



Image Capital, Field and the Economies of Signs and Space

Carol Pui-ha Chow



The C-Centre

Centre for Chinese Media and
Comparative Communication Research
中華傳媒與比較傳播研究中心



Award-winning
Student Paper

Image Capita, Field and the Economies of Signs and Space

by Carol Pui-ha Chow

Published by C-Centre x jcMotion, School of Journalism and Communication, The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Editor-in-Chief: K. W. Ma

Editor: L. S. Chan

The C-Centre conducts frontline research on media in Greater China and communication with a comparative perspective. Aspiring to be a hub of global communication, the C-Centre organizes seminars, conferences, workshops, and study groups, publishes a wide range of academic reports, and provides the research community with datasets and other services.

(The C-Centre, the Centre for Chinese Media and Comparative Communication Research)

jcMotion, a digital platform run by the School of Journalism and Communication, publishes quality e-papers, e-books and e-lectures by the teaching faculty and the School's strong alumni network and affiliates in the media and communication industries. We produce academic and creative works in accessible formats. We aspire to inspire, bridging the School and the society at large, and opening up a lively space for dialogue among people from all walks of lives.

For more information and enquiry, please contact us via jcmotion@cuhk.edu.hk

Copyright © 2013 Carol Pui-ha Chow. All rights reserved.

jcMotion e-publishes working papers and monographs. Authors reserve their right to publish these works through other channels such as academic journals and books in printed and electronic format.

To cite this publication:

Chow, C. P. H. (2013). *Image capita, field and the economies of signs and space* [Electronic version]. K. W. Ma & L. S. Chan (Eds.). Hong Kong: jcMotion. Retrieved from <http://jcmotion.com.cuhk.edu.hk>

Cover image by Xam L. S. Chan @ 2013.

Foreword

Winning an award at a peer-reviewed conference is an honor that most academics cherish. We like it because we enjoy being recognized by the research community. In addition, when rightly done, an award speaks to the quality of a paper. All this probably explains why the annual conventions of major communication associations of the world—ICA, NCA, AEJMC, WAPOR, IAMCR and the like—have set up awards for top student papers. While the authors will find the awards encouraging, the award-winning papers can be a source of inspiration to many others. Graduate students and budding scholars are particularly curious about these papers.

The graduate students in our School have been very active in joining all the aforesaid conferences. As teachers, we are happy to find that quite a few have won awards for their outstanding works. To meet the demand for easy access to these papers, the Centre for Chinese Media and Comparative Communication Research (the C-Centre) has launched this Award-winning Student Paper series as part of its e-publication plan. As the copyright owner, the authors are expected to revise and publish the e-papers in the more traditional venues of journals and books later. We publish the e-version as working monographs in order to speed up the dissemination of research ideas. We encourage you to share the e-papers with others. You are also invited to refer student award-winning papers to us for possible inclusion in the series.

Joseph M. Chan, PhD
Director, the C-Centre
Professor of Journalism and Communication
The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Image Capital, Field and the Economies of Signs and Space

Carol Pui-ha Chow



Abstract

Drawing upon Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital, this paper develops image as a form of Bourdieusean capital to examine what Lash and Urry identify as the economies of signs and space, which in turn is characterized by the dual process of semioticization and spatilization. By image capital, it refers to the accumulated labor of visual resources that allows agents possessing it to yield power. I argue that the theoretical apparatus of image capital does not only help differentiate the power of images from the power of linguistic signs in the age of mediation. The fact that Bourdieusean capital has to be understood in relation to field theory provides also an effective framework for the study of both possibilities and struggles brought about by the ascending role of a particular form of resource.

This paper was awarded the Best Paper Award in the Philosophy of Communication Division of International Communication Association (ICA) annual conference 2012. It has also been accepted for publication in *The Communication Review*.