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The Department of Communication and Mass Media at Panteion University organized the 2002 annual conference of the International Visual Sociology Organization (IVSA). The conference focused on "Visualizing Community, State and Nation: images of power and social bond" and was held at Santorini (Greece) (13-18 July 2002).

The IVSA is a non-profit, academic association that combines a variety of disciplines, including sociology, anthropology, ethnography, journalism and media studies, photography, art, and education. The purpose of the IVSA as stated on the association's website is to "promote the study, production, and use of visual images, data, and materials in teaching, research, and applied activities, and to foster the development and use of still photographs, film, video, and electronically transmitted images in sociology and other social sciences and related disciplines and applications" (http://www.visualsociology.org/). The IVSA aspires to expand the theoretical as well as methodological approaches of visual representational models as analytical patterns for examining contemporary cultural forms.

The 2002 IVSA conference explored questions specifically related to matters of power and social bond in a postmodern visual society where media representations based on the image appear to visualize the non-visual; that is describe – and perhaps redefine – in terms of vision that which is not in itself visual, i.e. such things as political and social agency, concepts of power embodied in the state and the nation.

Most of the papers presented concerned the disciplines of sociology, anthropology, ethnography, and media studies. Most of the participants came from North America, Europe, and the Middle East. Presentations covered a wide range of topics, all concerned with how one can explore visual representations of community, state, nation; how these visualizations affect and perhaps alter the existing perceptions of community, state, and nation; and how these changes are involved in transforming academia itself. The conference proceedings were enriched by two pre-conference seminars on "Methodologies in Visual Research" and "Visual Literacy and Visual Performance; analysis and guidelines for visual excellence."

Many papers addressed theoretical approaches as well as practical ways of visualizing national and ethnic identities and memories, immigration and diaspora phenomena, concepts of cultural differences and similarities. (Some of the panel discussions were: "Visualizing Nation-ness," "Immigrants and Diasporas," "Visualizing Memory," "Images of Culture," "Signaling Nationality," "Signs of Community.") There also was considerable focus on the media, in particular on issues of media pro-

duction and the dissemination of images; the concept of mediacy and visualized mediatic representations; the "old" media, such as analogical film, video, photography, diverse forms of art, and the "new" media, such as the internet, digital cinema, and photography. (Some of the panel discussions were: "Media Old and New," "Cinema and Identity," "Communicating with Images," "Imaging Technologies," "Images of War," "Images of Terror," "Art and Society.") Finally, a large number of papers dealt with questions of topography and body culture related to such issues as control, punishment, gender, and history. (Some of the panel discussions were: "Divided Cities," "City Images," "Demography," "Nationhood and the Media," "Homeless and Handicapped," "Visual Representations of Imprisonment," "Body and Gender," "Landscape and Territory.")

The 2002 IVSA conference was significant in at least two important ways. Firstly, it brought together a great number of scholars and enhanced the academic discussion on interdisciplinary and international levels. Secondly and most importantly, it made clear that a new field of inquiry and study, visual studies, is emerging. Within the framework of social and humanities studies, vision and visuality open up novel ways of reconsidering established analytical tools, explanatory schemes, and theoretical concepts. The study of the image in itself, whether iconolatric or iconoclastic, is not a novelty. Nevertheless, new media technologies have reintroduced vision and visuality in the social and humanities disciplines and, therefore, constantly raise new questions about the representational patterns of communication and the aesthetic modes of examining contemporary forms of culture. Visual studies is a field that has made its way through the social and humanities departments worldwide, but unfortunately still remains in a marginal position – if not in an embryonic state – within the context of Greek academia.