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Book Review

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- 1 No matter from which subdivision of Anthropology researchers may come from they are still challenged by the singular problem of addressing and defining the meaning of culture. Intellectuals such as Michel Foucault or Walter Benjamin represented a turn in the study of culture in the 20th century. Their analysis of capitalist societies opened up the field for a new range of approaches bringing culture in dialogue with discourse analysis, spatiality and power relations. Thanks to these contributions culture finally started to be seen not as a fixed concept, but as a multiple, flexible and always in the making.
- 2 *Culture and Visual Forms of Power. Experiencing Contemporary Spaces of Resistance*, edited by Lidia K. Manzo applies this approach to culture in the terrain of vision and visibility. The visual field has long been known, mainly because of its metaphoric potential, to be at the service of power. Faithful especially to Foucault's legacy, this collection of essays departs from this observation and hence from the acknowledgement that power, far from being a possession of any kind, is in fact a relation. The concept of power 'has always been entwined with the concept of visibility', says the author at page 11. Discussing a variety of themes, the various authors of the chapters that make up this book investigate the varying ways in which visibility arises as a form of power and resistance. These essays deliver us an array of possibilities not only for thinking visual culture and visual forms of power but also for engaging with them directly, whether as researchers or not.
- 3 The readers are provided with a rich set of references and 'a variety of visual methods in the study of power and resistance' (page 16) that will allow them 'to investigate the

productive quality of power' (page 17). From Australia to Argentina, from Brazil to Bangladesh and through Roma communities, the set of examples offered by the book present us with a reflexive attempt to push the political aspect of anthropology a bit further. To quote but a couple of examples, this is the case of Verónica Devalle's chapter on Latin-American design and craft. In it we have an account of the sometimes anachronistic approach towards design as a form of knowledge in Latin-American reality. The author offers us also important insights on the manner in which such practices are understood within a postcolonial society. On the other hand, Fabiene Gama's chapter on Brazilian and Bangladeshi photo-documentation brings two different practices of photo-activism, both located in the context of the so-called Global-South, in dialogue with each other.

- 4 Besides its consistent theoretical framework, the book adopts a reflexive way of presenting its materials and contributions, highlighting both the strong and weak aspects of visual methods. Another merit of this collection of essays is that it puts into perspective methods, practices and resistances belonging to the Global South: it addresses marginal communities within marginal countries; it effectively deals with power both as a repressive and as a productive relation; it approaches culture not only through abstract theory but also through the various ways in which it materializes in a given society. This book offers us a rich material for cultural critique. It goes 'beyond limitations of a both too-narrow disciplinary idea of power and a too-celebratory idea of agency' (page 125), while advancing on the issue of everyday power and resistance.
- 5 One possible flaw of the book as a whole is that despite being based on different case studies, it somewhat generates a universalist idea of culture as a self-sufficient structure that by itself manages to overcome contradictions, disparities etc. Nonetheless, this book is perfect for those interested in the meeting point between visual methodology, anthropology and the study of power in an urban context.

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