“One sows the seed,
but it has its own dynamics”
An Interview with Orlando Fals Borda

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This interview deals with the issue of Participatory Action Research (PAR) in the life of Orlando Fals Borda from its beginnings in the sociological investigation of the land problem in Colombia, through social organizations and political participation, to the relationship of the academia to society. The alternative paradigm of social research is based on a new relation, as a unique process, between theory and practice. This is the “seed” that today develops multiple and diversified enriching dynamics.

Orlando, we would like to talk to you about participatory research in your life history, and a first concern of ours is about your personal experience before the formalization of PAR. What were the first insights or roots of it?

Fals Borda: I think there were some family roots. In my home my mother was a very intelligent person, a bluestocking really, author of dramas and cantatas and things like that. She had a lot of social sensitivity, as a leader of the Presbyterian Church she was involved in the work with women, for instance. She was the president of the Women Society of the Presbyterian Church and organized a national campaign against cancer in a radio station. She was