

Questioning the Social Technology “Recycling”

Presentation for the session
“Control/Manageability”

Workshop at Cottbus University

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12. January 2008

Content

A: Introduction to the background and case

- “Julian Berger”
- Recycling

B: Two ways to frame the case; or: How social theory can help

- Actor-Network Theory - “John Law”
- Habitus & Technology - “Pierre Bourdieu” and “Jonathan Sterne”
- Revisiting “Recycling”

C: Conclusions?

A: Introduction to the background and case

“Julian Berger”

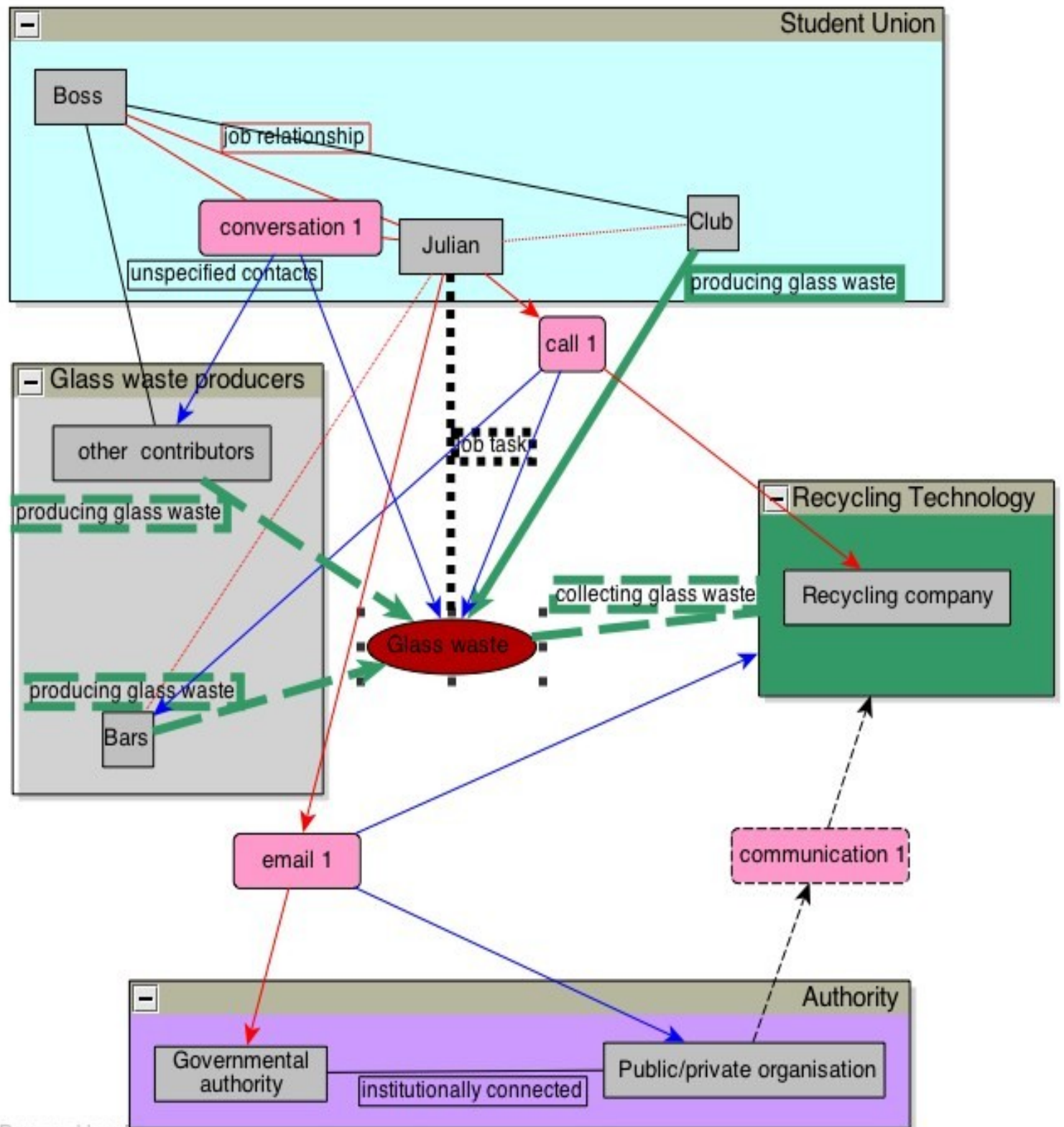
- Based on ethnographic research 2006
- Organisation serves about 12.000 clients
- Issue of agency: chances (sorting waste, serving radical activists) and limits (nightclub as designed to waste energy)
- His work field is influenced by i.e.: hierarchy, means for getting the work done, construction of “right to exist” of work

Recycling Network

- Night Club produces glass waste
- Needs recycling. Does not work out because of too few waste. Possible reactions?
- Draws in other producers of glass waste

B: How Social Theory can Help

ANT- Mapping of “Recycling Network”



Habitus and Technology

“Pierre Bourdieu”

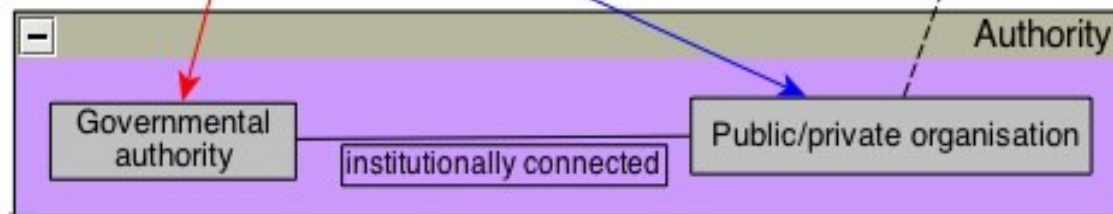
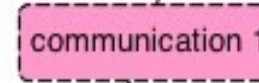
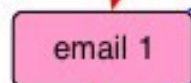
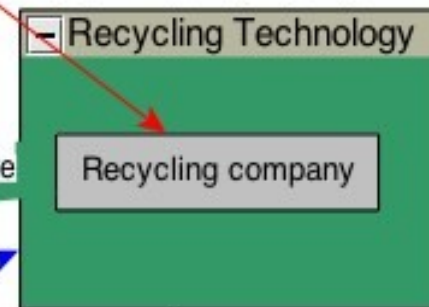
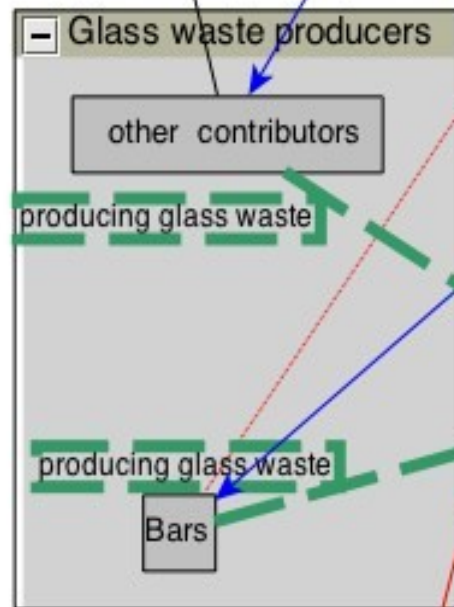
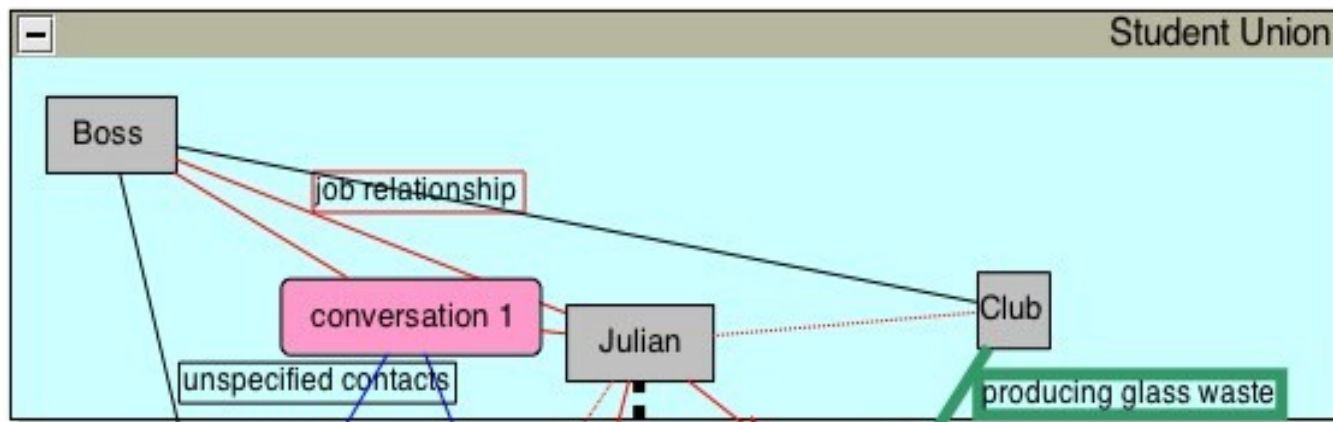
- At social position actors experience the world. To each position belong schemes of perception and for generating practices. Schemes called *habitus*
- *Habitus* renders social order relatively inert; not deterministic!

“Jonathan Sterne”

- Technology as extension of actors. Technologies as sites at which *practices crystallise: history sedimented.*

Revisiting Julian's Recycling

- Let's try to see habitus...



Questioning Recycling I

- Recycling is a technology. Contingent. *Sedimented history.*
- Practices *crystallise* at recycling.
- Think “glass waste” as non-substantialist? Part of habitus?
 - Drinking; putting bottles somewhere. Carrying away “glass waste” does not change “drinking”.
 - Other involved habitus: Julian's. Sellers', resellers', producers', ...
- Constraints in affecting these relations.

Questioning Recycling II

- Shared agency. Not silicon dioxide molecules!, but actors. Actors part of many fields. Anybody interested in changing these relations? (i.e. changing from people getting drunk to people dealing with all the materials and socialities involved in drinking?)
- Thus: lock-in: he needs more, rather than less waste.
- Change: Possibility to involve other actors

C: Conclusions?

Worthy of the concept “Conclusion”?

- 1) Recycling *naturalises* waste.
 - 2) Relations around waste are not questioned!
Implications in terms of the economic, social, cultural, ecological.
 - 3) Thus, “glass waste” as site of history being and been objectified.
- ▶ Critical Approach to EM: question what technologies implies, what does waste management naturalise?
 - ▶ Agents affected: change?! Help by us?

Sterne: Technology as Habitus

- Technology as part of socially organised form of practice
 - Technologies have *real* aspects as well as socially organised practice with the technology (e.g. camera)
 - Technologies do not have pre-existing roles, but social constructions are necessary (turntable, radio, phone); practices *crystallise* at technologies
 - Not deterministic: change is possible
 - Technology is non-human, but social: part of schemes to deal with *habitat*