

*Research Paper*

# **Linking Gender, Diving and Filmmaking: Conceptualising Film Outcomes as Narrative Capital Gains in the Making of *Wawata Topu* (Women Divers) in West Atauro, Timor-Leste**

**ENRIQUE ALONSO-POBLACIÓN\***, **DAVID PALAZÓN-MONFORTE**  
and **ALBERTO FIDALGO-CASTRO**

Anthropology Lab, Estrada de Castela, 127, 1. 15570 - Narón, A Coruña. Spain

## **Abstract**

*Wawata Topu* is a documentary portraying a group of women divers in Atauro Island, Timor-Leste. Initially aimed at increasing the visibility of women's roles in the fisheries sector, the filmmaking process brought along a practical negotiation between the community and the filmmakers on the topics to be included in the film. This paper describes the filmmaking process, reports on the final contents of the film, and explains the reasons the different themes were included. Based on a previous theoretical exploration on the notion of narrative capital, we suggest that this process of negotiation resulted in the enhancement of the women's narrative capabilities. After the release of the film, the protagonists were able to transform their enhanced capacity to be heard and acknowledged into social and symbolic resources leading to economic and health benefits.

## **Introduction**

With the sun rising in the background, Sara wakes early from bed in the morning; she ties her hair in a ponytail and leaves her modest palm leaf house to start her work as usual. We repeated this scene several times, as our presence with the camera created some excitement among the local children who followed us around Sara's house. That morning, it was raining and the children could not make the difficult, hour long walk to school in the nearby village. We

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\* Corresponding author. Email address: [enrique.alonso@anthropologylab.org](mailto:enrique.alonso@anthropologylab.org)

told Sara to do just what she usually does: “we will follow you”. After the first day of shooting we were impressed with her capacity to “play herself” in our presence throughout her daily activities. We repeated this scene several times, although we did not use it in the final cut of the film *Wawata Topu* (diver women in Rasua language).

Our presence filming in the small hamlet of Adara inevitably interfered with the daily lives of the inhabitants. But by getting Sara “acting as herself” we were pursuing the specific objective of “raising visibility” about the crucial roles these women play in the fishing sector and in the local economy at large. In this vein, *Wawata Topu* inscribes itself in a tradition of filmmaking aimed at boosting positive social transformations by using audio-visual ethnography as a tool. This is as old as the film genre, as pointed out by Ruby (1977) in regards to Vertov’s aim to create consciousness among the audience with his works in the 1920’s. In his definition of ethnographic film, Marcus Banks (1992:117) states that “an intention – to make a film” and “a reaction – the response of the audience to the physical manifestation of the event (the film)” are critical issues. The film can however produce changes amongst two different collectives: the audience and the protagonists. In a paper written before his death in 1984, Donald Snowden, one of the initiators of the Fogo process, pointed to the role of video as a tool to facilitate the establishment of lines of communication within a village or area, and between the village and distant decision makers (Crocker 2008). The establishment of lines of communication was in short what *Wawata Topu* accomplished.

Building upon a previous theoretical exploration (Alonso-Población et al. 2016), in this paper we use the notion of narrative capital to conceptualise and interpret the outcomes of the filmmaking process. On the basis of Bourdieu’s notions of the operation of power within fields (Bourdieu 1991; 2002), we understand narrative capital as all narrative resources that are mobilised by social agents to access other types of resources and ultimately accrue some quotas of power (Alonso-Población and Fidalgo-Castro 2014, Alonso-Población et al. 2016). This process of narrative capital transferred into other types of resources is conceptualised as transformations of capital (Bourdieu 2000). As pointed out by Watts, one critical aspect for accruing narrative capital is the agents’ narrative capabilities, or as put by the author, the capacity to be heard and acknowledged (Watts 2008).

From this theoretical conceptualisation, we suggest that ethnographic filmmaking can trigger practical dynamics at the social, economic and symbolic levels by enhancing the protagonists' narrative capital. In contrast to projects focusing on economic issues, which are dominant within the fisheries development area, the use of the notion of narrative capital brings to the foreground the multi-dimensional nature of power. It implicitly calls attention to the need for development interventions to take into account narrative aspects in boosting social transformations, especially when they are aimed at promoting gender equality.

### ***Timor-Leste's fisheries sector***

After independence in 2002, Timor-Leste attracted the attention of many foreign researchers and observers (Gunn 2007; McWilliam and Traube 2011). However, with few exceptions the fisheries sector has not been included among the preferred topics of research by social scientists. The exceptions include an overview article by McWilliam (McWilliam 2003) that addressed fisheries briefly, and descriptions of productive practices and interesting insights into the interconnections between fishing, religious regimes and identity (Bica 2011).

Currently, the fishing fleet is dominated by small-scale operators (Alonso-Población et al. 2013; Alonso-Población 2013). Availability of fishery products in the country is below regional averages (AMSAT Int. 2011a) and the sector faces crucial challenges triggered by market constraints (Hartmann 2010; Alonso-Población 2013) and eating patterns (Alonso-Población 2013). Little documentation is available on the fisheries sector during the Portuguese colonial period (16<sup>th</sup> century to 1975) and the Indonesian occupation (1975-1999), but the few available sources report on a long fishing tradition present in the Island of Atauro (Anon 1916; Magalhães 1918a and 1918b; Figueiredo 1966, 1968; Thomaz 1977; Barros Duarte 1984). Members of the Moana Expedition called attention to the ability of the Atauro dwellers in the art of spear fishing (Gorsky 1957) and later on, as part of his ethnographic explorations, Barros Duarte described how the inhabitants of the island started diving at the young age of six or seven years old (Barros Duarte 1984). No specific references are made to women fishing in these texts.

During Indonesian occupation, the New Order regime promoted the establishment and development of fisheries cooperatives (The Provincial Government of East Timor 1986) and introduced new fishing techniques in the pursuit of a production revolution (Gunn 2003). The newly formed organisations received boats, nets and engines along with technical training. However, the operation of the cooperatives was hindered by the regular bribes requested by the Jakarta political and military elites, who received a percentage of the catches in the form of money or fish (Gunn 2003). Along with the new fishing nets, use of cyanide, fish bombing and other unsustainable fishing practices were common during this period (De Carvalho et al. 2007; MAFF 2001), leading to signs of overexploitation at some specific fishing grounds. Right after independence in 2002, indicators of overexploitation were reported at the north-eastern reefs of Atauro Island (Wong and Chou 2004) as well as in the nearby area of the capital Dili (Deutsch 2003).

In 1999, the United Nations (UN) sponsored referendum for independence which resulted in a rejection by the vast majority of Timorese to integration with the Indonesian State, was followed by a violent campaign by East Timorese pro-integration militia supported by members of the Indonesian military, which led to widespread destruction of fishing vessels, gear and infrastructure (MAFF 2001).

Following independence in 2002, efforts were made to boost production and a regulatory framework was developed (Guterres 2003). However, these measures have had little influence in triggering significant changes in the sector (Alonso-Población et al. 2013).

### ***Gender and fisheries***

If the knowledge available on the fisheries sector is still scarce, even less is known about the women's contribution. Within the fishing communities, women have crucial roles in craft making, household labour and livestock rearing, mending nets (Baticados 2005), post-harvest and drying (De Carvalho et al. 2007), financial management (AMSAT Int. 2011b), seasonal shore fishing (Palmer and do Amaral de Carvalho 2008), shellfish gathering and reef gleaning (De Carvalho et al. 2007; Alonso-Población et al. 2013).

However, their contribution remained unseen for most institutions and external observers and has even been considered “marginal” (Lloyd et al. 2012) at specific locales in the country.

## **Materials and Methods**

### ***Wawata Topu- The Film Project***

The *Wawata Topu* project aimed to address the aforementioned lack of attention to women’s work in the fisheries sector in Timor-Leste. However, our immersion in the community raised additional goals which we considered important to pursue, that ultimately shaped the topics addressed in the final cut of the film (more details on the filmmaking process are in Alonso-Población et al. 2016).

In 2012 we learned about the work of the women divers through the East Timorese photographer Nelson Turquel. He had been invited by a local Catholic priest to join him on a short trip to the islands’ west coast where he first encountered some of the women divers in Adara. He spent a couple of days in the community forging good relationships with its dwellers, and bringing back a series of stunning pictures featuring a group of women fishing underwater while using wooden and plastic goggles, wearing flip-flops and dressed with their *lipa* (tube cloth that Timorese women and men wear wrapped around their waists) as they do both in and out of the water. David Palazón, (Co-Director and Co-Producer) had already worked with Nelson on many different arts projects and Enrique Alonso (Co-Director and Co-Producer) had worked for a number of years in the fishing sector in the country, both as a researcher and practitioner. One year after Nelson’s visit, we decided to put together a concept note to raise funds to develop a film and a photo book (eventually not pursued) in order to raise the visibility of the women’s work. We considered that by doing so, we would be able to contest the lack of attention to their work so that they would ultimately be able to benefit from specific policies and programmes by national institutions and international organisations. Their work could serve as well to counteract common notions of gender inequality in the country, and even serve as an inspiration and model for other Timorese women due to the implicit contestation of common notions on women’s work. Furthermore, the interest in making such a film did not lie solely in forging changes in local conceptions

about gender roles, but also in contributing to the filmography on Timor-Leste, which during the last decades had primarily focused on stories relating to war, suffering and grief.

The Secretariat of the Pacific Community became interested in funding the film, so we quickly moved to the pre-production phase in order to implement the project. In order to do so, the team, composed of David Palazón (artist), Enrique Alonso (anthropologist), Nelson Turquel (photographer) and Mario Gomes (production assistant) moved to Adara in June 2013, staying there for an initial period of ten days. The shooting continued until September, as additional field visits were necessary to gain further footage. In order to build an environment of confidence and feedback, we organised a communal dinner on the first night accompanied by a ceremony where the diver women received a selection of pictures taken by Nelson the previous year. As part of the engagement with the community, every night we projected on a white sheet the footage of the day as well as a selection of short films about Timor-Leste. However, we realised that our evening audience were much more interested in watching themselves in the daily footage, rather than watching short films displaying rituals and dances from mainland Timor, which they regarded as backwards practices. In Atauro Island, a Protestant Church (Assemblies of God) promoted a rupture with all regarded as traditional. In contrast, the Catholic Church, which is dominant in the main island, achieved only a partial conversion (Bicca 2011).

As the filmmaking progressed alongside the evening projections, a sort of engagement with the community emerged, bringing about a process of dialogue and negotiation around the very content of the film to be made. In this vein, we considered *Wawata Topu* as a collaborative effort (Alonso-Población et al. 2016), as some of the topics were suggested by us or by the very need to provide complete explanations to the audience on certain issues, while the protagonists requested other themes they considered relevant to be depicted in the film. All suggestions were included in the final version of the documentary, a 33 minute film built upon life stories, interviews and footage of the daily work of the diver women and the dwellers of Adara. A critical issue was to edit the narrative of the film combining all of these topics and avoiding an extensive use of a subjective voice over. In order to materialise this collaborative effort, we first developed a list of potentially interesting topics to be included prior to the

fieldwork phase, while the final script was developed on a *post-hoc* basis. In this regard, it is worth providing some details on these themes and explaining why they were addressed and integrated in the film.

### ***Introducing the Community: Adara***

Adara is a small fishing village located on the western side of the island of Atauro. The island is 140 km<sup>2</sup> with 8,602 inhabitants (NSD 2010), and is approximately 25 km from the capital Dili, surrounded by the Indonesian islands of Alor and Wetar. From the Portuguese time, the island was used as a prison, so the South-eastern side of the territory received many immigrants.

In contrast with the majority of inhabitants on mainland Timor, who consider themselves Catholic, Protestantism (Assemblies of God) is the dominant religion within the island (Bica 2011:25). Its villagers speak a form of the Wetarese language (Hull 1998), locally referred to as Rasuah or Duadua. The hamlet of Adara is inhabited by 318 dwellers who mostly practice a mixed livelihood strategy, combining livestock rearing, small-scale agriculture (specially maize), harvest of forestry resources, and small-scale fishing, including spear gun fishing and reef gleaning.

### ***Life stories: Sara, Angelita, Dina.***

Every morning Sara and Angelita feed the animals, harvest vegetables and fruits, grind the maize and prepare the daily meals for the household members. Despite her young age, Angelita is one of the main pillars within her household. She supports her family with the fish she catches while diving and fish netting with her father. As she explains, her mother became sick and can no longer participate in fishing activities. Sara, who was 18 years old at the time of the filming, lost her father some time ago. She left school due to her father's illness, when he was no longer able to generate enough income to support the family. She was the only one who was able to help him with the fishing, and together they were able to pay for the studies of some of her brother and sisters. Dina is 37 years old and mother of two. In her own words, she had to withdraw her older son from the school. In front of the camera, she recounts that they were abandoned by her husband and explains that she is not "strong enough" to provide for all her children's needs, including schooling expenditures.

***Wishes, aspirations, contradictions.***

Sara and Angelita were the younger protagonists of the film. When we asked them about their aspirations and wishes for the future, they developed a similar response: they wanted to get married to someone from outside their home hamlet Adara, so that once the intended husband would have paid the “*barlake*” (bride price) they could leave the hamlet and go to live with the man’s family. Dina, in contrast expresses her wish for her sons to marry a woman who can help her with her work, even suggesting that she is saving money for them to pay the “*barlake*”.

The “*barlake*” is a controversial issue amongst gender practitioners in Timor-Leste (Haider 2012; Khan and Hyati 2012; Niner 2012; Wigglesworth 2015). We felt that in understanding the expectations and prospects of the women divers, the audience would need to know more about the local interpretations, reasons and operation of the marriage arrangements. “*Barlake*” is conceptualised as a gift to the parents of the marrying woman for their effort in raising her, the payment should bring along the completion of the marriage process, so that the woman can move to the man’s family household. If the “*barlake*” is not paid, the Adara hamlet’s chief says, “*He [the man] has to come back here to live with the woman’s parents*”. Albertina states that she does not want her male sons to leave once married; in her own words: “*it is wrong*”. Following on from this, Agustinha provided her own interpretation: “*once the elders cannot keep catching fish, male sons can do it for them*”. Paradoxically, she is herself an experienced diver and fisher. We considered depicting all of these contradictions crucial in the film, so the protagonists, as well as the audience, could confront their own gendered interpretations of the work.

***Formal education: new possibilities for social mobility?***

A visual description of contemporary life in Adara required reflecting on the importance given by the local dwellers to the new opportunities to access formal education provided to the youngest generation. In this regard, the protagonists expressed their willingness for us to raise visibility about the difficulties their sons and daughters had in getting to school. The path to the school is almost an hour long walk along the coast, passing through several beaches, rocky walkways and forest paths all the way to the village of Atekru,



where the primary school is located. Accidents are common among the kids and eventualities such as high tides or rain can make the journey to school quite risky. In order to call attention to this issue, we walked with the children to school and presented the issue with a song performed by them as a soundtrack. The women's request to show the audience this issue responded to their willingness to call the attention to the government authorities about the difficulties children of the community face to get formal education, so that it could be improved.

### ***“A Man and a Woman are One Life”: Discovering Social Boundaries***

In the words of Albertina: *“Men and women are one life. This is a good life”* [*“Feto ho mane moris ida deit. Moris di'ak maka ne'e”*]. She explained how she and her husband cooperate while fishing: when she steers the engine, her husband fishes and vice-versa. This is the same with Delfina and Isaul, who both share the fishing with nets in pairs. They also explained about their sons studying in the capital and the need to work in partnership to provide them with support while studying. However, not all dwellers of Adara have the chance to work alongside their partners. In contrast to them, Dina, one of the women divers, explained that she cannot afford her sons' schooling expenses and finds it difficult to meet basic needs for her household.

This socio-economic condition had a narrative parallel. After the initial excitement of acknowledging our interest in making the women divers the protagonists of a film, the first days of shooting were a bit frustrating. Although the underwater filming was already underway, during the first three days, we were not able to shoot the women divers recounting their life stories. When in front of the camera, they only talked about issues related to diving. They spoke very timidly. One day we asked them to have a meeting; we all sat together and had a conversation about what interested us as filmmakers and what they expected from their roles in the film. Albertina was included in the group. She was the first one to talk and seemed the bravest speaking in public. Timidly but progressively, the women divers started to join the talk delineating what became obvious: the availability of adult manpower in the household production unit seemed to be a determining factor in the stories of *Wawata Topu*. Unfortunately, the entire footage shoot on that day was ruined, as the tapes sold by the electronics shop in Dili had been exposed for too long to the heat and

humidity of the tropics. After this hindrance, it was time to start again. Obviously, not all wanted to recount their stories again in front of the camera — as some referred to problems of alcohol among the men, disabilities or other kinds of personal issues. It was our duty to respect their wishes. However, that conversation served as an ice breaker and brought us closer to the heart of their personal matters.

### ***Origins: Maríá Cabeça, the pioneer woman diver***

Maríá Cabeça told us she was 71 years old. She is married, but she and her husband never had any children. Since the day we met her, we felt she had some kind of special charm. Although she lived in the neighbouring hamlet of Atekru, all divers in Adara pointed her out as the woman who first went diving. She explained that women did not go diving at all, back in the days when she decided to dive along with the men. When asked on her decision to dive, she states clearly to the camera: “*There was no money or food; so we went diving [...] because we were hungry... we went diving*” [*Osan la iha, hahán moos la iha; bá luku [...] tamba hamlaha... bá luku*]. The linkage between the origin of women diving and poverty confirmed an initial observation: those women who were diving as their main livelihood occupied a low status in the collective. The availability of adult manpower in the household units seemed determinant in establishing this economic boundary. Maríá Cabeça recalled that after she learnt spear-gun fishing from watching men diving, she was followed by more women from the hamlet. In her own words, “*next day we were all diving*”. As a pioneer she had to deal with sexist comments coming from some men, who asked her to stick only to the agricultural tasks. Her contestation to gender roles was a central theme to be depicted in the film.

### ***(Dis) valuing their own work?***

Sara, Angelita and Dina go diving every afternoon, and every Saturday morning they go to sell the fish at the Beloi market. However, they explain that their daily catches are not big enough to be dried and sold in the market, so they are intended for household consumption. Instead they sell the “big fish” caught by men during the week. In this vein, a further interesting topic to be depicted in the film was the discourse on the value of the work. We soon realised that these women divers did not value their own work equally to the men’s — or to the

children's diving, which is conceptualised merely as an entertainment. In the words of Dina: "*they (women) only fish once per day, they catch small fish and the catch is intended for household consumption*". On the contrary, men dive two or three times per day, catch bigger fish oriented for market trading. However, they did not emphasise the fact that in order to get income from their catch, men depend on them to sell their bigger fish at Beloi's Saturday market.

### ***Market and health***

Every Saturday, women from Adara walk between three and four hours to reach the market of Beloi. Starting at night, they walk through the coast up to the neighbouring beach of Arló. At the crack of dawn, they start trekking up the hills that cross the center of the island. Loaded with palm leaf baskets and plastic bags full of dried fish, they arrive early in the morning at the market, where they await the arrival of the ferry, which brings most of the potential consumers from Dili. Once the ferry boat departs in the afternoon, the market is over. Against images of the market, Dina explains the profit margins she gets from selling the men's fish. At the end of the day, all the economy of the hamlet depends on the women's role as fish sellers.

The path to the market brought a new issue to our attention to address in the film. Specifically, the health problems they face from their daily work and weekly excursions to the market, as well as the lack of health facilities in the hamlet. This issue was brought to our attention by the women themselves on various occasions, and we were asked directly to include a section about this issue in the film, so that the women could direct the attention of the state institutions towards the vulnerable situation they face given their geographical isolation.

### ***Engaging filmmaking with community-led initiatives: Tourism as an alternative livelihood***

Over the last few years, Adara and the surrounding areas have experienced the development of some tourism initiatives. At the time of our project, a foreign operator was offering expensive trips to dive the coral reefs around the west coast of the island and camp on Adara's stunning beach. However, the local inhabitants were concerned about the few benefits they were

receiving from such activities, reduced to the piecework wages obtained by young males for unloading equipment and carrying food from the boat. Furthermore, Indonesian builders instead of the local dwellers had been hired to build the bamboo cabins where the tourists camped at night. The community was then willing to take ownership of the tourist sector in a way that all villagers would receive a share in the profits. In coordination with the hamlet's chief, the promoters of the community-based initiative organised an association formed by the women who wanted to take part in the initiative. The members agreed on developing a rotating system by which each day a visitor stayed in the cabin, one group of women would prepare the meals and obtain the corresponding income for their work. The first cabin, fully built by local dwellers, was completed in September 2013.

On several occasions both the women divers and other dwellers from the hamlet expressed their willingness to develop a complementary livelihood from tourism. In this case however, instead of addressing this topic in the film, we decided to use the documentary as a means to boost the tourist visits to the newly built cabins.

After the film shoot in June 2013, the post-production continued up to September, followed by an accompanying marketing campaign and social media page. However, before the final result was released to the wider public, the first version was shown to Dina, Sara and Angelita —the women who recounted more intimate stories, in order to seek their approval. Once granted first by them and then by all involved, the premiere screening was organised in the hamlet. The event had a double aim. First of all, to give back the resulting film to the protagonists, and secondly, to promote the newly opened guesthouse, which the women expected as a complementary source of income to their fishing activities. In order to do so, the screening was organised for around 30 guests from the expatriate community, mostly formed by aid workers living in Dili. These were at the time, the main consumers of domestic tourism offered in the young nation. However, domestic tourism options are limited, mostly available as weekend trips and predominantly having the capital of Dili as the main departure point, with destinations as far as 10 hours drive away. Tourism is one of the focal economic sectors in the government's plan of transition to a non-oil economy and is included in the National Development Goals (RDTL 2011). Hence, we considered that the event would be the perfect opportunity for

promoting the newly completed cabin of Adara. Before the screening, a big meal for all hamlet dwellers and foreign visitors was organised and the event was closed by a handover of DVDs and a public acknowledgement of the participants in the making of *Wawata Topu*.

## **Results**

The outcomes of the project can be summarised as increased public recognition at local, national and international levels as well as the opening of new livelihood opportunities.

At a national level, the film was screened in several locations in the capital city of Dili, particularly during the 2014 International Women's Day events, and at the Xanana Cultural Center, at Fundação Oriente and during the official celebration commissioned by the Secretary of State for Promotion of Equality. On the international scene the film has been screened at a total of 24 international festivals in Australia, Asia, North and South America and Europe, and is currently available free on the internet (<https://vimeo.com/81265144>, accessed 22 June 2016). But the most important event for the film protagonists occurred in November 2013, during the National Day of Timorese Women, when they were awarded by the Secretary of State for Promotion of Equality of the government of Timor-Leste. Maria Cabeça, the pioneer woman diver was granted the Woman of the Year Award for her determination in contesting social barriers and getting to dive along with men. Maria left the island for the first time in her life to attend the invitation to the capital and to receive the award in a public event with the participation of the political and social elite as well as the national media.

Financially speaking, the promotion of the local guesthouse during the initial release and through the Facebook fan site helped boost the number of tourist visits. Currently, the community members have already built a second and third cabin and the occupation has increased significantly since then. In March 2014, the inhabitants of Adara received the visit of the current President of the Republic, who knew about the film and the local project and publicly recognised the value and economic function of this small social business. Managing the impact and the flow of tourists is a new challenge that the community will have to deal with. However, for the moment, tourism is starting

to be seen as a real source of income and the women have started to complement their wages with their work at the small cabin-resort.

Another source of income has arisen, namely, selling the film's DVD to the visitors. As the guests expressed their interest in obtaining copies of the film, the protagonists started to sell them. In managing the savings arising from the sales, they decided to use the association established for the work at the cabin-resort. Currently, discussions have already started among the members of the women's association in order to decide how to invest the common savings from the DVD film sales.

Finally, the community was able to get a health clinic built in the hamlet. Given the increased public exposure of their narrative, the dwellers of Adara used further chances after the development of the film (such as the President's visit) to call the government's attention to their isolation and risk when it comes to health facilities.

Despite all these immediate results, some challenges remain that will require further monitoring and research. Among them, the potential impact of double burdening associated with the new livelihoods among the women divers, the equity of benefits arising from tourism, the potential problems resulting from the flow of tourists and the current government developments in the tourism sector on the island.

## **Discussion**

If intention and results are critical aspects of ethnographic filmmaking as defended by Banks (1992), it is crucial to bring to the fore theoretical approaches that allow nuanced understanding of the complex dynamics of social change and the multidimensional aspects of power, including the narrative domain.

### ***Conceptualising results as transformations of capital***

Although *Wawata Topu* was not intended to be a participatory film, we consider that the ethnographic material, either visual or in the form of text, is the result of multi-layered and overlapping dialogues (Alonso-Población 2014) between co-authors (film protagonists, editors, directors). As can be inferred by

the account above, this nuanced social interaction encompasses emotions, moral obligations and reciprocity.

In a theoretical discussion about the inter-linkages between narrative and power, Watts (2008) argues that narrative capital constitutes more than a good story to tell (the value of the story itself); it encompasses also the way it is told. It is precisely in the way stories are told that a critical aspect of social reproduction lies, as those with more institutional cultural capital (formal studies, for example) or social capital (social networks) will have more chances to be heard (see the examples provided in Alonso-Población and Fidalgo-Castro 2014). Based on his fieldwork among patients with dementia, Baldwin (2010; 2013) introduced the notion of “narrative dispossession”. The initial silence during the first days of shooting and the avoidance by some of the women divers of recounting their life stories in front of the camera, revealed that they could be considered narrative-poor (Alonso-Población and Fidalgo-Castro, 2014). Not because they did not have a good story to tell, but because they lacked the symbolic and social capital to be heard. What the film provided was only a tool to enhance what Watts refers to as “narrative capability” (Watts 2008) or the capacity to be heard and acknowledged. This narrative capital enhancement passed through several processes that included different modes of collective action. First during the very shooting process, while including all the community members, it was focused on the women divers. The interest that we showed in their life narratives set an initial stage of recognition. Secondly, the first screening of the film (in which they were put at the centre of the stage), was participated by community members and foreign visitors, brought along a further tacit recognition (internal and external) of the value of their narrative. Thirdly, the awarding of the Women of the Year Prize implied the incorporation (in an object –the prize, and a ritual –the ceremony held in the capital of Dili during the National Women’s Day) of the credit granted by political elites and the nation as a whole. After the Women of the Year award in 2014, the film also received the “Chandrika Sharma” Special Prize at the Film Festival “Fishers of the World,” and the Best Foreign Documentary at the American Online Film Awards. The statuettes are kept by the protagonists in Adara. Fourth, the interest by foreign visitors in meeting them and getting copies of the DVD set a further level of recognition for their narrative. In sum, this enhancement of their narrative capabilities through the film was converted into economic capital (through the increased visits by foreign tourists and through the sale of DVDs),

social capital (through the establishment of social networks beyond the local arena to the capital of Dili) and symbolic capital (the awards).

As explained by Goodson, contrary to other types of capital, narrative capital can counteract the “old patterns of cultural capital and social elitism” (Goodson 2007) as, in contrast to educational credentials, narratives can be easily accrued by everyday experience (Alonso-Población and Fidalgo-Castro 2014). However, not all collectives have the chance to be heard and acknowledged. We suggest that one of the project’s main results was enhancing the women’s narrative capital, specifically raising the capability dimensions (Watts 2008), and that female agents had the capacity to further mobilise and transform these narrative capital gains into social and symbolic gains, and ultimately into economic and health benefits. For this reason, we contend that conceptualising film outcomes in terms of capital gains accrued by collective agents might help us in better understanding social dynamics and non-economic dimensions of power. We have shown that enhancing narrative capability, despite a modest result, can be a useful tool in triggering social negotiations and boosting transformative dynamics.

## Conclusions

In this paper we have suggested that the film *Wawata Topu* had as its only primary outcome raising narrative capital through enhancing women’s narrative capabilities. Economic benefits arising from the new opportunities, health benefits and social and symbolic gains as derived from their contact and acknowledgement by social and political elites and international audiences are secondary but not less important outcomes which can be conceptualised as transformations of capital. Yet, these transformations of capital were performed by the women themselves, who mobilised the leverage gained to mobilise further resources.

As a final remark, it is worth recalling and rethinking our initial aim when planning the *Wawata Topu* project, namely, raising visibility of women’s roles in the fisheries sector. The act of “making visible” emphasises the roles of the brokers (in this case the filmmakers, those who “make visible”), hindering the negotiation process involved in the filmmaking practice and the transformative capacity of the protagonists. On the contrary, recognising the



negotiation encompassed during the filmmaking process and describing the further results achieved arising from the agents' further use of the new resources accrued - that we conceptualise as narrative capital, portrays a different conceptualisation of the women, emphasising their transformative capacity as agents of change.

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