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Author

FRIBERG, Torbjörn

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Abstract

Today anthropologists seem to be increasingly studying phenomena in their own societies. Many have a focus on policies in organizations and an interest in explicating cultural phenomena constituted by power and governance. Consequently, a recent interest has emerged in Michel Foucault's philosophy, especially as an inspiration for ethnographic analysis. However, this type of inquiry is problematic, because the Foucauldian perspective contributes to a pre-established idea of social reality, hence distorting essential aspects of the process of discovery. This article aims to provide an alternative to recent trends in Foucauldian-inspired analysis by showing how Eric Wolf's anthropological project can contribute to a more discovery-oriented ethnography. Wolf's concept formation of structural power, tactical power, chain of signification and cultural brokers is closely examined in relation to studying organizational phenomena. In particular, an analysis based upon Wolf's concept can be useful for an increased understanding of policy processes in the field of higher education.(HRK / Abstract übernommen)