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## Abstract

### **Huis Ten Bosch: Mimesis and Simulation in a Japanese Dutch Town.**

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With the advance of capitalism, new communication technology and expansion of mass media, places and culture increasingly tend to be deterritorialized, time and space arrangements are renegotiated, social and cultural relationships are commercialized and commodified. Simulated and themed environments have attracted considerable attention as concrete expressions of "culture in motion". However, much of the academic inquiry has been theoretical in nature and has explored these sites as cultural products. This ethnographic study contributes to understanding of how people deal with simulated environments in everyday social interaction. It argues that the production of meaning is locally based, and anchored in translocal places in a local social and historical context. Furthermore, this study shows that mimesis plays an important role in this anchoring. Mimesis has often been seen as yielding shallow re-creations of surfaces, as missing the inner core meaning, and in (post-)colonial contexts mimetic practices have been viewed as expression of submissiveness or derisive resistance. This study, in contrast, purports that mimetic practices are culturally constructed and generative: it foregrounds the creative, explorative and joyful aspects of mimetic action in social life.

As a full size Japanese "living" simulation of an imagined historical Dutch town Huis Ten Bosch is possibly one of the most comprehensive and concentrated efforts to perform planned cultural transfer of all time. It is a particularly good site for studying issues related to simulation and mimesis in social life. The dissertation relates simulated environments in contemporary Japanese society to a longer history of re-creating distant places in Japan and within modernity, as well as showing how the mushrooming of such places in the last few decades fits into post-war developments in the Japanese political economy as projects for stimulating regional economies. Fieldwork for this study was carried out over a period of seventeen months from 1999 to 2000, complemented by a short visit in 2003. Most of the time was spent at Huis Ten Bosch Town, participating and observing everyday activities. Formal and informal interviews were conducted with visitors, residents and employees.

**Key words:** Anthropology, Japan, mimesis, simulation, simulated environment, *ikūkan*, other space, material culture, modernity, tourism, regional development, Holland, Huis Ten Bosch.

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