

Kent Academic Repository

Full text document (pdf)

Citation for published version

Pina-Cabral, João (2020) Obituary: Carmelo Lisón-Tolosana. *Anthropology Today*, 36 (3). p. 27. ISSN 0268-540X.

DOI

<https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8322.12580>

Link to record in KAR

<https://kar.kent.ac.uk/80739/>

Document Version

Publisher pdf

Copyright & reuse

Content in the Kent Academic Repository is made available for research purposes. Unless otherwise stated all content is protected by copyright and in the absence of an open licence (eg Creative Commons), permissions for further reuse of content should be sought from the publisher, author or other copyright holder.

Versions of research

The version in the Kent Academic Repository may differ from the final published version.

Users are advised to check <http://kar.kent.ac.uk> for the status of the paper. **Users should always cite the published version of record.**

Enquiries

For any further enquiries regarding the licence status of this document, please contact:

researchsupport@kent.ac.uk

If you believe this document infringes copyright then please contact the KAR admin team with the take-down information provided at <http://kar.kent.ac.uk/contact.html>

workers during this crisis. Still, to date, nothing has been done to improve their safety, income or security of employment. They are more exposed to the risk of infection, but are also under more pressure to go to work as they have few financial resources to fall back on. While retailers are paying out dividends and accept rate relief from government rescue packages, little is done for these workers.

Caplan draws attention to how remedies for food scarcity in the UK predominantly occur within a charity framework. The campaign advocating for the right to food in UK law (Food Justice Campaign 2003; Sustain n.d.), ongoing since 2003, has made little progress. We now need a more robust approach, such as a legal challenge to the government.

There are no signs for any government initiatives to alleviate food poverty or to regulate food supply currently or in the long term. The present crisis may have brought out 'the best qualities in its citizens', but perhaps not in the government. Olivier De Schutter, the United Nations special rapporteur for food (2008-

2014), summarized it well when he said:

Food assistance in the form of the right to social security, such as cash transfers, food stamps or vouchers, can be defined in terms of rights, whereas foodbanks are charity-based and depend on donations and good will. (De Schutter 2013)

The above seems a fitting quote to draw this discussion to a close and to remind us that whatever the new normal is post-Covid-19, charity is not the solution to food poverty. ●

Martin Caraher

City, University of London
M.caraher@city.ac.uk

Martin Caraher is Emeritus Professor of Food and Health Policy at City, University of London.

Barrie, J. 2019. People are sharing this open letter to MPs from a food bank volunteer about the struggles of people who rely on it. *The i*. <https://i.news.co.uk/news/politics/food-bank-volunteer-open-letter-mps-frank-field-heidi-allen/> (accessed 28 April 2020).

Buck, D. 2019. Public health spending: Where prevention rhetoric meets reality. The King's Fund. <https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/>.

Caplan, P. 2016. Big society or broken society? Food banks in the UK. *Anthropology Today* 32(1): 5-9.

Caraher, M. 2019. New food strategy for England. *BMJ* 366.

— & R. Davison 2019. The normalization of food aid: What happened to feeding people well? *Emerald Open Research* 1(3). <https://emeraldopenresearch.com/articles/1-3>.

— & S. Furey 2018. *The economics of emergency food aid provision*. London: Springer.

De Schutter, O. 2013. The right to food in times of crisis. In Just Fair (ed.) *Freedom from hunger: Realizing the right to food in the UK*, 7-11. London: Just Fair.

Food Foundation 2020. COVID-19: Latest impact on food. <https://foodfoundation.org.uk/covid-19-latest-impact-on-food-2/>.

Food Justice Campaign 2003. *From food poverty to food justice: New bill gives 'right to food' for the first time*. London: Food Justice Campaign.

Hammond, R.J. 1951. *Food*, vol. 1. *The growth of policy*. London: HMSO.

Sustain n.d. Achieving everyone's right to food. <https://www.sustainweb.org/righttofood/>.

Taylor-Gooby, P. 2012. Beveridge overboard? How the UK government is using the crisis to permanently restructure the welfare state. *Intereconomics* 4: 224-229.

Thane, P. 2018. *Divided kingdom: A history of Britain, 1900 to the present*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

obituary

CARMELO LISÓN TOLOSANA (1929-2020)

Carmelo Lisón Tolosana (1929-2020) was a major figure in European social anthropology, having played a central role in Spain and across Europe as a promoter of our discipline. He was part of a generation of Spaniards who were too young to fight in the civil war but not too young to feel its direct effects. Having originally trained at a seminary, he then graduated in history at the University of Zaragoza and found his vocation in the social sciences, largely inspired by the work of José Ortega y Gasset. Fascinated by the new developments that were taking place in British social anthropology in the 1960s, Carmelo registered at University College London to do a PhD.

He found out, however, that his plan to study Spanish society was not welcomed there. As a result, together with the Portuguese scholar José Cutileiro, he moved to Oxford, where J.G. Peristiany was cultivating a group of brilliant young Mediterraneanists at St Antony's College. At Oxford, however, both Cutileiro and Lisón Tolosana found greater support and encouragement in John K. Campbell, then a young post-doctoral researcher at the college, than in any of the older members of the Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology, who shared with their London colleagues a deep primitivist prejudice against anthropological research in Europe.

Carmelo's thesis – later published as *Belmonte de los Caballeros: A sociological study of a Spanish town* (1966) – is one of the major works of European ethnography of the period and remains fascinating reading today. The book deals with the small town in Aragón where Carmelo was raised, addressing very particularly the way in which the major



Fig. 1. Carmelo Lisón Tolosana.

upheaval of the civil war marked differently the world view and sense of self-identity of successive generations. Due to their close collaboration, the book brilliantly brings together on the one hand, Carmelo's inspiration in Ortega's phenomenological sociology and, on the other, Campbell's inspiration in Parsonian social theory (and his excellent English).

When he returned to Spain, Carmelo took from Oxford more than a lifelong love for ethnographic research and social anthropology. He also took his wife, Julia, who was a close companion and dedicated collaborator for the rest of their long lives. In the mid-1960s, Franco's regime was experimenting with a measure of modernization and liberalization. This meant that Carmelo ultimately managed to find a place at the prestigious Universidad Complutense de Madrid. In order to do that, however, he was obliged to write a second doctoral thesis, this time in Spanish. At the Complutense, he founded and directed first the Department of Sociology and then the Department of Anthropology. In the course of the decades that followed, he published a number of books on Galicia, where he carried out fieldwork in the 1970s, mostly researching themes associated with family patterns and

magic. His latter work was deeply influenced by Lévi-Straussian structuralism and manifested his growing fascination with the transcendental side of human experience.

One of Carmelo's greatest achievements was the role he played as a promoter of Iberian and European anthropology. Every year – with the financial support of a wealthy childhood friend – he organized a small conference. These restricted and intense meetings brought together a carefully chosen group of participants and normally took place in a distant and attractive venue or at the sumptuous setting of the Casa de Velazquez in Madrid. Having been a student of his lifelong friend, John Campbell, I was invited to many of these. There, I was given the occasion to meet some of the more important figures of European anthropology and I befriended Spanish and French colleagues with whom I have, since then, collaborated for a number of decades. All of us who were blessed with his discreet but decisive hospitality will fondly remember the intellectual intensity of these occasions. After retirement from the university, Carmelo's intellectual base was the Royal Academy of Moral and Political Sciences in Madrid, where again he fostered actively anthropological debate. He was an Honorary Member of the Royal Anthropological Institute.

Carmelo was a believer in European anthropology and worked actively at promoting it. With his loss, we witness the passing of a generation of social thinkers who fought for the institution of the social sciences in the universities of southern Europe, and who created schools that are today alive, active and share their ecumenical outlook. ●

João de Pina-Cabral

University of Kent
j.pina-cabral@kent.ac.uk