EDICIONES
COMPLUTENSE

Social Work in 40 Objects: Teaching and learning in the language of *things*

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Abstract. This article considers the significance of a web-based experimental project that aims to discover how social work might be displayed and demonstrated via a collection of Objects. An open access approach invited participants to 'donate' an object and to tell the story of how and why the object connects them to social work. The aim is to find a way to express the contested nature of social work in a more immediate and accessible way than text book definitions can achieve.

The experiment is quantitatively successful (more than 150 objects from 25 different countries); in qualitative terms, the objects donated to the website have elicited a very broad range of themes in entertaining and engaging ways. The exhibition has 'toured' to many countries where it proves to be adaptive to cultural differences and gives rise to spontaneous object donation, thus proving its relevance and immediacy. Understanding social work via Objects has been used successfully to teach students about the contested nature of social work theory and practice.

Keywords: charged objects; experimental website; material culture theory; professional identity; social work practice.

[es] Trabajo social en 40 objetos: Enseñar y aprender en el lenguaje de las cosas

Resumen. Este artículo muestra la relevancia de un proyecto experimental realizado a través de una página web en la que se explica cómo puede mostrarse y visualizarse el Trabajo Social, utilizando una serie de objetos. Es un enfoque abierto que invita a los participantes a la "donación" de un objeto que les sirva para contar la historia de cómo y por qué dicho objeto les conecta con el Trabajo Social. Esto servirá para mostrar una manera de expresar la controvertida naturaleza del Trabajo Social de forma más inmediata y accesible que las definiciones de libros de texto al uso.

El experimento ha sido cuantitativamente exitoso (más de 150 objetos de 25 países diferentes); y, en términos cualitativos, los objetos donados al sitio web han suscitado una amplia gama de temas de forma entretenida y atractiva. La exposición ha "recorrido" muchos países, demostrando su adaptación a las diferencias culturales, así como ha provocado la donación de objetos de forma espontánea, demostrando su relevancia e inmediatez. La comprensión del Trabajo Social a través de objetos ha sido un éxito y ha facilitado el aprendizaje de los estudiantes respecto a la controvertida naturaleza de la teoría y práctica del Trabajo Social.

Palabras clave: objetos cargados; sitio web experimental; teoría de la cultura material; identidad profesional; práctica de Trabajo Social.

Introduction

Social work is a largely private occupation. Whereas most people have experienced med- icine, nursing, education and the law in some form or other, direct contact with social work is less common. Moreover, those who do ex- perience social work are likely to be the most

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marginalized and least powerful sections of the community. In the 1997 British General Election, the campaign slogan of the winning Labour Party was "Education! Education! Education!" – it brings a smile to think that a political party would ever have "Social Work! Social Work! Social Work!" as its campaign message.

For all these reasons it is imperative that social work communicates with the wider community. Social work needs to find ways of showing what it is to those who have not experienced it and know little about it. This is important because broad political support is crucial to resource social work. Who is going to lobby for social work? Certainly not global capital. With the rise of rightwing populism, a lessening of support for the values of social work is evident in many parts of the world so it is important that the profession manifests itself.

There are many text books that purport to describe and explain what social work is, and there is an internationally agreed definition:

> Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing.
>
> The above definition may be amplified at national and/or regional levels (IFSW/IASSW, 2014).

This is a carefully crafted definition and it is admirable that there is sufficient consensus across continents to arrive at this definition but, as a social worker, can I really put my hand on my heart and say that it captures for me what social is? If you were asked at some party, "What is social work?" and you replied with this definition, would the inquirer have a true sense of what social work is?

For this reason I wanted to experiment with the idea that we might be able to *demonstrate* social work rather than define it; and one method of achieving this demonstration could be through *Objects*.

Objects and feelings

The dimension that is missing in the IFSW/IASSW (2014) definition is that of *feelings*. We recognise the importance of feelings in our direct work with service users, so why not recognise feelings as central to our connection to social work itself? Social work values like social and economic justice evoke feelings – of passion (for change) and outrage (at injustice) and other emotions, too. It is these strong feelings that help social workers to maintain their commitment to social work.

We think with the objects we love; we love the objects we think with. Thus Sherry Turkle (2011) links objects to feelings. It is a paradox, because we think of objects as cold and inanimate, far from the warmth and subjectivity of feelings. However, it is seventy years since Winnicott (1953) theorised about the role of objects in helping the young infant's transition from a world entirely centred upon me to a world that is 'not-me'. Objects can help with other life transitions, too; for instance, in the grieving process a treasured belonging can help retain our memory of the dead person, often through the touch and the smell of a piece of clothing.

Turkle (2011) goes on to note that "Most objects exert their holding power because of the particular moment and circumstance in which they come into our lives." Can this be also true of our professional lives? My eldest daughter, a social worker, retains the *A-Z Street Map* she used to help her get around the city of Birmingham, where she had her first job as a social worker. The map-book is of no practical use now, as she no longer works in Birmingham and would use sat-nav (GPS), but she keeps it as a nostalgic connection to her early years as a newly qualified social worker.

Objects and identity

A young, heavily pregnant woman came into the office asking to see a social worker. I had not long qualified and was a similar age to the woman. She told me how she had been in care (looked after in children's homes) but that she had little memory or knowledge of her childhood – where she had been and when – and that now she was about to give birth to a new life she really wanted to know more about her own background. Could we help?

I went to the back-office and searched where all the clients' case files were kept. I located her file – it was bursting with ill-filed papers and documents and its overall appearance was unloved and disrespectful. I didn't want her to see her 'life' so carelessly flung together so I asked if she would mind returning in a few days to give me time to sort through the things in her file to help write her 'story'. This she did. I gave her a chronology of events in her life and her movements (there had been many), and I was able to give her photographs and drawings that she had done as a child. All of these objects were lost in this file in the back-office when they ought to have been in her possession as important mementoes from her life. I wondered how many of the other bulging files contained items that ought rightfully be returned to their subjects (Chambon et al, 2011). It was a seminal moment of professional learning and it guided my subsequent practice and my later teaching with students.

"With such frequent changes of environment, material possessions may become particularly important as they have the potential to offer one of the few points of consistency in lives that are characterised by transience," writes Ward (2011) about children in the (state) care of the local authority.

The humility of objects (Miller 1986) can blind us to their importance in providing a sense of continuing identity through time (Mehta and Belk 1991). Although the attachment to objects can become dysfunctional, such as hoarding (Shaw *et al* 2016), the persistence of a comfort object through time can help ground us, like a teddy bear or the scarf given to the little boy by Father Christmas in the cartoon film *The Snowman* (1982).

Could objects help social work to find and express its identity and to chart that identity over time?

Objects and relationships

Social work theory and practice focus on the significance of communication skills and these are implicitly taken to be visual, aural and oral – observation, listening, speaking (Trevithick 2012). The significance of touch is neglected. Objects are notably tangible (Hocking 2000).

The power of touch is well illustrated by the many objects gathered by Thomas Clarkson campaigning for abolition of the slave trade in the late eighteenth century (Devenish 1994). Clarkson was a fervent opponent of slavery and his chest of objects contained examples of the artefacts of the slave trade: the appalling instruments of slavery, such as manacles and branding irons as well as the spices that were traded; and, significantly, the beautiful wooden and ivory objects that were exquisitely carved by the peoples who were enslaved. He travelled the country with this chest of objects encouraging people to touch, and be touched by, the objects of slavery.

"In his campaign to abolish slavery and the slave trade Thomas Clarkson noticed that artefacts could influence public opinion more than words alone." (Doel, 2019).

It is not a single object that has meaning and power, but the relationship of that object to others and to the human world. This has been coined by Baudrillard (2005/1968) as *the system of things*.

Social work's 'chest of objects'

In the face of public ignorance of social work, could a chest of objects enhance the relationship between the social work profession and the wider public? Could such a chest of objects help students to acquire their sense of professional identity? And could a large collection of objects illustrate complex notions such as the 'contested' nature of social work? (Jönsson 2015). Might experienced practitioners, educators and researchers also deepen their relationship with social work by telling and listening to stories of social work refracted through Objects?

If so, what might such a collection of objects look like?

In order to test this idea I launched a website in 2016 called *Social Work in 40 Objects* (socialworkin40objects.com). 'Forty' was aspirational and I had no idea, or confidence, that even one object might be proposed. Happily, to date (2020) more than 150 objects and stories from 25 countries have been 'donated' to the collection. (The geographic spread is considerable, but there is a notable absence of objects and stories from South America and the Caribbean. A collaboration with Universidad de Los Lagos in Osorno, Chile, was hoping to develop a specifically Latin American perspective on the project but has been postponed because of the coronavirus pandemic).

1. Examples from the Collection

What follows is an account of just ten of the objects that have been proposed for the collection. My intention in presenting this small sample of objects is to illustrate the richness of the themes that the objects evoke and the textured, layered understanding of social work that arises from the brief explanations about why the donors proposed them.

Object 1 – ŽVAKĖ (CANDLE)

Jorune Vysniauskyte-Rimkiene is a social work educator in Lithuania. She wrote:

> I came to social work not very much knowing what it is, but feeling that it is my field. I was immediately caught deeply by its main meaning – to take care of vulnerable groups of people, to stand for their rights, to empower them to change their life situations … I donate a Candle because it is a symbol of hope and light. Social workers bring light into the dark times in people's lives to help them see the possibilities. Social work lightens not just the outer world but the inner world too. Social workers provide a candle to others to lighten their lives (Doel, 2017).

Candle is an example of an object being used metaphorically in order to illustrate what social work means to the donor of the object. Vysniauskyte-Rimkiene's sentiments reflect the utopian tradition in social work, one of progressive reform and idealism. It speaks to hope as central to social work, a belief that change is possible and that it is social work that can make the difference.

Object 2 – BELLA THE DOG

Joan Cawsten is a former social work service user (client) in England. She wrote:

> I first encountered social services when I was five years old. Some ladies came to our house and took me, my three year old sister and my one year old brother away from my mother, out of our house, down the street lined with curious neighbours, and into two waiting cars. I never saw my mother again … I propose Bella the dog because all of us children in the home loved her – and Bella loved all of us, always, indiscriminately and lavishly. She was a

wonderful dog, placid and gentle and endlessly affectionate. So, beautiful Bella, you were unconditional love and acceptance, a wonderful contrast to the emotional austerity of life in a children's home in the 1950s (Doel, 2017).

If Vysniauskyte-Rimkiene's *Candle* shines light on the utopianism in social work, Cawsten's Bella takes us to the darker side, and asks us to be vigilant of poor practice and to challenge it. She was not ill-treated in the children's home, but the manner of her rupture from her mother, the subsequent denial of contact, and the absence of unconditional love represent a disturbing world in which social work gets its hands very dirty. Social work's involvement in much more dystopian realities, such as the complicity in the national socialist ideology of eugenics in 1930s Germany, must never be forgotten if we are to avoid such horrors. Even in less demonic circumstances, social workers regularly face difficult moral dilemmas (Doel, 2016).

Object 3 – FOOD

Duduzile Sokhela is a community activist and social work educator in South Africa. She wrote:

> I've served my people working in different non-profit organisations in South Africa.
> I was inspired by my deceased sister and my living mother's altruistic causes in the community I grew up in … Throughout my social work career I have worked with people living in abject poverty and the direst need is a basic commodity: Food. I decided to own my country's poverty and do something about it. Social work is about owning the community's problems and doing something about them (Doel, 2017).

The professionalization of social work in Western countries and the Global North has led social work to lose touch with the radicalism that is rooted it in the day-to-day concerns of the poorest people in our communities and inspires Sokhela's *Food*. Few western social workers know, for instance, that freedom fighters in the struggle for Indian Independence are known as social workers (Joseph and Fernandez, 2006).

Food challenges us to consider what it means to be professional: working at a computer behind a key-pad entrance building with little direct contact with service users, or living

and campaigning side by side with the most disadvantaged communities in society? Or something in between? All of these things? If Sokehla's views were voiced by a student social worker in a western placement, many practice educators (field instructors) would view these sentiments as 'unprofessional', getting too close and not being 'objective'; but there are models of social work even in the west that recognise that street-level, community activist social work is both effective and right (Holman, 1993).

Object 4 – JANE ADDAMS' COAT

Vadim Moldovan is a Moldovan social work educator living and working in New York. He wrote:

> I wandered into social work after leaving the Soviet Union for the United States and driving a New York cab. My main focus now is the professionalization of social work in Moldova and post-socialist countries … When Tolstoy [the progressive Russian aristocrat and author] met Jane Addams [the founding mother of social work in the US] in the late nineteenth century she was wearing a Coat whose fashionable sleeves had, according to Tolstoy, enough material in one arm to dress a girl. Tolstoy asked if she did not find such a dress a barrier to the people. These sleeves represent the potential for hypocrisy for social workers (Doel, 2017).

Social workers no longer wear voluminous coats but the notion that their lives can be very separate and different from the people they work with is just as relevant in the twenty-first century as it was in Jane Addams' day. If social work has one foot in the establishment and the other amongst the poor, how does it manage this balancing act; in particular, how does it speak truth to power when it is dependent economically and socially on that power? On a personal level, how do social workers manage the cognitive and emotional dissonance created on returning to their relatively comfortable, settled homes from the abject circumstances they have just experienced amongst the people they work with?

Object 5 – ILEKE IBILE (TRADITIONAL BEAD)

Enakele Seun David is a newly qualified social worker from Nigeria. He wrote:

I grew up in a small village in Nigeria. Social services is not a new phenomenon in Nigeria – the traditional rulers provide social welfare services through the elders and family heads. The kinship system provides for child and family welfare, mental health, and care for aged … As a young boy, I loved the Ileke ibile [Traditional bead] worn by the village leaders. The leaders meet the social needs of the villagers and deal with problematic behaviours and find solutions. I see social workers as 'wearing' the Traditional bead. It cannot be physically observed – but the social work profession is the Traditional bead (Doel, 2017).

From where does social work derive its authority? Even within the same social work team this answer is likely to be answered variously: from legal sanction, from professional training and qualification, from the power of the employing organisation, from personal charisma, from respect in the community, etc. David's *Traditional Beads* remind us of the significance of this question, whilst at the same time he manages to break down the barriers between notions of social work in the global North and the global South. The post-modern focus on difference and diversity can neglect the universal and the generic: David's elegant use of metonymy, with the beads standing for the relationship between social work and the wider community, skillfully illuminates what we have in common, no matter how exotic the differences in setting might at first appear –Nigerian village and British social work agency, for instance.

The idea of social work providing leadership has fallen by the wayside in many Western communities and David's *Ileke Ibile* can help reawaken this spirit.

Object 6 – VIŠJA ŠOLA ZA SOCIALNE DELAVCE (SCHOOL ENTRANCE SIGN)

Vesna Lescošek is a social work educator in Slovenia. She wrote:

We have had to fight hard for social work to be considered an academic discipline. In Yugoslavia / Slovenia I had to graduate as a sociologist, as social work was 'just' an applied profession ... In 2015 we celebrated the 60th anniversary of social work in Slovenia. This School entrance sign had been rescued from the school's former home and was produced as a

surprise at the celebrations. It has come to represent social work's resilience (Doel, 2017).

Like *Ileke Ibile*, Lescošek's *School Entrance Sign* has much to teach Western social work. In this case the lessons are about resilience: how to survive circumstances that are hostile to the profession. In the USSR the hostility came from a belief that social work was no longer necessary in a socialist utopia, though of course informal social work continued, largely connected to factory-based employment. In the West, the values of global capital are hostile to social work and have led to austerity policies that squeeze social work budgets and capacities. Questions about the resilience of the profession are as significant in present times as in the years when the Slovene school sign was protected.

A sub-theme arising from this object is the tension between social work as a practice and social work as a discipline. The borrowing of social work theory from so many other disciplines – notably sociology, psychology, education, law and political science – is both a strength and a weakness. The many variables in social work practice mean that the randomised control trial (RCT), the gold standard of the 'harder' sciences, is difficult and costly and therefore largely absent in social work. Moreover, many would consider RCTs inappropriate to social work's development. The focus on evidence-based practice puts a premium on an empiricism that is contested in social work circles.

Object 7 – DRUM

Biant Singh Suwali is a social worker in England. He wrote:

> I am a social worker and a percussionist and at my happiest when combining the two. I was born and bred in Nottingham, UK, where my family was exposed to complex issues of race, poverty and disability. I grew up steeped in traditions of Indian music … I donate the Drum because it is through drums that I facilitate a process where social justice, music, performance and the well-being of people intermingle. The drum has come with me every step of the way. I have drummed my way into the heart of social work practice. It has allowed me to retain a creative practice in the teeth of the harsh realities of austerity and bureaucracy (Doel, 2017).

What do social workers actually do? Much of a social worker's practice concerns abstractions such as listening, observing and communicating, so it is difficult to make these concrete in the form of an Object. Some fortunate and skilled practitioners manage to bring their other talents into their direct work with social work's service users. Suwali's passion for percussion is something he incorporates into his work, achieving an enviable integrity of the personal, the professional and the political. How can social workers learn from these practices to put notions of lifelong learning and continuing professional development truly into practice? Can non-social workers better understand the concrete reality of something like drumming, and then be gently led on to a deeper understanding of others' social realities?

Object 8 – SAC D'ÉCOLE (SCHOOL BAG)

Ludovic Barillot is an educateur, first in Ile de Réunion and then in France. He wrote:

> I am an educateur, a member of the family of social professions. For 14 years I worked on the Ile de Réunion where I created a volunteer organisation, Arts et Traditions [Traditional arts and crafts] which continues to this day. Its aim is to develop the potential of disadvantaged persons through the production of local traditional crafts … I donate this School bag because it was worn by my son to school in Réunion (he's now in his forties and still has it). It was made within the Arts et Traditions association, which aimed to counter the cultural degradation of colonialism and the island's dependency on French imports. The poorest families testify that the experience of Arts et Traditions has been "life changing" (Doel, 2017).

Some readers might consider the School bag as 'all very good, but not social work.' I disagree. In a period when we are increasingly concerned about the state of our planet, this is an excellent example of a social work that is sustainable and empowering. Forty years after its foundation *Arts et Traditions* is still providing employment and community self-respect. If one of social work's core values is working with people's strengths and building self- and community- reliance, what better than the story of the School bag from *Arts et Traditions*? The relationship between social work and other

close professions, such as social pedagogues, educateurs and occupational therapists, should be cooperative rather than competitive.

Once again, we have an example of an object that enables us to consider what is often referred to as the 'contested' nature of social work – a term that becomes less arcane when illuminated via Objects and their stories.

Object 9 – POSTMAN PAT MODEL

Sheila Slesser is a social worker and social work educator in Scotland. She wrote:

> Managing childcare and protection issues as a social worker and balancing this with my own parenting was always complicated, invariably involving guilt – 'mum' space in my head being used to think about child care cases when I was at home being a mum … I donate this model of Postman Pat. 'Patrick' was made by my son when he was five years old and it's been a permanent feature on my social work desk for about 30 years. It is a constant reminder that, though social work can never be a 9:00-17:00 job, 'my own boys' always had priority, (Doel, 2017).

If we were to limit the scope of objects in the '40 Objects' study, we could do no better than to ask social workers to tell us what objects sit on their desks (Scholar 2016). Patrick's thirty year vigil on Sheila's desk is undoubtedly a factor helping her to look after herself and to prevent the burnout that is prevalent in social work. It is a difficult job and takes its emotional toll, especially when there are pulls on the practitioner's time and focus between work and home. Patrick's longevity mirrors Sheila's time with the profession and is reminiscent of the ancient *lares* – the small, domestic shrines where Roman families tended their household gods in the belief that they would protect them and bring good fortune. In terms of Sheila's self-care, Patrick has no doubt been worth a thousand bullet-points in any policy document on 'How to Look After Yourself'.

All practitioners must learn where they draw the line between their personal and their professional lives. There is wider controversy concerning what rights individuals ought to have to a personal life that is separate from their public life, such as activities in campaign groups or other forms of public behaviour outside their professional role (Doel *et al,* 2010).

Object 10 – OVILLO DE LANA (BALL OF WOOL)

Yolanda Domenech is a social work lecturer in Spain. She wrote:

> My lines of research and teaching are social work with groups, skills for social workers, poverty and social exclusion, social services and social work in Spain. I have a PhD in sociology … I donate a Ball of wool because, for me, it represents social work with groups. Like the web that spiders knit, a ball of wool permits the knitting of a support network. The group as a support network in social work practice is the basic premise that I use to teach social work with groups. Professionally, social work with groups has and remains a challenge to some aspects and areas of the profession. Because of that, we need to teach the importance of "knitting" the group, as if with a ball of wool, (Doel, 2017).

Like *Candle* that introduced our ten example Objects, *Ball of wool* is an example of an object being used metaphorically in order to illustrate what social work means to the proposer of the object. Domenech's sentiments reflect the communitarian tradition in social work, best expressed through the social groupwork and social action wings of the profession. The allusion to wool and the knitting of a support structure reminds us of the particular skills needed by social workers and also of the collectivist values of cooperation and solidarity that are the basis of the social work profession. The particular mechanisms by which people knit garments can vary from culture to culture (as does the creature from which the wool is acquired), but the activity of knitting is itself a universal human experience. It is an apt analogy for *social working*.

2. The 13 Collections

Six months into the '40 Objects' project, 127 objects had been donated as well as their accompanying stories. At this point I had begun to consider the project as a *Virtual Exhibition of Social Work*, and I wondered how the various objects might be gathered into 'collections' with my role as the curator of this exhibition (Couchman et al*.,* 2010). One approach, that of the researcher, would be to gather ob-

jects together around themes – similar to the ones outlined earlier: the boundary between the personal and the professional; professional authority; strengths approaches in social work, etc. However, I decided that the 'Exhibition' ought to be true to the materiality of the donated objects and I searched for commonalities within the objects *as* objects: so, there is a set of objects that are all fabric-based (school bag, wool, hammock), another collection that is sound based (violin, songs, mouthpiece of a french horn), etc. In total there are twelve collections in which the objects are gathered on the basis of their material essence. A thirteenth collection brings objects together that reflect the contrast between utopian and dystopian visions of social work.

3. A typology of objects

The objects can be themed in terms of their material *objectness* or, secondly, the social work themes they evoke or, thirdly, in terms of the kind of approach the donor has taken to the relationship of the object to social work. In terms of this third perspective, the following six typologies were elucidated. One single object might fall into more than one of the categories, but every object can be classified as principally one of these types:

- **METAPHORICAL** objects illustrate social work via parallels with the object. Vysniauskyte-Rimkiene's *Candle* and Domenech's *Wool* are examples. David's *Ileke ibile* takes metaphor further to metonymy.
- **METAPHYSICAL** objects illuminate social work through objects that don't exist in the material world, such as Causten's *Bella the dog* – is an animal 'an object'? And this particular one has been dead for more than half a century.
- **SOCIO-POLITICAL** objects make links between social work and the broad political context. Sokhela's *Food* is a clear example, though many of the example objects have links with the socio-political context.
- **HISTORICAL** objects take artefacts from social work's past to illustrate significant themes from the present. Moldovan's *Jane Addams' Coat* is a nineteenth century artefact which no longer exists as an object, but the force of the story behind the item has a strong resonance today. Similarly, the re-

appearance of Lescošek's *School Entrance Sign* is a powerful reminder of the importance of historical continuity (Caple, 2006).
- **PRACTICAL** objects are used in direct social work practice with service users, such as Suwali's *Drum* and Barillot's *School bag*.
- **PERSONAL** objects are those from a person's own history and their association with the social work profession, such as Slesser's *Postman Pat Model*. The *Traditional Beads* and *School Bag* also have strong personal associations, too (Hoybye 2014).

4. Some conclusions

The inclusive approach to collecting objects via an open access website led to a diverse and comprehensive display of social work. Overall, the collection illustrates the complex notion of a *contested profession,* perhaps in a more accessible way than the written word. However, an Object is unlikely to speak for itself and the donor's story is needed to amplify the message: why have they donated this particular object and what is the story that connects them to it, and it to social work? If this were an actual Exhibition, we might consider this to be the informative 'plaque' mounted to the side of the object.

An object-based approach to understanding social work transcends language. Could objects help to overcome national and linguistic barriers in order to internationalise the social work curriculum, as powerfully illustrated by the *Traditional beads*?

The more strongly an object links the story of the person to the narrative of the profession, the more *charged* the object becomes. For instance, metaphorical objects tended not to have the force of personal objects: *Candle* can be any candle and does not have a person-specific attachment; whilst *Postman Pat* is a very particular object with its own name (Patrick), a unique object capable of evoking an emotional response that strengthens our attachment to it and to the hinterland of its story. When I see a candle I don't feel a response, but when I saw and handled Patrick I felt the reality of an object that had become *charged* (Morin 1969; Winkin 2018).

Although the idea has yet to be fully tested, there is tentative evidence that objects and their stories can tell us more about ourselves

as a profession and, more importantly, hold the potential for a better dialogue between social work and the wider public. This is crucial if we are to broaden support from people who have no direct experience of social work, and give voice to the people who rely on social work.

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More than 150 Objects donated from 25 countries:
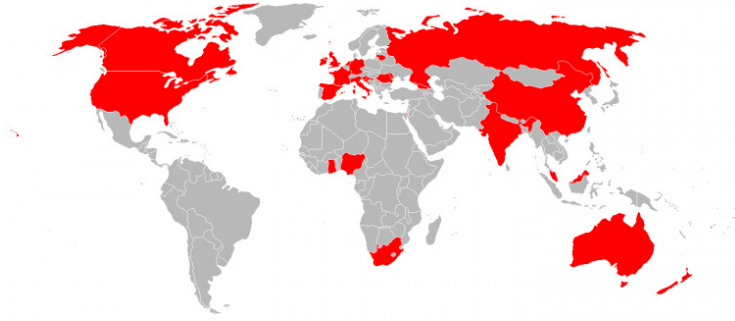
Evocative Objects:
Teddy bears

Objects and Identity:
A Case File

Objects and Relationships:
Clarkson's Chest of Objects

Personal and cultural identity:
Chinese Bowl

Object 1
Žvakė (Candle)

Object 2
Bella the Dog

Object 3
Food

Object 4
Jane Addams' Coat

Object 5
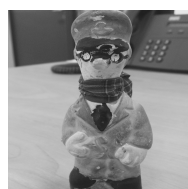*Ileke Ibile (Traditional Beads)*

Object 6
*Višja Šola Za Socialne Delavce
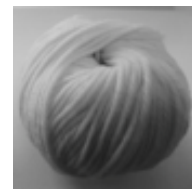(Social Work School Sign)*

Object 7
Drum

Object 8
Sac d'École (School bag)

Object 9
Postman Pat model

Object 10
Bola de Lana (Ball of Wool)