When what's mine isn't yours in collaborative consumption: the politics of parking for car sharing cars.

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Abstract

Car sharing is an emerging transportation industry in which drivers access a fleet of shared vehicles for short-term use. Car sharing programs have demonstrated success in reducing private car ownership and kilometres travelled by private car and shared vehicle use is increasingly positioned as a useful tool for cities seeking to transition away from private car dependency.

For a number of reasons, car sharing's success is dependent on the provision of fixed and reserved car parking space. Allocated parking space works to provide consistency and reliability in the location of the act of transfer where the car is conferred from one user to the next. The reservation of parking space for the car share car delineates the structure of a car sharing network and determines its ability to offer a service to car sharers. Furthermore, the allocation of space sends a strong message of regulatory support for a sustainable transport mode, relieving car sharing organisations of the need to invest in parking, and contributing to the financial viability of the car sharing business, particularly in the start-up phase.

This paper first presents a review of car parking policy for car sharing in Sydney, Australia. We show how parking for car sharing is governed at the scale of the municipality and detail the emergence of several different approaches to the provision of car sharing parking, with parking-related policy used to both restrict and encourage the use of shared cars. We then position these policies within the findings of a series of in depth interviews carried out with Sydney car sharers who recount their practical experiences of the way car parking makes car sharing work. The ability to park a car close to home is identified as a key motivator for the uptake of car sharing in areas where on street parking is constrained and private off street parking unavailable. Non-car sharing cars parking illegally in designated car sharing parking space is consistently cited as a key complaint, with car sharer's indicating that a lack of parking enforcement detracts considerably from car sharing's appeal. The paper concludes with a series of recommendations for policy, and implications for emergent car sharing models.

1. Introduction

Car sharing has been suggested as one element of a package of measures to decrease reliance on the private automobile. After becoming a member of a car sharing organisation, the user can book a car online using a dedicated website or smart phone app. The car is then accessed using an electronic key card or key fob, and members are billed at the end of the month for time and/or kilometres travelled. Cars are located in central business districts, residential areas and major employment centres, as well as at public transit stations. This is round-trip car sharing (Le Vine et al. 2014) in that the car sharer must return the car to the same place it was accessed. In between bookings, idle car share cars usually occupy dedicated parking bays (sometimes referred to as ‘pods’ – ‘points of departure’) positioned on or off street. Car sharing organisations in the model described here are privately owned companies. They are sometimes affiliated with established car hire companies or automobile manufacturers, including Hertz (‘Hertz 24/7”), Daimler (“Car2Go”) and BMW (“BMW Sixt DriveNow”). Their services are targeted at households and businesses. This is a relatively simple, yet extremely popular kind of car sharing (Shaheen and Cohen 2013), and examples include “Zipcar” in the United States and the United Kingdom and “GoGet” in Australia.

Despite considerable popular focus, academic attention to car sharing in Australia remains in its infancy. There has been some attention paid to the cultural correlates of car sharing (Simpson 2009, Dowling and Simpson 2013) and in more recent work, its theorisation from policy and practice perspectives (Kent and Dowling 2013). Our aim in this paper is to further extend Australian research on car sharing. We do so through an explicit focus on a critical land use nexus for car sharing – parking. We begin by describing how and why car sharing relies on a space for the parked car share car. The paper then explores car share parking through two different empirical lenses. In the first, policy, we illustrate the ways in which car share parking is regulated and negotiated in Sydney, Australia. In the second, we consider parking from the perspective of car sharers. In the concluding section we bring the two sets of analyses together to suggest ways forward for both researchers and policy makers

1. **Car Share Parking: Principles and Policy**

**2.1 Parking allocation principles**

In recently published work (Dowling and Kent 2015) we have argued that parking is central to the practice and regulation of car sharing. The location of a parked car share car in a reliably available and accessible location increases the visibility of car sharing in the urban landscape as well as facilitates it. Car sharing’s dependency on fixed and reserved parking space is the result of a number of factors. Firstly, car sharing works in localities where other transport modes alternative to the private car are available, practical and popular for regular journeys such as the journey to work or school. These areas are also characterised by high residential and commercial densities and mixed uses – a combination that commonly results in a shortage of on-street parking space (Marshall 2014). The streets where car sharing is likely to be successful are therefore also those where car parking is scarce, and the reservation of parking space specifically for car sharing vehicles makes it an attractive alternative. Second, allocated parking space works to provide consistency and reliability in the location of the act of transfer where the car is conferred from one user to the next. The reservation of parking space for the car share car delineates the structure of a car sharing network and determines its ability to offer a service to car sharers (Shaheen et al. 2010). Finally, off-street parking space in areas where car sharing works is generally expensive (Manville 2014). Fixed and reserved parking allocations relieve car sharing organisations of the need to invest in parking, and contributes to the financial viability of the business, particularly in the start-up phase (Shaheen and Cohen 2013).

Local land use planners are often responsible for the realisation of policies to allocate car parking space (Willson 2013), and so also have responsibility for the reservation of parking spaces for car sharing (Le Vine et al. 2014). The rest of this section explores some of the ways this practice has been expressed in policy and negotiated in reality in Sydney, Australia.

**Table 1: Analysis of local car sharing policy in Sydney, Australia**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **City of Sydney** | **North Sydney** | **Waverley** | **Marrickville** | **Randwick** | **Leichhardt** | **Woollahra** | **Ashfield** |
| 1. **Car sharing policy adopted?**
 | 2011 | 2005 | 2012 | 2014 | No | 2008 | No | 2009 |
| 1. **Cost allocation practices**
 |
| Initial fee charged for line marking and signage | 🗸 | 🗸 | 🗸 | 🗸 | 🗸 | 🗸 | 🗸 | 🗸 |
| Ongoing fee charged for space allocation | 🗸 | 🗸 |  | 🗸 | 🗸 | 🗸 | 🗸 |  |
| 1. **Space allocation practices**
 |
| Preference given to spaces adjacent to public land | 🗸 | 🗸 | 🗸 | 🗸 | 🗸 | 🗸 | 🗸 | 🗸 |
| Location of spaces on residential streets discouraged | 🗸 | 🗸 | 🗸 | 🗸 | 🗸 | 🗸 | 🗸 | 🗸 |
| Quota of car share members required to allocate space |  | 🗸 |  |  |  | 🗸 |  | 🗸 |
| CSO must use low emissions vehicles  | 🗸 |  | 🗸 | 🗸 |  | 🗸 |  | 🗸 |
| CSO must participate in council reporting | 🗸 |  | 🗸 | 🗸 |  | 🗸 | 🗸 | 🗸 |
| Space revoked if not used |  | 🗸 | 🗸 |  |  |  |  | 🗸 |
| Avenue for enforcement articulated | 🗸 | 🗸 |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 1. **Ability for the community constrain**
 |
| Community consultation required prior to space allocation | 🗸 | 🗸 | 🗸 | 🗸 | 🗸 | 🗸 | 🗸 | 🗸 |
| Policy articulates the amount of community opposition required to refuse an application for a car sharing parking space |  |  | 🗸 |  |  | 🗸 |  | 🗸 |
| 1. **Car sharing parking is formally mandated through development control**
 |  |  | 🗸 |  | 🗸 | 🗸 |  |  |
| 1. **Car sharing parking is informally mandated through development control**
 | 🗸 | 🗸 | 🗸 | 🗸 | 🗸 | 🗸 | 🗸 | 🗸 |
| 1. **Provision of car sharing parking can be used to justify parking shortfalls**
 | 🗸 | 🗸 | 🗸 | 🗸 | 🗸 | 🗸 | 🗸 | 🗸 |

Commercial car sharing has existed in Australia since 2002 (Simpson 2010), and, akin to international trends, continues to grow. A worldwide survey in 2010 reported an exponential increase in Australian car share members from 1130 to 12,750 between 2006 and 2010 (Shaheen and Cohen 2013). Other estimates put the number of car sharers in Australia at around the 50,000 mark (Ottley 2014). Our investigations (further described below) found that in June 2014 there were 1641 car sharing cars across the country, with over 1000 of these cars located in Australia’s largest city, Sydney.

Sydney’s day-to-day land use planning, including the location and allocation of car parking, is the responsibility of local government agencies, known as local councils, who are accountable for a local government area (LGA). There are eight LGAs whose jurisdiction lay within a five kilometre radius of the Sydney central business district, and collectively these councils host over 85% of the cars available for sharing in the Sydney Greater Metropolitan Region (GMR). Between December 2013 and November 2014 we undertook a series of reviews of policies, practices and procedures relevant to car sharing in these LGAs. We first reviewed planning policies and development controls related to transport and car parking in each LGA. In order to explore the background to the development of these policies, we also reviewed the minutes of meetings of council committees responsible for car sharing. This was complemented by a search of development consents granted for major residential and/or commercial developments in the 24 months prior to data collection, enabling analysis of the impact of development controls for car sharing parking. This data was coupled with publically available online information from each of Sydney’s three car sharing operators to review the number and location of car sharing cars in each LGA. Table One presents a summary of our car sharing policy analysis.

Car sharing is officially encouraged by all local councils, with this support usually proclaimed on a dedicated sustainable transport council hosted website. Car sharing is framed by councils as a way to attain local urban land use and transport related goals. These include the use of sustainable transport options and reductions in the demand for on-street car parking and traffic congestion, but also extend to incorporate goals related to human health and equity. While universally supportive of the car sharing concept, each council maintains unique arrangements to manage their role in its success. Our review revealed two discrete policy approaches used to attain this goal.

**2.2 Car share (parking) policy**

The first policy approach is a specific council car sharing policy. In 2007, the state department responsible for roads (then known as the NSW Roads and Traffic Authority) issued a technical direction to assist local councils with guidance on the provision of car sharing parking. All councils follow these basic guidelines, with six of the eight areas analysed embellishing them to maintain their own formal car sharing policy. As an indicator of the relatively nascent and shifting status of car sharing in Sydney, all car sharing policies were less than six years old, with the majority the subject of substantial amendment within the 12 months prior to commencement of this study.

Each policy is distinct in its approach. In general, however, the policy document is used to articulate the nexus between council’s ‘bequest’ of car sharing parking, and the conditions under which the CSO needs to operate to qualify for this somewhat unorthodox donation of (parking) space. In allocating a car share parking space, councils accept guidance from CSOs as to the exact location of the space, yet maintain a hierarchy of preferred locations that declare reluctance to support the location of car share parking spaces directly in front of private residential property. The Policy Statement of Ashfield Council is typical. It states: *“Ideally spaces will be located in front of public land (e.g. parks), Council premises (eg. Libraries and other facilities) or business premises (e.g. factories), rather than in front of residential properties”*. Other councils take this a step further to state that *“dedicated [car share] parking spaces will not be located adjacent to the front of residential properties” (Waverley Council).*

In terms of consultation with the wider community, all councils require that community consultation be undertaken prior to space allocation. Three councils (Leichhardt, North Sydney, Ashfield) specify that a quota of CSO members who express interest in a space be met prior to allocation. North Sydney Council, for example, states that “*Each vehicle in the [car sharing parking space] must have a minimum of 10 residents (not businesses) nominating that particular [space] as their preferred pod”.* Some councils maintain a formal statement on the amount of community opposition required to refuse an application for a car sharing parking space (Waverley, Leichhardt, Ashfield). Leichhardt Council’s Car Share Parking Policy, for example, states that “*During the resident consultation for the proposed car share spaces, if objections are received from more than 75% of properties within the subject block, the proposed location is considered undesirable*”. Other councils do not specify any formal arrangement for the point at which community opposition will lead to rejection of an application for a car sharing parking space. Our review of the minutes of council meetings, however, revealed numerous examples of successful community appeals to council to revoke or relocate car sharing parking spaces. For example, a petition of 40 signatories was considered at a meeting of North Sydney Council on 23 April 2012 requesting: *“That North Sydney Council remove the following Go Get car [sharing] spaces currently allocated within the Kirribilli business area. These spaces were used by our customers who now have greater difficulty in shopping locally”.*

Once a council has approved allocation of a space, the CSO is charged an initial fee for the maintenance of signage and line-marking for space and/or parking permit. There is also a trend for councils to introduce ongoing fees once a CSO is established in an area. For example North Sydney Council did not charge CSOs a parking permit fee until 2011 – five years after car sharing was established in the area. Similarly, the car sharing policy for the City of Sydney states: *“the city has made a substantial in-kind contribution to the early viability of car sharing. The city will fund in full the line marking and signage of car share spaces until the financial year 2011/12”.* Since this time, car sharing organisations operating in the City of Sydney have been charged over AUD$1000 for the establishment of a car sharing parking space.

Regarding mechanisms to protect a car sharing space from illegal use by non-car share cars, two councils specifically articulate a connection between their approach to the allocation of car sharing parking space and the enforcement of parking controls more generally throughout the LGA. The City of Sydney is the most explicit, stating that *“Recognising that illegal parking is particularly problematic for car sharing, the City of Sydney will consistently enforce existing regulation that prohibits non-car share vehicles parking in car share spaces. Levels of non-compliance will be recorded and further actions taken if frequent patrols and high-visibility line marking are not sufficient.”* Other councils, however, propose that illegal parking in dedicated car sharing spaces will not be an issue given the appropriate treatment of the space with signage and line marking. Ashfield’s policy, for example, states that *“Council statistics indicate that illegal parking in car share spaces is currently not an issue in the LGA”,* with Leichhardt indicating that “*if the dedicated parking zone is unavailable for Car share vehicles due to illegal parking, additional enforcement measures should initially be considered.”.*

**2.3 Car sharing cars and other parking policy**

The second policy avenue employed to influence car sharing is the inclusion of provisions for car sharing parking spaces in controls mandating parking provisions for new development. Development in NSW is subject to a series of legislative and regulatory requirements and it is usually the local authority’s Development Control Plan (DCP) that will state specific controls relating to parking space. Most councils specify minimum car parking requirements (see Shoup 2014). Three of the eight councils (Waverley, Leichhardt, Randwick) in this study also specify minimum car sharing parking requirements. This simply means that if an application for development is of a certain type and size, it must allocate parking space for car sharing cars. For example, Waverley Council requires that a minimum of one car share car parking space be provided for every 90 residential units and for every 50 commercial car parking spaces. Our search of recent development consents revealed that councils without car sharing parking provisions in planning controls still mandate its provision on a case by case basis by placing a relevant condition on the consent granting development approval. Mechanisms to enforce these conditions are variable. Some require proof in the form of a letter of commitment from a CSO prior to issuance of the final occupation certificate for the development. Others required that the developer pay for car sharing memberships for the new development’s residents for a period of up to 10 years. For example, a recent consent granted for a seven storey mixed-use residential/commercial development in the LGA of Randwick states that *"Two car share spaces must be provided within the basement of the development. The applicant/developer must enter into an agreement with a car share provider and pay the costs associated with the provision of the car share vehicles including the membership fees for residents of the building for a period of 10 years. The applicant/developer must provide details to Council of the agreement with the car share provider and the payments made to ensure the provision of the car share spaces prior to an occupation certificate being issued."*

Car sharing parking is also used in flexible parking provisions whereby the allocation of dedicated car sharing space is accepted as a concession for any shortfall in the development’s compliance with other specified parking requirements. For example, Leichhardt Council’s primary development control plan specifies that one car sharing space can be provided in lieu of five private car parking spaces. Application of this form of concession is usually to large scale residential developments where on-street parking is constrained and the level of service provided by surrounding public transport networks is considered superior.

Our policy review reveals the way local government in Sydney is intervening in and managing the practice of car sharing. This is primarily through the allocation of the fixed and reserved parking spaces that make car sharing work. The outcome of these various policy mechanisms is the provision of a network of car share ‘pods’ across the streets and public and private car parks of inner Sydney. Our review of publically available online information from each of Sydney’s three car sharing operators revealed that pods demonstrate different degrees of physical and regulatory delineation. In areas where parking is not regulated in any way (for example on streets where time limits do not apply) pods for car sharing cars are sometimes ‘floating’. This means that the car’s pod is not fixed using signage or line marking but the car is parked in an agreed general vicinity (such as ‘Miles Street near the corner of Bridge Road’). These, typically on street, parking spaces, are available for use by other cars and car share members are instructed to park as close as possible to the agreed location. There are also ‘fixed’ parking bays positioned on the street (Figure 1). These parking spaces are often demarcated through the use of signage and/or line marking that designate them as car share only. And finally, there are fixed off-street parking bays, also delineated through line marking and signage but located in private or public car parks.



**Figure 1: Dedicated Car Share Parking**

While our review provides a background to the regulatory framework around the provision of car parking space for car sharing cars, it does not inform understanding of the way this provision works ‘on the ground’. The following section of our paper reports experiences of car sharers to shed light on the way the provision of car sharing parking space is both perceived and practiced.

1. **Car Share Parking: Perspectives from Car Sharers**

The allocation of dedicated parking for car share cars is hotly contested. An analysis of recent newspaper commentaries on car sharing reveals a preponderance of discussions of the resident and politicians perceptions of dedicated car share parking spaces. The current NSW Minister for Roads, for example, has been reported as wanting to ban all car share parking from Sydney’s streets (Saulwick 2015). There has been a critical set of voices absent from these debates: those who car share. To address this lacuna we conducted a series of in-depth interviews with car sharers in Sydney, Australia, during October and November, 2015. Participants were recruited using a combination of advertisements on social media sites and editorial in local newspapers.

Twenty one people participated in the research. A summary of the characteristics of participants is provided in Table 1. In short, participants were young (half aged 18-34), without children, and unlikely to be car owners despite access to onsite car parking. Intriguingly, three quarters of participants were women. While this may be reflective of the gender composition of Sydney's car sharers, we suspect that this may also be reflective of women’s greater willingness to engage with the research.

**Table 2: Summary characteristics of car sharers interviewed**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Characteristic** | **Number of Participants (n=21)** |
| Age18-34Age 35-54Age 55-64 | 1092 |
| MaleFemale | 516 |
| Owned private transport:CarScooter | 41 |
| Couple household | 14 |
| Couple with children | 3 |
| Living alone | 3 |
| Single with children | 1 |
| Access to free onsite parking | 11 |

Semi structured interviews lasting between 45 and 90 minutes were conducted. Interviews were guided by a schedule listing issues to be covered: general socio-economic and demographic details, length and type of car sharing membership, the way car sharing is practised and perceived, other travel practices (including car ownership history), interactions with other car sharers, original and existing motivations for car sharing and complaints. Interviews were transcribed verbatim. For the purpose of this paper we focus just on perceptions and practices of parking. References to car parking in interviews were extracted and thematically coded as presented below.

**3.1 Parking as a catalyst and motivator**

Our first point is an obvious one: that parking is central to car sharing practice. Parking was also regularly acknowledged as a key motivator to not only join, but also maintain car sharing practice. This was particularly so for those without on-site parking at home or work, and with limited on-street parking available.

*Dominique:* That's one of the reasons we have the goget[[1]](#footnote-1) as well, because parking where we live is such an issue. It was a problem, like we had this [traditional hire] car on the weekend, so we had it overnight and then used it on Sunday. And just trying to find a place to park it was a real nightmare. We ended up parking right down in Woolloomooloo [over one kilometre away]. Because that was the only place we could get, that's a real consideration for us. The fact we don't have to worry about the parking, it's really important.

*Anna:* Even when we were at Stanmore we were well past the point of ever considering owning a car again. And now it's just not feasible in Elizabeth Bay. Our apartment doesn't have a parking spot, it would be totally ridiculous.

 *Interviewer:* So your day to day commute is by public transport?
*Rebecca:* Yes, both of us use public transport to get to work every day. And even if we had a car we wouldn't drive, we both work in the city and parking would be prohibitive.

Participants indicated a strong preference for spaces to be fixed rather than floating:

*Anna:* Yeah, when we first joined we had problems finding a spot to put the car back and finding the car when we'd booked it, because there wasn't an allocated spot for it, it was just generally in a certain vicinity. Here there are dedicated pods which makes life easier.

*Interviewer*: Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about?
*Stephanie:* No, I guess just the importance of the cars having their own space. And everyone says the same thing, the cars need their own pod…

Some participants indicated that they intentionally avoid the use of cars that don't have a dedicated car parking space:

*Interviewer*: You mentioned that that car has its own dedicated space, do you ever use cars that aren't in a dedicated space?
*Rebecca:* No…we tend to go just where they have their own space.

In sum, the location and type of parking was an important influence on the use of car share cars.

**3.2 Parking as a complaint**

Participants highlighted the importance of not only the allocation, but also the enforcement of spaces that have been allocated. The inability to return a car share car to its designated parking space was the most regularly cited complaint of those interviewed. Participants consistently described issues associated with non-car sharing cars parked in car sharing spaces. Emphasising the regularity of the problem, this description was often accompanied by some kind of numerical estimation of the extent to which this occurred:

*Dylan:* The most difficult thing is other people not respecting the parking space….every Saturday or Friday night if you took the car out in the afternoon you'd be guaranteed that the space would be taken by a non goget car when you came back.

*Eve:* Another good thing about goget is knowing you'd come back and there would be a parking spot available. Although recently random people have started parking in the spots which is annoying, it drove me crazy.…It started to happen regularly, like a third to half of the time for one particular car which is just up past Redfern station, it's a busy spot and I think there's a couple of businesses and a block of apartments there.

*Keira*: there are three pods in Wolli Creek, three goget cars and every single time I walk past the pod there are always two or one that are taken up by non goget cars. I have photos to prove it! It's every single time. Often they are construction vehicles. It's not acceptable. Like I'm doing the right thing, I'm trying to protect the environment and do the right thing and I can't if I can't return the car. Like then I need to park illegally.

Gillian, who lives in a suburb where on-street parking is highly constrained, describes the practical implications of not being able to return the car sharing car to its designated spot, explaining that it impacts both on the returning car sharer, and the next person booked in to share that car:

*Gillian:* ..when it does happen [someone parking illegally in a car share space], it makes it really difficult. It' be fine if you could park in a space really close by, but if you can't park in that space here then you have to take the car down by the harbour or up towards Kings Cross, it's a big hassle for everyone involved.

**3.3 Problems with enforcement**

In some areas where most if not all car sharing spaces are allocated fixed pods, the problem is with the practice of enforcement rather than the practice of designation:

*Anthony:* Yeah, I've had some frustration where someone else has parked in the spot I'm supposed to return the car to and I get back and I call the council or the traffic people or whatever and they say "yeah, we'll send someone over there", but I never hear anything back and meanwhile I have to find somewhere else to park and that's pretty frustrating. It happens too often, probably about a quarter of the time, one out of every four times.

*Dominique:* The one on the main street though, I often have problems with parking back in there. It's usually the [local government authority] actually that is parked in that spot - their contractors seem to park in the goget space as though it's just a council car parking space for them. That's happened the last two times I have tried to come back to that pod.

*Joan:* Someone was parked there [illegally in a car share space] for three days recently and when I rang the Council they said there was nothing they could do about it.

*Stephanie:* And I've said to the traffic cops and that "you need to book these people" [for parking illegally in a car sharing space], but they never book them.
*Interviewer*: What do they say?
*Stephanie*: They say, "oh maybe it's their first time".

While most participants acknowledged that the local Council was responsible for enforcement of car sharing parking, others chose to 'take the law into their own hands' to defend car sharing:

*Dylan:* I also think sometimes people just don't realise what they are doing and that it's wrong [to park illegally in a car share space]. I think we kind of have to educate people in a way. Sometimes I tell people they're parking in a goget space and people will be quite nice about it and say "sorry I didn't realise".

*Eve:* It makes me cross [when people park illegally in a car share space]. If it's a business van I always call the business but if it's a private car it's hard so I call goget and report the car.

*Trevor:* The big de-motivating factor, which has annoyed me quite a lot recently is that even though they have a dedicated parking spot, it doesn't mean it's vacant because people come and park in it and then it's up to you to go and find somewhere else to park, so I've lost it sometimes and written rude notes on windscreens. There's an issue with the enforcement of parking.

Others indicated they felt the car sharing organisation was responsible for enforcement:

*Keira:* I have already discussed with goget and I explained to them that I don't understand why they are not protecting these parking spaces, I understand they lease the spaces and my question was to goget that they couldn't answer was why don't they use the new technologies that allow you to block out a parking space so no-one else can park there? They have technology using bollards and things…why isn't goget doing anything to protect their customers?

**3.4 Parking as a site of tension**

This lack of enforcement and understanding seems to exacerbate tensions associated with car sharing cars taking parking spaces from privately owned vehicles:

*Dylan:* People will scream abuse at you for taking up their space, even though it's not a public space, I've been threatened, and I've seen cars keyed.

*Joan:* And we have problems with the pod closest to us because someone near there keeps defacing the signs around it, because they obviously are really annoyed that it's there and it's happening all the time.

*Stephanie:* The problem is with the parking... And I've had arguments with people, like I'll wait by the car and send the two kids home and you know someone will come back and be like "oh I didn't know", and I'm like "I'll get fined for that", and it's difficult.

**3.5 Implications of different physical treatments**

In addition to better enforcement, participants repeatedly advocated for a more consistent and effective approach to the physical treatments used to delineate a car sharing parking space. Again, this is not an issue with the designation of space as much as it is the practical implementation of council car sharing policy:

*Interviewer:* The pods that you use, do they have green marking on the road?
*Anthony:* No, just signed, I wanted to suggest that, to put some serious marking on the road, because perhaps people just don't see the signs, or perhaps they do and they just don't care, I'm not sure which. The green marking on the road would be better.

*Natalie:* City of Sydney they are great with the pods, like they mark the pods clearly, they're signed and painted green and white, but here at Ashfield Council you're lucky if you get a sign and then occasionally you'll get some dodgy "car share" painted on the road which soon starts wearing away and then so you get cars parked in the pods, especially like there's a car parked in the car park down at Summer Hill shopping centre and that's a notorious one, people just don't realise that it's a car share space.

*Trevor*: People are more intimidated by parking in a spot with green paint on it, but sometimes it's just a [street] sign. A lick of green paint would help, I should suggest that.

1. **Discussion and Conclusion**

The themes raised in conversation with car sharers both confirm various policy approaches to parking provision and bring to life some of the issues associated with existing practice. Car sharers reinforced the views of local governments that fixed and reserved car parking spaces are integral to car sharing’s operation and ongoing appeal. They acknowledged, in detail, the issues they had experienced with parking for car sharing. These include non-compliance with parking regulations around car sharing, existence of poor physical treatments for parking spaces, the need to sometimes defend the car parking spot personally and evidence of public disdain for car sharing cars “taking up their [parking] space” (Dylan). Car sharers did not, however, generally articulate awareness of the complexities faced by local authorities in reserving a public on-street car parking space for the exclusive use of a private business. Car parking for car sharing was viewed by car sharers more as a right or reward for “doing the right thing” (Keira). Car sharing parking policy approaches, on the other hand, indicate that the local councils allocating car sharing parking space are very much aware that car sharing is not only a sustainable transport mode, but also as a private business seeking local government support. This is expressed through the various restrictions placed on car sharing parking space provision and, it could be said, a lack of commitment to enforcement.

The result of this inconsistency between car sharer expectations and council’s policy approach is a simmering tension amongst car sharers who consistently raised the failure of the policing mechanisms commonly used to enforce local government parking strategies as a key complaint. Regardless of community expectations, local councils consistently demonstrate an underlying recognition of the place of car sharing in sustainable transport systems, and as a way to mitigate problems associated with congestion. The overarching intent of their approach to car sharing is one of support. The narratives of car sharers suggest that this intent is, in some places, potentially undermined by a lack of commitment to enforcement.

The case of parking for car sharing therefore provides some valuable lessons for attempts to shift transport practices away from routine private car use. The first is that car sharing as a sustainable transport mode has emerged and endures not as a result of a large scale systemic intervention, but instead because of a relatively piecemeal and organic process that has melded public and private interests in a very practical way. This point is demonstrated by the various nuances in local approaches to car sharing policy, and the fact that policies are relatively new and open to change. The second implication confirms existing research that suggests the sites where mobility transitions can best be supported are perhaps not those where we are mobile, but instead the places in between characterised by immobility – in this case, space for the parked car. Again, this involves looking at the practical workings of an emergent mode of mobility to explore its elements in context. The final, and related, implication of our analysis is that policy alone will not result in shifting transport practices. To be effective, policy needs to be implemented, and its intent enforced.

References

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1. The car sharing company "Go Get" is the standout market leader in the provision of commercial car sharing services in Sydney. As a result, our interviewees regularly refer to car sharing as simply "goget". [↑](#footnote-ref-1)