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## "We all killed those birds": Emotion-symbolic work in social entrepreneurship

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# **1. Intro and Motivation**

# **2. Theoretical framework**

# **3. Findings**

An empirical model of emotion-symbolic work

# **4. Contributions**

- Social entrepreneurship confronts very complex problems as climate change and plastic pollution.
- To communicate these problems to stakeholders, social entrepreneurs often use visual symbols to manage their emotions (Nisbet, 2009, O'Neill & Nicholson-Cole, 2009; Shaw et al., 2009; Neilson, 2018)
- The raise of social media allows more effective ways of emotion management through interactions with stakeholders with iText (text-centered interactions, Geisler, 2001) like phenomena as the “web brigades” (state-sponsored anonymous Internet political commentators, usually linked to Russia) show

***RQ: How social entrepreneurs manage stakeholders' emotions using visual symbols during interactions?***

# Emotions and entrepreneurship. Literature review

**Energetic** (less cognitive concept than motivation; Gylfe, 2018, Illouz, 2007; Collins, 2004; Quinn and Dutton, 2005) **emotions in entrepreneurship: passion** (Cardon, et al., 2009; Cardon et al., 2005) **and grief for failure of entrepreneurs** (Shepherd, 2003; Shepherd, Patzelt, & Wolfe, 2011; Shepherd, Wiklund, & Haynie, 2009) **and compassion of social entrepreneurs** (Miller et al., 2012).

“Stem from the field's historic glamorization of the lone entrepreneur” (Jennings et al., 2014).

## Emotions of others in entrepreneurship? Literature review

- Employees, clients and investors: emotion work (Hochschild, 1979; Moisander et al., 2017) of entrepreneurs through the use of symbolic devices (as pictures/designs of yachts or office décor) in interactions with stakeholders provoke the emotional arousal of the former and the identification with the entrepreneur and/or the organization (Jennings et al, 2014; Clarke, 2011)
- Identification often is related with legitimacy gains of the entrepreneurial organizational form (Clarke, 2011)
- This organizational identification influences the exchange of social and economic resources between entrepreneurs and stakeholders (Huang and Knight, 2017; Massa et al, 2016)

## Emotions of others? Insights from social movement research

- Identification with a “broader we” (not necessarily organizational or even circumscribed to a movement) promoted by movement entrepreneurs to provide activists-stakeholders with emotional satisfaction (Polleta, 2001; Jarvis, Ruling and Islam, 2015) when the objectives of the movement are very difficult to achieve.
- Another important element of emotional energy of stakeholders-activists are “moral emotions ... when we do and feel the right ... thing” (Jasper, 2011).

“I remember my first photos of cats being tortured in experiments; it was at a table on Fifth Avenue in 1987. I didn't know anybody in the movement - in fact I thought they were a bunch of weirdos. But they were right about animal torture.”, Jasper and Poulsen (1995: 501)

- What these studies teach us:
  - The importance of the use of symbols in interactions with stakeholders (Jennings et al., 2014; Clarcke, 2011).
  - The importance of social emotions of (organizational and/or broad we) identification in gaining resources and legitimacy for entrepreneurs (Huang et al., 2015) and for energizing stakeholders even if the objectives of the venture are very difficult (social movement theory).
  - The influence of moral emotions in stakeholders for enacting new moral standards (social movement theory)

***Gap in (social) entrepreneurship research: a empirically grounded micro-process model of managing stakeholders emotions using visual symbols during interactions***

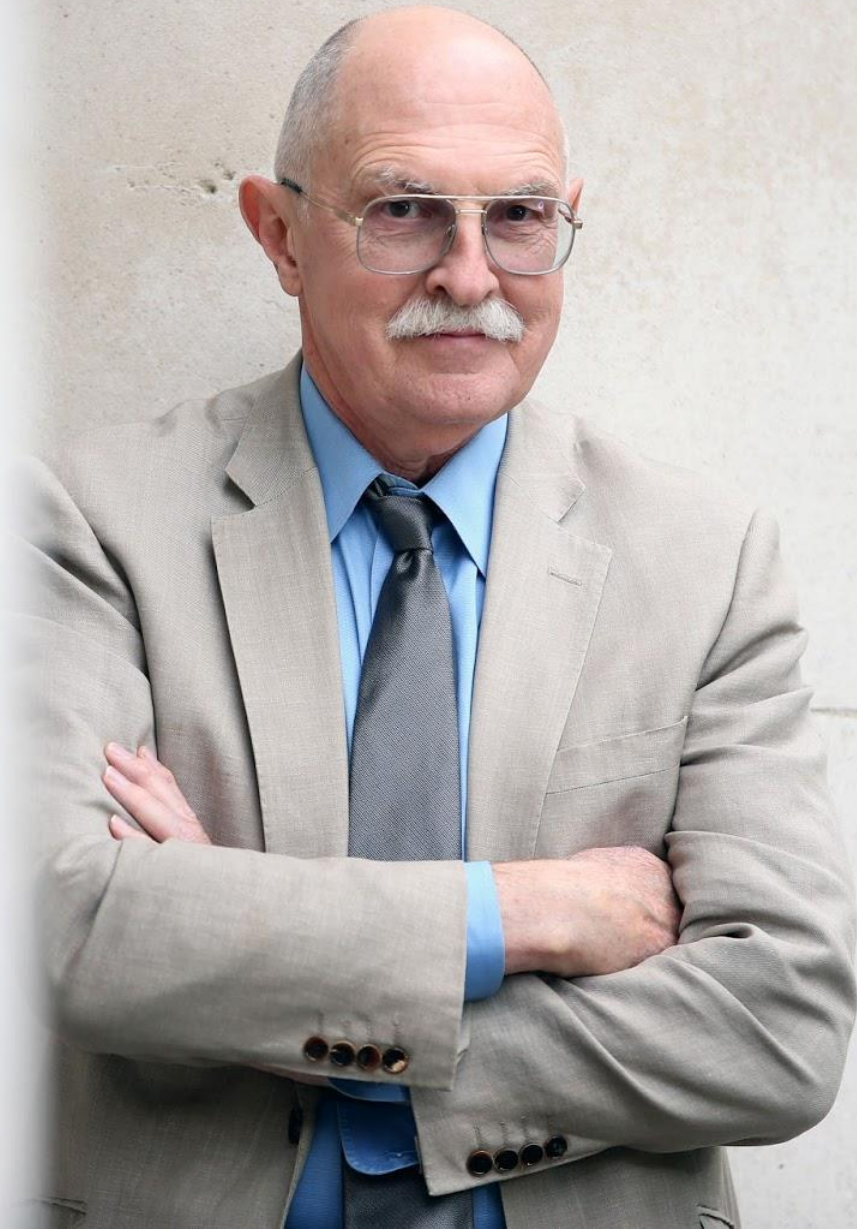
RQ: How social entrepreneurs manage stakeholders emotions using visual symbols during interactions?



## An interaction ritual approach to emotion-symbolic work (i)

Interaction ritual approach in sociology of emotions (**Collins**, 1993, 2004; Summer-Efflers, 2002; Turner and Stets, 2007; Rossner and Meher, 2014; Bericat, 2016; Goss, 2005)

- Although individually felt, emotions are dependent of interactions around symbols.
- Transient emotions provoked by the symbols in (ritual) interactions often scale to collective effervescence, related to happiness but also to sadness, as the phenomena of “social media mourning” shows (<https://mashable.com/2017/09/27/social-media-grief-mourning/?europe=true#zIAUAFQFJmqh>).
- After interactions, these emotions are transformed in individual emotional energy, which include moral and social elements.



## An interaction ritual approach to emotion-symbolic work (ii)

*“The emotions that are ingredients of the IR (interaction rituals) are transient; the outcome however is a long-term emotion, the feelings of attachment to the group that was assembled at that time. Thus in the funeral ritual the short term emotion was sadness, but the main “ritual work” of the funeral was producing (or restoring) group solidarity. The emotional ingredients of a party may be friendliness or humor; the long term result is the feeling of status group membership. I refer to these long-term outcomes as ‘emotional energy’... Emotional energy is a morally suffused energy; it makes the individual feel not only good, but exalted, with the sense of doing what is most important and most valuable ... this feeling of emotional energy has a powerful motivating effect upon the individual”. (Collins, 2004: 108-109).*

## An interaction ritual approach to emotion-symbolic work (iii): conceptual structure


	MORAL	SOCIAL
TRANSIENT (during interactions)	Compassion evoked by the symbol (Miller et al., 2012)	Collective effervescence ( <i>social media mourning</i> )
EMOTIONAL ENERGY (after interactions, at the individual level)	Enact moral standards developed in interactions around the symbol	Organizational or “broad we” identification

- Although an interaction ritual approach provides us with a solid scaffolding to inquire into processes of transformation of transient emotions in emotional energy, it lacks agency (Collins, 2004: 6)
- We coin the term “**emotion-symbolic**” **work** (anchored in middle-ground descriptions of agency as “work”) to describe the entrepreneurs’ “purposeful efforts to manipulate” (Phillips and Lawrence, 2012) symbols to create emotional energy among stakeholders during ritual interactions. While emotion work has been used in the literature to address attempts to manipulate people’s emotions directly, it has not typically focused on the use of symbols.

## Empirical context

- A non profit organization (NPO) founded in 2009 which mission is **“refuse plastic pollution”**
- One of the founders (Tobb) and first community manager of the NPO, intimately related with the production of the albatross visuals (pictures and youtube videos since 2009, a documentary premiered nexty 8<sup>th</sup> June in United Nations)
- Special attention to iText (text-centered interactions, Geisler, 2001) to understand emotion symbolic-work and emotional energy.

**RQ: How social entrepreneurs manage stakeholders emotions using visual symbols during interactions?**

Source of data	Type of data
Naturalistic observations	August 2010-March 2011 & June -September 2013 in California. Meetings in Madrid until 2018. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 7 social gatherings and art exhibitions (28h)</li> <li>- 2 workshop (6h), 1 TED talk (29 testimonials transcribed, 10-20 min each)</li> <li>- 5 meetings with PPC leaders (7h)</li> </ul>
<b>Semi-structured interviews</b>	<b>50 interviews (5 with Todd), August 2010- May 2018 (Total 1071 minutes transcribed)</b>
Archives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 44 documents including strategic plans, internet web analysis, internal emails, news- letters, non-management academic articles, press articles</li> <li>- 2 Books (Moore, 2012; Terry, 2012)</li> <li>- 5 documentaries: Albatross, Blue Planet II chapter 1&amp;7, Blue Planet II clip on plastics, Message in the Waves (225 minutes)</li> </ul>
<b>Social media</b>	
<b>Facebook</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Observation of 6 key Facebook pages.</li> <li>- Systematic analysis of NPO Facebook page October 2009 to December 2011 (when Todd was community manager). Total of 17,287 lines, including 578 posts, 2,504 comments on these posts, selected <b>421 full iText</b>.</li> </ul>
Twitter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 8 key hashtags and accounts reviewed:</li> </ul> Tweets read 4.517. Specific analysis of Tweets with 2 or more comments selected: 628 comments analyzed.
Instagram	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 23 hashtags and accounts reviewed:</li> </ul> Total conversations analyzed: 33 ranging from 2 to 36 lines of conversation.
<b>Blogs/Micro sites and key articles in mass media</b>	<b>Systematic analysis of the comments in two sites:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- YouTube: 154 comments.</li> <li>- The Guardian chat: 205 comments.</li> </ul>

NPO: *coalition* business model based on online (mainly via Facebook) prescription of moral standards: “refuse plastic pollution”

Recycle: “*the main lie*” and the “*big Trojan horse*”

“Marine debris”: a “*very euphemistic word... a term that comes from the industry and intentionally obfuscates the idea of pollution*”.

Refuse plastic pollution: “*massaging the old paradigm won’t work*” (NPO internal document)

“*We need an image which breaks our heart*” (Tobb, Nov 2010); “*...people want to see something, and to get excited, even when they do not know what to do with that emotion.*” (Tobb, July 2015)

“*I become aware from Tobb ... When I learned about these birds in Midway, I realized that I could go and photograph them individually, very close up. In a very personal way.*” (Jordan).

“*I came back from that trip with the batteries loaded.... And that lasts until today, it's something that makes a deep impression ... you have to honor what you have seen. .... The Midway thing is a trip, you make a trip to zone 0, and then you come back transformed.*” (Tobb, Dec 2016).

NPO: *coalition* business model based on online (mainly via Facebook) prescription of moral standards: “refuse plastic pollution”

**“as we have this incredible digital following of reaching over half a million people a week we’re able to bring a lot of attention to new products**, or even old products, but just products that help people with plastic free. And since we are a coalition we have over 700 member groups right now. Many of our member groups are businesses that have some sort of plastic pollution solution .... So we’re always trying to elevate plastic pollution solutions, number one, and also, number two, if this member group, this business, is a member of our coalition, then **we’re gonna work especially hard to elevate their (member organizations) plastic pollution solutions ... (Member organizations) took the trouble to join us and because they are spreading the good message about stopping plastic pollution** (EF, full time US based community manager, also supervising a part time worker, April 2018)”

Web presence based on both identification with a “coalition” and a “movement”

[HOME](#)[THE MOVEMENT](#)[THE COALITION](#)[RESOURCES](#)[TAKE ACTION](#)[About](#) [Guides](#) [Get Started](#) [Contact](#) [Privacy](#)© 2018 [www.plasticpollutioncoalition.org](http://www.plasticpollutioncoalition.org)



NPO: *coalition* business model based on online (mainly via Facebook) prescription of moral standards

Online strategic discourse in Facebook promote identification with the organization

*“to build the organization you have to collect funds ... And the organization have to have a leadership in thinking, right? It has to lead public opinion and that’s why I tried to reinforce NPO’s [moral standards in social media] ... and NPO is the coalition. Leadership is needed because we need the coalition to join around a discourse ... we are here because of something, right? And that’s the discourse. And how you share it? Through NPO ... in NPO we have a new member, our new member does this or does that ... Giving the NPO the leadership in thinking needed to be respected and listened” (Tobb, July 2015)*

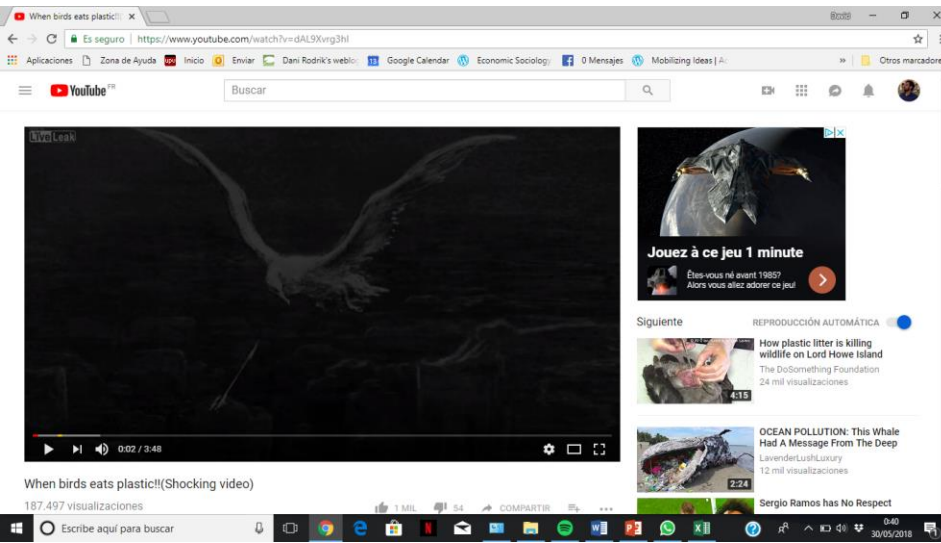
The online strategy of the NPO to confront complaints against the toughness in enacting the “refusing” moral standard was to **promote identification not only with the organization, but also with an inclusive “broad we”** which could foster the emotional energy of the activists.

*“It is difficult, it is something against the whole society ... you have to have a special kind of inner processes for not getting mad ... That is the reason of all this rhetoric [in interactions with activists in social media] of onwards, we are together, we are learning together ... was my way to apply compassion to the others ... I wanted to highlight also that we are pioneers, we are the vanguard of a movement”* (Tobb, July 2015)

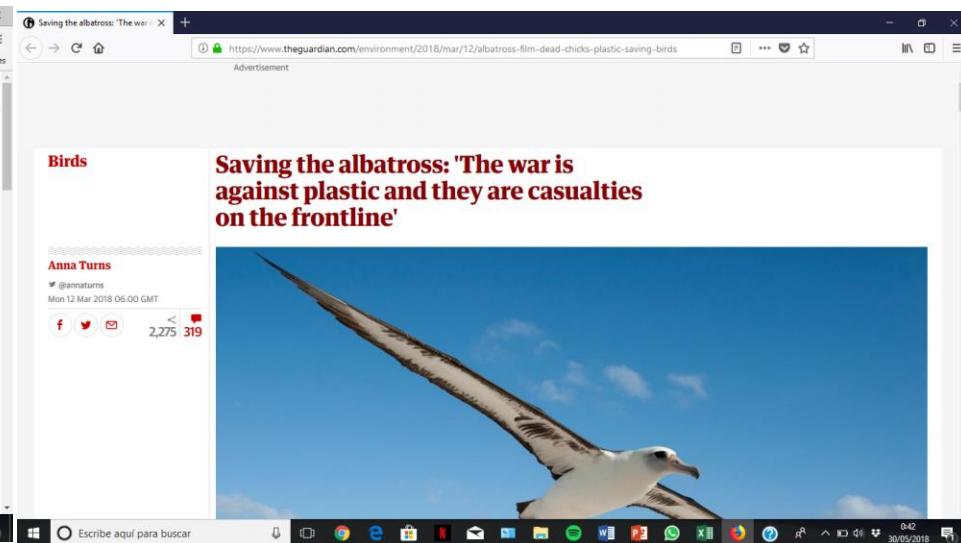
Annex I with data (iTexts) about identification work of the NPO (without using visual symbols)

Analysis of 505 comments from the two most popular (in terms of comments, no intervention of the community manager) key web-based resources:

*“I want people to watch this film and feel sadness and rage and realise that comes from a place of love. Don’t pull the plug out of the bathtub just yet; don’t let all that raw emotion drain away. Once you feel love, you can be more courageous and make more radical choices.” (Jordan, The Guardian)*



A screenshot of a YouTube video player. The video title is "When birds eats plastic!!!(Shocking video)". The video is from the channel "Livo Leak". The video player shows a dark image of a bird's head with a small piece of plastic in its beak. The video has 187,497 visualizations. The YouTube interface includes a search bar, navigation icons, and a list of suggested videos. The suggested videos include "Jouez à ce jeu 1 minute", "How plastic litter is killing wildlife on Lord Howe Island", "OCEAN POLLUTION: This Whale Had A Message From The Deep", and "Sergio Ramos has No Respect".

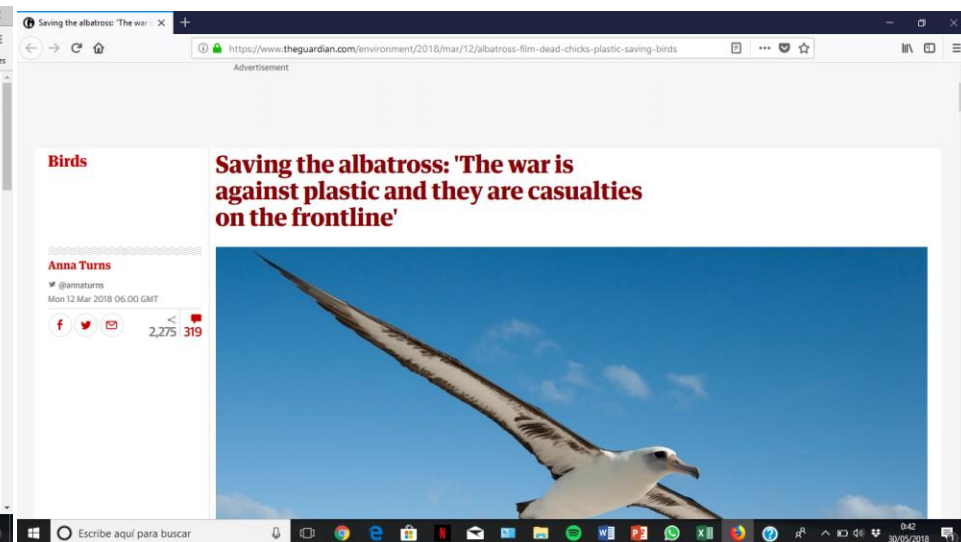
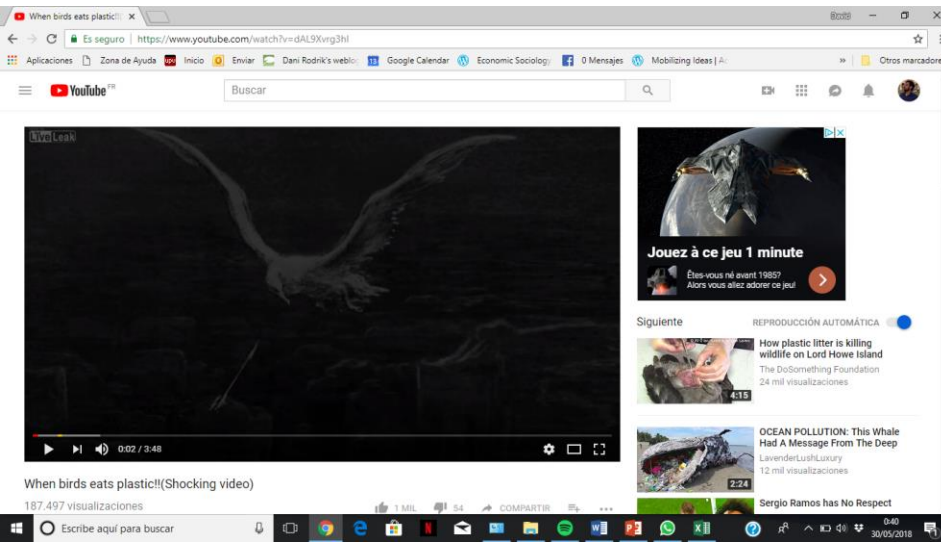


A screenshot of a Guardian article titled "Saving the albatross: 'The war is against plastic and they are casualties on the frontline'". The article is by Anna Turns, published on Monday, 12 March 2018 at 06:00 GMT. The article has 2,275 likes and 319 retweets. The main image shows a white albatross in flight against a blue sky. The article is categorized under "Birds".

Analysis of 505 comments from the two most popular (in terms of comments, no intervention of the community manager) key web-based resources:

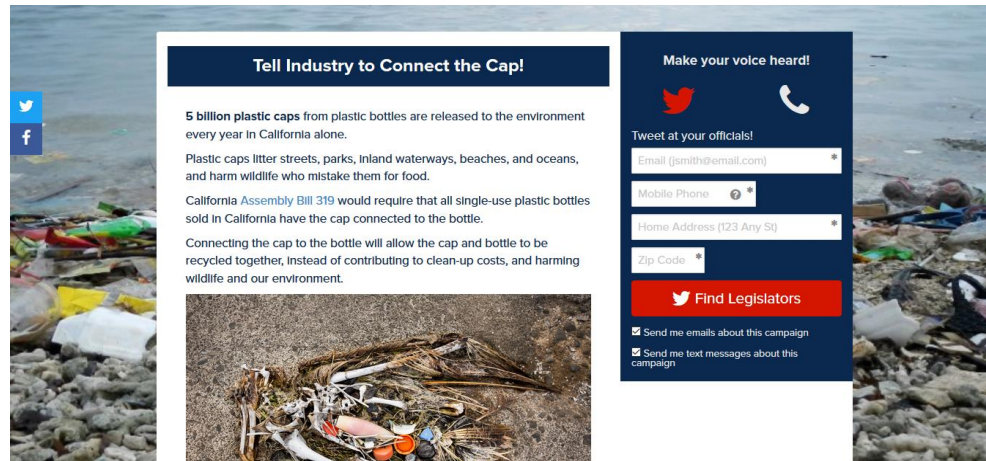
When no moral guidance is provided, activists (Annex II for data):

- Express different emotions (compassion, rage and guilt)
- Propose a broad range of moral standards besides refuse.
- Show very little “broad we” or organizational identification



*“I think [the albatross symbol] has quite an enormous role in this ... it wasn't until he took those pictures of those chicks and other young birds with their stomachs filled with plastic that—I mean like that picture is worth a thousand words and those images really shocked people, it woke people up, and got a lot of people concerned. I feel like ... the NPO ... they sort of focus ... systematically at the issue.” (Res 5, January 2013)*

The first form of emotion-symbolic work we describe consists in anchoring the visual symbol to the preferred moral standards of the NPO.



*“we actually used the albatross photo with that campaign because you can see, as clear as day, here's the albatross photo, here's black plastic caps in the bird's stomach, here, sign this letter and send it to your representative saying please support this bill to connect the caps”*

Testimonies of social events and slide-shows exhibitions by NPO members using the albatross symbol

*“they draw horrifying responses lots of times from the audience ... it really speaks to people, as we started with this picture says a thousand words. So that really, it just helps start the dialogue, people get the issue. It’s like we try and explain climate change or ocean acidification to people, it’s like their eyes graze over, this, their eyes focus, their emotions build and they wanna do something, they wanna act. So definitely, we use it.”*

*“Seeing his footage and having his dialogue –... having his context for it, people in the audience were crying. It was just so powerful.... And within his presentation, he had these beautiful images from the Atoll of birds flying and he had the gruesome ones ... I think it was actually really powerful”*



*Post NPO (6-8-10): Midway Journey albatross photos by Chris Jordan inspire children to take action against plastic pollution*

*Activist 1 (6-8-10): It's gross Really opens your eyes I am trying 2 live without plastic & am into the Environment so don't throw my rubbish about or abandon it willy nilly. Ppl need 2 think & dispose of their trash in a responsible manner.*

*NPO (6-8-10): Thank you (Activist 1) for your passion and support. However let's be careful not to point the finger at others. In a sense we all killed those birds. We are all the problem, and also the solution. **Plastic pollution is not the result of improper disposal by some bad, irresponsible guys.** It is a problem of design: plastic is toxic and lasts hundreds of years, and yet we use plastic all over the planet at an enormous scale for objects designed to be thrown away. The message that albatrosses are bringing us is that there is no away and that we need to radically change our ways. Please help us unite everyone around the idea of learning together to **refuse single use plastics** ... Thank you. Onward!! <3*

## Rage in blame



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## Sadness in blame



*Post (1-7-2010) NPO: Midway Journey returns to the island! ... Please fan Midway Journey on FB and follow their blog at <http://www.midwayjourney.com/> <3*

*Activist 1: **I didn't think my heart could break anymore, but it can, and does.***

*Activist 2: **I couldn't watch the whole thing. It made me sick to my stomach. Rethink plastic!***

*Activist 3: **A horrific irony**, watching the animal decomposing around the non-biodegradable plastics...*

*Activist 4: **This is so sad. People should take recycling seriously***

*NPO: Activist 4, 'recycling' is not the solution. Plastic pollution is not a problem created by bad people who don't 'recycle'. **You killed those birds**, I kiled [sic] those birds, we all did. So called recycling of plastics is a scam serving to increase the sales of disposable plastic junk, so it is a part of the problem, not of the solution. The truth is that plastics are not recycled, or even recyclable most of the times ... What about stopping plastic pollution at the source? Thank you so much [sic] K., make sure you share this important message with the ones you love. Thank you!! Onward!*

## X in blame



Science

A new study reveals that by 2050, 99 percent of seabirds will likely have undigestible pieces of plastic trash in their bellies.

*“The photograph has been widely circulated for years: a mess of feathers and bone, beak and bottle caps. For many, it's a shocking introduction to the problem of plastic pollution. As the image pops in our newsfeeds and the sum of its elements comes together in our minds, a single thought hits hardest—we did this.”*

## Rage in “broad we” identification



*Post NPO (6-8-10): Midway Journey albatross photos by Chris Jordan inspire children to take action against plastic pollution*

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## Dispair in “broad we” identification



*Activist 1: Those pics are so sad*

*NPO; Activist 1, I feel deep sorrow too, everyday. Please don't give up/ shut-down.  
**We need everyone that is capable of having such empathy to stay present***

*Activist 1: **we should all just cease to exist. That is the only TRUE green event that would help the earth.***

*NPO: @Activist 1: The complexity and the contradictions in our own existence should not paralyze us. **We are all experiencing grief, anger and other feelings these days. Sharing them is important, because the gift is next to the wound, and we are all passionate***

*Activist 2: To whomever wrote that response from the PPCNGO, it was beautiful and inspiring. Nice work.*

*Activist 3: I'm with Activist 2, bravo!*

*Activist 4: You're right Activist 2, his name is [CE] and he inspires us...*

*THOUSANDS of us ~ thousands of candles can be lit from a single candle, let's make it MILLIONS!*

*NPO: (blush) ;-) ♥*

## Dispair in “broad we” identification



*Activist 1: **I just can't stand it anymore, I have refused plastic for years ...**  
The simple sight of it disgusts me. To see these beautiful animals suffering so much at the expense of human greed and consumption*

*Activist 3: **I'm completely devastated.** Watching that bird ingest a plastic bag is unbearable. Fantastic video.*

*NPO; **To those feeling overwhelmed: first, let's remembers that we are not fighting all plastic in the world.** 'Only' single use plastics, and those that leach toxic chemicals into our food and drink. Those bad uses of plastics are the ones we care about.*

## Rage in organizational identification



*NPO: Dear Activist. **This is easily explained. The 'floating island of plastic' does not exist (!)** The typical piece of plastic in the ocean is tiny, barely visible. Over 90% are under 10 mm in size. ... This makes cleaning the oceans not feasible, technically or economically ... **NPO believes in stopping plastic pollution at the source.** This is something we can do now. Please help us by learning more about what this problem really is, about the solutions that we can implement now, and please help us spread the word as well. **Here's some reading that might be helpful:** <http://npo.org/learn/basic-concepts/> and <http://npo.org/learn/avoiding-the-pitfalls/> **And a video to watch** -where you can put a face to the person writing these lines- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?> It was filmed on **Midway Atoll**, near the heart of the so called Pacific garbage patch. Thank you so much Activist. We are together in this. Onward!*

## Rage in organizational identification



*Post (27/04/2010) Activist 1 in NGO Facebook wall: It's not the solution but it's a start...Water in box not in plastic! This product is 100% recyclable and 97% compostable. [www.iceboxwater.com](http://www.iceboxwater.com) Check it out and give your thoughts to [info@iceboxwater.com](mailto:info@iceboxwater.com)*

*Comment NPO: **REFUSED**. No thanks. Actually, this is nothing but 'a less plastic bottle'. Lined with polyethylene and with top, seal and cap made with polypropylene. **I've retrieved these caps from inside carcasses of baby albatrosses with my own hands.***

## Extreme enactment of moral standards

*“Three years ago I was like the average American ... I thought I cared about the environment but I guess I didn’t care enough to do something meaningful and then one night sitting alone at my computer I stumbled upon the article and the photo that changed my life. The article was about the plastic pollution problem in the ocean and this was the photo. It was a dead albatross chick carcass filled with plastic pieces like bottle caps and things that I used in my everyday life and all of the sudden the connection was made. I was harming a creature that I didn’t even know previously existed and I had to stop just like that so I ask myself what would it be like to try to live without plastic – is it possible could I actually do it? ... This is all the plastic wasted I’ve generated since January of this year. The average American about a hundred pounds of plastic wasted per year – this is under two pounds and what I have here I mostly blame on my cats ... I don’t recycle anything I collect at all ...” (AE, TedTalkx organized by the NPO)*



## Enactment of moral standards



*“NPO 7-7-10: Plastic Pollution Coalition: Unbelievable footage just uploaded by Midway Journey Please watch and share. Everybody please fan Midway Journey's facebook page and support their important work. Onward! <3*

*Activist 1 7-7-10: ugh. sad...*

*Activist 2: Nicole MacRae: **From now on I will try not to buy plastic stuff. It will be hard...but I will try. I already recycle, but that isn't good enough.**”*

## Enactment of moral standards; organizational identification



*Post NPO: Hey Facebook fans and friends we need your help. Can you tell us, in your own words, why the NPO is an important organization to you? We might just quote you on it! Leave your comment about us on this post. We'd love to hear your feedback about us and what you find important about the work we do.*

*Activist 1: Oh, I can answer that: NPO is awesome. For me, it is strength behind my message...The loud voice behind my small one...*

...

*Activist 3: NPO makes sure I remember what's at stake when I get lazy about not using plastic.*

...

***Activist 5: I think of you guys EVERY day - in the kitchen, at the takeout, at the office... My son is sick of me grabbing a plastic bag out of his hand and saying 'Don't kill birds!'***

## Enactment of moral standards; transformation of sadness and shame in organizational identification



*“NPO: The photograph has been widely circulated for years: a mess of feathers and bone, beak and bottle caps. For many, it's a shocking introduction to the problem of plastic pollution. As the image pops in our newsfeeds and the sum of its elements comes together in our minds, a single thought hits hardest—we did this.”*

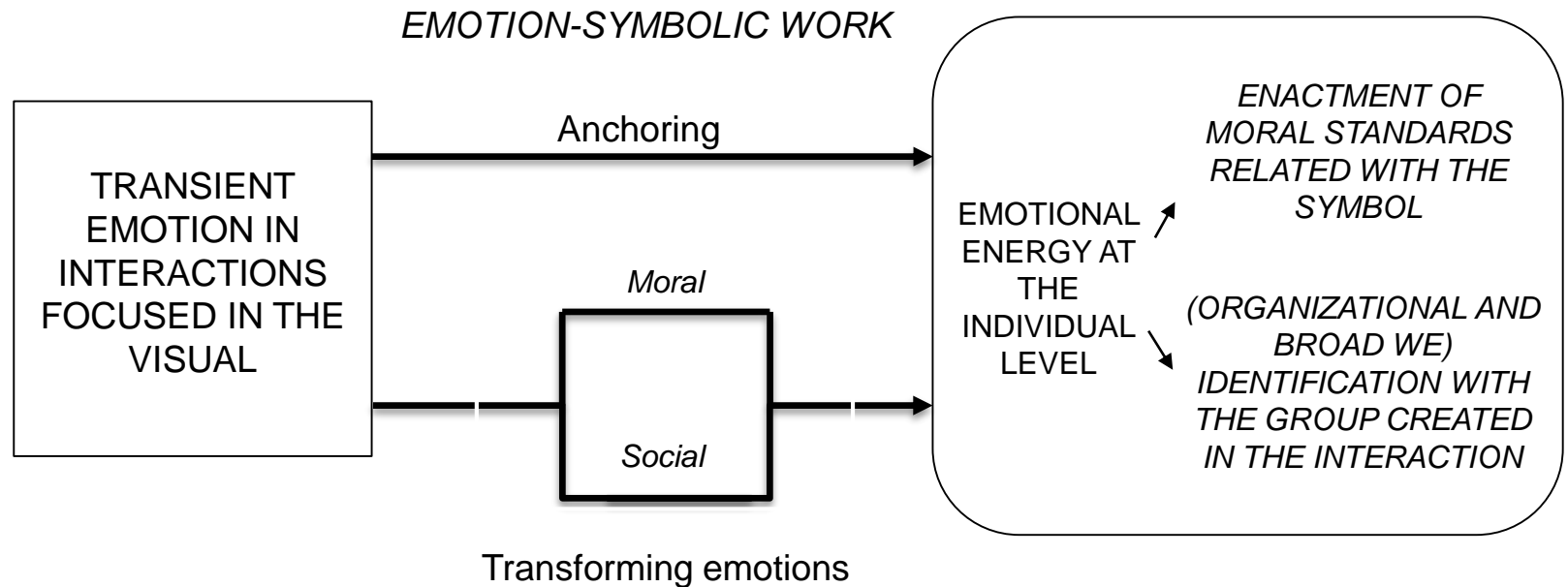
*“**Activist:** Powerful image. It was heartbreaking to learn ... that both my activities and my generations consumer path has led to horrific suffering of too many animals who die alone and without relief. There is no avoidance for them. **Shame and sadness were my first feelings but they change nothing. I AM MOTIVATED! And I am grateful for the armies of people who will not sit down”.***

Enactment of moral standards; transformation of moral and social emotions in organizational identification; **evangelism**

*Initially, he “**was absolutely disgusted and I felt helpless and it made me realise the severity of this problem** “. Once he started to diffuse online and offline (through conversations) the visual linked to the refuse moral standard:*

*“And then that feeling you get when you actually pass on something and it creates change I think is addictive ... This is something I’ve been really passionate about for a long time ... yeah, **it ignites a fire and all it does is keep building and it makes them more inclined to spread the message and tell people about it, which is really cool** ... it’s one that they identify that there’s a problem, two, that they’re actually continuing the narrative themselves with other people” (CR, 2018).*

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**Data Structure**

<b>Data examples</b>	<b>First-order categories</b>	<b>Second-order categories</b>	<b>Aggregated dimensions</b>
XXXXX	Anchoring Refuse	Anchoring work	Emotion-symbolic work
XXXXXX	Anchoring Plastic Pollution		
XXXXXX	Moral emotions	Transforming emotions	
XXXXXXX	Social emotions		

<b>Data examples</b>	<b>First-order categories</b>	<b>Second-order categories</b>	<b>Aggregated dimensions</b>
XXXXX	Enacting Refuse	Enactment of moral standards	Emotional Energy
XXXXXX	Enacting Plastic Pollution		
XXXXXX	Organizational	Identification	
XXXXXXX	Broad-we		

To social movement literature: although research on visual symbols (Doerr and Matoni, 2014), emotions (Jasper, 1990s) and interactions (Snow and Benford, 2000) is present, no theoretical/empirical intersection.

To sociology of emotions: emphasis on agency

**THANK YOU!**