Car Parking Matters to Small Retailers: An Historical Case Study of Three Town Centres in Marrickville

Claudine J. Moutou[*]

Increasing the costs of car parking and in some cases removing it has become recommended practice for discouraging car use. To understand the perspective of the high street retail cluster who will be confronted with such changes, the paper reviews a time when another change in mobility and access led to car parking construction. A case study of local newspaper coverage between 1968-87 about car parks in the Marrickville Council area is analysed for themes, using a sociological framework of mobility. The paper concludes that while policies of the past may have prioritised economic needs the paradigm shift of sustainable decision making means that future policy implementation will be more complex. In town centres this requires more attention to be paid to the needs of those not engaged in the policy debate, but who are dependent upon the existing infrastructure of car parking. Small retail businesses are one such group.

Why Car Parking Matters to Small Retailers

Retail businesses are often located in clusters as they can gain access to customers attracted to their neighbouring competitors.[1] This co-opetition[2] relationship amongst businesses where they compete for customers and co-operate at the same time extends also to the infrastructure that they share, such as car parking facilities. For the customer who prefers to drive, the convenience of having a cluster of shops in the one place with parking makes it a more attractive destination to shop due to the reduced 'spatial, temporal and effort costs of patronage'.[3]

With the advent of the automobile, shoppers were no longer limited to public transport, walking, or cycling and therefore were less constrained by distance, pre-determined routes or carrying ability. By the 1950s, levels of car ownership had increased in Sydney to the point that the car became a favoured mode for travelling. In response, destinations needed to change to accommodate the increased demand for car parking. City suburbs established pre-automobile typically feature narrower streets and densely packed land parcels, which made adapting the landform to accommodate the car a complex task. In contrast, newer urban areas where space was more abundant were able to incorporate parking into the design of destinations with greater ease.

In 1965, the opening of Sydney's first regional shopping centre, Roselands, literally drove customers away from their normal shopping destinations. Roselands offered 'superior shopping convenience' as a large portion of space was allocated to car parking which provided customers with access to a compact and large cluster of retailers under the one roof.[4] This was helped by the design of their multi-deck car parks, which were also to optimise space and reduce walking distance to the shops thereby reducing consumer lethargy. In 1966, three more regional shopping centres were opened; East Lakes, Burwood Westfield and Bankstown Square. A feature of these four shopping centres were the large number of big retailers which effectively brought city shopping choices to the suburbs. The impact of these developments on the smaller retailers located in suburban town centres as high street shops was costly. Customers frustrated with difficulties in getting parking in their local town centres had the mobility to reach other desirable destinations, leaving local town centres at risk of economic decline.[5]

In the interests of shopkeepers and their retail cluster, off-street car parking became a strategy to attract shoppers. The artefacts of this period are not just physical infrastructure but also the view that car parking makes business sense. This perspective contrasts to sustainable transport policy. This paper aims to analyse the themes and views of the past, so that a better understanding can help in managing conflicting perspectives into the future.

The Approach

The focus of this paper is to examine 56 local newspaper articles published between 1968-87 about the creation of off-street car parking facilities in the established smaller suburban town centres of Marrickville, Dulwich Hill and Newtown in the Inner West of Sydney.[6]

Looking back at the story of how car parking was established and the significance it had for the local retail clusters is important in light of the contemporary sustainability challenge of reducing car dependency and encouraging shorter trips. Historical and comparative analysis is one way in which 'to pinpoint the material, institutional and cognitive factors that contribute' to entrenched views and make it difficult to introduce new corrective policies.[7] Increasing the cost of car parking, and the removal of parking spaces is commonly described by the media as a concern for local small businesses that have come to rely upon car parking as a means of attracting customers. The businesses fear they will lose customers if they don't have car parking. Having town centres with businesses under stress or closing down is not in the interests of policy makers as it reduces the options of residents to shop locally, which is a means of shortening or displacing car trips. Analysing the role of local retail businesses in past events will hopefully not only help policy implementers manage stakeholder resistance but also potentially help the businesses support customers in choosing more sustainable travel behaviour so that their businesses do not fail.

An environmental pragmatist approach recognises the value of interdisciplinary perspectives in solving complex problems. This paper's use of a sociological review of history as captured in the news articles of the local media is representative of an interpretative philosophy. The motive for this historical case study was to understand the perspective and actions of small retail businesses at a point in time when society was adapting to increased levels of car ownership and the desire of more shoppers to drive to the shops. A collection of local newspaper clippings held by the Marrickville Council's Archival Reference Centre was the primary source material. In addition Council-archived correspondence pertaining to properties being sought for car parking were used to shed light on the Council's role in negotiations.

The use of unobtrusive source material such as media accounts and archival records offers researchers interesting and complex challenges for understanding events of the past.[8] The extraction of meaning from the accounts needs to be done cognisant of the power of the original documenter, such as the journalist or council officer, in judging what will be included or excluded and the portrayal of the facts through language and sequence. The narratives of the documenter have been described as 'poetic elaborations' where a narrative contract between them and their audience is constantly renegotiated as each responds to perceptions and reactions to the story.[9] The journalist's account of an event, for instance, can elicit positive and negative reactions from those mentioned in the article, amongst the community who are the target readership, and within his own media organisation, all of which can potentially influence future narrative accounts. In addition the archivist and the researcher adds an additional layer of meaning through their selection of materials, interpretation of messages, own narrative description and analysis of meaningfulness.

The scope of this research exercise is exploratory in nature, instigated by an interest in understanding the reaction of present day small retail businesses to changes in mobility

and accessibility of their retail cluster. Therefore the accounts are not examined for their accuracy of facts, but are used as an indicator of themes, perceptions and roles of different stakeholder groups. As the mouthpiece of the local community and business, newspapers needed to balance the need to keep their various stakeholders satisfied. The coverage of the planning and opening of car parking facilities and the subsequent controversies about their use indicate that it was a topic of local relevance to the readership of local residents and businesses, as well as the newsmakers, the Councillors and businessmen who used the media to advocate the case for or against car parking. The council officer who chose to keep and store the newspaper clippings over five decades, reports doing so due in part to the level of controversy but also to capture the changes to the urban environment.[10]

The sociological framework used to analyse the source material is one focused on a concept of motility. While mobility is the observable travel of people and goods, 'motility' is the potential for mobility. Motility encompasses interdependent elements relating to 'access' to modes, routes and infrastructure; 'competence' in skills and knowledge needed for mobility; and 'appropriation' which is the rationale for choosing to act or not act on mobility options. The convergence of motility to mobility is subject to compromises. For example, the choice of a shopper to drive to save time may not result in time saved due to delays caused by traffic congestion, or difficulties in finding a car parking space.[11]

Within the context of this research the framework of motility will be viewed through the lens of sustainability. One of the paradigm shifts required for sustainable decision making is an emphasis on balancing economic, social and environmental needs.[12] This has lead to a gradual shift in the perception of what is in the interest of the public good.

In the case of Australian urban policy there have been a number of significant shifts in policy thinking. From the 1920s, encouraging domestic manufacturing was a means of helping national reconstruction and modernisation as it provided jobs. The first of Sydney's car manufacturing plants was General Motors, which opened in 1940 in Pagewood. The domestic production lowered the cost of the automobile making it more affordable. An increase in car use was perceived as a sign of increased affluence and modernisation, which soon gave way to a concern about congestion as the demand for road space by the growing number of cars resulted in a serious shortage of car parking in inner suburbs. According to Neutze, the building of off-street parking stations by Councils in the 1950s and early 1960s was seen as a policy of relieving congestion as it would alleviate the number of motorists cruising for car parking. This was followed with a growing awareness in the late 1970s of car use as an environmental problem that needed to be managed. This was subsequently refined with the adoption of sustainability as a policy principle which framed car use not only an environmental issue that needs management for the sake of current generations, but also future generations.[13]

In understanding the perspective of retail businesses in the local town centres of Marrickville, Dulwich Hill and Newtown it is important to acknowledge that the representation of small businesses is typically going to be high. In Australia, small businesses are defined as those with less than 20 employees. Since the first business census in 1968-69 until 1999-2000 small businesses have represented more than 95 per cent of businesses registered in Australia, as seen in Table 1. Within the retail sector over the same period, the proportion of retail businesses in Australia that are small has been higher than that for all other sectors.

The fortunes of small businesses affect the business owner and their employees. Data from the same business censuses (Table 2) show that across all sectors in Australia, 41 to 47 per cent of workers were employed in small businesses. Interestingly, the portion of workers in the retail sector employed by small businesses has been consistently higher than that of all other sectors, though it has decreased over time since the first census in 1968-69.

Table 1: Small Business in Australia from 1968-2000

	1968-69	1983-84	1986-87	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-00
In Australia							
No. of small business (000)	189.1	620.7	690.9	990.2	1036.3	1048.3	1075
Total No. of business (000)	198.4	645	721.9	1026.7	1072.6	1087.1	1114.6
% that are small business	95.3%	96.2%	96%	96.4%	96.6%	96.4%	96.4%
In Retail (in Aust)							
No. of small business (000)	91.5	149.8	159.6	171.6	164.9	162.2	164.7
Total No. of business (000)	93.0	152.8	163	176.3	169.4	166.8	170.1
% that are small business	98.4%	98%	98%	97.4%	97.3%	97.2%	96.8%

Source: Collated from Johns, Dunlop and Sheehan, 1978 and 1989; and ABS, 2001.[14]

Table 2: Number of People Employed in Small Business 1968-2000

|	1968-69	1983-84	1986-87	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-00
In Australia							
Employed in small bus. (000)		1963.7	2212.4	2892.5	3023.2	3119.6	3181.0
Employees in Total (000)		4355.5	4716.5	6267.4	6377.2	6659.5	6734.8
% of employees in small bus.	41%	45.1%	46.9%	46.2%	47.4%	46.8%	47.2%
In Retail (in Aust)							
Employed in small bus. (000)		499.1	518.5	601.5	601.9	599.6	590.0
Employees in Total (000)		870.4	947.0	1184.1	1183.1	1219.5	1217.8
% of employees in small bus.	60.7%	57.3%	54.8%	50.8%	50.9%	49.2%	48.4%

Source: Collated from Johns, Dunlop and Sheehan, 1978 and 1989; and ABS, 2001.[15]

During the period covered by the newspaper articles, 1968-87 there is no evidence to suggest that the representation of small businesses in Marrickville, Dulwich Hill and Newtown were any different. Language in the articles and advertisements are the only guide to the type of businesses that were in the retail cluster, and these most often referred to 'shopkeepers'. Franchises, if they existed as small businesses, were not mentioned. The news coverage also makes references to a group separate and distinct to the shopkeepers, which included specific big name stores, hotels, 'leading business houses, banks, and chain stores'. The distinction often alluded to greater customer pulling power as well as financial power.[16]

The Marrickville Local Government Area

Marrickville Council is located in the Inner West of Sydney. The history of the area is strongly linked to the accessibility provided by new transport technologies. There were significant urban population increases with the introduction of the tramway network in 1880, which made travel across the naturally hilly topography much easier, more frequent and cheaper than the first railway lines crossing the area that were built earlier in 1855. The combination of railway stations and tram routes encouraged the development of suburban retail centres, and 'ribbon' shopping on the high streets. Private buses established in the 1920s became public bus services by the 1930s, and by 1957 replaced trams.[17]

Figure 1: Suburbs of Marrickville Local Government Area Over 1947 Aerial Photo.
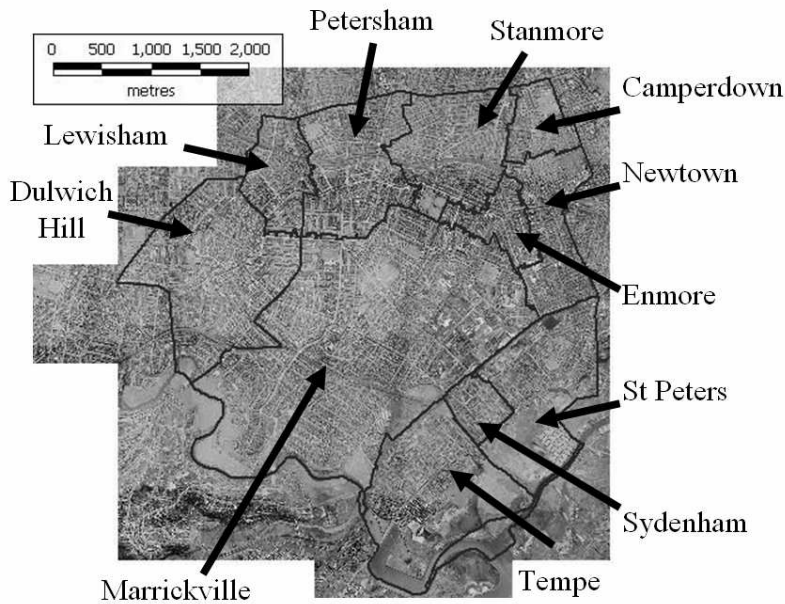
Source: Marrickville Council, 2009.[18]

The Marrickville Council area was formed through a series of amalgamations of the smaller municipalities of Camperdown, St Peters, Petersham, Newtown and Marrickville. The rise and fall of the population (see Figure 2) are attributed to a variety of factors such as increased migration and land releases in the outer urban areas of Sydney, which in turn were facilitated by the extension of roads, railways, trams, buses and later the increase in car ownership.[19]

Figure 2: Population Changes in the Marrickville Local Government Area
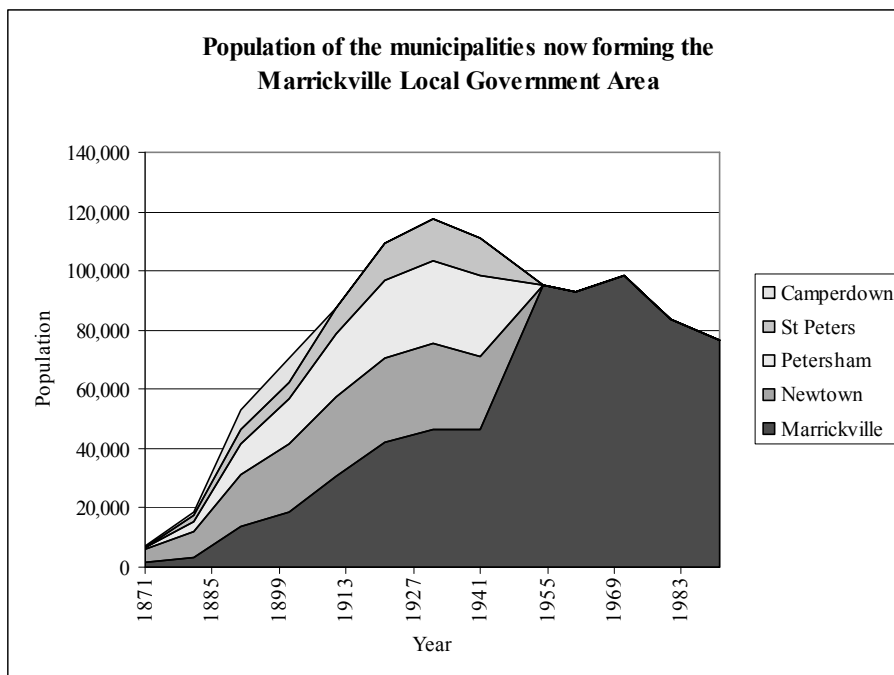
Source: Marrickville Council, no date.[20]

The civic fathers of Marrickville continued the association with transport and sought to modernise the pre-automobile town centres to the automobile. The urban form needed to reshape to accommodate the changes in accessibility and mobility, and in partnership with the business community the Council worked to make motility converge with mobility.

> Mayor of Marrickville, Ald. J. Carr, said yesterday that the council was probably unique in Australia so far as its parking problems were concerned.
>
> SEVEN CENTRES
>
> 'Unlike many other Local Government bodies in New South Wales, Marrickville Council is face with the problem of providing adequate parking in at least seven shopping centres within its municipality', he said.
>
> Realising this, council since 1960, when it held its first meeting with Mr. Stan Reynolds, the then chairman of the Marrickville Chamber of Commerce, has been endeavouring to acquire properties where parking areas could be established throughout the municipality.
>
> Much time, thought and planning has gone into this. Most of Sydney's larger developers have been invited to consider re-development schemes for Marrickville, with the idea that if re-development was carried out parking would be provided.
>
> However, because of the closely populated areas of Marrickville this was most difficult and hard to negotiate because of properties being owned by so many individuals.[21]

Marrickville the First to Get Car Parks, July 1968

On Saturday 27 July 1968 the Mayoress of Marrickville Council, Mrs J. Carr, opened the first three newly built car parks strategically located around the town centre of Marrickville. The car parks added 222 off-street car parking spaces, 43 spaces at Illawarra Road, 58 spaces at the Shrublands Parking area and 120 spaces at the Victoria Road Parking Station, a multi-deck car park costing the Council $128,000 to build.[22]

The opening ceremony was held on the top deck of the Victoria Road car park where guests were able to enjoy the district views accompanied by music played by a local school brass band. The opening involved a series of speeches from local dignitaries, including a short speech by the Mayoress. Before unveiling of a plaque that had been concealed behind the Australian flag, she is reported to have called on the Marrickville people to 'make good use of their off-street car parking areas'.[23] Newspaper articles reports in the following weeks suggest shoppers heeded her advice, as the car parks were 'a busy place', particularly on Saturday mornings.[24]

A special eight-page tabloid newspaper was published by The Free Weekly and Marrickville Council to commemorate the event and promote the new assets. It included illustrations, photos, articles and instructions for use. The newspaper featured half-page and quarter-page adverts from local businesses congratulating the council on the wonderful achievement whilst enticing shoppers to their businesses with directions relative to the car parks, and information about their wares.[25]

Dulwich Hill Shopkeepers Want a Car Park Too, 1969-77

In May 1969 the proposal for an off-street parking site in Dulwich Hill began taking form when Council approved the purchase of three residential properties on Seaview St, and instructed the Town Clerk to write to shopkeepers in New Canterbury Road informing them that Council wanted to acquire the rear of their properties.[26]

To the frustration of the local Alderman Jack Shanahan who owned the newsagency in Dulwich Hill, the process took more than a year before the first stage of the desired car parking development was complete. At the official opening of the Seaview St car park in July 1970, Alderman Shanahan delivered a controversial speech about the favouritism and expense Council showered onto Marrickville town centre, and the neglect experienced by Dulwich Hill. The speech was published in the Marrickville Free Press and one could assume that the sentiment of the speech was shared by the five Dulwich Hill businesses who have adverts alongside the full page article.[27]

Efforts to get stages two and three of the Seaview St car park were more difficult. The businesses of Dulwich Hill town centre had been paying a special car park levy for a number of years but additional finance was needed. The Council met with a number of bank managers to discuss the option of getting a loan, and approached larger businesses in the area proposing a co-operative purchase of property. A variety of proposals to purchase land were put forward, but fell through. In 1975, five years after the first car park was completed, Dulwich Hill got a step closer to having a second car park when Council agreed to purchase additional property in Seaview St from Woolworths. The houses were demolished and Dulwich Hill had a second car park that opened in April 1977.[28]

Car Parking to Save Newtown Shops, 1974-81

Before South Sydney Council was amalgamated into the City of Sydney in 2004, Newtown was a town centre managed by three different councils. In 1974 the Newtown Business Chamber of Commerce in Newtown approached Marrickville Council with a proposal for a car park on Lennox St at the corner of Church St. The proposal required the purchase and demolition of properties including a Baby Health Care Centre, a factory, an office and seven residential properties. Other car parks existed in Newtown, courtesy of South Sydney Council.[29]

Like the experience of Dulwich Hill, the time taken to get the car parking was a protracted one. Owners of all the properties were reluctant to sell, but did so eventually. Council records of the time indicate that the threat of council action for assets constructed without development consent may have been somewhat persuasive in the decision to sell.[30]

Community dissent towards the project was high amongst local residents who were concerned about more traffic being enticed onto the narrow streets. Newtown Reverend Don Meadows summed up concerns by suggesting Council had it's priorities wrong as 'providing spaces for cars before people is putting things back to front'. Eventually residential property owners were left with little choice but to haggle for a good price.[31]

The Lennox St car park was opened and Newtown had an additional 48 parking spaces, for the sum of $271,000. The cost was perceived as excessive by other Aldermen with claims that the money would have had more value in the other town centres where property was cheaper. The purchase of the factory alone cost $205,000 which was then demolished to construct a single level car park instead of the three-level car park accommodating 139 vehicles that was initially planned.[32]

Reorganisation of Land Use

To build each of the car parks involved a surrendering of existing land use, and in many cases the acquisition of land parcels. For Marrickville Council this was an expensive task as the land parcels were small and owned by different entities, with residential, commercial and industrial properties in close proximity with each other.

Losing the existing or potential functionality of the land was a major point of controversy for most of the car parking proposals considered by the Council. To make way for the Illawarra St car park in Marrickville, the trade-off was significant for the Marrickville Presbyterian community. The special edition newspaper published to celebrate the opening included pictures of St Andrew's church intact and then as rubble. It reported that the Council leased the land occupied by the church for 10 years at $4,000 per year, and within a few days of the lease had sent in the workmen. The paper explains, 'While the issue was controversial at the time, people will now agree that the parking area, with provision for 43 cars, will be of considerable benefit to the shopping centre'.[33]

Businesses too were subject to trade-offs. Operational businesses in Newtown, including a factory, were bought out so that the remaining businesses could benefit. Seven years after the initial proposal, Alderman Shanahan eventually persuaded his fellow Dulwich Hill businessmen to give up a part of their rear property so that a rear access lane could be widened to improve access to the car park.[34]

While the cost to shopkeepers would be recouped with expected increases in customers, the people inconvenienced by the loss of land use were not so lucky. The loss of a place of worship, a health service, homes, and workplaces of factory and office workers were not so easily compensated. In all cases it would have required a relocation of the activity, which could have induced more trips by car particularly if the displaced activity was now done outside the local area.

The Limits to Co-opetition

Provision of car parking was considered a necessary investment to maintain the economic vitality of the area. The threat was not just the regional shopping centres but also the heavy traffic passing through the municipality. The Lennox St car park was considered necessary to avoid King St 'becoming a freeway' according to Mr Joe Meissner, President of the Newtown Business Chamber of Commerce. King St he felt was 'the most important ribbon of shopping centres in Sydney' which had a distinctive character as it compromised mainly of small private businesses. However the loss of major retailers which the smaller businesses needed, was 'blamed directly on the absolutely inadequate parking facilities'.[35]

Whose responsibility it was to provide the car parking was also an issue amongst businesses. Some businesses were prepared to pay a car park levy, but there was an expectation that the larger businesses, and chain stores that would attract the most shoppers, should shoulder more of the financial burden and be more cooperative about locating (and surrendering) convenient car parking sites.[36]

Moreover, it was the view of shopkeepers that Council should protect and upgrade existing shopping centres, as they were not just a 'convenience to the people', but that they also contribute to Council revenue. 'The goose that lays the golden egg must be protected' remarked the car park advocate Alderman Shanahan.[37]

It appeared to some that the golden egg was in Marrickville town centre, as the Council was regularly criticised by the Chamber of Commerce for showing favouritism towards Marrickville town centre. All the town centres experienced similar issues, and difficulty in persuading Council to direct the municipal's limited budget to their car parking

needs. In April 1975, the President of the Dulwich Hill Chamber of Commerce, Mr Joe Garcia expressed shock at the news that the Council was considering building and funding a sixth car park in Marrickville. The Council's favoured treatment of Marrickville was 'at the expense of its sister suburb, Dulwich Hill' he is reported to have said on hearing the news.[38]

The Council's focused investment on Marrickville town centre was a reflection of its positioning as a competitor to other towns in neighbouring council areas as well as the regional shopping centres. It was a view still shared by Mr Sam Carter, President of the Marrickville Chamber of Commerce in 1987, who claimed Marrickville was a good place for shopkeepers and shoppers, attracting people from as far away as Newcastle, Wollongong and Blacktown.[39]

However while the shopkeepers in Dulwich Hill and Newtown may be able to see the benefits of co-opetitive relationships with other businesses in their cluster, they would have less or no self-interest in helping Marrickville become the premier shopping location.

Restricting Accessibility to Increase Equity

There was not only conflict about who should get the car parks, there were also conflicts about the use of the car parks. Two conflicts reportedly fractured relationships within the community. In Dulwich Hill there was a dispute between the local Alderman Shanahan and staff from Dulwich Hill High School. While in Newtown, there was a dispute between the Council and the Newtown Chamber of Commerce who partnered to build the Lennox St car park.

To the frustration of Alderman Shanahan and local shopkeepers the teachers at Dulwich Hill High were using the car park as staff parking. As the car park had an existing two-hour limit the Alderman encouraged Council staff to enforce the rule, and 94 people, including 46 teachers and some shopkeepers, found that they their cars had been fined. The outrage about the $6 fine, which was cheaper than the $100 fines that car park hogs were threatened with, appears to have been severe as the Alderman later asked the Council to pardon the fines.[40] 'Morally they are not right to park in the car park, all the time, but it has made me unpopular with my constituents' he reportedly explained.[41] In response to claims he was a 'dober', the Alderman tried to regain popularity by noting he had the highest regard for teachers and suggesting the motorists should have first received a warning before being fined. In 1981 Council obliged, declaring they would fine teachers using the car park. The Council's suggestion that the 100 school staff use the nearby seven blocks of Department of Education owned land for car parking, was rejected by the Principal who noted it would be an inconvenient distance for staff to walk, and only a short-term solutions as the plots were earmarked for playing fields.[42]

The conflict in Newtown was different. Newtown Business Chamber of Commerce had put a condition in the agreement with Marrickville Council that the parking would have no time limit. Once the Lennox St car park was opened shopkeepers, shoppers and Council alike complained that there were never any spaces as they were occupied by the same vehicles all day long. Shopkeepers were accused of abusing the car park for their own needs, and denying the use to the more deserving shoppers. The Council urgently called a meeting with the Chamber, as the expensive project that had not been without controversy was also now threatening the reputation of Newtown as a good and friendly place to shop.[43]

The conflicts arising from the self-interest of motorists to maximise their use of a common asset such as car parking, is a classic 'tragedy of the commons', were anticipated.

People should use them for only for the two-hour limit, thereby making them available for other people, just the same as they would return a book to the library to make it available for re-issue. Shopkeepers or their employees who used the car parks would be depriving a shopper of a parking space and possibly themselves of a customer.[44]

Imposing time restrictions or penalties requires efforts to enforce the rules which add additional costs to Council, which even to this day is viewed with suspicion by many who claim parking fines are used by the Council as a revenue raiser. The tragedy was anticipated, as Mr. A. Backhouse the President of Marrickville Chamber of Commerce warned in 1968: [45]

Developing Mobility Competence

Since the first of Marrickville's car parks were opened in 1968, there were lessons learnt about the planning, funding, constructing and operation of the car parks.

The Victoria St multi-deck car park did not live up to expectations. Within eight years of its opening, concern was raised about the safety and convenience of pedestrians and motorists being compromised. Concerns included: that shoppers were at risk as they tried to return to the car park, particularly those pushing 'grocery laden trolleys'; the placement of the car parks were too far away requiring shoppers to walk long distances; the deck parking design required awkward manoeuvres for drivers wanting to park there; and people did not want to walk up and down two flights of stairs to the top level, leaving it poorly patronised. By 1997 the Victoria St car park was a liability for Council, as it did not comply with modern engineering requirements. It had also become a place for anti-social behaviour and was considered by many as an unsafe place to park. Council considered the cost of making the required alterations too high, so it was demolished in 2002, and sold it rezoned for mixed commercial and residential development.[46]

Its costly failure impacted the intentions of building additional decks to the Seaview and Lennox St car parks, but did not persuade the council or the business community in their thinking that car parking was a valuable investment for the area. Instead the pressure to convert other properties to car parking continued. One car park was never enough.[47]

The stance of 'no turning back' would be difficult to oppose in light of the growing number of people with a driving licence and a car. The competence amongst motorists in using car parks had developed over time. This has been aided by the use of signage to the car parks, messages informing people to the conditions of use, and line marking of car spaces.[48] Whilst this growing expertise has developed into greater use of cars, it is likely to have contributed to a loss of other mobility skills such as knowing how to use alternative methods of travel to reach desired destinations.

Understanding Small Retailers Helps Sustainability

The attractiveness of the town centre shopping district is forever changing. It changes with changes in consumer preference and trends, as well as attributes of the location that are subject to broader changes in economic trends, and cultural and technological changes related to mobility. Off-street car parks have traditionally been constructed as a strategy to alleviate traffic congestion, and generate prosperity for town centres. Shopkeepers and other retailers were involved in the process of constructing off street car parks as the car parks were framed as being a means for attracting customers. Conversely, not providing car

parking has been seen as a contributor to the economic decline of town centres. It is only recently with the focus on sustainable transport that car parking as a public good is being challenged. The policy of displacing and divesting in public transport in favour of private transport facilities is now less popular as the problems of traffic congestion grow and as the value of sustainability as a policy objective has gained greater traction. Sustainable transport policies such as bus only lanes, bike lanes and pedestrian spaces can involve the removal of car parking. Other policies such as increasing the cost of parking, reserving parking for car share schemes, and limiting deliveries to certain hours also impact the travel choices of customers and businesses. While these are focused on on-street car parking, their removal would add pressure on off-street car parking that was constructed to manage the overflow of demand for on-street parking. The policy shock of losing car parking assets is likely to be significant for shopkeepers and retail clusters who have strong associations with car parking and customer patronage.

Sustainability represents a paradigm shift in decision making. Society's complex problems such as mobility and access demand more complex solutions that take into account economic, social and environmental needs and intra- and inter-generational equity. The trade-offs are therefore harder to negotiate as the conflicting demands amongst stakeholders, society and the environment need to be taken into account. In town centres this requires more attention to be paid to the needs of those not engaged in the policy debate, but dependent upon the existing infrastructure of car parking. Small retail businesses are one such group.

Conclusion

This historical case study identifies that shopkeepers in retail clusters were involved in the funding and construction of car parking and considered it an important attribute to help make them attractive places to shop for customers. While their perspective was in keeping with the urban planning policies at the time, they are now incompatible with contemporary thinking about sustainability.

The land use and transport policies used by Marrickville Council appear to have valued the economic needs of the area over social and environmental needs, as reflected in the priority of car parking despite the inconvenience and loss of assets to the community. However, the paradigm shift for sustainability demands decision makers to balance economic, social and environmental needs now and into the future; this requires decision makers to undertake a comprehensive analysis of the indirect impacts and cumulative impacts of policies.[49] This makes the process more complex as there is pressure to reconcile the variety of self-interests. The interests of the retail clusters in town centres, and their small businesses, will therefore need to be managed more sensitively as sustainable transport policies go through the decision making process. Even if these stakeholders are not engaged in the policy debate, it is in the broader interests of sustainability to not only reduce car dependency and increase public and active transport but to have local places to shop and work. Understanding the perspective of these businesses in retail clusters therefore will be essential to help them adjust to changes in mobility and access instigated by the sustainable transport policies.

This exploratory paper used past events to investigate the value and associations held by retail clusters and shopkeepers about their collective local parking assets, which was successful in illuminating how a strong association between car parking and customers developed amongst retail clusters. The historical period was chosen due to the amount of material covering the change events. The resonance of decisions by retail clusters of the past on contemporary small retailers is not known, but would be interesting as it pertains to

formative influences, storytelling and group identity, especially with the increase in franchisees raising questions about differences in class identity amongst the petite bourgeoisie.[50]

Claudine Moutou is a postgraduate student at the Institute of Transport and Logistics Studies, The University of Sydney, Australia. <c.moutou@econ.usyd.edu.au>

Endnotes

*   This conference paper (full version) has been double-blind assessed by two referees. I acknowledge the constructive and insightful comments of the referees and colleagues at the Institute of Transport and Logistics Studies (ITLS). Thank you also to the staff at Marrickville Council's Archival Heritage Centre who provided access to such interesting material.

1.   Max Neutze, *Australian Urban Policy*, George Allen and Unwin, Hornsby, 1978, p. 22.

2.   Christoph Teller and Thomas Reutterer, 'The evolving concept of retila attractiveness: What makes retail agglomerations attractive when customers shop at them?', *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, vol. 15, no. 3, May 2008, pp. 127-43.

3.   Vaughan Reimers and Val Clulow, 'Retail concentration: a comparison of spatial convenience in shopping strips and shopping centres', *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, vol. 11, no. 4, July 2004, pp. 207-21, p. 208.

4.   *Ibid.*, p.218.

5.   *Ibid.*, p.208.

6.   The source material are all local newspaper publications, the number of articles is indicated in brackets. *Free Press* (1), *Free Weekly* (28), *Glebe* (5), *Guardian* (15), *Inner Western Suburbs Courier* (1), *Leichhardt Marrickville Weekly* (3), *Marrickville Free Press* (1) and (2) from unknown sources. Copies were taken of newspaper cuttings are kept in the Car Parking file at the Marrickville Council's Archival Heritage Centre, Petersham NSW (hereafter AHC, Marrickville Council). The majority of articles, 26 were about Marrickville with 18 articles published in 1968, 13 of which were in the special edition. The 23 articles about Dulwich Hill spanned from 1968 to 1981, while the 6 articles about Newtown were focused on the later period of 1977-81. More information about Newtown was available at AHC, Marrickville Council on microfiche as council records.

7.   Geraldine Pflieger, Vincent Kaufmann, Luca Pattaroni, Christophe Jemelin, 'How Does Urban Public Transport Change Cities? Correlations between Past and Present Transport and Urban Planning Policies', *Urban Studies*, vol. 46, no. 7, June 2009, pp. 1421-37; 1435.

8.   Bruce L. Berg, *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*, Pearson International, Sydney, p. 239.

9.   Yannis Gabriel, *Myths, Stories and Organisations: Premodern Narratives for our Times*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2004, p. 75.

10.   Chrys Meader, Marrickville Council to author, personal communication, 21 July 2009.

11.   Vincent Kaufmann, Manfred Max Bergman, and Dominique Joye, 'Motility: Mobility as Capital', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, vol. 28, no. 4, December 2004, pp. 745-56.

12.   Todd Litman and David Burwell, 'Issues in sustainable transportation', *International Journal of Global Environmental Issues*, vol. 6, no. 4, 2006, pp. 331-47.

13.   George N. Georgano (ed.), *The Complete Encyclopedia of Commercial Vehicles*, Motorbooks International, 1979, p. 350; Archive photographs taken by Sam Hood (1872-1953) held by the State Library of NSW of the opening of the General Motors works at Pagewood in Sydney, attended by Prime Minister Robert Menzies in 1940; Max Neutze, *Australian Urban Policy*, George Allen and Unwin, Hornsby, 1978, p. 125.

14.   B.L. Johns, W.C. Dunlop, and W.J. Sheehan, *Small Business in Australia: Problems and Prospects*, George Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1978, first edition; B.L. Johns, W.C. Dunlop, and W.J. Sheehan, *Small Business in Australia: Problems and Prospects*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1989, third edition; Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Small Business in Australia Update, 1999-2000*, Product no. 1321.0.55.001, Australian Government, Canberra, 2001.

15.   *Ibid.*

16.   Efforts to attain substantiating evidence such as archived records related to the businesses were unsuccessful. Quoted material is from *The Free Weekly* article 'Council to call tenders for car park extensions', 13 September 1973; *Free Weekly*, 'Council seek help of bank over parking', 26 June 1975.

17. Marrickville Council, *The History of Transport in the Marrickville Local Government Area*, no date. Available at: <http://www.marrickville.nsw.gov.au/community/history/local.htm> Accessed 1 October 2009.
18. Mapping facilities on the Marrickville Council website 2009 were used to generate map; labels provided by author: <http://www2.marrickville.nsw.gov.au/exponare/marrickville_mapping.aspx> Accessed 1 October 2009.
19. Marrickville Council, *A Chronology of the History of the Marrickville Local Government Area*, no date. Available at: <http://www.marrickville.nsw.gov.au/community/history/local.htm> Accessed 1 October 2009.
20. *Ibid*.
21. *Free Weekly*, 'Parking areas a big achievement', 25 July 1968, p. 8.
22. A special edition of the *Free Weekly*, 'Marrickville Municipal Council's Car Parks open on Saturday, July 27th', 25 July 1968; *The Glebe*, '$128,000 Marrickville Carpark "poorly patronised"', 8 December 1976.
23. *Free Weekly*, 'Parking problems are over for Marrickville', 1 August 1968.
24. *Free Weekly*, 'Car park a busy place', 15 August 1968.
25. A special edition of the *Free Weekly*, 'Marrickville Municipal Council's Car Parks open on Saturday, July 27th', 25 July 1968; Local big businessman Mr. C. Gilmore of Seymours congratulates Marrickville Council in the *Free Weekly*, '"Well done" says "Mr. Marrickville"', 25 July 1968; *The Glebe*, '$128,000 Marrickville Carpark "poorly patronised"', 8 December 1976.
26. *Free Weekly*, 'Car parking', 29 May 1969.
27. *Marrickville Free Press*, 'Seaview St, car park official opening' by Jack Grove, 24 July 1970.
28. *Free Weekly*, 'Council investigation: Car park priority for Dulwich Hill', 31 January 1974; *Guardian*, 'Additional car parking for Dulwich Hill', 12 November 1975; *Guardian*, Photo and caption of Alderman Shanahan supervising demolition work, 5 May 1976; *Free Weekly*, Photo and caption of Alderman Shanahan clearing rubble, 20 June 1976; *Leichhardt Marrickville Weekly*, 'Stump finally bowled: cement post goes', 8 June 1976; *Guardian*, 'Dulwich Hill news: Car park soon', 13 April 1977; *Guardian*, 'Residents slam project: Car park up for debate', 14 December 1977.
29. *Guardian*, 'Residents slam project: Car park up for debate', 14 December 1977; Archive microfiche records pertaining to Lennox St, Newtown records Marrickville Council Town Planning Committee Minutes Ref. 13/1974 held at the AHC, Marrickville Council; Archive microfiche records pertaining to Lennox St, Newtown records held at the AHC, Marrickville Council. Correspondence to Mr. Alec Glenn, Regional Director, Inner Metropolitan Regional Office, Health Commission of NSW, 24 August 1978. Ref. 180.104 (No.193-97) informing of the pending demolition of the Baby Health Centre and confirming Council's intention to purchase a property in Stanmore for a Child Care Centre and part-time Baby Health Facility.
30. Archive microfiche records pertaining to 10 Lennox St, Newtown records held at the AHC, Marrickville Council. Correspondence to The Director, Kallenia Pty.Ltd from B.S. Gardner, Town Clerk, Marrickville Council, 24 September 1975 Ref.180.286 AGM:VW; Archive microfiche records pertaining to 12 Lennox St, Newtown records held at the AHC, Marrickville Council. Council report quoting correspondence from Sutton Forest Smallgoods Pty. Ltd requesting an extension to a compliance deadline as they had decided to transfer the factory to an alternate premises, 11 July 1974, Ref. HSR 9/74.
31. Quote of Reverend Don Meadows reported in the *Guardian*, 'Residents slam project: Car park up for debate', 14 December 1977; *Guardian*, 'Health centre goes for parking' 11 July 1979.
32. *The Glebe*, 'Layout of $271,000 for 48 car spaces', 6 June 1979; Archive microfiche records pertaining to 2-10 Lennox St, Newtown records held at the AHC, Marrickville Council. Correspondence to the President, Newtown Chamber of Commerce from B.S. Gardner, Town Clerk, Marrickville Council, 10 February 1978 Ref. item 24 T/P 1/78; Archive microfiche records pertaining to 10,12,14 Lennox St, Newtown records, held at the AHC, Marrickville Council. Correspondence to Messrs. Bartier, Perry & Purcell, Solicitors from B.S. Gardner, Town Clerk, Marrickville Council, 19 April 1979 Ref. item 40 T/P 5/79.
33. *Free Weekly*, 'As the carparks have taken their shape' in special edition published by the *Free Weekly*, 25 July 1968, pp. 6-7 accompanied by photos of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church before and after demolition.
34. *Leichhardt Marrickville Weekly*, 'Answer soon on lane', 8 June 1976.
35. All sourced from the *Guardian*, 'Health centre goes for parking', 11 July 1979.
36. *Guardian*, 'Marrickville receives favoured treatment', 30 April 1975; *Free Weekly*, 'Council seek help of bank over parking', 26 June 1975.
37. *Ibid*.

38. *Ibid*.
39. *Free Weekly*, 'Parking areas a big achievement', 25 July 1968, pp. 8 and 10; *Guardian*, 'Air space to be used for new car park', 16 April 1975; *The Western Sydney Courier*, 'Fighting feared over car parking for shopping', 8 July 1987.
40. *Free Weekly*, 'Nasty shock waits for carpark 'hog'' 18 July 1974.
41. *Guardian*, 'Ald. Backs off parking blitz', 6 December 1978.
42. *Guardian*, 'I'm no dobber, cobber', 14 December 1978; *The Glebe*, 'Parking war on teachers', 27 May 1981.
43. *Guardian* 'Council action on car parking', 28 July 1981; *Guardian*, 'Price war brings chaos in parking: three councils set up working party', 21 July 1981; *Guardian*, 'Car park talks', 11 August 1981.
44. *Free Weekly*, 'Amenities for all to use', 25 September 1968.
45. Ronald H. Coase, 'The Problem of Social Cost', *The Journal of Law and Economics*, vol. 3, no. 1, October 1960, pp. 1-44; Department of Local Government (DLG), *Review of Parking Enforcement: Report on Findings*, 2008, NSW Department of Local Government, Sydney.
46. *Free Weekly*, 'Intersection: danger claim', 23 November 1975; *Guardian*, 'Marrickville receives favoured treatment', 30 April 1975; *The Glebe*, '$128,000 Marrickville Carpark "poorly patronised"', 8 December 1976; Peter Wotton, Team Leader, Development Assessment, Marrickville Council and the author, personal correspondence, 31 July 2009.
47. *Guardian*, 'Noisy scenes over new car park', 11 December 1974.
48. Adverts, graphics and articles in the special edition *Free Weekly*, 'Marrickville Municipal Council's Car Parks open on Saturday, July 27th', 25 July 1968.
49. Todd Litman and David Burwell, 'Issues in sustainable transportation', *International Journal of Global Environmental Issues*, vol. 6, no. 4, 2006, pp. 331-47.
50. I acknowledge the anonymous referee for highlighting the issues related to franchisees, small retailers and petite bourgeoisie.