

The characteristics of children's activities at after school childcare centres in high-density areas

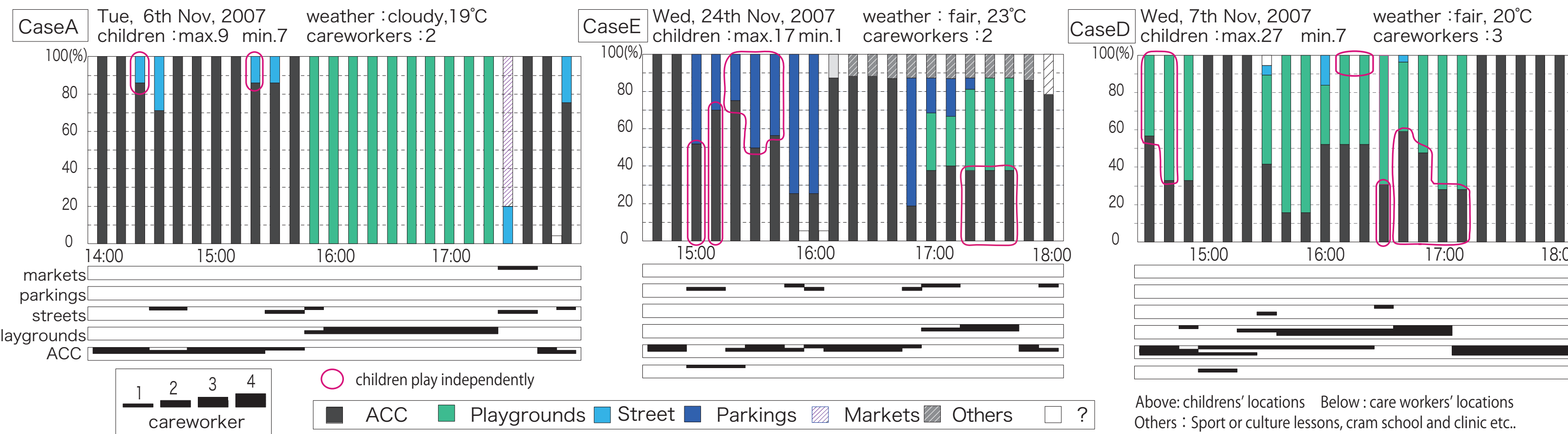
- A case study of Osaka City -

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▲ Children are playing at the narrow path in front of ACC.[Case A]



▲ Relation between children's locations and careworkers' locations. Children play at their discretion without adults to some degree in the surrounding outdoor spaces.

distance (time)	2min	3-5min	6-10min	11min-
school	⑤ ACF	⑥ ⑦ ⑧	CEFFFF	FGGGH
playground	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧
temple / shrine	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧
riverside	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧
street	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧
parking lot	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧
market	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧
sweet shop	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧
public bath	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧
community facility	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧

① frequently used ② sometimes used ③ seldom used

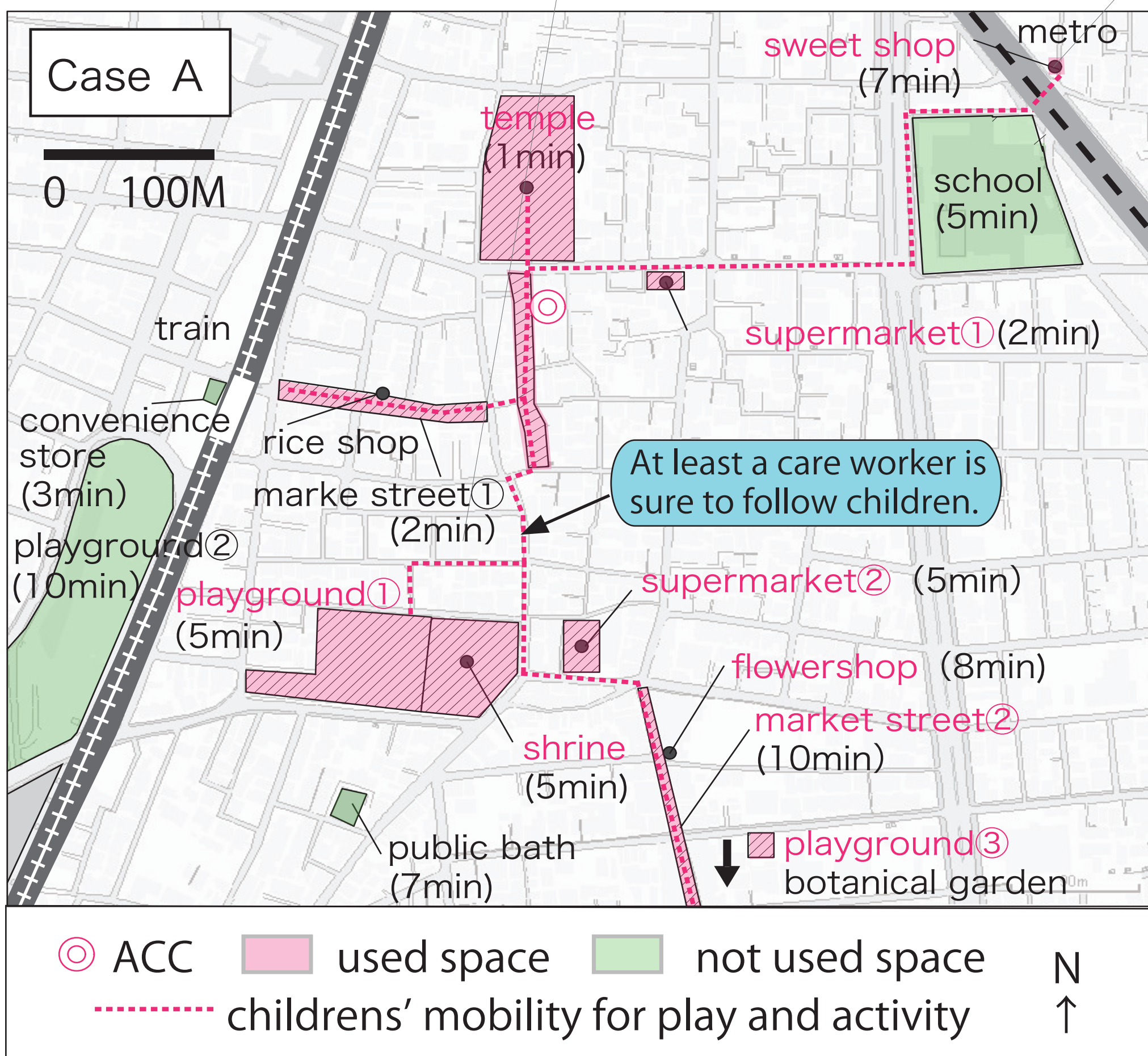
▲ The distance from ACC to spaces.



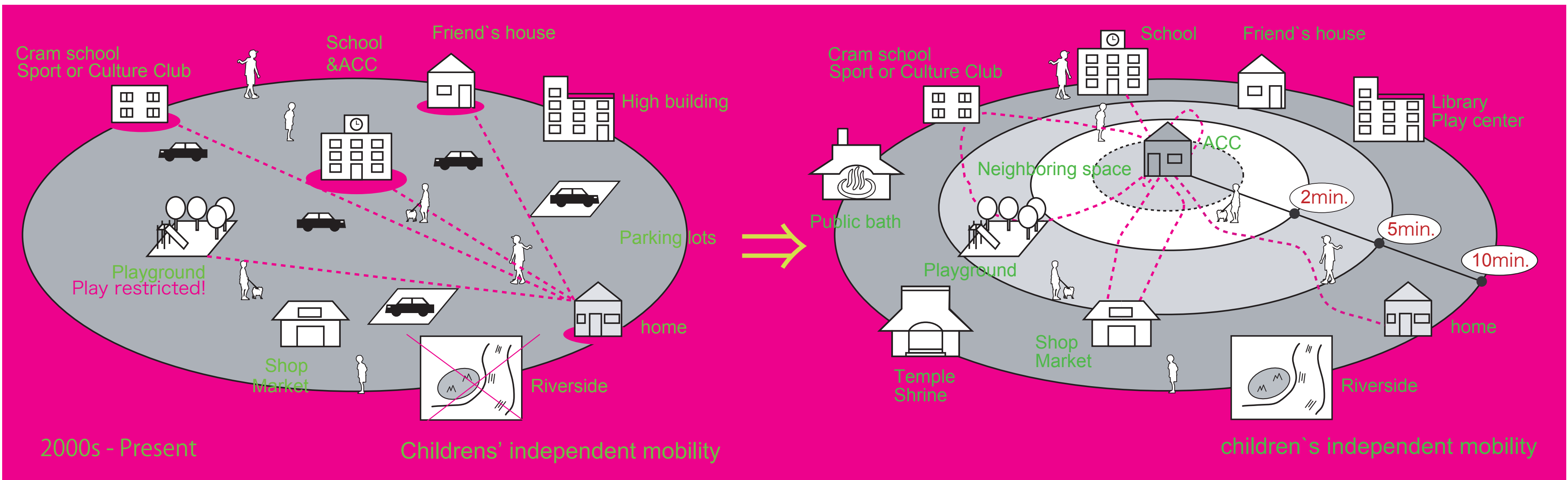
Children play at the near-est playground everyday.



Children go to the sweet shop once a week with fun.



▲ Neighbouring spaces and facilities in the community area where children use as an afterschool activity.



▲ The organizers should consider the principles when deciding about the location.

【Background and purpose】

With the continued urbanization and growing commonsensation of deteriorating security, children in urban areas can rarely play outdoors safely, and they have fewer opportunities to interact with other residents in the local community. Thus, safe home bases are needed for children of working parents to spend their after-school hours under other adults' supervision until their parents come back from work. This type of service is organised by the after-school childcare centers (ACCs), who offer their services in private rented properties in Osaka City. This study examines the relation between the children's activities at ACCs and the neighboring spaces, based on eight case studies conducted in 2007, including interviews with careworkers and behavior observations.

【Result】

The surveys showed three phenomena. Firstly, children play not only in the indoor facilities but also use the neighborhood spaces, playgrounds, temples and shrines, riversides, and streets. They also frequent private shops and public baths, which are used for both play and learning life skills, as well as the playgrounds within a five minutes' walk and other public or private spaces within ten minutes. Secondly, children play at their discretion without adults to some degree in the surrounding outdoor spaces, where their play can be seen by the careworkers and which can be reached in a few minutes. Thirdly, although children generally cannot be by themselves without adult supervision nowadays in Japan, some children are allowed to return independently to the ACCs after going to cram school or a culture lesson, or after playing outside the centre with a non-registered friend. In addition, they can return independently if the group size is below 40 or the child is considered sufficiently mature and has the parents' permission.

【Conclusion】

Consequently, the organizers of after-school childcare should consider the following principles when deciding about the location and organisation of the service: a) the walking distance between the centre and the play places should not exceed five minutes, b) the spaces around the facilities are important for the children's play, and c) the maximum group size should be approximately 30 children, i.e. 10 children per careworker.