

# Introduction

## Prelude

It's almost 1 a.m. Z. calls me. I am staying at his home, on the sofa that we built a few days earlier in the living room. I should have slept but wasn't able to. I rarely go to bed so early and the sense of expectation doesn't help the sleep to set in. I get up. I put on the yellow rain gear and my rubber boots while Z. prepares something to eat. L. is already outside. He waits for us. We leave with a piece of sausage in one hand and a piece of bread in the other. It's cold, but not windy. L. says that V. and C. have already left. To the sea. He doesn't know where they went. They said they were heading north. 'Maybe!', they added. In these situations, you never know if what a fisherman says is true or not. Most times even they are not sure where they are going. And because everyone knows that the sea is in charge, no one takes it personally.

At the end of the street we see F. He is silently heading to the *laredo* (a term that designates a slushy type of shore gravel), like someone who doesn't want to upset the others' rest. We do the same. We go down the street, go around the café and follow the path that leads to the *laredo*. The day before, F. had left everything ready for another night at sea. The 'fishing rigs' were baited, with salt on the bait and covered with waterproof gear, inside the boats. The salt keeps the bait, made from pieces of sardine or squid, from rotting. The waterproof gear over the boats, held down by rocks, protects the bait from stray cats or more daring birds.

At the *laredo* we meet other fishermen. There don't seem to be many of them going out to sea tonight. 'These guys don't like to work!', someone states ironically behind me. 'They're chickens!', continues another. 'And they say that fishing doesn't work. Of course not! In bed, it doesn't work, of course not!' 'If it's summer, it's because they also have the right to rest; if it's winter, it's because the sea is rough. . . .' 'It's none of that, the men now use more nets and creels . . . and, you know, now they only go out to sea in the morning.' 'When they feel like it, you mean!' In the meantime, they all look for the 'rollers', small eucalyptus trunks on which the boats roll through the rocks in the sand, making their way into the water.

'Let's go!' 'Hop in!' The boat moves out on its stern for a while, until it can manoeuvre itself in deeper water. It's still dark out and quite foggy. No one speaks. L. looks to the side and sees F. practically next to him. He speeds up. Passes among the rocks that give access to the open sea. 'So we are going down there?' asks Z. 'Let's see. . . .' We move into the open sea for a few minutes. Then we turn south. The undulation is not bothersome, but it's enough for us to hear the bottom of the boat hitting the water for every wave that goes by. The noise resembles a door shutting far away. Curiously, it's a sort of thump.

'Is everything okay?', Z. asks me. 'Yes', I answer. 'You are going to end up a fisherman.' 'This is great, we don't think of anything else', says L. 'It makes us want to keep going south . . . One day I'll go to Cape Verde. . . .' he goes on. 'And I'll go with you, but first we must fish!' adds Z. 'Once, dude, towards Sagres, I was in the boat and started to see a huge stain moving in the water. I thought it was the shadow of a cloud, but, since there was no moon, it was impossible . . . The thing started to get closer and I started thinking this wasn't going to end up well . . . It wandered there for a while and it went away. I thought it could be a whale. A few days later I saw a TV show on the whale shark. I am sure that I saw the same thing . . . it's rare to see this kind of thing. In the Algarve, I have seen sharks, but here, in the north, it's unusual. Every once in a while we see some dolphins, but even those are rare. . . .' Z. asks again, 'Are you all right? It's a pity you can't always come; with the rig and all, it's not easy to bring people along with us. As soon as we get a larger boat, you just let us know when you want to come.'

I am at the bow of the boat, on signalling floaters. L. and Z. are at the stern. L. manoeuvres the outboard motor. A powerful, almost new Honda motor. Every once in a while, one or the other stands up to look at the sea. They confirm their intuitions: a wave that seems

higher than the others, a stain or shadow that could be a tree trunk or even a container that has gone astray, all kinds of things that may endanger their lives. For me, lying on the floaters or standing, everything seems uniform and normal. I know it's dark, that the sea has waves and that it is beautiful. The moon reflects on the lead and titanium coloured water, the noise from the motor, the boat riding the waves, the splashes, the smell of the sea and even the cold, is all exhilarating.

We left Azenha a little after one in the morning. We have been at sea for about two hours. L. pushes the motor to its limit, always considering the seafaring conditions. He keeps his eyes on the probe to 'see' the bottom of the sea. When the line is straight, it means we are passing sand; when irregularities show up, it means we are navigating over rocks. Through the probe the fishermen also know where they are. This is because they already know the bottom of the sea. For example, shortly after leaving Azenha, towards the south, the probe traces a long straight line. They are certain that it is the beach at Odeceixe, even when the fog doesn't allow them to see any light or other reference points on the coast.

This time L. and Z. look for a 'crown' that they will recognize by the triangulation of several reference points: an area of sand that will remain behind, lights on the top of a cliff and the probe graphic that will show a long, rocky and shallow area. This area is called 'Atalaia Point', located in front of a small promontory with the same name just before the village of Arrifana and just after Amoreira beach, revealed by the probe.

When we reach this zone, L. seems to search the sea with his eyes. He looks alternately at the sea and the probe, until he questions: 'Here?!' 'Let's go', answers Z. I have to leave the bow. They ask me for a signalling floater (or flag). This is merely a piece of Styrofoam tied with nylon ropes to a cane that has a piece of cloth at the end, serving as a flag. They grasp one end of the *madre* (pelagic longline) and tie it to a big rock that we found on the *laredo* the night before, and throw it into the sea along with the floater. Then Z. holds the *madre* over his left wrist and L. goes towards the motor. He starts to manoeuvre the boat slowly in the direction of the current, while Z. lets the *madre* slide over his left forearm and wrist. Suddenly, the first fishhook shows up, followed by another and yet another. There are more than two thousand. Each one of them is a weapon that could pull Z. into the sea or, at the very least rip open the fisherman's hand while launching the rig. I knew this was the most delicate moment in this art of fishing. I had not imagined, however, the real danger,

only overcome by automated gestures repeated many times through experience and expertise. Every once in a while, as often as the fishermen think convenient, the boat stops in order to tie another rock and floater to the *madre*. But this moment cannot take too long, otherwise the rig may ‘roll up’, when it is essential that it remains well extended at all times. The *madre* has around two thousand fishhooks, each one about an arm and a half’s distance from the next. This means that the *madre* is no less than four thousand metres in length. Two rigs are launched into the sea. This is eight kilometres of line, four thousand fishhooks. It doesn’t take long. One hour of silence and total concentration, no more. The last floater is tied to a big rock. The boat is tied to this last floater. Now all we can do is wait for the fish to bite. We need to wait. ‘So, are you all right?!’ Z. asks again. ‘This is tough, this is the most boring part; if a guy is not careful, there goes a finger.’ The fishermen’s hands are full of deep marks caused by the gliding nylon line and by the fishhooks that rip the skin. The sea salt dries the wounds but doesn’t let them close or completely heal. With the passing of the years, the hands become as hard as leather, especially the parts that hold the *madre*.

‘And now what do we do?’, I ask. ‘We wait . . . we use the opportunity to get some sleep.’ The boat is no more than four metres in length and less than one and a half metres in width. It has two cross-bars that divide it into three parts: the stern, which is closed by a wooden lid; the space between the two crossbars, in which are kept the fishing gear and the probe box; and the bow, where two fishermen complete the crew and also where the fuel tank is situated that maintains the outboard engine. ‘Sleep?! How?!’ I ask again. ‘If the sea is not too rough, it is more or less possible to sleep . . . you may feel sick though; with the boat moving, it’s not difficult, but, with the boat still, those who aren’t used to it almost always feel sick. . .’ I sit at the end of the boat, near the stern. Z. lays himself in the boat, also inside. L. remains next to the bow, half lying down, half sitting, on the seat next to the motor. We speak with our eyes closed. ‘Well, I’m going to eat something’, says L. They have brought bread, sausage, water, liquid yoghurts and apples. I get up, eat an apple and start to feel the boat undulating. I can’t manage to vomit. ‘You should have eaten more. It’s better to eat than to be on an empty stomach and not be able to vomit. The nausea won’t go away like that . . . don’t worry, we have to start pulling the rig’, remarks Z. ‘How long do you usually wait?’, I ask. ‘Two or three hours, but it depends on the size of the rig or on how the sea is feeling . . . today we have to start now . . . which is not that great.’ The fog that never left us is now thicker. The

waves seem to be getting stronger, but I really don't know if they are or if it feels that way because I am not feeling well.

'We have to move fast!' says L. He unties the boat from the floater. Z. grabs the tip of the *madre* and keeps pulling the line into the box. The first hook brings no fish, neither does the second. The physical force and resistance needed to pull the *madre* from the bottom of the sea to the boat are massive. This is where the fishermen's work scars their hands. The fourth hook, just like the third, also has nothing on it. 'This is a hassle, sometimes a box of sardines, as bait, is wasted at sea, in exchange for nothing', says L. Z. continues to pull the rig. 'It's stuck!', he declares. L. stops the boat to help pull the *madre*. It got loose. 'Sometimes it gets stuck on the rocks and we have to cut it and leave it in the sea', he explains. The undulation is stronger. 'If it happens again, I'll cut it', threatens Z. 'Right, don't waste time. . .', agrees L. We have pulled hundreds of hooks and there are still no fish. The floater appears and with it the first fish: a (safio) lenge. And then another. Larger. A moray eel comes right afterwards. 'Let's see if this compensates for the cost!' says L. The first rig is finished. There are no more than a few dozen fish. Two large moray eels and six or seven congers, also large, lie at the bottom of the boat. 'Do you think it will be enough?' asks Z. 'If it gets worse, cut the line and we'll leave', answers L. The waves are visibly higher. Z. pulls the first floater of the second rig. He cuts the line that was tied to the rock and starts to pull the *madre*. There is a 'rascácio', a typical fish of the Portuguese coast. As he keeps pulling, more fish start to appear: sea bass, sea breams, more moray eels and congers. 'Ah, this is better!', states L. Shortly after he says, 'We have to go'. 'Just a little longer', suggests Z., while he takes a fish off the hook. 'The last floater is just over there.' More than three hours have gone by. It doesn't take long; the rig doesn't get caught in the rocks as it often does. 'Let's go.' L. holds the compass and points the boat northwards.

The boxes of the rigs are full of the tangled *madres* and hooks. At the bottom of the boat, next to the boxes, lie the fish. L. and Z. are at the stern. The floaters, placed in a disorderly way, are all in the bow. I sit on the last crossbar facing the stern, but with each wave that passes by I am thrown up in the air. 'Maybe it's better if you move toward the bow; try sitting in the bottom', advises L. I move some of the floaters to make space among them. I end up sitting on one, this time with my back turned to the bow. L. and Z. remain silent. Their faces seem to be tense and thoughtful at the same time. We proceed, until a larger wave makes the floaters slip over me. I look forward, in the direction of the bow, and I understand the expressions I see on Z.'s

and L.'s faces. The waves are higher than the boat. I lie down across the floaters, and slip my feet under the edge of one of the boat's rails. I pull the elastic of my hood tight, and grab onto the other rail. I am tired. The sun has risen, but it doesn't look like it. The fog is like a white cloud that has landed on us. We keep heading north, I have no idea for how long. L. and Z. remain silent. They don't utter a word. I feel like I'm going to fall asleep. I feel myself going into a state that I can only describe as dreamy, until I hear L. asking Z.: 'Have we already passed Azenha?'

The probe had revealed the long sandy shore of Odeceixe beach, I realized later. Shortly after, it should have revealed another plain line signifying the small Azenha cove. Perhaps it didn't show it due to the heavy undulation. The fog limits visibility to only a few metres. In these conditions it is not possible for the boat to approach the beach, as it wouldn't be able to avoid the rocks. The compass is therefore the only method of orientation. North is guaranteed.

Azenha do Mar is, in fact, behind us. However, L. seems to proceed to the north. Shortly after, I note that we have waves over the stern, contrary to what was happening a few minutes earlier. We are already facing south. It isn't possible to change directions rapidly, given the state of the sea. The boat had made a huge arch until it faced the opposite direction.

A few minutes later it's possible to see the rocks that protect the *laredo*. The waves pass over the small quay located on the south side. Everyone from Azenha is near the fish auction place. Men, women and children. L. manoeuvres the boat up next to a rock. Z. jumps into the water and grabs the hook that secures the boat. Up above, a fisherman manoeuvres the electric winch and starts pulling the boat to land. I jump to the sand, grab a roller and someone asks me, 'Pro-saste?!' ('Did you get sick?!').

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This account is a descriptive exercise of a night spent at sea. It comes from personal experience, of course, and represents an attempt to make coherent and readable the notes that I made in my fieldwork diary,<sup>1</sup> which ended with the following phrases:

As soon as I arrived at the fish auction, P. was saying out loud: 'I already knew that the sea was going to get rough! It was visible yesterday. I've been around for many years. . . ' . . . Z. and L. caught 56 kilos of fish that were worth around seventy-two thousand escudos (not forgetting to exclude taxes and what they invested). (21/05/1997)

With the (re)writing of these notes, I want to introduce the reader to what marks daily life in the fishing community of Azenha do Mar: the relationship with the sea and the certainty of impermanency. These facts attain a huge magnitude in a community that thrives on the sea as practically its sole source of livelihood (the individuals who are a part of it have no land and rarely look for other sources of income) and whose daily lives are therefore marked by the uncertainty of access to the most basic resources.

At the same time, I intend to begin to reflect on what I present in the following chapters, keeping in mind what I don't say. While writing this introductory chapter after finishing all the other chapters, and reflecting on what I have written, I cannot avoid thinking also about some of the material that I omitted from this text.

In an article published in 2001, Rolland Munro suggests the notion of *disposal*, which, translated into Portuguese, produces a reflection on what may be set aside (Munro's suggestion), but also on what we don't think about. However, what I have dispensed with from the focus of my analysis (namely, from the following chapters) is what I have often thought through, but that I obliterated or is simply implicit. In other words, for the creation of meanings that I present here, there are experiences, ideas, emotions, feelings that are not explicit. However, this in no way means that their importance is minor in justifying my reflections on Azenha do Mar or for the comprehension of my experience of it. Sometimes, what remains hidden or implicit (between the lines, perhaps) is just as important as what is explicit. For example, there are various 'elements' of the life of Azenha that I cannot, should not and do not want to make public. This is sometimes due to self-censorship, at other times due to ethical duty or even because I was asked to keep certain types of information to myself. Stories of smuggling, drug trafficking, prostitution and pandering, sexual abuse of minors and rape all happened, but I must not reveal them. However, they serve my reflection and analysis in a determinant way. Frequently they are the argument that allows us to understand some aspects of the community's life. They were occasionally moments of epiphany in the field. Without those moments, I would not have understood, for example, the establishment of differentiated relations of proximity, the unequal accumulation of wealth, alliances and family ties that seemed 'strange' to me, or the unexpected actions of the police force.<sup>2</sup>

Simultaneously, the text is crossed with implicit meanings that must be clarified. The one that worries me the most is the 'hidden' place attributed to women. I must clarify that women are rarely ex-

cluded from the term ‘fishermen’. As a matter of fact, the large majority of domestic groups in Azenha do Mar are also businesses (including in a legal sense) composed of both men and women. Both are fishermen. One goes to sea and fishes; the other stays on land preparing the technologies that help in the fishing activity. Men go out to sea; women stay on land. However, both participate in the same work. It is true that they operate in different moments and with distinct chores. Nevertheless, as the women make a point of stating, they are also ‘licensed’ fishermen (it is common for women to have a seaman’s booklet or a legal status that makes them ‘partners’ of their husbands in the fishing business). In this way, the women are implicit in the text and are not, in any way, dismissed from my analysis. In terms of gender studies, what may be absent is a more feminine worldview. It goes without saying that my masculine entity meant I was closer to the men than the women during my fieldwork; it is useful, however, to recall the fact that during my first field experience, I had the privilege to have as a colleague Inês Meneses, with whom I had written a first book on Azenha do Mar (*Se o Mar Deixar*, 1996) in which gender issues are addressed. We clarified the fact that, already at that time, women’s daily life in Azenha did not correspond to the generally stereotyped images of feminine gender identity in non-urban spaces or, even, to those acted out by women living in proximity to the community. This is well noted mainly in the distinction between private and public spaces and, especially, in women’s access to the latter. Before proceeding with the presentation of the chapters that make up this volume, the following extract is worth noting:

Quite different is what happens with the women of Azenha [by comparison with women from nearby communities]. During the day these women remain mostly outdoors or use the structures that are situated on the periphery of the housing area: small patios, warehouses or garages, or even an exterior kitchen. . . . These are the quarters that, when shown to an outsider of the domestic group, signify the existence of a certain degree of intimacy with that person, as they represent the territory where the women, in fact, conduct their daily activity. Often, it is there, outside the house, where we find them, focused on daily chores or simply in conversation with small groups of family members or neighbours. In this area around the house, where the woman carries on her work and socializes most of the time, when present, men are the ones who seem less at ease, and are often the object of fun for the groups of women. The majority of these women may be seen during the day in short but frequent wanderings through the village and the surrounding space, complying with their duties, visiting other women (generally with the pretext



of having to plan some kind of collective work, or to make an offer or exchange various sorts of objects). . . . The outside, within or outside the community, is definitely, as we were able to observe in the practices of the population, a space used by women more so than men. We must not forget that even when there is fishing activity, the majority of men are at sea during the morning, and so the women have the opportunity to ‘invade’ even the most masculine spaces (like the café or the lookout point over the sea) without any constraints.

What we had the chance to see was a constant negotiation process, where there is an attempt to appropriate this or that space alternatively or simultaneously by men and women, being defined as a special framework in constant mutation, with various appropriation levels and time periods. Such appropriation depends heavily on another more general level, with the differentiated use of several cultural elements that constitute gender ideology. There was not a particular ‘woman image’, but rather a framework made up of several images, always subjected to recomposition, either in the choice of pertinent elements in this or that situation, or in the relative value attributed to those elements. It should be noted that these recompositions cannot be seen as pacific and consensual processes but rather as an object of conflict and differentiation, when opposing or uniting, according to concrete situations, these or those individuals, favouring different types of relations with different objectives. Only in this way does the ideology of gender obtain the contours of a ‘social fact’: social and, therefore, relational and situational. (Meneses and Mendes 1996: 70–71)

With this I do not wish to state that matters of gender are less relevant in the context of Azenha do Mar. I only intend to clarify that the use of the masculine pronoun ‘fishermen’ does not relegate women to second place. They are an essential group for fishing activity, the appropriation of space and the establishing of community feelings. As stated above, the ideology of gender is both relational and situational. I have not ignored it in my analysis; rather, I have integrated it into the relational whole made up of these individuals and the environment (to which they belong), which is after all my main objective. With this idea, I ‘use’ Azenha do Mar as an ethnographic example.

Ethnography is an exercise of similitude and likelihood. What I describe, what I tell only produces meaning for the reader because they associate what they read with something that, in some way, is familiar to them. This can be a field of knowledge (other ethnographies, for example) or personal experience (which is, perhaps, constituted by a visit to an ethnographed place). It is in this similitude that the likelihood of ethnographic narratives rests. Because of this, but also because I consider that fieldwork with observer participation is

the nucleus (and a surplus) of anthropology, I have centred the description of my research objective on an ethnographic example that I consider particularly heuristic: a fishing population that appeared only recently or, in other words, without ‘antecedents’ (cf. Fernandez n.d.), and little anchored in time, as we shall see in the following chapters.

In this volume, in Chapter 1, I begin by looking for the antecedents of the population and I distinguish different moments of its history. The reconstruction is based essentially on oral tradition, on interviews and on the information that I collected while doing fieldwork. Who first gives rise to a place, the different times of territorial occupation through the different types of buildings and the main migratory movements that start to sediment the town constitute themselves as aggregating elements of the narrative. I cross and frame these elements within the economic and social history of the region and the country (particularly with the introduction of mechanical equipment in the fields and with the economic recession that took place in the mid 1970s). It is, therefore, a chapter that attempts to reconstruct simultaneously, the historical depth that, ultimately, is a trope for the group’s existence as a (‘real’) social unit, and a classical form of the ethnographic text, the monograph.

Chapter 2, has the purpose of also reconstructing the becoming of a trend of thinking. I try in this chapter to show some moments lived in the field and the analytic and conceptual proposals of some authors in order to construct my own way of looking at Azenha do Mar as well as the perspectives that I conceived through time. This is a reflective exercise on what influenced me and determined my way of thinking and how I looked upon my field experience. For these purposes, I establish chronological and theoretical landmarks, as I explore the history of some current concepts, ways of thinking and sub-areas of anthropology: maritime anthropology (and/or fishing anthropology), anthropology of individuality and the notion of self and ecological anthropology. The latter is envisaged in a chronological line that attempts to show the pertinence of an analysis that considers the relation of concomitance and of mutual correspondence between the social/cultural and the natural environment. Anthony P. Cohen (especially his texts related to self-conscience, but also to community building) and Tim Ingold (regarding matters of environmental perception and the relationship between human beings and ‘nature’) are central authors in this reflection. I therefore create an archaeology of a thought, whose beginning I place in the binomial

field/literature of maritime anthropology, to reach environmental anthropology and the relationship between individuals and ecological contexts of belonging.

In Chapter 3, I return more explicitly to Azenha do Mar and rehearse a description of day-to-day life marked by the exploitation of fishery resources, trying, in this way, to establish a relational framework between the community's daily life and its environmental context. In other words, I try to put into perspective contexts of mutual determinacy between labour (the tasks associated with fishing activity) and the binomial environment/landscape where that same labour takes place. The technologies used in fishing activity, the organization of chores and the uncertainty and/or incapacity of controlling resources are, therefore, understood in a perspective that relates the interaction between human knowledge and the natural/environmental framework in which they occur.

I proceed in Chapter 4, titled 'Personal Experience and Fieldwork', with a reflection on the production of anthropological knowledge. It is my own fieldwork experience with participant observation that I concentrate on as the object of my analysis. This had the specificity of dividing itself into two different time periods: an initial one, which was developed through team work with another anthropologist, Inês Meneses, and another, carried out on my own, five years later. This fact was determinant for the different approaches and points of view that I follow throughout this chapter. Simultaneously, I explore the fieldwork experience as being itself a space for knowledge production. The relationships and friendships that I maintained with my hosts and informants, the house or the place where I lived, are overlapping elements of analysis, helping to explain some of my conclusions. As an example, Brejão, the closest place to Azenha do Mar, where the houses I lived in during the fieldwork are located, revealed itself as a place of reflection in two distinct but inseparable ways. On the one hand, it allowed for some personal 'shelter', which facilitated the analytic work on the data that I collected; on the other hand, it constituted, continuously, a 'mirror' of the fishermen's place, contributing in a very determinant way to the explicitness of the identity image attributed to the fishermen.

In reality, this chapter aims to be an exercise centred on ways of producing anthropological knowledge and, therefore, it presents fieldwork with participant observation as a process and not a methodology. At the same time, I want to solidify the exercise of verisimilitude that I mentioned earlier. Ethnography is a result of the contexts

of interaction between individuals, which deserve to be explained and clarified so that the similitude and verisimilitude of ethnographic texts is not merely something plausible, but also comprehensible in the precise ways in which they are first established: in the relationships with other beings.

In spite of this more reflective option, the methods and techniques that sustain research in the social sciences were used during the fieldwork and, although they are not considered necessarily or exclusively the instruments that shed more 'light' on what is being observed,<sup>3</sup> they deserve some recognition.

The literature in Portugal on methodology in/for anthropology is rather sparse. The works of Carlos D. Moreira, *Planeamento e Estratégias da Investigação Social* (1994) and *Teorias e Práticas de Investigação* (2007), along with one other book of a more reflective nature, *Experiência Etnográfica em Ciências Sociais*, edited by Telmo Caria (2005), are notorious and, together, help to offset the lack of methodology manuals in the social sciences written by anthropologists for anthropologists.<sup>4</sup> It is therefore necessary that some methods and techniques used in the research process for this volume should be commented upon.

The population census, an instrument that made it possible to know each one of the domestic groups, and at the same time allowed the presentation of the researcher(s) and their objectives, was followed by the selection of the population, and was based on a form with previously prepared questions that inquired about the composition of the household – among other things, the number of members, genealogy, places of origin, education, professional occupation, type of housing, date of settlement, fisherman or not, what type of vessel, company, fishing technology and so on. This same census gave rise to the structuring of a questionnaire that was applied to the population and that attempted to discover the individual reasons behind the migration movement to Azenha do Mar. At that point, due to doubts and gaps in the information, but with enough data to design open-ended interviews, we proceeded to what is called participant observation. That is to say, the 'field calendar' was now determined by the people with whom we were in contact, taking into consideration their professional commitments and other factors. Therefore, the interviews and/or questions (for example about the art of fishing and the various species) were conditioned by the population's daily life and, sometimes, by their suggestions and requests. It should be noted here that no tape recorder was used, simply because it was re-

quested by most people. This established a pattern of research that aimed to create equal terms among ‘informants’, avoiding situations of doubt and suspicion.

Finally, a note about using photography. As we know, visual anthropology has established itself and, at the same time, has reached a position of notoriety (Banks 1997). However, in this research, perhaps due to the lack of specific preparation, video was not used and photography was always considered a technique of accessory research that tended to the static fixation of the population’s daily life and to document artefacts used for fishing. In spite of this, after two periods already spent in the field, looking at the pictures taken, they stand out not only for their aesthetic quality, but essentially for their ambivalence, showing compositions that are susceptible to being analysed independently of the larger context in which they happened, as well as drawing our attention to what is beyond the fixed frame.

If these references to methods and techniques used during fieldwork are justified, I believe that a deeper analysis of the process of immersion in the field is required. This is to say, ‘life’ in the field as a research ‘method’ acquires larger relevance when we recognize that participant observation is without a doubt and in a very determined way conditioned in its objectives by the inherent subjectivities of each researcher. Hence the option used for Chapter 4.

Azenha do Mar, while not being a very touristic place, is located on an extension of coastline where tourism has grown exponentially in recent decades. If in Chapter 3 I explore the relationship between individuals and ‘nature’, in Chapter 5 I relate the building of a community and the local scenario with the presence of tourists. I privilege the approach that considers the individual’s consciousness of themselves as the first *locus* in establishing the social and, in this, the phenomena of inter-communication between hosts and guests. I divide the latter into two distinct groups: ‘residential tourists’ and tourists (those who visit but stay no more than a few days). In order to establish this distinction, I trace the region’s tourism ‘history’, and here I make evident the role of some of the tourists and the specificity of their interrelationship with the inhabitants of Azenha. This interrelationship has contributed to the transformation of the value that the locals attribute to the natural scenario of the region, changing the notion of relative periphery and the ways in which they see their way of life and themselves.

In Chapter 6, I return to the concept of community and confront it with what is experienced, lived, in Azenha. With that objective, I

trace a history of the concept of community in the social sciences, especially in what pertains to anthropology; I set it alongside the ‘emic’ expressions that allow us to understand how the feeling of community arises within the population. I understand the notion of community as an ethical expression to translate other expressions and, above all, inclusion and distinction, feelings of belonging and exclusion felt by people who belong to a certain group.

In this perspective, I proceed with the analysis of images that are projected about Azenha, particularly those that derive from Brejão. As such, the fishing activity and the images that are centred on who practises it are contextualized, simultaneously, in the day-to-day of the population, in its own history and in the possible historical justifications for the images that were being drawn of the majority of the population and fishermen.

I also return to the relation between settlement and natural scenario, and I attempt a ‘human ecology’ to understand Azenha as a society. For this purpose, I make use of Tim Ingold’s proposals on perception of the environment and (re)settlement of human beings as *organism-persons*, therefore subject to development processes not detached from ecological contexts. As such, I propose an understanding that considers the individuals and their ways of social organization as part of an intricate relationship among themselves (as entities, as well as collectives) and the scenario in which they live and integrate. I am, therefore, finishing a train of thought in which Azenha do Mar is understood as an ‘adaptive response’ to social contexts (historical, economic and cultural), but also to ecological frameworks. The use of technologies, the social and professional competencies, the individual intentions (often shared), the competition that may be seen in lying and secrecy appear, in this way, as elements of a social life that cannot be disconnected from the ecological contexts in which they occur. But, as I suggest, this does not mean that the processes of individuality and/or of adaptation override the search for ways of social and cultural organization. On the contrary, the objective of the entire text is, in brief, to try to understand how social ties are established, the sense of community, and what relevance the perception of nature has for social organization. These are the answers that I look for. Azenha do Mar, being a recent settlement, is a good place for a reflection that questions why we organize ourselves in certain ways and, therefore, how the situations in which we integrate and, at the same time, what surrounds us are implied in those same forms of social organization.

Kay Milton, one of the authors who has worked more on ‘environmental matters’ (whether environmental movements, emotional relations that individuals establish with the surrounding environment, or the concomitant relation that is established between forms of social organization and the ecological contexts in which they occur), similarly to Tim Ingold, considers that it is not possible to ponder social learning processes without considering the ways in which individuals perceive the surrounding environment (see, for example, Milton 2002; Ingold and Kurttila 2000). In fact, listening to the individuals of Azenha do Mar talking about their lives, we are able to understand that the sea is what determines their day-to-day. The sea is always an imperative common denominator of the ways in which time and space are occupied. For a better understanding of how the sea emerges as a structuring factor, one has to recall the moments (which may extend for months) in which it is not possible to go out to sea to fish and, therefore, families’ financial resources are drastically reduced (or non-existent), with all the inherent consequences. Therefore, the recurrence of the expression that designates this text, ‘the sea commands’, assumes the outline of an axiom for one of the structuring factors of Azenha do Mar’s social group. For the fishermen, the proposition is in fact quite evident. This is to say, the power of the sea is not thought of in a figurative sense. It is, rather, experienced corporeally and daily. Making use of a fisherman’s words, ‘the prices at the fish auction may go up or down and we earn more or less, but it is the sea that gives and takes away our food’.

Finally, a word on some options that inform, structure and organize this text from an epistemological and formal point of view.

Italo Calvino in *Six Memos for the Next Millennium* (a posthumous volume that compiles a cycle of six conferences on literary values for the twenty-first century, which took place at Harvard University) advocates ‘Lightness’, ‘Speed’, ‘Exactness’, ‘Visibility’, ‘Multitude’ and the ‘Beginning and Ending’ as elements that should be preserved, developed and made visible in literary production (Calvino 1990). These same values, these same conferences surpassed the field of (fictional) literature and became, somehow and for some, philosophy and/or an ethic. I certainly do not comply with Italo Calvino’s suggestions. However, I try to keep the text light, fast and exact. At the same time, I attempt a multiple approach to what may result from the experience of participant observation (as will be evident in the different chapters), and I wish to give visibility to that multiplicity so that I may finish what I believe to have started, with

Inês Meneses, in *Se o Mar Deixar* (1996). For this reason, every time I thought it would be useful, I ‘revisited’ that text and integrated it into this new account of my personal and ethnographic experience of Azenha do Mar. If, with this text, I am opening new paths for analysis that I would like to pursue, I would also like to finish what I started in *If the Sea Allows It* and, above all, get closer to possible answers to the many questions, doubts and ‘dissatisfactions’ that remained at the time.

The multitude of approaches that I seek is based on the various textual style forms that I used and in the different perspectives that I tried. As I said earlier, this introduction is followed by chapters that are more ‘orthodox’ and ‘ethnographic’ in form, and others in which I have tried a more essayistic style, more prone to interpretation. At the same time, I tried to look at Azenha do Mar from different perspectives, considering that the *multitude is what structures a community*. Therefore, the perspectives that I use may claim an ontological anthropology or an ethnography of material culture. In this way, I tried to consubstantiate the recent proposals of Viveiros de Castro, which may be, provocatively, summed up in the phrase ‘The anthropologist necessarily uses his own culture; the native is sufficiently used by his’ (Castro 2002: 114), and I attempted a writing style that would contribute to an anthropology that not only tries to think the ‘other’ from his own discourse, but is also capable of being shared outside the academy walls, for it not only avoids the excessive strange conceptualization of the ‘native’, but tries with the description to refer possible questions and answers to the *arguments presented locally*. It is exactly here that I consider the pertinence of nature or/and how it is perceived. If we know that there are several factors that contributed to the ‘birth’ and maintenance of Azenha do Mar (see Chapters 1 to 3), in the discourses of the locals who inhabit it, ‘nature’ is exalted as the main element in their lives. I understand, therefore, that the perception of the environment contributes to particular worldviews that, in turn, condition forms of social organization. This is uniquely notorious in the ways in which the territory, the scenario is perceived and valued locally (see Chapters 5 and 6).

As I have stated, the sea emerges as a metaphor especially apt for this perception, as it materializes in one of nature’s elements over which we have less control. To make the metaphor evident is a daily exercise carried out by the fishermen. Thus, I repeat, the title ‘the sea commands’.



## Notes

1. The use of a diary, a ‘tradition’ of anthropological research which culminated in the controversial publication of Bronislaw Malinowski’s diaries in 1967 (a publication that was authorized and published by Malinowski’s second wife, and with an introduction written by his student, Raymond Firth), was a constant throughout my field research. I gathered descriptions, accounts, ideas and even reviews of texts in several notebooks during and after field research. In these volumes I made daily entries in which I accounted for all that I had done during the day. Usually, I wrote at night. As the fieldwork went on, the entries became more selective and, I now realize, written with more prospective reflections, more than mere descriptions; I took note of ideas with the possible text in mind. Perhaps I was, then, moving from an ethnography to an attempt at an anthropological essay.
2. Another aspect that may eventually require a more complete explanation has to do with smuggling and drug trafficking. I distinguish these two activities not because of imposing moral or legal reasons of my own, but because they are locally understood/judged in a totally different way. The first activity mentioned, smuggling, was widespread in the recent past (until Portugal joined the European Union); it was practised by a large part of the population and considered a legitimate source of income, although recognized as illegal and subject to sanctions. It is still carried out, although with much less frequency. The second activity mentioned, drug trafficking, is not common; it is carried out by very few individuals and is not accepted as a legitimate activity. But both activities, as I mention in the following chapters, were/are vital in order to understand some social changes (and even the buildings and landscape) in Azenha. I do not explore them in my analysis, because (a) I do not think I should contribute to limiting anybody’s liberty; (b) I should not reveal what I always understood to be the population’s ‘secrets’; and (c) because I was asked not to speak much about these matters.
3. This is to say, I do not believe that the set of techniques and methods applied during anthropological research (interviews, census, life or family stories, etc.) is a more valid tool for data collection than the apparently simple act of ‘being there’, to invoke Clifford Geertz’s famous expression (1988). On the contrary, it seems to me that it is the fact of remaining in the field for quite a long time that allows us to: (a) collect more information; (b) select, with pertinence, the appropriate research techniques and methods; and (c), above all, highlight the advantage of anthropology: the communication of information based on personal experience.
4. In 2016, myself and Humberto Martins edited a book, *Trabalho de Campo: Envolvimento e Experiências em Antropologia* (Fieldwork: Involvement and Experiences in Anthropology) with the aim to close

this gap. In 2019, again with Humberto Martins, I edited another book, *Contos Antropológicos* (Anthropological Tales), on personal fieldwork experiences but specifically asking the different contributors to give freedom to their literary creativity in order to put into written words what is usually recalled as an anecdote or silenced in academic texts.