



An Agronomy School for the Amazon: elements of implementation of Higher Agricultural Education in the Northern region of Brazil (1945-1972)

Uma Escola de Agronomia para a Amazônia: elementos da implantação do Ensino Superior Agrícola na região Norte do Brasil (1945-1972)

Una Escuela de Agronomía para la Amazonia: elementos de la implementación de la Educación Agrícola Superior en la Región Norte de Brasil (1945-1972)

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Abstract

This historiographical study is based on the *Escola de Agronomia da Amazônia* (EAA), created in 1945. The time frame corresponds to the school's existence, from 1945 to 1972. The research falls within the field of History of Education and uses Oral History as its methodology; iconographic documents, newspaper articles, legislation of the time and official documents were added to the empirical evidence of memory narratives. The research objectives are related to the possibility of identifying the conditions that led to the implementation of a higher education school of Agronomy in Belém do Pará and the elements that motivated its establishment, between the 1940s and 1950s. In this way, its establishment process is also examined. As the memories advance, in a process of reminiscences, the narratives indicate that it was a school which provided considerable support for the development of education, as it was an institution that acquired academic fame and prestige.

Keywords: History of Institutions; Rural Higher Education; Agronomy School of Amazon.

Resumo

Este estudo de cunho historiográfico tem como *lôcus* a Escola de Agronomia da Amazônia (EAA), criada em 1945. O recorte temporal corresponde ao tempo de existência da escola, de 1945 a 1972. O trabalho inscreve-se no campo da História da Educação e tem como metodologia a História Oral; somaram-se, à empiria das narrativas de memória, documentos iconográficos, notícias de jornais, legislação da época e documentos oficiais. Os objetivos da investigação relacionam-se à possibilidade de identificar as condições que levaram à implementação de uma escola superior de Agronomia em Belém do Pará e os elementos motivadores de sua instalação, entre as décadas de 1940 e 1950; examina-se, ainda, seu processo de constituição. À medida que as memórias avançam, em um processo de reminiscências, as narrativas indicam que se tratava de uma escola de considerável suporte ao desenvolvimento do ensino, por ser uma instituição que adquiriu fama e prestígio acadêmicos.

Palavras-chave: História das Instituições; Ensino Superior Rural; Escola de Agronomia da Amazônia.

Resumen

Este estudio historiográfico tiene como sede la Escuela Amazónica de Agronomía (EAA), creada en 1945. El marco temporal corresponde al tiempo de existencia de la escuela, de 1945 a 1972. El trabajo se encuadra en el campo de la Historia de la Educación y utiliza como metodología la Historia Oral; a la evidencia empírica se sumaron relatos de memoria, documentos iconográficos, informes periodísticos, legislación de la época y documentos oficiales. Los objetivos de la investigación están relacionados con la posibilidad de identificar las condiciones que llevaron a la implementación de una escuela superior de Agronomía en Belém do Pará y los elementos motivadores de su instalación, entre las décadas de 1940 y 1950; examinando también su proceso de constitución. A medida que avanzan los recuerdos, en un proceso de reminiscencia, las narrativas indican que fue una escuela con un apoyo considerable para el desarrollo de la enseñanza, pues fue una institución que adquirió fama y prestigio académico.

Palabras clave: Historia de las Instituciones; Educación Superior Rural; Escuela Amazónica de Agronomía.

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Introduction

This study addresses the process of implementing a Higher Education School of Agronomy, created by Decree-Law No. 8,290, of December 5, 1951, in the city of Belém/PA¹. The purpose of the institution was to train agricultural engineers who would work in the typical environment of Northern Brazil.

The objectives of the study are related to the possibility of identifying the conditions that led to the implementation of a Higher Education School of Agronomy in Belém do Pará and the elements that motivated its establishment, between the 1940s and 1950s, as well as examining its establishment process, from the arduous path of the installation of this space to its recognition – by the Belém do Pará community – as an outstanding institution in the training of professionals to work in rural areas. In this sense, the question is: what representations were produced, through the subjects' memories, about the training process at the *Escola de Agronomia da Amazônia* (EAA).

According to Magalhães (2004), the history of the educational system is not a sum of juxtaposed school institutions, nor does the history of one of these institutions become possible outside of a coherent whole. It is in the domains of representation and appropriation of the subjects who lived in it that an educational institution manifests itself as a broader, more complex whole, related to an educational system, a geographic space, a political context, thus composing a certain dimension of coherence.

Educational institutions have common features and are similar in different ways, but they also present singularities. Among the elements that make them unique are the historical and political contexts in which they were created, the subjects that integrate them, the physical, material and financial structures, as well as the cultures that they develop and share. In this sense, the possibility of problematizing the relations that shape the institutional contexts of each of these organizations becomes powerful for studies in the field of History of Education.

In the course of the research, in search of empirical data to understand the training process at EAA, we chose to work with oral narratives, since they are the memories of the subjects that produce certain representations about the place of an institution. According to Amado and Ferreira (2006), Oral History, as a research methodology, enables the production of unique historical documents; the narratives, the result of the interaction between interviewer and interviewee, allow us to work with these oral testimonies as the main source of study. Thus, the memories, produced through dialogues with the participating subjects, constitute the main documentary source of this research.

In the chosen excerpt, an analysis was made that encompasses the history of the *Escola de Agronomia da Amazônia* as a space for higher education, an analysis whose emphasis lies in the study of the representations that wander between the geographic isolation of the institution and the ignorance of its existence, until it conquered a prominent place as a thriving space, which conferred status to those who attended it.

Paths taken: between written and oral documents

Oral History, as a methodological research option, brings together elements that make it powerful, but it doesn't have certain limitations in its execution process. When thinking about the challenges faced in carrying out this research, the researcher's insecurities and fear of not being well received by the subjects identified as potential narrators come to mind, as well as the uncertainty of being able to locate them.

¹ The article presented here is an excerpt from the doctoral thesis defended by Ranyelle Foro de Sousa, in the Postgraduate Program in Education at Unisinos, entitled *Memórias de uma instituição de ensino superior em Belém do Pará: uma história da Escola de Agronomia da Amazônia (1945-1972)*.

In the research developed for this article, access to the interviewees was built as the investigation progressed. In this research process, it is important to reflect that the time and spaces shared by the subjects who experienced the establishment of the *Escola de Agronomia da Amazônia* (EAA) no longer exist in the present: they are only in the memories of those who knew and shared experiences in its environment in the past. The institution researched persists today, with a new name, new structures and new people, but the memory of the meanings shared by each interviewee traces a path from past times to the present day. This is one of the reasons why we chose to use Oral History as the methodology for this study. This methodology depends on people who are willing to tell their stories: in the case of this project, we found students and teachers who had lived through such experiences in the not-so-distant past and who reconstructed their memories of EAA in the present.

At the beginning of the investigation, one fact that shed light on the process was contact with Walmir Hugo dos Santos Monteiro, an 85-year-old man who, since the 1990s, has held the public office of special advisor to the *Reitoria da Universidade Federal Rural da Amazônia* (UFRA). He is one of the few who has written the history of the institution.

Sharing the research intentions with him resulted in a phrase full of excitement, joy and a sparkle in the eyes: “[...] I thought that no one but me would be interested in the history of this Institution, your research is a crowning achievement for the University, how can I help you?” And he helped a lot. On the same day, Walmir called five contacts who were on a list he had already provided. He made a point of telling them about the research and played an important role in convincing many of them to collaborate. At the end of the meeting, Walmir asked that interviews be scheduled with all those he had previously indicated and, lastly, with him, which in fact happened. Thus, interviews were conducted with Antônio Carlos Albério, Waldir João da Silva Monteiro, Ítalo Cláudio Falesi, Maria da Glória Cunha Aguiar, Maria de Fátima Alves, Elias Sefer, Eva Maria Abufaiad, Emeleocípio Botelho de Andrade, Emir El-Husny and, finally, Walmir Hugo Pontes dos Santos Monteiro.

All of them, with the exception of Elias, were former students and/or former teachers at the school. It was through Antônio Carlos that we managed to locate Elias, the only living former director, who administered the school from 1961 until it was transformed into the *Faculdades de Ciências Agrárias do Pará* (FCAP).

Before starting the interviews, the process of collecting other documents was carried out in the following way: a visit to the *Empresa Brasileira de Pesquisa Agropecuária* (Embrapa) and UFRA, where some available documents kept in the collections of these institutions were identified. Embrapa had access to a biography of scientist Felisberto Camargo, founder of EAA, in a book entitled *O Homem que tentou domar o Amazonas* (Ferreira, 2011). Despite the boastful nature of the biography, reading this work allowed us to learn a little about the life, history and ideals of the aforementioned scientist in the context of higher agricultural education in the state of Pará. Another find was the magazine *Norte Agrônomo* (1954). It contains the speech by Felisberto Camargo, given at the inauguration ceremony of classes at EAA. The EAA Ordinances No. 110, dated March 14, 1951 (EAA, 1951), and No. 134, dated March 31, 1952 (EAA, 1952a), which deal with the criteria for granting scholarships to students at the school, were also found. The EAA Report for the 1951 academic year (EAA, 1952b) and the EAA Report for the study excursion (EAA, 1953) were also found, all archived in each of the spaces mentioned.

In the special advisory room of the UFRA Rectorate, three publications that reference the EAA were accessed, namely: *A Escola de Agronomia da Amazônia e Faculdade Memorial histórico 1951-1991* (1992); *A Escola de Agronomia da Amazônia e a Faculdade de Ciências Agrárias do Pará no contexto sócio-educacional da Amazônia* (2003); *Registros históricos: contribuições à memória da Universidade Federal Rural da Amazônia* (2014). These documents are dedicated to recording events, historical developments, and great

achievements of the main administrators who have worked at the institution. These documents helped to compose the mosaic of the constitution and consolidation of the EAA. They are unilateral, chronological, and linear versions of the events, but fundamental to this research; and, as in the case of any document, we were responsible for problematizing the information conveyed in them.

In the *Biblioteca Pública Arthur Vianna*, located in Belém, the location of microfilmed newspapers helped to understand the discursive production about EAA in the time period of interest to this study. These are four publications from *Folha do Norte*, “*Criada a Escola de Agronomia da Amazônia*” (1945) and “*Instalar-se-á amanhã a Escola de Agronomia da Amazônia*” (1951); and *O Liberal*, “*Instalada a Escola de Agronomia da Amazônia*” (1951) and “*Solenemente instalada a Escola de Agronomia da Amazônia*”. These publications give an idea of the impact of the installation of such a higher education space in the Amazon Region. The journalistic articles have as their objective the dissemination of the creation of the EAA and the celebration of the beginning of the school's activities. In this sense, such news helped in the construction of social representations about the EAA in that period.

Another collection of documents that was used was the *Arquivo Público do Pará*. This space was installed on a large counter, with almost no ventilation, with stacked boxes, and did not have any information system for conducting the research. The searches were carried out through a folder/catalog in which the subjects were referenced. No documents on the EAA was identified on site. This experience at the *Arquivo Público* refers to the words of Bacellar (2005, p. 49), according to whom “venturing into the archives [...] is always a challenge of working in precarious facilities, with poorly stored and preserved documents, and poorly organized”. In addition to these sources, a video located in digital media was produced by the project *A UFPA e os Anos de Chumbo: memórias, traumas, silêncios e cultura educacional* (1964-1985).

In Chart 1 below, we systematize the locations where written documents were found, the number of documents found and their typologies. Giving visibility to these sources and their access locations shortens the path for other researchers who may one day be interested in them.

Chart 1: Survey of sources identified before the interviews

Local	Quantity	Description of sources
EMBRAPA	06	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Book <i>O Homem que tentou domar o Amazonas</i> (2011). • Journal <i>Norte Agrônomo</i> (1954). • Ordinance EAA nº 110, de 14 de março de 1951. • Ordinance EAA nº 134, de 31 de março de 1952. • Report <i>EAA do ano letivo de 1951</i> (1952) • Report <i>EAA de excursão de estudos</i> (1953).
UFRA	04	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Book <i>A Escola de Agronomia da Amazônia e Faculdade Memorial histórico 1951-1991</i> (1992). • Book <i>A Escola de Agronomia da Amazônia e a Faculdade de Ciências Agrárias do Pará no contexto socioeducacional da Amazônia</i> (2003). • “<i>Registros históricos: contribuições à memória da Universidade Federal Rural da Amazônia</i>” (2014). • “<i>Memorial fotográfico: EAA, FCAP, UFRA – 60 anos dedicados à Amazônia</i>” (2011).
UFRA	02	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decree law nº 8.290, de 5 de dezembro de 1945, which created the <i>Escola de Agronomia da Amazônia</i>. • Decree law nº 65.943, de 23 de dezembro de 1969, which approved the <i>Estatuto da Escola de Agronomia da Amazônia</i>.

Biblioteca Arthur Vianna	04	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News “<i>Criada a Escola de Agronomia da Amazônia</i>” (<i>Folha do Norte</i>, 1945, p. 1). • News “<i>Instalar-se-á amanhã a Escola de Agronomia da Amazônia</i>” (<i>O Liberal</i>, 1951, p. 2). • News “<i>Instalada a Escola de Agronomia da Amazônia</i>” (<i>Folha do Norte</i>, 1951, p. 1). • News “<i>Solenemente instalada a Escola de Agronomia da Amazônia</i>” (<i>O Liberal</i>, 1951, p. 1).
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Source: Prepared by the authors.

After collecting and separating the aforementioned documents by typologies and subjects, the narratives of those who were willing to speak were produced. Through the memories of each person, linked to the written sources, the empirical *corpus* of the investigation was constituted, which enabled the historical production based on the representations about a space of agricultural higher education in the Northern Region of Brazil. Before continuing, it is worth returning to the objective of this article, which is to identify the conditions that led to the implementation of a higher education school of Agronomy in Belém do Pará and the elements that motivated its installation between the 1940s and 1950s, as well as to examine its process of recognition in the community of Belém do Pará.

In order to achieve the defined objectives, the development of the state of Pará and its relation with the EAA are analyzed below, from its beginnings, when it was lacking fame and attended by poor students, until its recognition as a space with its own architecture and notable academic merit.

The development of Pará and its relation with the *Escola de Agronomia da Amazônia*

Magalhães (2004, p. 162) assures that the history of educational institutions occurs with the aim of creating a coherent narrative that gives them a historical identity, articulating the materiality that involves “times, spaces, structures, organization, which are activated as forms of organization, regulations, curriculum, pedagogies”, among other particularities related to these spaces

Aware that it is not possible to cover all these aspects within the scope of one article, we have chosen three elements that are related to the subjects, space and time of the creation of the EAA. For this purpose, it is important to clarify some contextual issues related to the state of Pará.

In its more than 400 years of history, Belém has experienced times of greater socioeconomic development, including the rubber boom, which lasted from the mid-19th century to the early 20th century, when the regional elite strove to promote urban reforms that reflected the signs of material comfort and progress facilitated by the rubber business.

During this period, Moreira (1977) states that primary and vocational education developed considerably; however, the same did not happen with higher education. Only two higher education institutions were created: the *Faculdade Livre de Direito*, in 1902, and the *Escola de Farmácia*, in 1904. With the rubber crisis, the elite no longer had sufficient resources to send their children to study abroad. The solution was to encourage the creation and expansion of local Higher Education to train their intellectuals. After the creation of the aforementioned courses, in chronological order, the following emerged: the *Faculdade de Odontologia* (1914) and the *Escola Agrônômica do Pará* (1918). However, despite the intention of local politicians to invest in development alternatives for the region, the region remained in “hibernation” for a long time.

It was precisely during the Second World War that the region once again became the focus of government actions and planning. With the entry of the United States into the conflict, Brazil made agreements, committing to the supply of natural rubber for war reinforcement. The national State, supported by the Washington Accords, began a new process of promoting public policies in the Amazon, with the aim of creating social and economic infrastructure in the context of the new rubber extraction cycle. It is worth noting that, during this period, an important agricultural research agency was created in Belém, called the *Instituto Agrônômico do Norte* (IAN).

In the educational field, many efforts by the federal government were made in the region, starting in the second half of the 1940s. The first higher education institution conceived in this period was precisely in the agricultural area. In Belém, the EAA was created and inaugurated, which, despite being created in 1945, would only be inaugurated six years later, in 1951. It is the only agricultural Higher Education institution created in Brazil between the 1940s and 1950s.

However, the EAA was not the first agricultural Higher Education institution in the Amazon, nor in Belém. In the Amazon region, the first agricultural higher education course dates back to 1912, with the creation of the Agronomy course at the *Escola Universitária Livre de Manaus*, in the state of Amazonas. This course operated until 1943 and was closed due to lack of recognition by the Ministry of Agriculture.

In the 1940s, with the aim of resuming higher education with an agricultural focus, the then director of IAN, Felisberto Camargo, presented the federal government with a project to create a higher education school of Agronomy, linked to the institute itself, which was supposed to fill the gap left by the closure of schools in Pará, Amazonas and Maranhão (Ferreira, 2011).

Through vicarious memories, which occur “when the memories of others become a part of reality for those who hear them, but had not experienced the events [to] which the memories refer” (Errante, 2000, p. 165), Emeleocípio narrates, from what he heard from Felisberto Camargo and other people with whom he lived at the IAN, details of Felisberto’s own efforts to create the EAA:

Felisberto, using the prestige he had with [...] President Getúlio Vargas, knew that it would be easy to approve such a project. However, in 1945, when the School project was almost finished, on October 29, as we all know, Getúlio was deposed. Felisberto rushed the completion of the document and took it personally to the Ministry of Agriculture and, immediately afterwards, went to talk to President Vargas and asked him to use his prestige to approve the project. Logically, the normal procedures within the Ministry of Agriculture were followed. At that time, agricultural education was within the Ministry of Agriculture and the procedures were very slow, so he went back to Vargas and asked him to use his prestige with the interim president, José Linhares, to sign the creation of the School (Emeleocípio Andrade, Interview, 08/10/2016).

In light of these memories and others produced during this study, it is clear that the community feels indebted to Felisberto Camargo, who is credited with the achievement of the Agronomy course and the implementation of the EAA as a whole. The EAA was created with the purpose of preparing agronomists for the typical environment of the North of the country. The Decree-Law since its creation ordered that the institution operate in close cooperation with the IAN, using all the equipment and facilities of the Institute for the development of academic activities. The IAN technicians were assigned the performance of teaching functions, according to the possibilities of each one. Until the time when the school had its own organization, it

should follow the regulatory standards of the *Escola Nacional de Agronomia* (ENA). It was also established that the EAA would be put into partial operation, according to the availability of funds from the Ministry of Agriculture, and that, until further deliberation, the direction of the EAA would be exercised by the director of the IAN (Brazil, 1945).

The opening of the EAA allowed students of the old *Escola de Agronomia do Pará*, closed in 1943, to continue their studies at a higher level. An article published in the newspaper *O Liberal*, on April 4, 1951, clarifies to those interested how to proceed to enroll in the EAA.

On April 16, 1951, the same newspaper announced that the EAA would be opened the following day. The news shows that the beginning of the institution's operations represents the realization of a long-standing desire of the region's youth, which confirms the importance of the school in contributing to solutions to problems related to national agriculture.

This and other articles in the newspaper *O Liberal* attribute the aspiration of the creation of the EAA to the youth of Belém, as if it were a desire of the community, of its young people, in a process of collective mobilization². However, as it was possible to perceive during the research, it is much more about the will of some members of the society of Belém do Pará, with political influence in the federal spheres and who, due to some conspiracies of that historical moment, achieved their goal. So much so that we will see, during the research, how long it took for the EAA to gain legitimacy in that territory.

The personality who became notorious in this creation process, Felisberto Camargo, gave the inauguration speech, when the EAA was still linked to the IAN. He influenced the construction and installation of the building in which it operates to this day.

Regarding the construction of the building, “Felisberto demanded that the front of the School of Agronomy be facing the floodplain, because he believed that the floodplain was the breadbasket of the Amazon and of the world as a whole, due to the production and fertility of the floodplain” (Ítalo Falesi, Interview, 22/02/2016).

This building was designed along the lines of the Brazilian colonial style, with a two-story central body and a main entrance. In addition to the classrooms and laboratories, the following facilities were planned: auditorium with capacity for 538 people; congregation room; amphitheater; reading room; teacher's room; coffee room; director's office; secretary's office; school service; reception; two side halls; four exits to internal courtyards; three darkrooms; two scale rooms; six storage rooms and fourteen toilets (EAA, 1952).

Viñao Frago (2001) states that the fact that a school institution achieves its own building and is architecturally identified as such is partly related to the degree of independence it has acquired in relation to other institutions. In the specific case of EAA, the transfer of the school to its own facility demonstrated, in a certain measure, the breaking of its close dependence on the IAN and the consolidation of its process of spatial autonomy.

Based on the memories recorded, some categories were thought of and organized, with the aim of analyzing, in addition to the common and recurring themes, also the idiosyncrasies present in the narratives of the interviewees. With this perspective, we sought, as already mentioned, to answer the problem of this research, namely: what representations were produced, through the subjects' memories, about the training process at EAA?

² “The *Escola de Agronomia da Amazônia* will be established tomorrow. Opening the doors of agricultural science to the youth of the Amazon, tomorrow at 5:00 p.m., the inaugural lecture of the *Escola de Agronomia da Amazônia* will be held at the *Palácio do Comércio*. The ceremony will be a landmark in the country's educational life due to its importance for the future, since, in addition to satisfying an old aspiration of the Amazon youth, it directly affects one of the most pressing problems of the nation, namely agriculture. Thus, tomorrow, through the authoritative words of agronomist Felisberto Camargo, we will have the establishment of the *Escola de Agronomia da Amazônia*.” (1951, p.2)

According to Chartier (1988, p. 17), the concept of *representation* can be understood as “incorporated intellectual schemes that create the figures thanks to which the present can acquire meaning, the other can become intelligible and the space can be deciphered”. In this sense, the interviewees produced, through their memories, meanings about the past of the institution, a set of shared meanings that allowed us to historicize certain elements of EAA. In the research section presented here, two aspects were chosen for discussion: first, the beginning of the Agronomy course as a space without prestige; secondly, the achievement of academic merit as an important institution in the formation of rural higher education in the North of Brazil.

A beginning without prestige and attended by poor students

In the interviews conducted, there are many narratives about the EAA. These are memories that, produced by each subject, sometimes coincide, sometimes present specificities pertinent to all studies that have oral memories as their anchors for analysis. The different points of view, the idiosyncrasies and the similarities are aspects that challenge a historiographical production, regardless of the type of documentation mobilized.

In the context of this research, the memories bring elements that allude to the geographical conditions and the lack of knowledge about the Agronomy course, as the main causes of its lack of prestige at the time of its establishment. These factors contributed to the construction of representations that refer to the course – and, consequently, to the institution – as a space destined for the poor.

When recalling memories of the school's existence, the subjects produced reflections that led to an image of EAA as a little-known and unrecognized institution. It was common to hear about students learning about EAA's existence by chance, through relatives who were close to someone who worked at the school, or through a contemporaneous student who wanted to study or who was already studying Agronomy at the institution. As an example, Waldir, who enrolled as a student at EAA in 1952, stated that he had no idea of its existence and that he had no knowledge of Agronomy, nor did he intend to be an agronomist. He had taken the entrance exam for Civil Engineering and had not been accepted. Then, a friend of his father told him about the existence of the school. Waldir decided to go to the institution, took the test and passed, becoming a student in EAA's second class. In this regard, the interviewee highlighted: “[...] I had no idea that the School of Agronomy existed, [...] I must confess that I did not fulfill any desire of mine, any inclination, any vocation, in fact it was just an opportunity to attend Higher Education” (Waldir, Interview, 04/03/2016).

Ítalo, another interviewee, took the entrance exam for Medicine in 1951, but was unsuccessful. He also did not know that the EAA existed in Belém, or even what the profession of agronomist was about. In a meeting with an old school friend who was in the second year of Agronomy at the EAA, the information came up. Upon learning that Ítalo had not been successful in the selection process for the Medicine course, his friend asked him if he was interested in studying Agronomy at EAA, to which he replied: “[...] what to do? Agronomy? What is Agronomy? Where is this school?”. Ítalo then invited his friend Francisco Pereira, who had not passed the entrance exam for Civil Engineering, to visit EAA together. They decided to take the selection process for Agronomy in 1953, passed and were part of the third class.

Waldir confirmed that, at the time he took the entrance exam, in 1953, little was known about the profession of Agricultural Engineer. Maria de Fátima, when she was in the third year of science at *Colégio Público Paes de Carvalho*, in 1958, found out by chance, through a classmate, that there was an Agronomy school in the city and that it provided free transportation to those interested. Together, they decided to check out the institution. The students interviewed, those who studied at EAA from the 1960s onwards – such as Maria Margarida,

Emir El-Husny, Emeleocípio, Antônio Carlos and Antônio Ronaldo – confirmed that they only became aware of the existence of an Agronomy school in the city through acquaintances who had professional or academic ties to the institution. Thus, the set of narratives demonstrates, among the students, the EAA and the profession of Agricultural Engineer were little known.

In addition to the lack of information among the residents of Belém about the institution, the course itself did not add any value to the future professional. The work of the agronomist was ignored and, probably, little needed, at that historical moment, in the space in question.

The geographic location of the EEA was another impediment to admission, as it was considered far from the center of Belém, located in an area that was difficult to get around. In this regard, Magalhães (2004) points out that the place occupied by a building in the physical and human landscape, as well as its forms of access or isolation, reflect, condition or stimulate the relation of that place with the community that surrounds it.

It is important to note that there was no public transportation on *Avenida Perimetral* in Belém until the mid-1960s. In order to solve the situation, the school began offering a free means of transportation from the beginning of its academic activities: a bus, called “*gostosão*” by the students, which had been purchased for this purpose.

The interviewees reiterated the “marginal” nature of the school when they shared the same impressions about the courses most in demand by young people from Pará, namely Medicine, Civil Engineering and Law. They claimed that the other courses, including Agronomy, did not confer the same social and economic *status*. Therefore, the low demand for these other courses persisted and their consequent loss of prestige.

In order to increase demand and make both the Agronomy course and the EAA better known in Pará society, the school administration, with the support of students, began to develop dissemination strategies that were implemented back in the 1950s. According to Waldir João da Silva Monteiro: “We began to visit the high schools in Belém to explain to the students in the last year of high school [...] what Agronomy was” (Interview, 08/10/2016). A school bus picked up students from different schools to visit the EAA facilities and be introduced to the profession of Agronomist, learning about the importance of this professional for the region.

Even with the increase in demand, “it was considered a school for the poor, for those who were from the suburbs or the countryside, it didn’t have much *status*, let’s say” (Waldir Monteiro, Interview, 08/10/2016).

The memory of the group interviewed insisted on confirming that a large part of the students who entered EAA came from financially disadvantaged families. There were, however, exceptions, such as the following research participants, among whom were Ítalo, Antônio Carlos, Antônio Ronaldo, Maria Margarida, Maria da Glória, Eva and Emeleocípio.

An impressive school which produced brilliant professionals

The narratives and images from the time indicate that it was a school that provided considerable support for the development of education. Students who studied at EAA, from the beginning, when it operated temporarily in the IAN facilities (from 1951 to 1957), stated that the school received all the support it needed from the Institute to carry out its school activities. Waldir, Ítalo, Waldir and Maria da Glória were the only interviewees who studied at EAA at that time. Waldir recalled details of the infrastructure offered by the school and described all the support offered by the institution at the time of his formation as something extraordinary:

I spent my entire EAA career at the Institute, with all the instruments, all the knowledge, all the experience, all the technical training of the Institute's technicians, not only those who were already at the Institute, who were people from outside, there were Americans, there were

many people from São Paulo, from Luiz de Queiroz, because Camargo had its origins there (Walmir Hugo Pontes dos Santos Monteiro, Interview, 04/03/2016).

Even though the memories and written and iconographic documents bring evidence of qualified teaching and an infrastructure adequate to the needs of the course, the review of its *status*, its consolidation and its recognition as an important space in education only happened after the construction of its own building.

The building changed, the discourses were transformed: this institution of improvised building gained, in 1958. From then on, the subjects' memories insist on ratifying the school's attributes of wealth and grandeur, starting with the building constructed to house the institution. For example, Maria de Fátima, who joined the institution as a student in 1959, expressed that, despite the school having a rural appearance, being surrounded by woods, it had a luxurious and refined building.

Figure 1: The area where the EAA was installed, highlighting the central building in the background, 1956.



Source: UFRA (2011, p. 12).

In Figure 1, it is possible to see that the school was, in fact, surrounded by plantations, resembling the rural setting described by Maria de Fátima. In the background of the image is the EAA headquarters building, a grand and imposing building that stands as a modern symbol in the middle of the rural space that houses it. In the center of the photograph is Benito Gabriel Batista Calzavara, a professor at EAA, in an area of soybean plantations.

The spaces surrounding the institution were suggestive of the work environments that students would find after graduation, as EAA was surrounded by flora, fauna and floodplains – and, further ahead, there was a river. These spaces even caused a kind of fascination in many who experienced the school, as can be seen in the words of student Emir El-Husny: “[...] we had that forested area, practically a fantastic river in front, which was the Guamá River, and we could see the land there in front, which was a floodplain, so everything about that enchanted us” (Emir El-Husny, Interview, 08/12/2016).

As memories converge to another space, representations are reconfigured and another meaning is attributed to the course. Escolano Benito (2001, p. 26) highlights that school spaces, beyond their materiality, express certain types of discourse that must be analyzed. About this issue, we emphasize that former students insisted on revisiting the EAA premises, through their memories, in order to portray and reflect about the school environment in which they lived.

From this perspective, school spaces seemed to function as a kind of support for the group's memory. Regarding this aspect, Escolano Benito (2017, p. 187) states: “[...] school buildings record in themselves contents and memory values; they are, at the same time, inducers of lasting influences in the memories of the actors”.

The grandiosity, beauty and cleanliness of the central building were elements highlighted in the reminiscences of student Antônio Carlos: “[...] a sumptuous, beautiful building, the most beautiful thing that central building. The floor was not made of tiles, it was made of parquet, waxed every week by the warehouse staff, it was a gem” (Antônio Carlos, Interview, 02/22/2016).

The student Emeleocípio emphasized that EAA was architecturally beautiful, impressive and rich; he also emphasized that the Agronomy course was expensive; However, according to him, the school had resources to maintain its activities. The interviewee highlighted the facilities made available to students and teachers: “[...] we had crawler tractors, wheeled tractors, trucks. [...] another thing, we had a university restaurant. We had a soccer field and a swimming pool” (Emeleocípio Andrade, Interview, 08/10/2016). Paul Ricouer (2007, p. 59) explains the power of memories like this, stating that “inhabited places are, par excellence, memorable. Because memories are so linked to them, declarative memory takes pleasure in evoking and describing them”. Elias commented that he inaugurated many projects when he was director of EAA, and pointed out that the school's university restaurant, founded in 1969, was the first to open in the entire Legal Amazon. He also highlighted that the institution had the largest university sports center in the North Region of the country. He proudly recalled his own achievements as head of the school's management:

I would also like to say [...] that the first university restaurant set up in the Amazon and that began operating throughout the Legal Amazon was the one at the Amazon School of Agronomy. [...] We had the largest university sports center in the North of Brazil, a swimming pool, a tennis court, a gymnasium, the first restaurant in the North of Brazil was that one, but it has now been expanded (Elias Sefer, Interview, 02/29/2016).

In addition to excellent physical facilities, the school was well equipped, with laboratories, machines, tractors, parts and animals available for the development of academic activities. The narratives of student Emir provided more details about the structures offered for teaching at EAA:

Each student in different disciplines worked with a microscope for each student on their respective benches. In entomology classes, a magnifying glass on each student's bench [...] We had four buses, two of which we called large buses, one minibus and one older one, a Mercedes-Benz, we had four buses for 200 students, for practical classes, to pick us up in São Brás and drop us off on the way back from classes, nobody had that in Belém. [...] In the zootechnical area, we had practical classes with cattle, with buffaloes, which were the large animals, we had goats, sheep, pigs (Emir El-Husny, Interview, 08/12/2016).

In turn, student Eva remembered other equipment that existed at EAA that were very important in the students' training process, such as: theodolites, vaginoscopy, insemination equipment, incubators, animals in bone and in mass. The interviewees emphasized that the equipment and supplies used in the classes were of good quality, with some imported from North American and European countries: “[...] in our drawing room, the desks and drawing

boards were imported from the United States, it was a fancy thing. The theodolites, for example, came from Germany” (Emeleocípio Andrade, Interview, 10/08/2016).

During the research, some elements became apparent: students stated that they had not noticed any financial difficulties, but, in the narrative of Director Elias, he clarifies that all public institutions go through some type of difficulty. In this regard, he reports having overcome this issue by establishing agreements with different agencies, such as the *Instituto Nacional de Colonização e Reforma Agrária* (INCRA) and the *Superintendência of the Superintendência do Plano de Valorização Econômica da Amazônia* (SPVEA), which later became known as the *Superintendência do Desenvolvimento da Amazônia* (SUDAM), for the construction of the library and the cafeteria, as well as for the granting of student scholarships. In 1951, 16 student scholarships were granted and, the following year, 20 were granted. These scholarships were granted by means of an application and took into account the student's classification at the time of admission to the course.

Consideration about the process of creating the EAA and the memories that narrate it

From the beginning of its operation, in 1951, until 1971, over a period of 21 years, the EAA graduated 18 classes, with a total of 451 professionals graduated in Agricultural Engineering. An average of 21 agronomists graduated from the school each year to join the staff of various public or private organizations linked to the agricultural sector in the Amazon region.

Based on the memories, it is understood that the initiative to create a federal institution of higher education in agriculture in Belém came from Felisberto Camargo, a researcher at the IAN. The creation and implementation of the EAA in the 1940s and 1950s were related to a set of factors, among which the following stand out: the lack of agronomy schools throughout the Brazilian Amazon; the training of agronomists to fill the shortage of technicians at the IAN and other institutions in the agricultural sector in the region; support for the implementation of developmental public policies for the Amazon, established in article 199 of the 1946 Federal Constitution and in the *Plano de Valorização Econômica da Amazônia* (PVEA); and compliance with international agreements – the Washington Accords and the Point IV Program – which sought to encourage activities related to agricultural development, science and technology in Brazil.

Between 1951 and 1957, the EAA maintained a close relationship of dependence with the IAN, being physically integrated into the facilities of this agronomic research institute, which provided physical facilities, equipment and personnel for teaching and managing the school. The institution achieved spatial autonomy in 1958, when the school's main building was inaugurated, and the school began to be architecturally identified as such. The educational architecture is similar to the model of the *Escola Eliseu Maciel*³, in Pelotas/RS, and the regulatory standards established followed the model of the *Escola Nacional de Agronomia*, in Rio de Janeiro.

The reminiscences of the subjects participating in the research, about the times and spaces of the school, lead to the understanding that the EAA was, at the beginning of its operation, a little-known and it is not a famous institution, for different reasons: the lack of publicity about it in the Pará society and the geographic location of the school, considered far from the urban center and, therefore, difficult to access.

³ The Agronomy course of *Escola de Agronomia e Veterinária Eliseu Maciel* was recognized by the federal government by Decree No. 1,753 of June 29, 1937. In 1945, the School was federalized by Decree-Law No. 7,970 of September 19. In 1960, the School was integrated into the *Universidade Rural do Sul*, which in 1969, by Decree-Law No. 750 of August 8, 1969, was transformed into the *Universidade Federal de Pelotas* (UFPel).

The interviewees' narratives presented indications of the socioeconomic profile of the students who attended the EAA. Generally, they were people from the lower social classes, humble, poor people – characteristics that were probably interconnected.

The memories produced and some photographs analyzed provide evidence that it was a school institution that provided excellent support to the process of formation of its students. Those who studied at the school between 1951 and 1957 had at their disposal the entire physical, technical, technological and human structure of the IAN, an institution that had modern technical-scientific agricultural equipment in the region. Even after being transferred to its own facilities in 1958 and separating from the IAN in 1960, the school continued to maintain the attributes of wealth and sumptuousness.

This is, therefore, a history of the Amazon School of Agronomy. It is also a history of the subjects who shared experiences, rituals, feelings and symbols at the EAA, subjects who, by telling their experiences, (re)signified their life trajectories and the educational institution itself historicized here.

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