind of conscious about sound, and it actually takes away a lot of learning when you can't get excited about ... You know it reduces the range of activities I can do, and I feel especially with some of the kids we've got at the moment like A and Z who really need that...

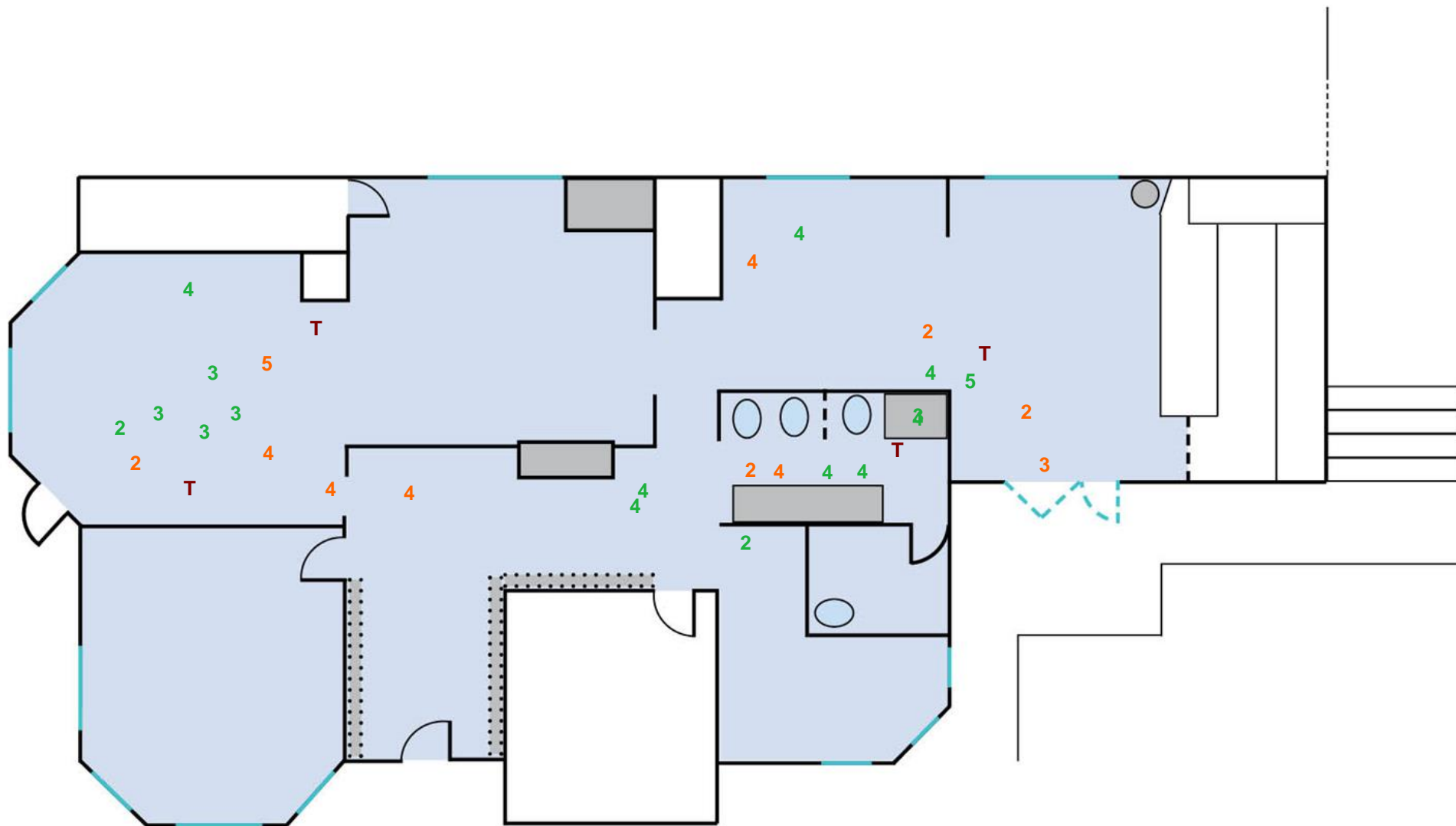
... I also find they're easily distracted, so when the sleepers get up and come past and have a look at what we're doing, and hang around the table. It's hard, I get very frustrated. (Centre LO)

10.55 am



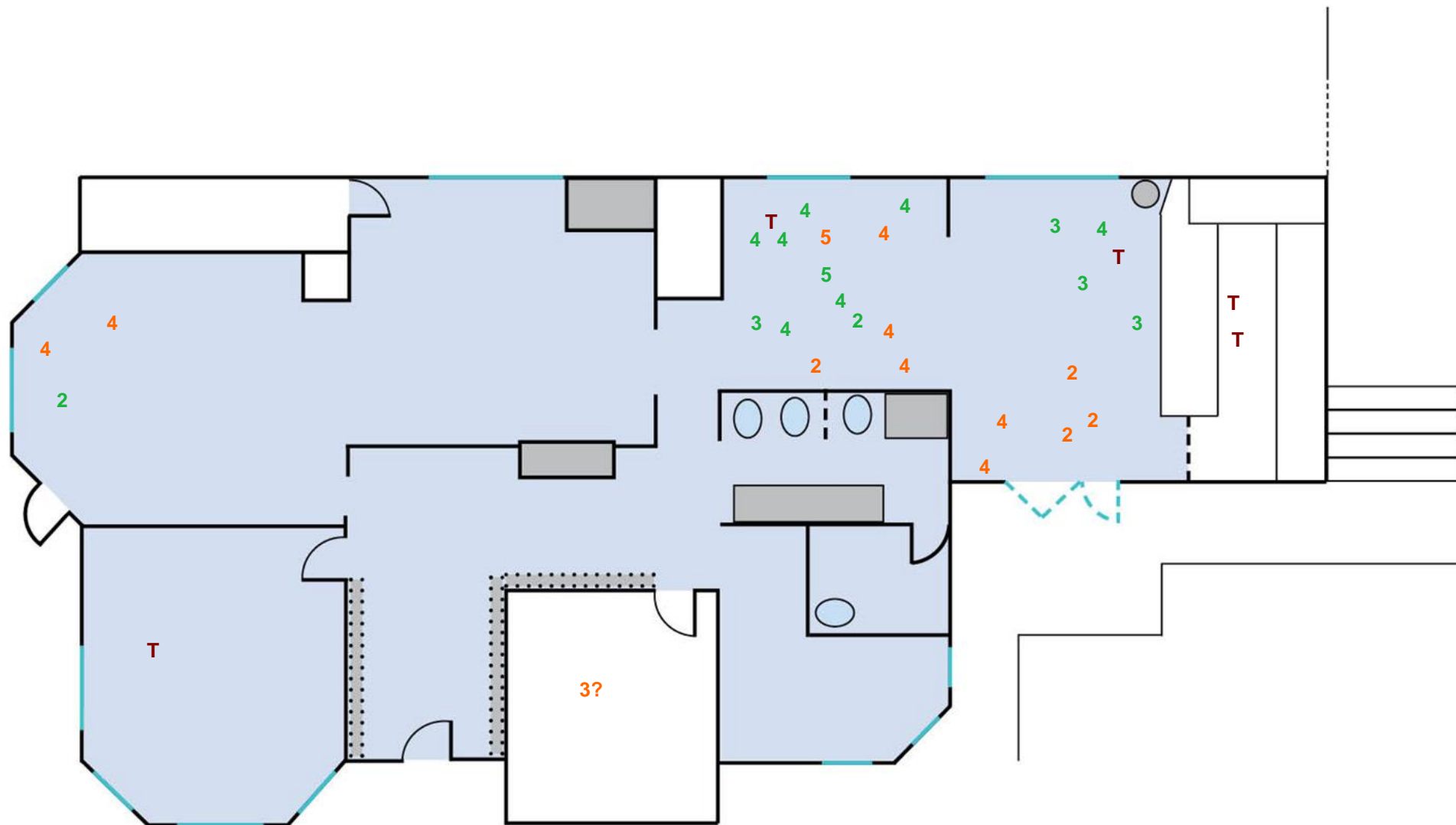
11.15 am

11.25am



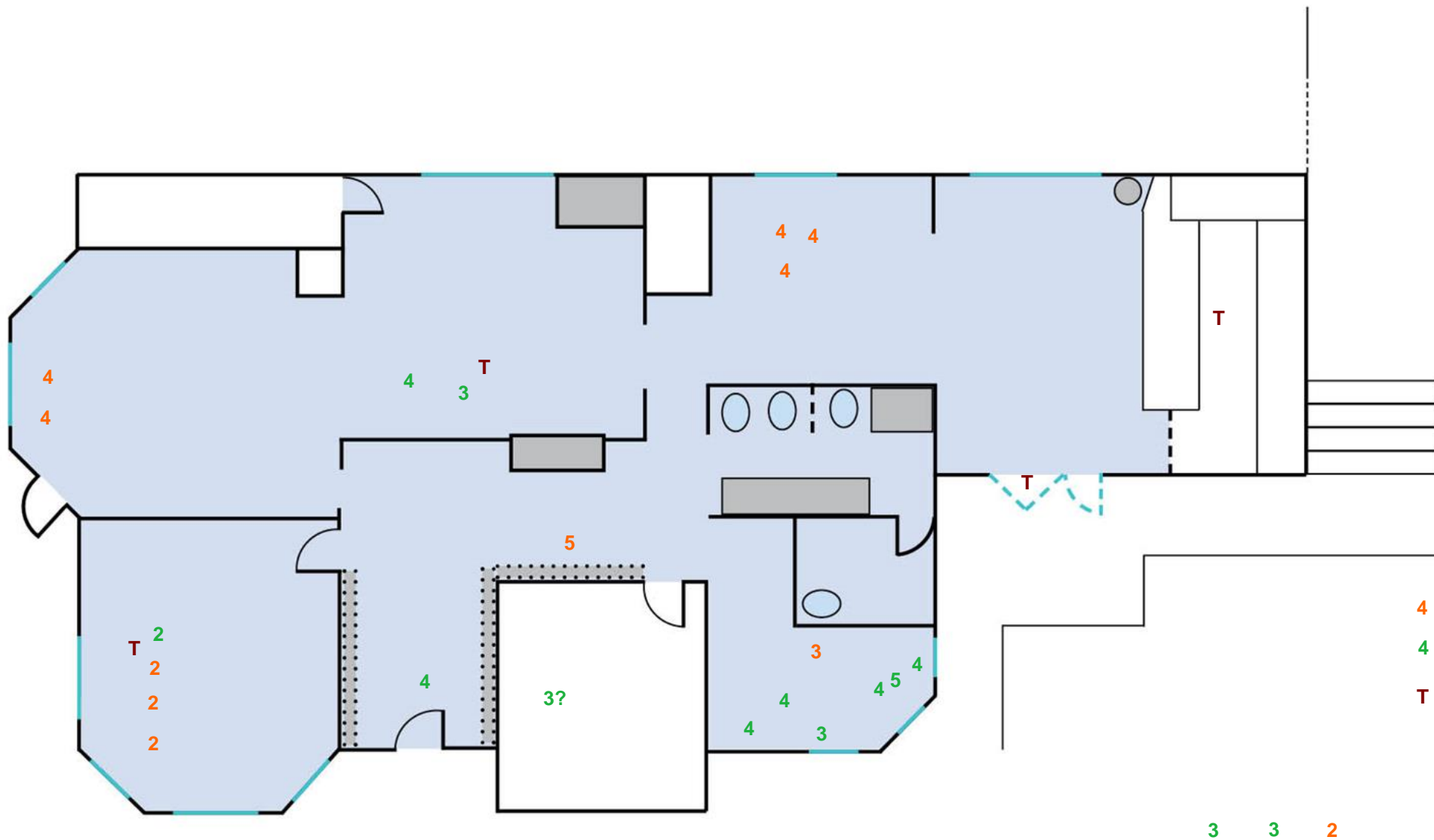
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11.40am

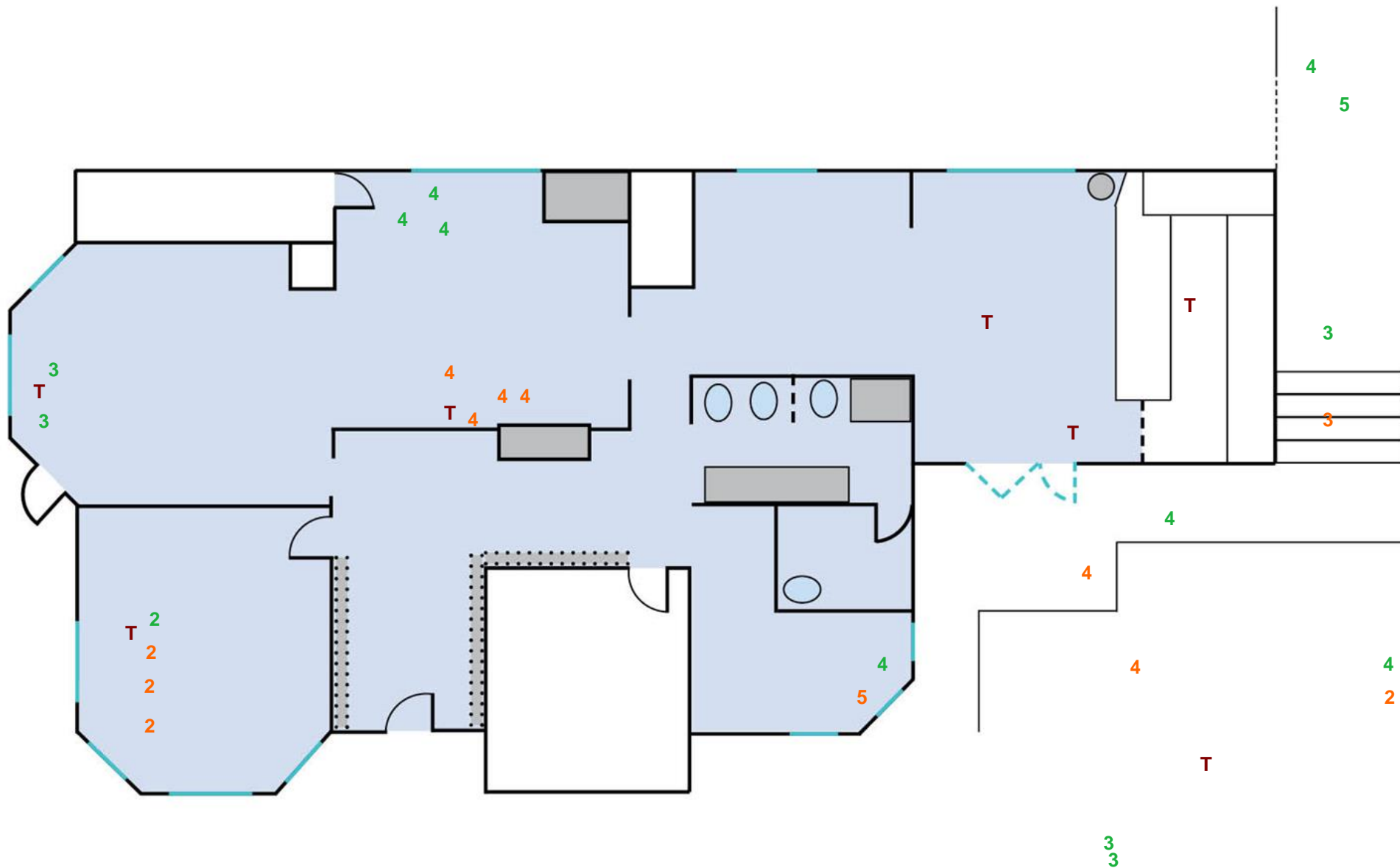


11.45am

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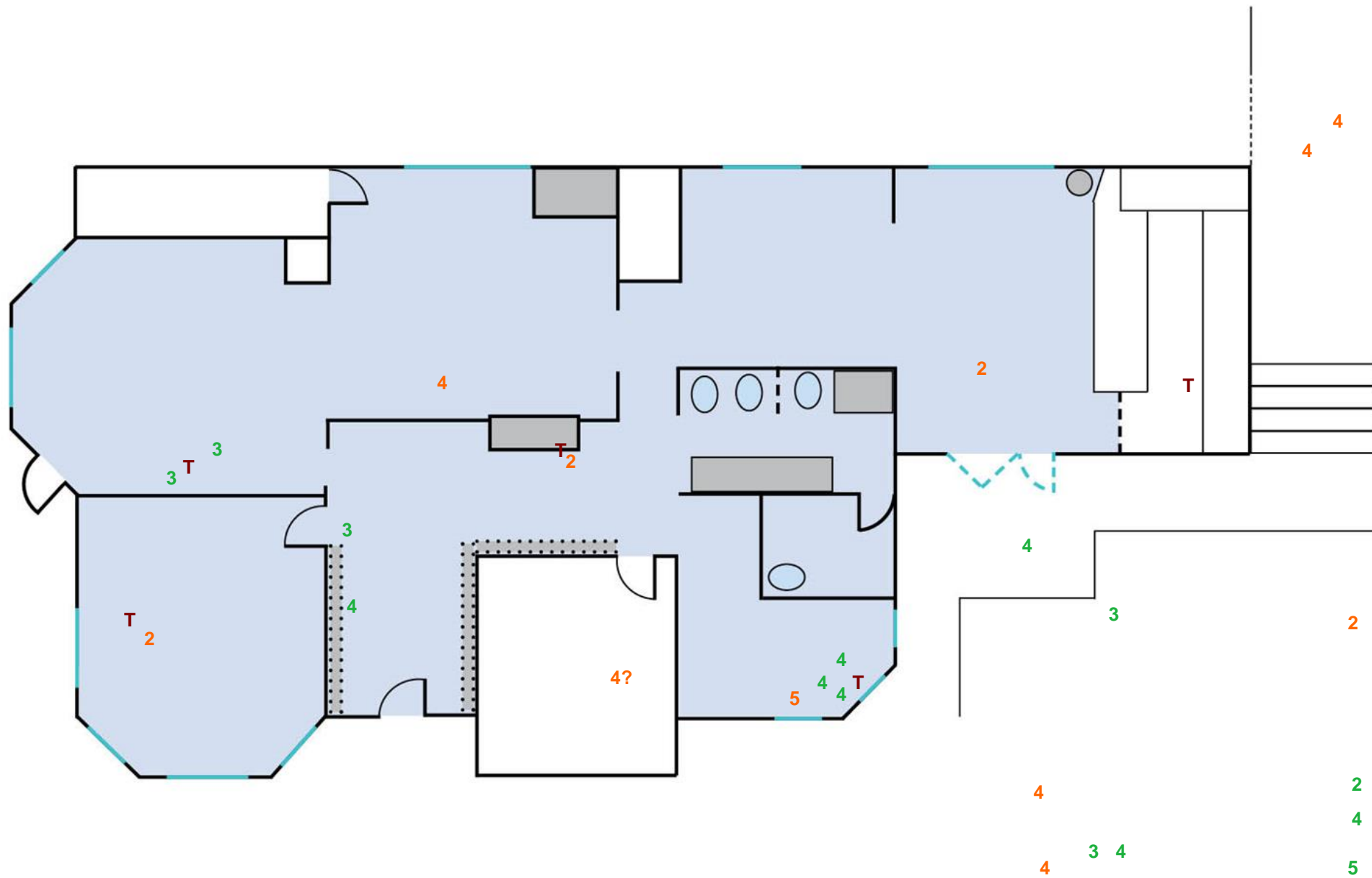
12.30am



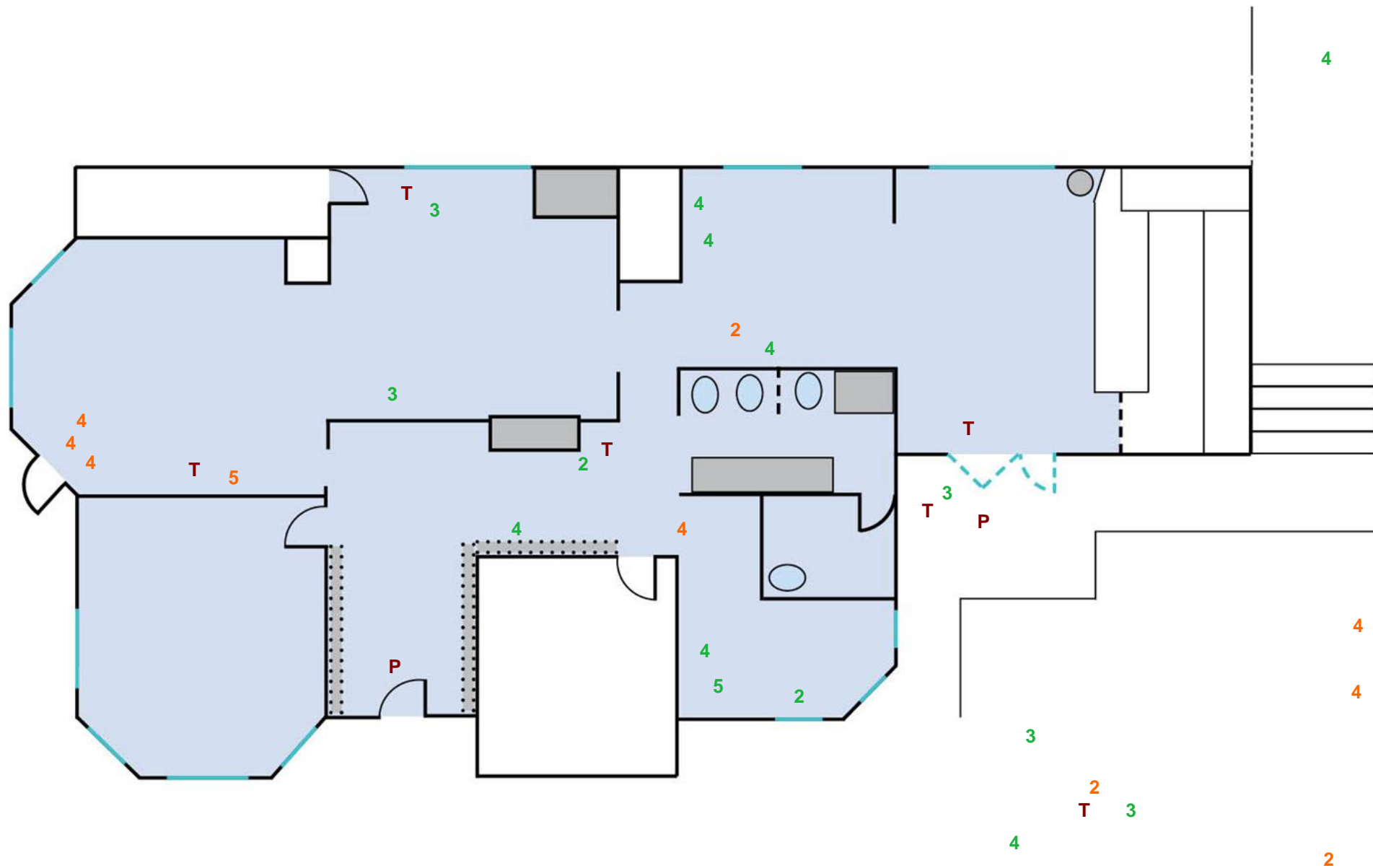
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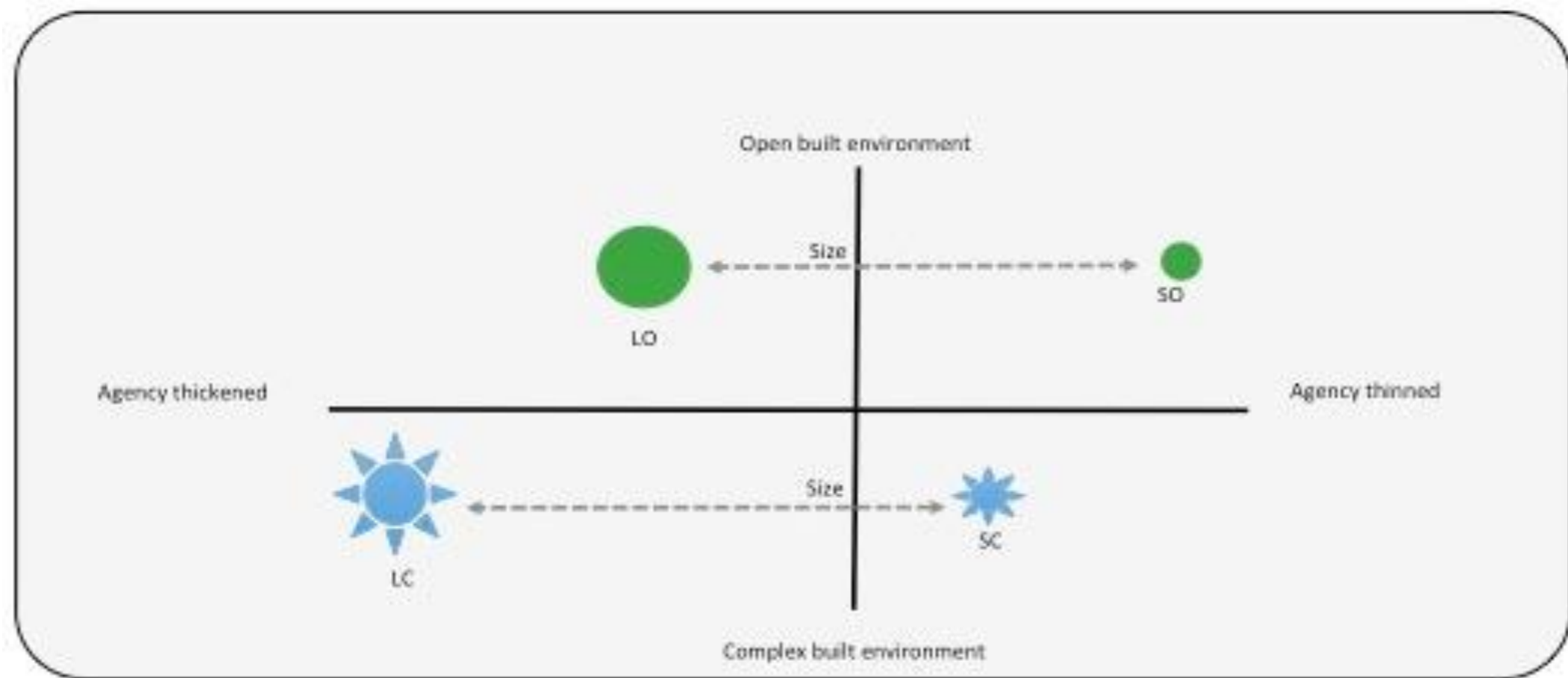
1.10pm



1.30pm



2.00pm



AGENCY & YOUR BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Group into your centres + if more than one teacher here.

One way your built environment 'thickens' and 'thins' your agency as a choreographer?

How do you respond?

10 minutes

POSSIBILITIES & REALITIES OF REVISED TE WHĀRIKI



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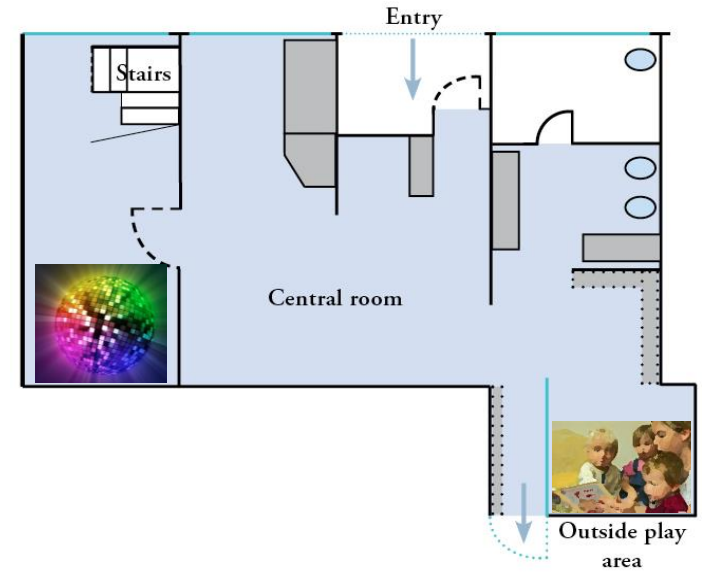
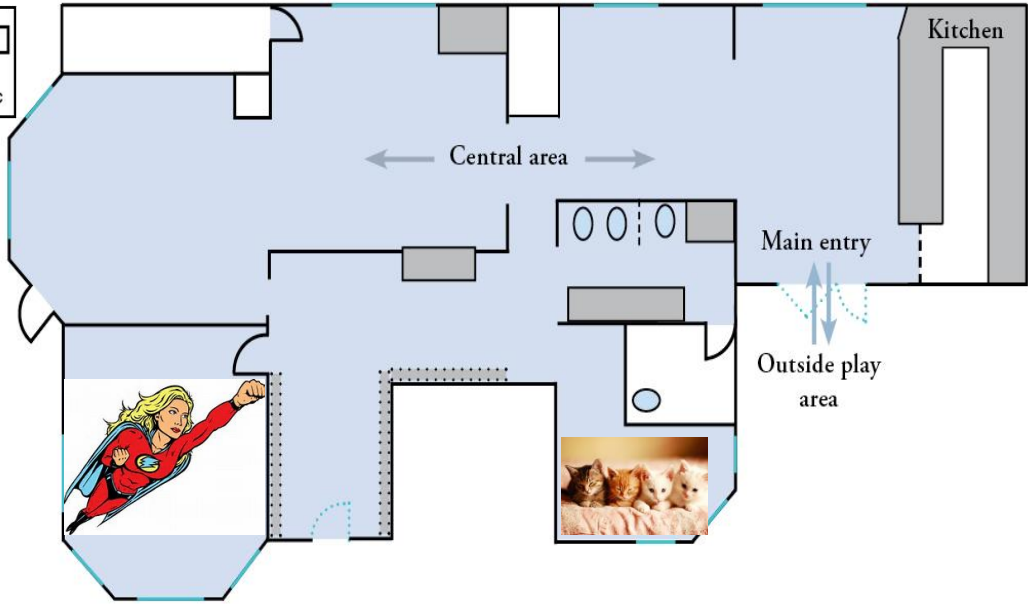
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	Time	SO (Freesia)	SO (Tulip)	LO	SC	LC
	Time	SO (Tulip)	SO (Tulip)	LO	SC	LC
Main (central) space	9.30-11.30am	70.4 dB	67.8 dB	63.4 dB	60.9 dB	60 dB
Quiet (peripheral) space	9.30-11.30am	70.3 dB	69.7 dB	62 dB	58.6 dB	45.4 dB

3 dB represents a change in power ratio by a factor of 2.

This means that background sound pressure level of 63 dB is double that of 60 dB.

This tells us that: SO's quietest area was 8-16 x louder than LC & SC's quietest areas.

Noise transferred more in open centres.

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COLLECTIVE INTERESTS CAN DOMINATE

You want to have a space that's like quiet and calm, and you want to have a space that is more active, so it makes sense that your inside space would be your calm space in your outside space would be your noisy and active space. Because is not fair children who want to sit down and read a book if someone is hooning around the room, especially in a room that size. (Focus group, S0, 14.12.15)

TEACHERS AS CHOREOGRAPHERS

How is noise experienced in your centre?

What role does the physical space play?

How do you structure time / space in response?

POSSIBILITIES & REALITIES OF REVISED TE WHĀRIKI



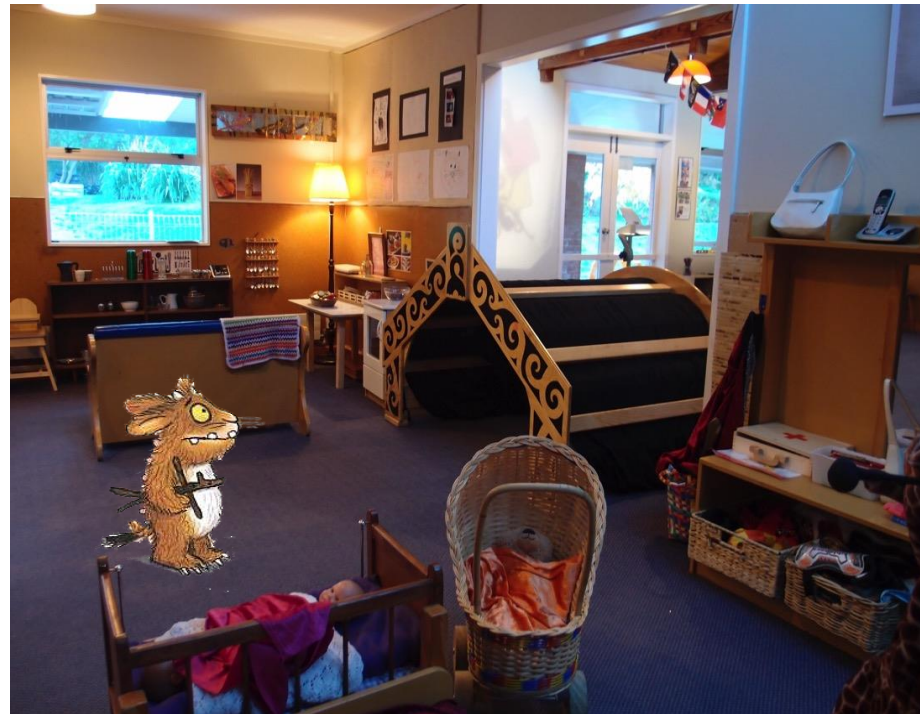
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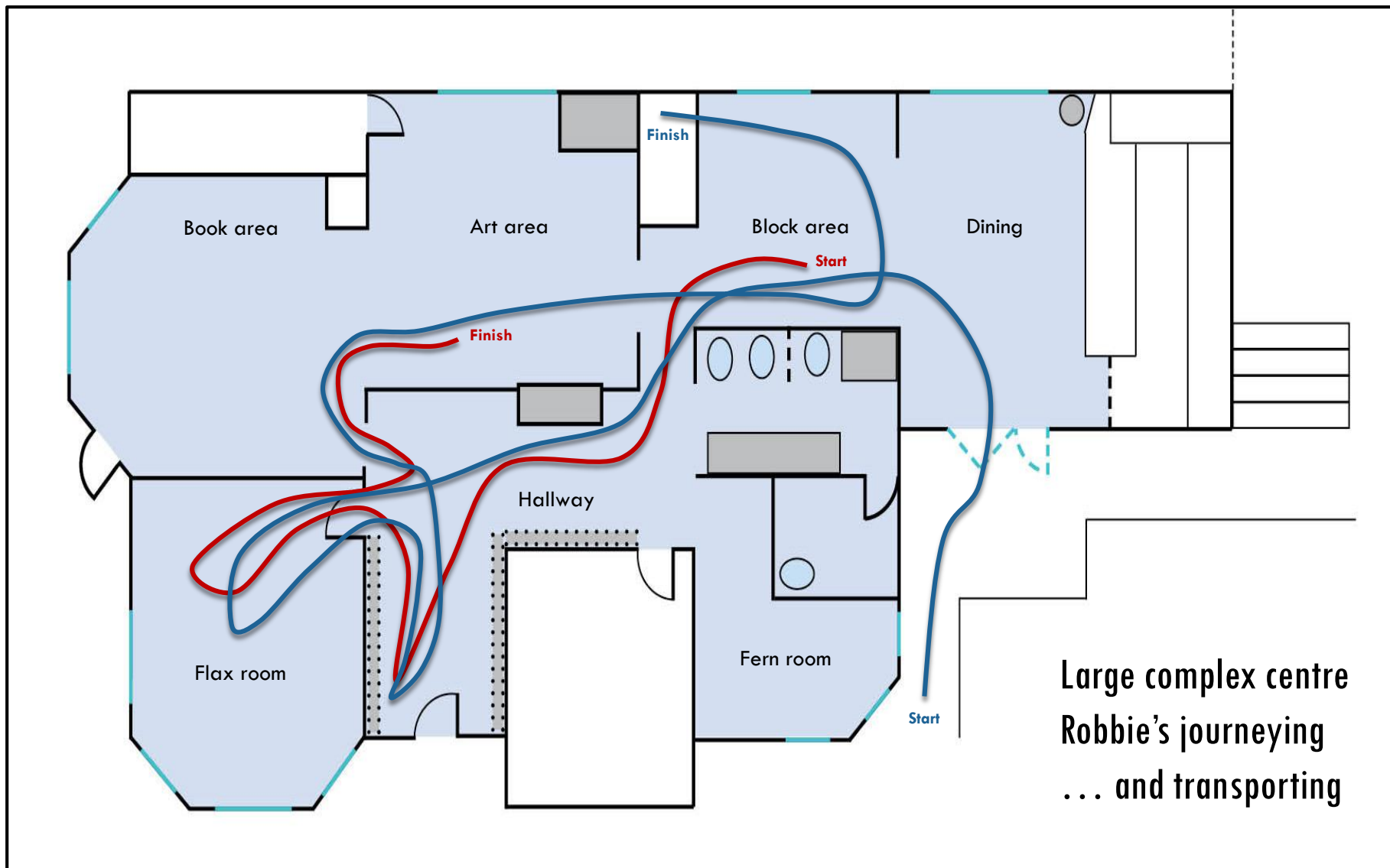
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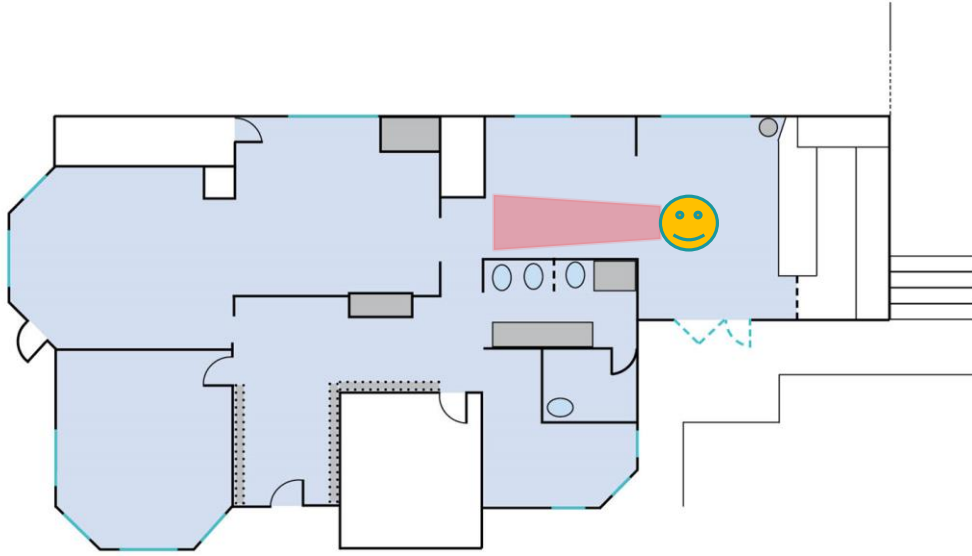
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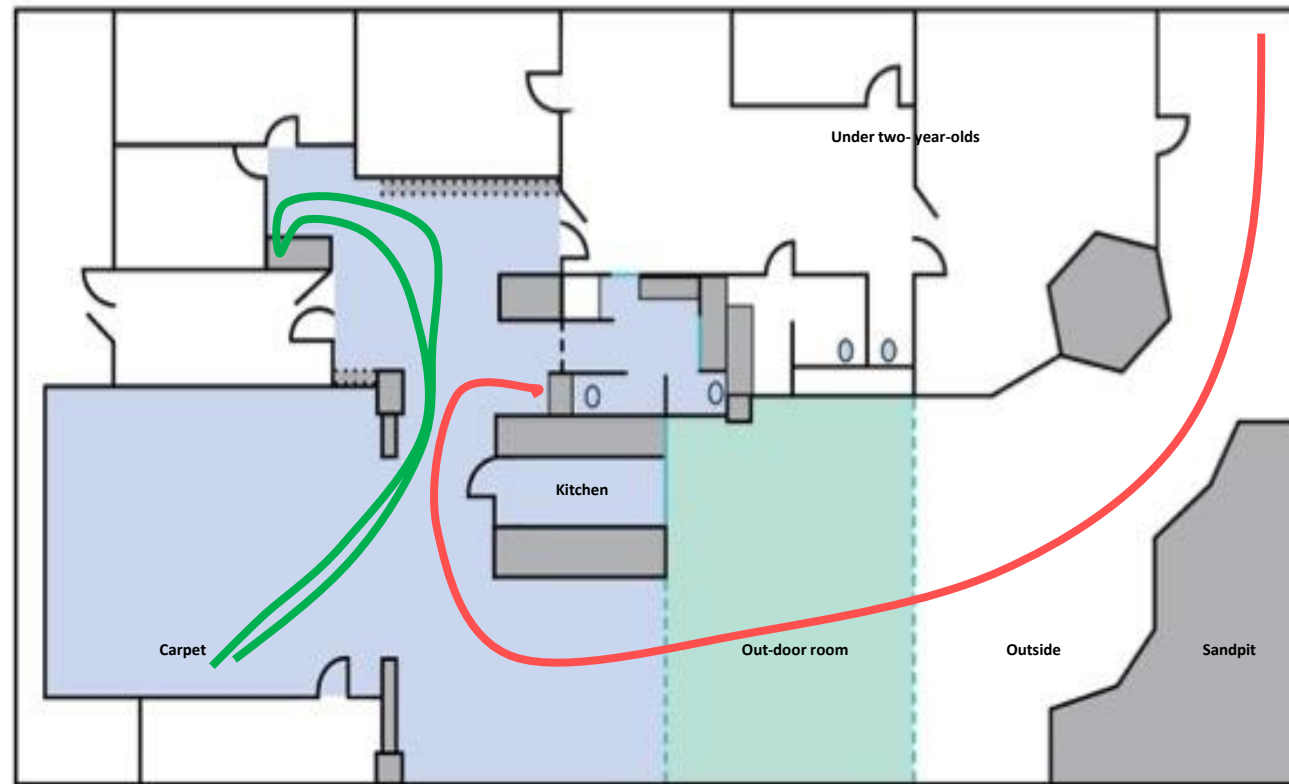
Aubert ECE centre, Island Bay (building now demolished)





“She stops for a moment and appears to look for Ali. She then turns around and moves back into the eating area and leans on the table again for a few seconds. Mae then goes and looks into block area again. She does not enter, but returns to her lunchbox cubby and briefly looks at her lunch box. She then looks into the area again (3rd time). She appears not to want to enter the space. Ali is out of sight”.

Two-year-old children were able to maintain visual contact with peers while 'on the move' more easily when in open, rather than complex, built environments.



POSSIBILITIES & REALITIES OF REVISED TE WHĀRIKI

Groups or pairs of highly mobile younger children used open space to journey *together* while remaining visually connected, and used *intentional divisions* in open space to make journeys from place to place while in view of each other as part of their dramatic play.

This contrasted with younger children's experiences in the complex centres, where they tended to visit *peripheral, separate rooms* alone or with older children.



POSSIBILITIES & REALITIES OF REVISED TE WHĀRIKI

This appropriation of space in collaboration with peers enabled very young children to exercise agency in relation to their social lives *in mixed-age settings* and this influenced their opportunities to exert power.



NZ AOTEAROA: 4TH LOWEST IN OECD

NZ's minimum standard of 2.5m² per child (New Zealand Government, 2008, Schedule 4) is 31st (lowest) of 36 OECD countries measured ([OECD, 2012, p. 50](#)).

Finland and Italy are near the top with 7 and 7.5m² respectively.

Canada and Scotland's 3.5m² are close to the average of 3m² for older children and 3.5m² for younger children.

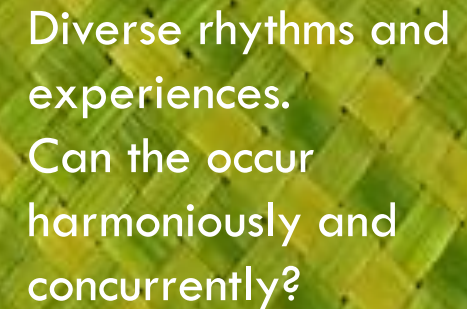
Of the countries with different minimum standards for younger and older children, all allocate more space to younger children.

YOU — ADVOCATES

How does your built environment thicken and thin:

- Your agency
- Children's agency

What can you do with your agency?



Diverse rhythms and
experiences.
Can the occur
harmoniously and
concurrently?

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