
DOSSIER PPGEM 40 YEARS

“It’s early, I have so many stories to tell you”: orality and Oral History in the investigation of rural schools in Paraná**“Está cedo, tenho tantas histórias para te contar”: oralidade e História Oral na investigação de escolas rurais paranaenses****Mirian Maria Andrade*** ORCID iD 0000-0001-5004-6320**Línlya Sachs**** ORCID iD 0000-0001-7826-686X**Filipe Santos Fernandes***** ORCID iD 0000-0002-2964-3582**Grasielly dos Santos de Souza****** ORCID iD 0000-0001-6932-3754**Cíntia Aparecida Paião******* ORCID iD 0009-0007-3298-3178**Bruno Elias Domingues******* ORCID iD 0000-0001-8021-2801

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Abstract

In this article, we present considerations about orality as a legitimate source of knowledge for understanding the historical processes that involve the (mathematics) education of rural people in Brazil, and we also deal with the potential of Oral History as a theoretical-methodological resource, suggested by and perceived from investigations carried out in the state of Paraná, to understand, elaborate and record stories of rural schools. We also consider the challenges and possibilities that these studies show when they practice Oral History and place it as a powerful methodology for studies in the History of Mathematics Education, whose primary object of analysis is rural educational institutions. To this end, we chose to present four historiographical researches, which recorded historical versions of rural schools in the state of Paraná, at different times: one of them investigated a Rural Schoolhouse and proposed to elaborate a narrative about the first decade of operation of this school institution (1961-1971); another research considered studying a Rural School Group (1947-1977) and the other two researches deal with Itinerant Schools, one of which is no longer in operation (2009-2016) and the other is still traveling, as it is located in a camp (2008-current days).

Keywords: Rural Schools. Rural Education. Narratives. Oral History. History of Mathematics Education.

Resumo

Apresentamos, neste artigo, considerações sobre a oralidade como fonte legítima de conhecimento para a compreensão de processos históricos que envolvem a educação (matemática) dos povos do campo no Brasil e, além disso, tratamos das potencialidades da História Oral, como recurso teórico-metodológico, aventadas por e percebidas a partir de investigações realizadas no estado do Paraná, para compreender, elaborar e registrar histórias de instituições escolares rurais. Tecemos, também, algumas considerações sobre os desafios e as possibilidades que essas pesquisas mostram quando praticam a História Oral e a colocam como metodologia potente para os estudos em História da Educação Matemática quando o objeto primeiro de análise são instituições de ensino rurais. Para tanto, escolhemos apresentar quatro pesquisas historiográficas, que registraram versões históricas sobre escolas rurais do estado do Paraná, em diferentes épocas: uma delas investigou uma Casa Escolar Rural e se propôs a elaborar uma narrativa sobre a primeira década de funcionamento desta instituição escolar (1961-1971); outra, considerou estudar um Grupo Escolar Rural (1947-1977); as outras duas pesquisas se dedicaram ao estudo de Escolas Itinerantes, uma delas não mais em funcionamento (2009-2016) e, a segunda, ainda em movimento de itinerância por estar localizada em um acampamento (2008-dias atuais).

Palavras-chave: Escolas Rurais. Educação do Campo. Narrativas. História Oral. História da Educação Matemática.

1 Introduction

It is possible that margins delimit, sabotage, imprison,
prevent the expansion.
Make walking difficult.
Do not allow new perspectives on unknown horizons.
Many were placed on the margins.
Numerous were eternally condemned to it.
Alive without life. Lives of other lives.
We propose readings without margins.
Readings that allow unchained knowledge.
That go beyond the meaning(s).
(Hebelyanne Pimentel da Silva, 2021)

Rural Workers' Schools and Fishermen's Schools¹, School Groups², Rural Primary Schools, Isolated Schools, also known as Schoolhouses³, and Itinerant Schools⁴... are some types of schools that can be found in the literature when we set out to study rural schools in the state of Paraná at different times, including the current scenario.

The state of Paraná has been diverse since its colonization; a colonization that proved strong and inhabited, at the beginning of the last century, quickly and largely, especially in the rural areas. Agricultural producers from the states of São Paulo and Minas Gerais, along with European immigrants, were responsible for the rural popularization of the state. Fertile lands and good purchasing conditions were significant factors in this movement. This scenario called for actions that would serve these people, and offering schooling to the rural population was part of this agenda. Historical records show that the first rural schools in the state of Paraná appeared around 1920, in a state that had a rural population as the predominant until the mid-1970s. Thus, in Paraná, as in the rest of Brazil, rural education emerged due to the need to offer primary education to rural residents (Souza, 2019). However, our studies and research efforts, within the scope of the History of Mathematics Education, conduct us down paths that lead us

¹ The process of institutionalizing the Rural Workers' Schools and Fisherpeople's Schools in Paraná provides strong evidence for understanding them amid the themes that considered rural schools as a locus for training rural workers and their education as fundamental to constituting or, using Mennucci's (1934) words, creating "the countryside people" and "the sea people", so that they would not consider themselves inferior on the social scale in relation to "the city people". "The Rural Workers' Schools and Fisherpeople's Schools are an expression of a national concern, as previously evidenced, the training of countryside people and sea people gained specific importance in the government of Manuel Ribas, in which the agricultural issue was highlighted as a concern that began to involve joint action by the state and federal governments" (Shelbauer; Neto, 2013, p. 90). According to Shelbauer and Neto (2013), Rural Workers' Schools were public boarding schools designed to train professionals in agriculture and livestock for both sexes, but in independent facilities and with different purposes, according to the social imperatives and the technical and practical needs of agriculture and livestock. Maintained by the state government, these schools were to be installed in rural areas and offer the Primary Agricultural Course and the Professional Agricultural Course. The Fishermen's Schools had as their main purpose the training of fishing professionals, limited to the coastal population, through courses focused on regional interests. With a practical orientation, Fishermen's Schools began to be aimed at the children of fishermen and others interested in maritime life, facilitating study excursions to museums and markets and practical activities in factories for industrializing and preserving fish.

² A new model of school organization configured with pedagogical and architectural aspects, presupposed the adoption of a differentiated teaching system, implemented pedagogical guidelines quite different from those in force, implying the constitution of classes, for homogeneous teaching - in each classroom a class corresponding to a grade, for each class, a teacher. This classification of students constituted an evolution in the educational system, thus emerging the notion of class and grade. The grade became the structural matrix, thus the distribution of content, timetables, frequencies of daily routines, the structuring of subjects composed of lessons, points, classes and exercises began to be carried out (Souza; Andrade, 2022).

³ As an attempt to solve the problems of rural education, with its own characteristics and precarious structures, the Schoolhouses operated in the teachers' homes and in other environments poorly adapted to the functioning of a quality public school. Known as a first-letters school because it offered education from 1st to 4th grade, there was almost always a single teacher teaching all classes and the teaching was multi-grade (Souza, 2017).

⁴ Itinerant Schools are schools located in camps of the Landless Workers' Movement (MST), so that when the camp or occupation changes location, the school follows suit. Therefore, these schools are the responsibility of the state government and not the municipalities (Sapelli, 2015).

to understand that there is an erasure or, perhaps, a silencing of subjects, practices, ideas, and discourses involved in rural schools.

Data from the Demographic Census carried out by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE, 2022) indicate Paraná as the fifth most populous state in the country, with territorial dimensions that place it fifteenth on the list of the largest Brazilian states in terms of surface area. In the stance that we seek to promote in our work, we insert ourselves in this context, it is this territorial space that attracts our investigative eyes, not in its entirety, given that we do not believe in the possibility of this view ending, but in the possibilities of studies that have shown themselves along our path, even considering geographical proximities.

Ruckstadter and Ruckstadter (2015) state that the history of rural schools has been a very recurrent theme in research in the History of Education, but they warn that the Northern Pioneer mesoregion of the state of Paraná has not been covered. Our research scope refers to this mesoregion and the Central North—both, in the nomenclature used by the IBGE since 2017, are included in the intermediate geographic region of Londrina⁵.

The research by Souza (2017, 2019), Bailão (2019), Paião (2019), Melo (2021), and Domingues (2023) is the result of our efforts to understand these rural schools, record their possible histories, or the possible history, and trigger other investigations that, along the way, reveal themselves as a potential for new studies, “[allowing] new perspectives on unknown horizons” and “readings that allow [them, the rural schools of Paraná] to be known” (Silva, 2021).

Therefore, these studies address different models of rural schools in Paraná. They are historiographical research that records historical versions of these institutions and contributes to the History of Mathematics Education as a region of inquiry. But this research reveals more to us: the historical versions recorded in these works are narratives elaborated from orality, they are narratives produced from moments of interviews, a theoretical-methodological movement based on the methodology of Oral History, in which we have understood that “to narrate is to tell a story, to narrate oneself is to tell our story or a story of which we are also, were or feel ourselves to be characters. It is important to emphasize that this telling is always done in the direction of someone. In this way, the narration foresees a positioning in relation to the other” (Cury; Souza; Silva, 2014, p. 915).

⁵ Until 2017, the IBGE used mesoregions to subdivide Brazilian states. In this organization, the scope of the research cited here is the Central North and Pioneer North of the state of Paraná. From 2017 onwards, the IBGE began to use “intermediate geographic regions” and “immediate geographic regions”. In this organization, the research is included in the intermediate geographic region of Londrina (IBGE, 2017).

Our research brings to the discussion sets of narratives that allow other narratives, in an open, plural, shapeless process of elaboration, leading us to other understandings and discourses about the different modalities of rural schools in Paraná. Sets of narratives that allow us to create a design without borders, margins, or limitations in the variety of its space and time and, at times, to perceive the images that are formed, deformed, and transformed (Garnica, 2010) about rural schools in Paraná.

Thus, in this text, we present considerations on orality as a legitimate source of knowledge for understanding historical processes involving the (mathematical) education of rural people in Brazil and, in addition, we address the potential of Oral History as a theoretical-methodological resource, suggested by and perceived from these investigations, to understand, elaborate and record histories of rural school institutions. We also make some considerations on the challenges and possibilities that these studies show when they practice Oral History and place it as a powerful methodology for studies in the History of Mathematics Education when their primary object of analysis is rural educational institutions.

2 Orality and Oral History: potentialities in the History of (Mathematics) Education of rural people in Brazil

The encounter between the field of History of Mathematics Education and the rural population of Brazil requires, first and foremost, an exercise in historical decentering (Garnica, 2005). This is because, due to the centrality given to understanding the processes of production, circulation, and communication of mathematical knowledge, whether school-based or not, undertaken in urban centers, in the historiography of Education there is an erasure and/or silencing of subjects, collectives, ideas, and discourses involved in educational processes specific to the rural population of our country. Thus, rural Brazil has hardly been established as a territory of interest for the investigation of Mathematics Education, and it is thanks to the legitimate demands coming from groups linked to the fight against the violation of land rights, such as communities, civil society entities, social and union movements, and also from municipal and state education departments, that this scenario has changed.

This historiography of Education linked to the urban context has hegemonically used the documentary perspective and the valorization of written culture records to produce historical knowledge. This option has to do, as Patricio Arias (2010) inspires us, with the colonial domination of our territory, since writing was built as a heritage of the urban world, which was considered civilized, developed, and modern; while the countryside, whose forms of cultural

expression are essentially marked by orality, was positioned as primitive, backward and incapable of understanding the progress instituted by modernity.

Therefore, we can say that the dichotomy between writing and orality marks the dichotomy between city and countryside in Brazil. Writing has shown itself to be a form of expression of the colonial difference insofar as it has established itself as an instrument for exercising power, establishing the presence and permanence of certain subjects, collectives, ideas, and discourses in time, such as those linked to the urban, while silencing and relegating to oblivion others, such as those linked to the countryside. With this dichotomy established, a historiography that saw urban written cultures as the source of legitimate information for constructing considerations and perspectives for education in our country prevailed, with the countryside being portrayed, at most, through a colonized history, built on centuries of domination and fetishism over the rural population.

It is in this scenario that we understand the value of orality and oral tradition as a non-negotiable position for a historiography of Mathematics Education that respects and includes the rural population. Orality and oral tradition play an important role in their resistance since, by creating, preserving, or reviving their memories, they recognize themselves as political and historical subjects and collectives capable of outlining their project for the country, disputing meanings with the hegemonic narratives advocated by the urban system. In the educational field, particularly, orality brings specific systems of values, practices, and knowledge that, previously invisible, define educational processes in rural areas. These processes demand political spaces for enunciation about how the rural population understands both education and the production of a specific, alternative, and differentiated school, consistent with their struggles, and their future horizons and radically resistant to the dynamics and purposes of a school education aligned with the urban. After all,

The school has historically been constructed as a place for incorporating the ideas of modernity, and thus as an urban-centric space, with its demands directed towards the aspects that mark the city. In the national reality, these perspectives are consolidated based on colonialism and soon after on coloniality. Within these issues, the school has its form articulated with the purposes of modernity/urban centrism, however, the school does not place itself in the reproduction of this new order, but also ends up participating in the production of modes of existence that legitimize them, in search of order - standardization of bodies based on civility. Thus, Eurocentric norms have historically been triggered in Brazil, where the ideas of urban-centric modernity and civility take the school as a privileged locus of actions to disseminate orders, where it is a space for social and cultural development in favor of modern progress (GONZÁLEZ STEPHAN, 1995) (Farias; Faleiro, 2020, p. 8-9).

In research on the History of Mathematics Education, the approximations of orality with discussions that touch on the rural schools are not recent, although they have intensified in

recent years. We can consider the works of Ivete Baraldi (2003) and Maria Ednéia Martins (2003), linked to the Oral History in Mathematics Education Research Group (GHOEM), as pioneers in this approach⁶.

Baraldi (2003), when outlining a historical overview of the training of Mathematics teachers in the 1960s and 1970s in the Bauru region of the state of São Paulo, Brazil, highlights how the ideas and discourses on modernity materialized in the expansion of railroads marked the training of teachers and instituted training actions aimed at expanding the teaching staff. These ideas and discourses, as revealed by the narratives of the research collaborators, are marked by the overcoming of the rural way of life and the adoption of the urban as signs of progress and urbanization.

Martins (2003), in turn, investigated the training of teachers and students in rural education centers in the western region of the state of São Paulo, Brazil, between 1950 and 1970. This work brings relevant insights into schooling processes in rural areas by discussing themes such as labor relations and exodus; transportation difficulties; teaching strategies and teaching resources, such as multi-grade classes and school spaces and times; subjective relationships, marked by the influence of values and the intense aspiration, by the rural community, of the urban way of life; as well as particularities about the teaching of Mathematics in these institutions.

The twenty years since the conclusion of these works have been marked by several changes in the political scenario, particularly the expansion of *Educação do Campo* as an educational paradigm. If, previously, the establishment of education for the rural population focused on development and urban-industrial interests prevailed, with the provision of an educational model that was alien to their reality, *Educação do Campo* began to advocate overcoming the antagonism between the rural and the urban worlds from two perspectives. The first is to understand that both, despite their profound contradictions, are complementary, interdependent, and have similar values. The second is that the rural and the urban worlds have particularities, which imply different possibilities for organizing the educational processes in and with them.

The emergence of *Educação do Campo* in the educational debate⁷, admittedly possible

⁶ It is a fact that the *pioneers* attribute here does not indicate the lack of studies on the schooling of rural people, focusing on educational and formative processes linked to Mathematics, prior to these two studies. We believe that the studies by Ivete Baraldi (2003) and Maria Ednéia Martins (2003) inaugurate an action toward the theme that is closest, in terms of assumptions and procedures, to the one we mobilized in the research we developed.

⁷ Further on, we bring a discussion about the option of adopting, in this text, the expressions *rural schools* and *escolas do campo*, even though the latter expression is the one that, nowadays, best represents the struggle of rural population for the construction of a specific, differentiated and alternative school.

thanks to social movements and collective actions linked to the struggle for the right to land, redirects the commitment of researchers in Mathematics Education to the rural population. Although it is important to understand the relationships that subordinate them, in a reactive sense that reveals the material and symbolic inequalities to which this population is subjected, a propositional sense has also been adopted that sees in educational processes specific to rural territories possibilities of identification and political construction, affirming their ways of knowing, doing and, fundamentally, of being. From this perspective, the History of Mathematics Education adopts a mode of interpellation that passes through “rural memories and stories, through individuals and collectives that, yesterday and today, (re)exist in political, territorial and cultural identifications that escape the colonial images that give the rural a depreciative view [...]” (Fernandes; Medanha, 2022, p. 7).

Because of this non-negotiable importance of orality as a mode of knowledge production and the affirmation of a History of Mathematics Education as a possibility of identification and self-determination of the rural population, Oral History emerges as the methodology intentionally chosen for our research. We believe that Oral History, in its commitment to attentive listening and narrative production, makes it possible to create, preserve, or revive rural memories, affirming their ways of life and recognizing them, in the academic space, as political and historical subjects and collectives capable of constructing and deciding on their own educational processes. Research in the History of Mathematics Education becomes a field of dispute of meanings that no longer defines the rural by the urban world, but that sees these educational processes – especially, rural schools – as spaces of identification and political and cultural construction. In this sense,

It is very important to announce the implications not only epistemological, but also ethical, aesthetic, and political, of the practice of oral tradition, in situations of neocolonial and neo-imperial domination such as those we currently experience. Oral history does not only become a distinct theoretical-methodological perspective for the reconstruction of the past of indigenous peoples [and we understand, in this text, the rural population], but rather an insurgent political instrument necessary for the collective decolonization of history (Arias, 2010, p. 286).

This intentional choice for Oral History is driven by listening to others, interlocutors who collaborate so that we can construct and record historical versions based on memories triggered during interviews, which tell of what they experienced, or experience, in the educational processes in the field. “A work in Oral History is, therefore, always an inventory of perspectives irremediably permeated by subjectivity, a parade of narrated memories, a multifaceted block of enunciated truths” (Garnica, 2010, p. 31). Handling these memories often allows us to access unknown and unrecorded scenarios and stories.

It is in this sense that we corroborate Cury, Souza and Silva (2014, p. 911) when they state that they see in narratives “the possibility of exploring different perspectives on historical situations and expanding their meanings so that aspects that otherwise might not even be covered can be understood”, leading us to believe in the power of mobilizing Oral History in our research efforts, as well as agreeing that “the in-depth study of narratives and their theorization through research in the line of the History of Mathematics Education through Oral History have become indispensable” (Cury; Souza; Silva, 2014, p. 911).

The encounter between Oral History and *Educação do Campo* has allowed us, in addition to developing a comprehension of the schooling processes of the rural population in Brazil, to constantly re-elaborate the principles and procedures that support the methodology. Therefore, we can say that this encounter has enabled the problematization of our research assumptions and strategies as we have uniquely encountered research objects with a distinctive nature from those we usually work with in educational research. In addition to each research scenario being unique, the ways of mobilizing Oral History procedures in investigations are also unique, creating specific conditions based on the subjects and contexts that participate in our investigation.

Following this text, we chose to present the studies by Souza (2017, 2019), Paião (2019) and Domingues (2023) to present some research that took place in this movement of encounter between Oral History and *Educação do Campo* and highlight how this research tensioned the principles and procedures of Oral History.

3 Possibility of an encounter between Oral History and Rural Education: research movements in the state of Paraná

Among some of the previously mentioned studies⁸, theoretically and methodologically based on Oral History, which address the history of rural schools in the state of Paraná, Brazil, we have listed four for presentation and exemplification in this text. The first investigated a Rural Schoolhouse and proposed elaborating a narrative about this educational institution’s first decade of operation (1961-1971). The second considered studying a Rural School Group, located in the heart of a sugar and alcohol plant, one of the main sources of income for the

⁸ We refer to research carried out within the scope of the following research groups: *Educação Matemática do Campo – estudos e pesquisas*, led by Linly Sachs, and the *Grupo de Estudos em História da Educação e Educação Matemática*, led by Mirian Maria Andrade. Both are linked to the Universidade Tecnológica Federal do Paraná (UTFPR).

municipality in which it was located. The following two studies deal with Itinerant Schools, one of which is no longer in operation, due to previously occupied lands (encampments) being converted into legalized territories (settlements) – and, consequently, the school ceased to be itinerant and became fixed in space, like municipal and state schools. The other study addresses a still itinerant school since it is located in encampments.

We consider it important to make a brief digression to justify the usage of the term *rural schools* in this article. We address research conducted at very different times, including before the *Movimento por uma Educação do Campo*, organized by rural social movements in the late 1990s, which, among other effects, repositioned the nomenclature used for schools that serve rural population. The replacement of *rural schools* with *escolas do campo*, later seen in public policies, in the schools' names themselves, and academic literature, was intended to shed light on the problems historically experienced by such schools, to overcome them. As Caldart (2009) points out, however, the path of *Educação do Campo* is marked by tensions and contradictions, especially between social movements and the State.

We have maintained the reference to *rural schools* in this article because we understand that it is not possible to address *escolas do campo* in a period before that mentioned, which inaugurates a new phase in research in the area and also in the proposal of public policies, which begin to consider the centrality of social movements in education. However, we understand that there is also a discrepancy in referring to Itinerant Schools as rural schools – since these are schools that challenge, in many ways, the rural school model previously established and consolidated in the country. To avoid an anachronism, which we consider a major error, we use the expression *rural schools* in the sections dedicated to a look at the totality of the research developed, and, in the more specific sections on Itinerant Schools, we use the expression *escolas do campo*.

Souza's (2017) research focused on developing a narrative about the first decade of operation of a type of school institution – *Casa Escolar Rural* (1961-1971) – located in Bandeirantes-PR, Brazil. Based on the theoretical and methodological frameworks of oral history, she interviewed former teachers and former students who experienced the school during this period. Based on the memories verbalized during these interviews, a narrative about this school was developed, allowing for a (re)construction of the history of rural education in that community and establishing features beyond what is covered in the literature, considering aspects such as the structure of the school, the setting, the practices, the demands of the school inspectors, the roles of the teachers, the teaching materials, the punishments, the assessment, the discipline, and the routine.

It is important to emphasize that, when we mobilize the oral history methodology in our research, we do not dispense with existing official records about our object of analysis, since we believe that investigating these records helps us to constitute our historical versions. The school that Souza (2017) wanted to study was still in operation: *Escola Rural Municipal Ricierre Ormenezze – Ensino Infantil e Ensino Fundamental* [Early Childhood and Elementary Education]. In her research, the author highlights that she found no official records about the more than five decades of operation of this school, and the little information she found illustrated pages of its current Political-Pedagogical Project (PPP) that attempt, without much success, to record the history of that time, of that *Casa Escolar* [Schoolhouse]. Apart from these few pages, nothing else was in the school's collection or that of the Municipal Department of Education.

Souza (2017) then decided to carry out a movement in the neighborhood where the school is located, a campaign called *My Memories*. With this campaign, she intended to recover records (photos, books, notebooks, etc.) of the *Escola Rural Municipal Ricierre Ormenezze*, since she had not found any informative material or documents from when it was in operation. “The campaign began at the school, and to this end, pamphlets were handed out to students who study at this school in the neighborhood, so that they could take them to their parents and grandparents, and some pamphlets were also left at a small grocery store in the neighborhood” (Souza, 2017, p. 36). This choice made by Souza (2017) exposes her research to a rural neighborhood and brings curiosity and a desire to contribute to those people. “The campaign quickly mobilized neighborhood residents and even other close neighborhoods. People began to tell each other about the campaign, which greatly impacted the neighborhood population” (Souza, 2017, p. 37).

The author reports that, within a few weeks, people approached her to deliver records and tell their stories. This may also be explained by the fact that this is a rural area that the researcher was already familiar with (and a researcher who had previously known this neighborhood as a former resident) and that it was at the school, in its current configuration, that the researcher completed part of her education. In this encounter with the people of the neighborhood and their records, Souza (2017) defined her first possible collaborators. Thus, from a place of absence, the research became a space of presence. After the movement generated by the *My Memories* campaign, Souza (2017) met former teachers and former students, women who had experienced this school and who could and wanted to tell their stories. Souza (2017) found through oral history a possibility of accessing a “parade of memories” (Garnica, 2010, p. 31).

It is important to highlight that Souza (2017) chose to interview a former teacher at the school twice. After the first interview, she came across other information and returned to the interviewee for a new conversation. In each narrative of her collaborators, it was possible to perceive school under a specific dynamic – they were versions of the history of the *Casa Escolar* that were stored in the collaborators' memories, a recollection of experiences and memories of moments that accessed a possible scenario of the school. Considering that “oral sources tell us not only what the people did, but what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing and what they now think they did” (Garnica, 2010, p. 34), Souza (2017) uses these aspects to trigger a narrative about the *Casa Escolar Lourenço Ormenezze*, in an analytical movement of narrative analysis and records a historical version of the school.

Souza (2019), in turn, conducted a specific investigation into a *Grupo Escolar Rural* in a small town in the interior of Paraná, located near a sugar and alcohol plant complex. To do so, she intended to conduct interviews with former teachers and students who could help her construct a historical version of this *Grupo Escolar*.

When she began her research, she emphasized that using official documents from the school's collection seemed like a good strategy to find possible names. She hoped to find the names of students, teachers, and employees in them, and that these could be a starting point in her search for interviewees. She was surprised when, upon coming across boxes and boxes of documents, she found none that corresponded to the time frame to which her research referred. Souza's research (2019) intended to study the *grupo escolar* between the years 1947 and 1977, however, the documents found were related to the *Colégio Estadual do Campo Usina Bandeirantes*, from 2012, which was installed in the same building after the extinction of the *Grupo Escolar Rural Usina Bandeirantes*⁹.

Between the search and the long wait, Souza (2019) chose to prepare her interview scripts, considering possible collaborators, then developed a possible interview script for former students, another for former teachers, and a third version designed to interview the founder of the *Grupo Escolar*. In oral history, researchers tend to send the interview script in advance to the collaborator so that the latter can, if they wish, organize their speech and separate objects (books, photos, etc.) to share with the researcher during the interview. However, when her collaborators were already defined, Souza highlights that none wanted to receive the script in advance.

Regarding the scripts and the interview moments, the author explains in her research

⁹ The name *Colégio Estadual do Campo*, obviously, does not date back to before 1978, but rather has been used after more recent changes..

report:

We assumed a non-uniformity in the interview moments, each interview moment was unique, a transformative movement, knowledgeable and understanding, in different ways, at each interview moment we were one... we were several. Thus, we recognize that the script, in this aspect, gives us an initial direction, the script is dynamic and has been continually restructured (Souza, 2019, p. 55).

Souza (2019) publicized the research on social media (Facebook) and WhatsApp groups, where she disclosed her interest in research to the local community. In addition, the publicity also specified the interest in some records (photographs, notebooks, books, etc.) related to the *Grupo Escolar*. Soon, the first collaborator, a former student, would contact her. When she came across the research publicity, she contacted the researcher through WhatsApp. The first interview was then conducted with this person, who was a former student of the *Grupo Escolar*. From this first interview, Souza (2019) exercised what the literature already tells us: a powerful way of finding collaborators when mobilizing oral history is the snowball sampling criterion, that is, one collaborator indicates another possible one and, she states: “[the first interviewee] told us about several people, told us some names and so we started getting in touch with the possible people, talking to one, talking to another, a movement of assembling and disassembling [...]” (Souza, 2019, p. 56). The author reports that she even appealed to an old telephone directory based on the suggestion of a surname that was not very common. This strategy yielded a telephone contact and the scheduling of an interview. That was how this research found its collaborators, among contacts made after the dissemination and through the snowball sampling criterion.

The analysis of recorded interviews with teachers and students who experienced the *Grupo Escolar* resulted in its historical version and pedagogical practices. It was also possible to understand an institution that inaugurated a new conception (architectural and pedagogical) of *school*, which remains to this day. This investigation made it possible to question the model of teacher education, the shortage, and the urgency, to which is added another mark that operates in this scenario, the discontinuity of public policies in education and, mainly, in rural education, the treatment of issues related to hygiene –a model of school organization based on medical reasoning, which, when established, would remove from the private sphere –religious or family– the monopoly on the education of boys and girls. To this end, scientific arguments are used that cover a broad spectrum of issues related to schools, such as the problem of the location of school buildings, the need for a specific and appropriate building to function as a school, student enrollment, school time and knowledge, food, recess, perceptions, intelligence, morals, and even civic awareness.

It is interesting to highlight how Souza's (2017, 2019) research required methodological movements regarding conduct and procedures, which differ from those usually employed in oral history research. In this case, the absence of written records about the schools investigated required the construction of inventive –and therefore unusual– strategies to approach people who experienced, at different times and in diverse ways, the school spaces investigated and were interested in sharing experiences with the researcher. In one of the cases, the personal approach to the research scenario allowed for more direct contact through a campaign; in another, digital technologies and the rapid sharing of information made it possible to reach people, even strangers, to collaborate with the research. These aspects demonstrate oral history as a methodology in movement, in which the forms of access to collaborators –and, essentially, to their narratives– vary according to the object to be investigated, always considering, of course, that these forms of access are established respectfully in relation to the groups with whom we seek to dialogue.

The research developed by Paião (2019) aimed to record the memories of the history of the Maria Aparecida Rosignol Franciosi Itinerant School (2009-2016), located in the Eli Vive Encampment, in Lerroville district of the municipality of Londrina-PR, Brazil. The investigation used oral history as a theoretical-methodological basis for the recording, and the analysis of narratives produced from seven interviews conducted with educators who worked, organized, and built this school during its years of operation. The narratives made it possible to tell a story of the experience of creating *another school*, qualified by the direct political action of the Eli Vive Encampment community, which was done in and by the collective of the Landless People, being recognized as necessary for the continuity and quality of the struggle for popular agrarian reform.

It is important to highlight that research involving rural people often imposes ethical conduct on the research designed with collectives in mind, something that we are not used to in general research protocols. In some cases, besides the procedures for presenting the research to potential collaborators, individually and complying with the ethical assumptions outlined by the Ethics Committees for Research Involving Human Beings, the collective must give its approval. Paião (2019) reports:

Based on the narrative of educator Vanderleia's memories and information about the educators from the times of the Itinerant School, I contacted two people who appeared in the report. One responded to the messages, advising me to contact the settlement's coordination to present my research proposal. [...] Upon arriving at the settlement headquarters, I went to the market, which I had not yet visited, and asked for information about where I could find Sandra Flor. [...] When I went to the building where I had been instructed to go, Sandra came to meet me, greeted me with a hug and a smile, and asked me to wait, as the meeting was about to end. [...] Soon, I was

called to a balcony where there were several people, some sitting, others standing, scattered around the space. I sat in a chair in front of everyone; it was a group of about 15 people. Sandra explained to me that some representatives of the settlement brigades, sector coordinators, and coordination leaders were present. She asked me to present my research proposal to the group, and I did so. I began by introducing myself and also sought to present the objectives and theoretical and methodological basis of the research. I explained that, with this exercise of recording the narratives about the Itinerant School, from the times of the encampment, I aimed to produce a work that could contribute to the socialization of this experience of the community and, thus, contribute to the preservation of the history of the community and of the MST Itinerant School. I explained that the work could also contribute to train teachers who came from Londrina and who, in general, were unaware of the history of the “Maria Aparecida Rosignol Franciosi” Itinerant School, or even the history of the MST and its educational proposal. I expressed my admiration for the Movement and its history of struggle for Popular Agrarian Reform and thanked them for being the MST and keeping this struggle for land democratization alive. After my presentation, we started talking about the research, several people gave me ideas of who to interview and a list of names of people who were educators at the school. The research was welcomed by the community (Paião, 2019, p. 63-65).

This procedure of prior consultation with a group before beginning interviews was not familiar to us, nor was it even mentioned in the oral history. How society or community is organized determines whether this makes sense and how important it is. In societies marked by individualism, a request for authorization from a group to conduct individual interviews seems like a restriction on the freedom of expression of each individual, who would decide whether to give their time to talk to a researcher. However, in societies or groups organized in such a way that survival, struggles, and achievements depend on the collective, as is the case of rural encampments and settlements, especially those affiliated with social movements, such as the *MST*, and also of traditional, Indigenous and quilombola communities, authorization from a group is nothing more than a decision for the common good.

As Durham states (1984, p. 28, emphasis added by the author):

In the urban life of a society like ours, the individual (an undifferentiated part of the mass) is only fully recognized as a person, as a *subject*, in the primary groups that are structured in private life: family, relatives, friends, and neighbors. In the public sphere, he tends to be depersonalized and appears as a seller of labor power, a buyer of goods, a beneficiary of the INPS, a user of public transportation, a voter, and a mass man. In social movements of a community nature, where the participation of each and everyone is valued, where everyone must speak, give their opinion, and decide, what seems to be occurring is a new process, that of the constitution of people in the *public sphere*, through the game of mutual recognition that occurs internally, in community practice.

In the process of collective authorization to conduct the research, Paião (2019) was successful and could continue with the interviews, including with names indicated by this collective. However, there are no guarantees for this. In the event of a refusal, the researcher may have their project interrupted, with the consequences that this may cause (delay in the completion of a master's or doctoral course, loss of a scholarship or other type of funding, need

to develop a new research project, etc.). Therefore, we believe it is essential to be aware, when working with rural people who organize themselves through social movements or traditional communities, in which the collective is central, that there is always such a risk, and this procedure is necessary.

Domingues' (2023) research aimed to conduct a historiographical investigation into the process of construction and operation of the Valmir Motta de Oliveira Itinerant School, located at the Valmir Mota de Oliveira Encampment, in the municipality of Jacarezinho-PR. This school began its activities in August 2008, shortly after the occupation of Fazenda Itapema, and has been active since then. Nine interviews were conducted to develop the research, which constituted narratives mobilized as the primary historiographical sources of this investigation. With this, reflections were made on the following themes: the opposition between Itinerant Schools and urban schools; the beginning of the school even before there was a building that could be called a school; and the difficulties of putting into practice the educational proposal of the Itinerant Schools.

As in Souza (2017, 2019) and Paião (2019), we used the snowball sampling criterion to select the people to be invited to give interviews for Domingues' research (2023). Initially, there was a first person who, in addition to being a teacher at the Valmir Motta de Oliveira Itinerant School, had completed her doctorate in the Postgraduate Program in Science Teaching and Mathematics Education at the Universidade Estadual de Londrina, with research developed at the school. In our search for historiographical sources, we found scarce material that addressed anything related to the school, one of which was Silveira's thesis (2020), which does not have historiographical purposes but uses the school as a research setting. Thus, an initial contact was made through the social media Facebook to present the research objective and the official invitation in detail. From this first interview, conducted at the school, other people emerged: some by recommendation, others through meetings and conversations during the researcher's experience in the school environment – whether to consult materials to conduct interviews or even to return with the textualization for the interviewee's approval.

A recurrent challenge in using the snowball sampling criterion is the acceptance by the Ethics Committees in Research Involving Human Beings. Although Circular Letter No. 110 of December 8, 2017, by the National Research Ethics Commission and the Executive Secretariat of the National Health Council of the Ministry of Health (Brasil, 2017) provides that, in the event of no prior definition of the number of research participants, the sample size may be indicated as zero on the *Plataforma Brasil* (due to the technical need to indicate a numerical value), this is not always accepted. In some situations, we received opinions that we could

present a projection of the number of participants. In these studies, there is no way to project a number, since invitations are no longer extended to new people when there is no more time for interviews or when the information obtained begins to be repeated without incremental contributions to the research.

In this same sense, Souza (2019) mentions her difficulties in finding people who could tell him about the School Group and expresses her concern:

Narratives that would only be possible if we found the subjects, these subjects. People to whom we could assign names, and whose statements of what they experienced in this school, it would be up to us, based on their records, to write a story. So, along our research path, we found our first “stone”. *How can we find the subjects who experienced the School Group in the period from 1947 to 1977?* (Souza, 2019, p. 53, our emphasis).

These studies also showed us that another recurring situation was the one highlighted by Souza (2019) regarding the lack of access for people. As we highlighted above, Souza (2019) prepared her interview scripts while searching for possible collaborators. A version of the script was prepared with a view to a possible interview with the Founder of the School Group, a name the researcher had access to during her search. However, despite several attempts, Souza (2019) could not access this potential collaborator for her research and had to give up on conducting this interview, which the researcher considered relevant to understanding the School Group investigated.

The difficulties in finding, accessing, lack of access, interference from weather conditions, the need for sales campaigns in the neighborhood, and campaigns on social media and chat applications, highlighted in the research by Souza (2017, 2019), Paião (2019) and Domingues (2023), also lead to surprises that interfere with the research methodology.

In Souza’s research (2019), the author tells us that she arranged an interview with a collaborator by phone but that, upon arriving at the agreed place and time, she came across two people, the second being a friend of the collaborator –both believed that the second person’s speech would also contribute to the research, hence the invitation. A surprise: the challenge of an interview with two people simultaneously, a script that requires rethinking in seconds, dealing with the unexpected, and an extra collaborator.

What the author did not know was that this would not be the only interview that would take place along these lines in her research. When contacted by a former teacher, who had learned about the investigation through publicity on social media, she agreed to collaborate on the condition that she would be accompanied by her sister, also a former teacher at the school, during the interview. Another simultaneous interview, this time without the strangeness of the unexpected, was a previously agreed moment, and certainly, the experience of the previous

interview was essential.

Amidst the surprises, distrust also turns into smiles and acceptance.

One morning, I sought my first contact with Teacher Idalina, to explain the research, tell her what I was looking for, and ask if she would be willing to give us an interview. I arrived at the address and saw a simple house with a huge yard full of animals. I called out her name at the gate. After a while, a tall, white-haired lady appeared, with a serious and initially suspicious expression. Before I could say anything, the lady, who was almost 90 years old, and barely knew me, said to me: “What does the young lady want?” At that moment, still outside the yard, I began to introduce myself. When I brought up the subject of the *Grupo Escolar*, the retired teacher smiled at me and interrupted me: “Come on in!” She began to tell me, in a conversation that seemed like that of a grandmother to a granddaughter (those conversations that grandparents tell their grandchildren, about a time that seems so distant, about a time that was theirs, that when they tell it they take us on a journey, they make us see the time with an impression or a false impression, that everything back then was good), that was how my first and informal conversation with Mrs. Idalina took place. Then she told me about her experiences, retraced her journeys, narrated her identities, told me about herself, about her family, showed me her photographs, and showed me her house, welcomed me (Souza, 2019, p. 56-57).

That conversation preceding the interview, when the researcher regrets not being authorized to turn on the recorder: “But all that wasn’t the interview, I wasn’t recording, the only record I have is in my memories. And after many hours of conversation, we scheduled the interview for the beginning of the following week” (Souza, 2019, p. 57).

Reception, smiles, and tears are constant when we hear stories that stir memories. When Souza (2017) returned for a second interview with the same collaborator, she noted that:

At the end of the interview, we had coffee and cake, lots of laughter, and the stories she told about that time. When I said I was leaving, she said: “It’s early, I have so many stories to tell you!” Neuza made me promise that I would always come back to her house to have, according to her, a coffee and a chat (Souza, 2017, p. 44).

The researcher always returned for coffee and a chat because she was always invited based on the bond and trust established when she began to listen to what the other person would say. We also credit this to the ethical seriousness and respect in which the interview process is always handled, the authorization of the narratives for the researcher, a commitment to and throughout the entire research process –and, who knows, after it is over...

Another relevant aspect to be highlighted is that, according to the Oral History procedures, after the transcription and textualization of the interview, the collaborator analyzes the text prepared and, after corrections, modifications, additions, or omissions indicated by them, grants the rights to it to compose the historiographical source of the research. This process, which is often carried out with the help of digital media (by e-mail, for example), in the context of our research, required, in most cases, in-person returns to the locations and reunions with the collaborators –considering the difficulty of accessing the internet in rural areas.

This aspect shows us, once again, how these studies, in some way, revisit assumptions and procedures of Oral History due to the specificity of the context. When it comes to accessing places and people, the rural world often presents difficulties: on the one hand, roads and public transportation are very precarious; on the other hand, contact through the media often fails. Planning and conducting interviews with people who can collaborate with the research are major challenges.

For example, Paião's (2019) and Domingues's (2023) research depended on much support from the interviewees and others. Without a car, Paião (2019) depended on various forms of help to get to the Eli Vive Settlement, where her interviewees lived and worked. In some cases, other residents, whose way of life also differed from that experienced in urban centers, were willing to listen to and help an outsider:

We left Cornélio Procópio on the first bus, leaving at 7 am, got off at the Londrina bus station, and boarded a metropolitan bus bound for Tamarana, stopping in Lerroville at 10 am. When we arrived in Lerroville, around 11 am, we looked for information on phone numbers of people who could provide rides or taxis that could take us to the Settlement. We stayed at the bus stop that takes the community to the Settlement, which is in front of a small grocery store. There were several people in front of the grocery store, waiting for the bus, and several of them were from the Settlement. The owner of the grocery store provides plastic chairs for people to sit on, and in this "circle", they chat about a variety of subjects. Everyone helped us with transportation contacts and we managed to speak to Mr. Celso, who agreed to take us. (Paião, 2019, p. 61-62).

In other situations, residents of the settlement itself showed compassion and assisted the researcher:

I arrived in Lerroville at 8:30 am [...] I sat on the bench in front of Polaco's Bar and, while I waited, I saw a family leaving the grocery store and their dusty car made me think that they might live in the Settlement. I went to meet the family and asked if they lived in the Settlement and they said yes. There were three of them, Mrs. Marisa, her son Emerson and her grandson Murilo, a child of about five years old. I went down to the Settlement with them. [...] Gilda welcomed me with great affection throughout the morning. When I sent a message saying that I would be late because I had "missed" the bus, she was understanding and kind and even offered to have her son pick me up in Lerroville. But since I had gotten that ride, it wasn't necessary. (Paião, 2019, p. 68-69).

I arrived in Lerroville at 7:50 am and couldn't get on the bus. I tried to contact Mr. Celso, but I couldn't. I went back to the grocery store, the place where you can chat and ask for help, and I got the phone number of Mr. Nego, a local taxi driver. We arranged to meet and he came to pick me up. That day, due to the difficulties in scheduling interviews, I scheduled three interviews, one for the morning and two for the afternoon. When I got to the school, I got a ride with Junior, a resident of the Settlement, who took me to the lot of my first interviewee that day, Marilda, an educator at the Itinerant School from 2009 to 2011. It was difficult to get to the lot, with the internet failing and without much idea of where it was, we got lost and passed the location. (Paião, 2019, p. 71).

Domingues (2023), in turn, always went to the research site accompanied by another researcher in a car –which made his transportation much easier. For a particular interview,

however, which was conducted at the Companheiro Keno Settlement, he had the help of a resident:

I walked for about an hour along the stone road and, along the way, I had some hardships: a dog ran after me, I was thirsty, and there was a lot of dust, as some trucks were passing by on the road. However, I witnessed a beautiful sunset in that landscape. Then, a young man on a motorcycle passed by and shouted: “Are you going to school?” I nodded and he asked: “Do you want a ride?” I didn’t hesitate, I got on the motorcycle and we set off towards school (Domingues, 2023, p. 39).

In rural areas, distances are great and transportation is scarce, placing greater demands on those who undertake research using Oral History. In addition, weather conditions can also be obstacles to access:

On March 25, 2022, I conducted the fifth interview with Jonathan. During the week, I contacted him and we arranged the interview for 3 pm. The night before, it rained heavily in Bandeirantes – which left us in doubt as to whether we would go or not. We left at 12:38 pm and encountered heavy truck traffic. When we arrived on the dirt road on the way to school, we noticed that there was a lot of mud and the only thing that came to mind was what Dahiane had said about her accident. Even so, we decided to take the risk, but be more careful. During the journey, there were many puddles of water and the road was a little slippery (Domingues, 2023, p. 39).

In Lerroville, this time without being in such a hurry, since I had scheduled the meeting for 2:00 pm, I first went to the grocery store. Among the items I bought was an umbrella to protect me from the light, continuous rain that was falling. The temperature was pleasant. I went to a restaurant that the people at the grocery store recommended. A simple, small place with home-cooked food, which I soon realized was run by a family. I asked the people about the bus to the Settlement, which would leave at 1:30 pm, and they warned me that the bus might not arrive because of the condition of the road due to the rain. I had lunch and walked on, thinking about the decision I should make. I walked down four streets and passed in front of the district school. It was departure time, and several rural school buses were in front of the school. I stopped at the grocery store that I had gotten help with on the day of Vanderleia’s interview and, from there, I called Mr. Celso again. There were two women and a child waiting for the bus to the settlement, Mrs. Nadir and her ten-year-old daughter Mônica, and Mrs. Nair. I asked Mr. Celso to take us to the settlement. The rain made the road noisier and bumpier, even by car. On the way, we discussed politics and the need to meet the demands of the settlements, with the focus of the discussion being the importance of paving the road, which would improve the lives of the families living there and could also be an alternative route to Tamarana. (Paião, 2019, p. 64).

These efforts by Souza (2017, 2019), Paião (2019), and Domingues (2023), intended to understand rural schools and record their historical versions, were largely made possible by listening to those who experienced these schools in their different spaces, those who had to tell us about how they were established, the struggles, the challenges and the joys of the times when these schools were established and remained in these communities.

The excerpts from the methodological approaches highlighted in this section show that the intentional choice of Oral History as a methodology was powerful enough to enable these studies to be carried out. The narratives developed and analyzed are historical sources intentionally produced so that the rural schools addressed in the research mentioned here would

also have a record of their history, and it is in these narratives produced from the mobilization of Oral History as a research methodology that the researchers found elements to constitute these stories.

In addition to what the collaborators interviewed in these studies said, these research movements that take photos and notebooks from the houses and provide researchers with them from a certain period, objects previously kept for personal purposes now contribute as important elements of analysis and interpretation and help illustrate the research reports and becoming public, in the same way as the narratives. They are records mobilized and produced given the research intention launched in those communities. In this sense, we see the mobilization of Oral History as a way of enabling the elaboration of a history of these rural schools that seem to have had their historical records neglected over time, given that little or almost nothing other than the collaborators' personal objects was found during these investigations. Several reasons may indeed have contributed to these non-encounters, and it is also true that we believe that, for this research in question, the choice of the Oral History methodology to investigate rural schools was essential.

4 Considerations

As presented in this text, the research by Souza (2017, 2019), Paião (2019), and Domingues (2023) had different objectives but shared a focus on rural schools. In addition, they developed their research in the ways they could, and designed their methodological paths, whether by choice or necessity. In all of them, one choice brings them together, the theoretical methodological choice, the Oral History. Thus, they tensioned the principles and procedures of this methodology with the way each methodological path was allowed and/or required.

It is important to emphasize that what drove us to write this text, in the meeting of researchers interested in discussing the theme that is established in these pages, was the desire to communicate and share these research movements to bring to light how they show the possibilities of Oral History when we intentionally mobilize it as a research methodology in investigations that aimed to study rural schools in Paraná, in their most varied structures, as we highlighted at the beginning of this article. However, speaking of possibilities also leads us to speak of challenges. More than that, it leads us to design new studies that can, like those already carried out, help us advance this discussion, casting other eyes on schools in Paraná and beyond the border limitations that demarcate the state on the map.

In this sense, the encounter we provoked between Oral History and *Educação do Campo*

shows us that there are possible and powerful paths!

In the four studies discussed in this text, few official documents were found by the researchers, and when they were found, they presented few records. The stories we were able to record in each of these investigations, in the way that was possible for us, are versions produced from the desire to hear other stories, from listening to the various versions, which meet and diverge when we look at them as a whole. These narratives, when heard, recorded, and organized into written texts ethically produced and authorized following the procedures of Oral History, allow us to record versions based on memories communicated in intentionally planned interview moments.

We were willing to listen to and produce versions of these educational institutions that are (or were) in the countryside, that serve (or served) a specific rural community. Versions that were also possible for us to obtain through the encounter with the photographs, notebooks, and other objects that came to us through the interviewees, their families, and the campaigns – which mobilized the local community that expressed no doubts about the importance of contributing to research on their school history.

For the interviewees, interested in telling stories, *“it’s always early, I have so many stories to tell you!”*. It is too early to turn off the recorder; it is too early to leave! And how many stories have they told, more than once, alone, with friends, among siblings, with cake, with coffee, with prose, laughter, and emotions. For the researchers, it is a commitment, an effort, and with challenges that sometimes go beyond the routine ones encountered in the course of research, some of which are typical of the field, be it the rain that makes it difficult to get around, the distance, the patience of waiting, or the running of the dog...

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All authors contributed substantially to the conception and planning of the study; to the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data; to the writing and critical review; and to the approval of the final version to be published.

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