

SUBTLE DIFFERENCES AND MORE SUSTAINABLE APPROACHES IN SOCIAL WORK



*COME NOTARE SOTTILI DIFFERENZE PER FAVORIRE
APPROCCI PIÙ SOSTENIBILI NEL LAVORO SOCIALE?
AULA E1 POLO PIAGGE, VIA MATTEOTTI 3 - PISA*

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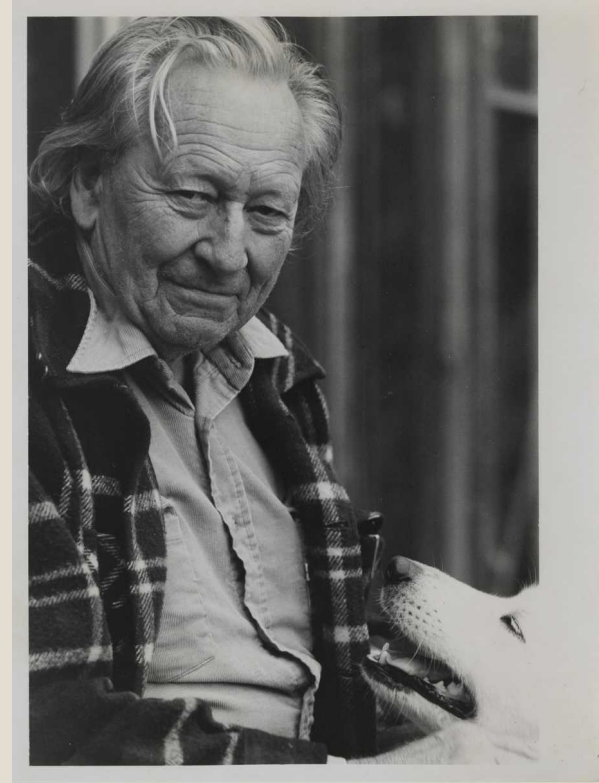
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14.30 p.m.
Dipartimento di
Scienze Politiche
*Corso di Sistemi di
Welfare Comparati*

Universita di Pisa

*Questions in Social work
in the light of Gregory Bateson`s (1904-1980) quote:
“a difference which makes a difference”*

- *How to notice differences to enhance the current situation in Social work?*
- *How to notice tiny differences in the wake of new governance and subtle control mechanisms in order to take responsible in social work*

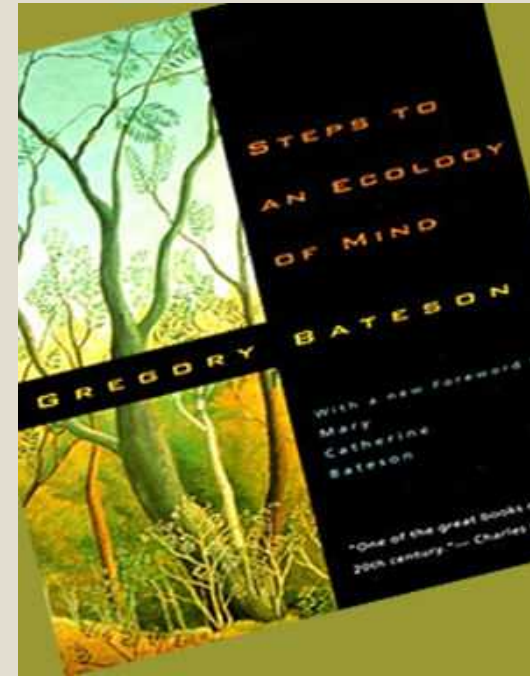


Landscapes that can open up our minds

A summer night by Harald Sohlberg



Steps to an ecology of mind



Preconditions of social workers and child care workers

- Individualization of responsibility in the wake of the new liberalization and New Public Management.
- They also face trilemmaes (See f.i. Hood, 2012: *Addressing the Double Crisis: The Welfare State Trilemma*).
- Requests of handling contradicted values at the same time; goodness, justice and efficiency.
- At least, double - bind messages towards grassrootlevel bureaucrats.
- Concrete responsibility on grassroot-level is transformed into something abstract and floating at management level

Effects on perception, rationalization and use of language

- The language takes an abstract form at higher hierarchical levels
- A kind of hypocrisy disseminate
- The lack of «free speech» and metacommunication

- Individualization and loneliness and even guilt in the wake of The New Accountability

- Sublimation and transformation from power to ethics.

- Moral that disguises power (Kroken, 2012, 2015, 2016)

- A reminder on Henrik Ibsen: "If you take the *life lie* from an average man, you take away his happiness as well".

Why differences matter in the light of Gregory Bateson's (1972) double-bind theory

- The condition "double-bind" is characterized by that there are no opportunities for meta-communication and that one cannot escape the situation (according to the schizophrenia-theory).
- Individuals are exposed to mutually contradictory signals that are impossible to meet at the same time ("damn if you do and damn if you don't").
- In addition, there are no opportunities to meta-communicate about the signals' contradictions, then the only way out of it is to withdraw.

Why differences matters, also in social work and especially in bureaucratic contexts?

- Double-bind communication represents an assault to the man`s self.
- Building an identity presupposes stability and it`s crucial to survive as a human being.
- A schizophrenic communication doesn`t contain much space to develop a stable self. Double- bind communication represents a negation of the self and represent a constant threat- as "someone falls you in the back".

How to handle double-bind situation-in general contexts

Ways of dissolving double bind- communication is to meta-communicate about the double binding, change the preconditions that the communication is based on or to leave the field (see Schjødt and Egeland, 1989).

Discussion – how to become more sustainable in social work?

- Consciousness about differences
- How to evolve realistic perspectives in Social Work in turbulent times? «Do the little you can»?
- How to build bridge between an inner and an outer world?
- Regulating oneself in a common world *within* social work to prevent destruction/dissolving? For example the social workers self.
- The importance of situating oneself and create common networks and common narratives (see Wilson, 2017; Weinberg and Banks, 2019)