

Visual Representation of Urban Spaces: Iconic Strategies of (Post)-Modern City

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Questions to be discussed:

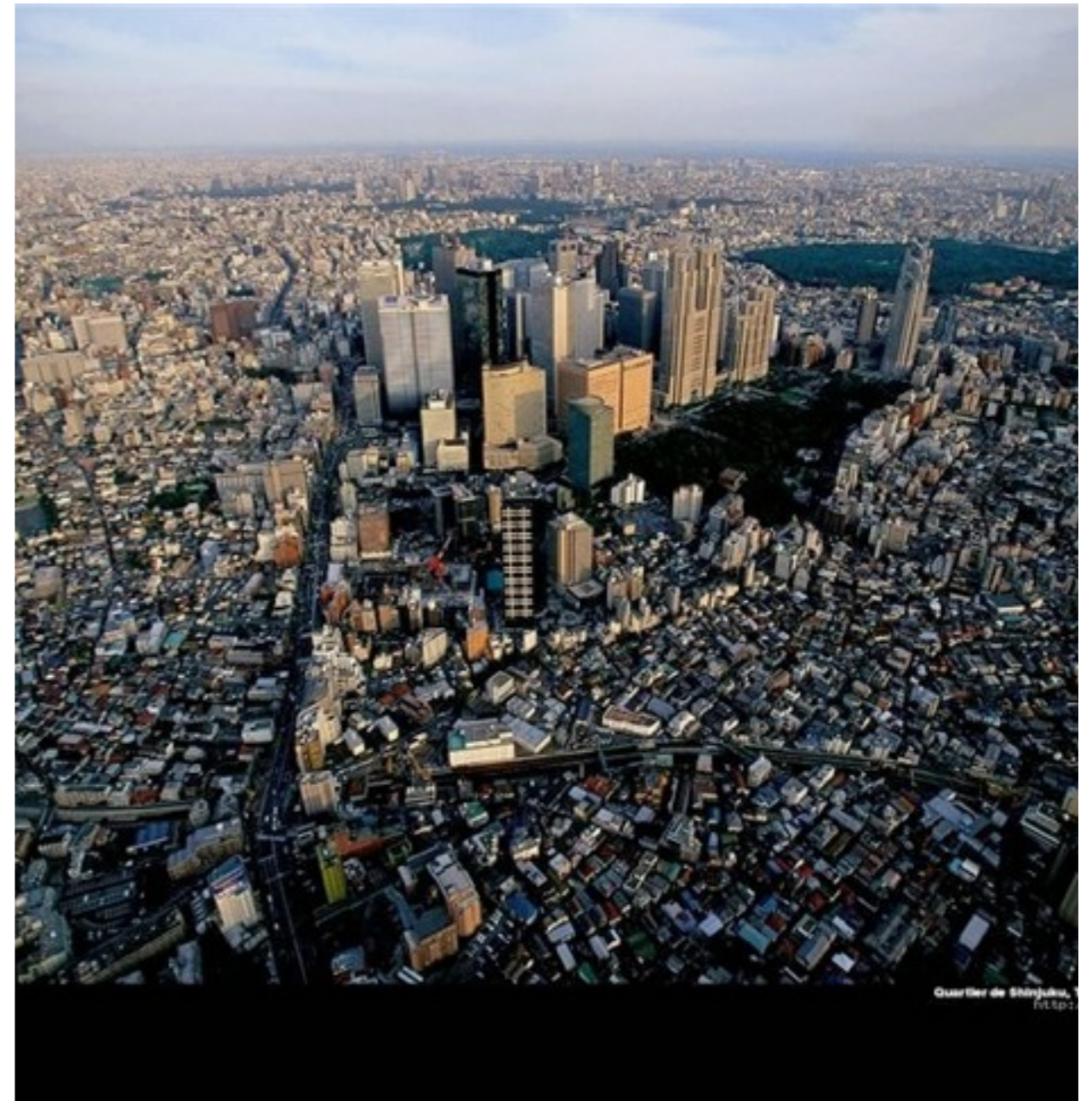
- What are conditions of givenness of a city as a research object?
- What does it mean to perceive a city visually «as a whole»?
- How do the modes of visual representation/perception of a city correlate with its historical identities?
- What are, in this regard, distinguishing features of modern and postmodern cities?

Hypothesis:

There is some interconnection between type of identity of a city and respective type of its (visual) representation.

Thesis:

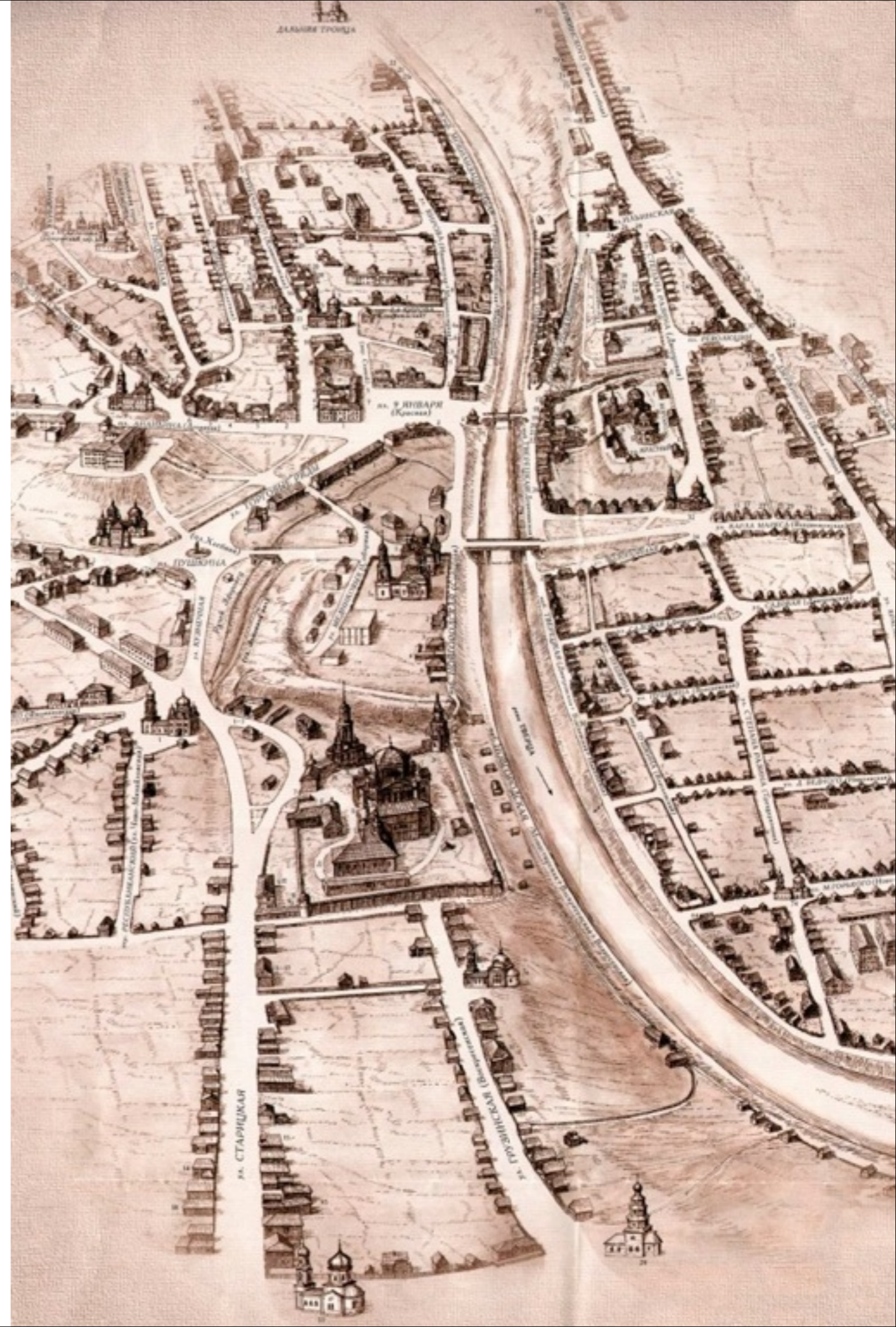
Modern city, as compared with premodern one, is not only dependent on the visual representations but itself can be considered as a kind of pictorial object.



premodern vs. modern city

Pre-modern city

- City is an potentially observable object embedded in the external pragmatic contexts. «External» means here having not a specifically urban character.
- In terms of givenness, or a mode of representation, premodern city was, as a rule, visually represented as a complex material object
- Interestingly, predominate way of representation of premodern city was depiction – something between a map and a picture.





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Rome

the 16th century

(Post)-modern city

- Modern city is not substantial, or object-like but rather relational. In this regard, it is characterized by some ontological autonomy. (It is not so much embedded in some external relations as consists from relations inherent in its very structure)
- Hence, modern city is «implosive», it develops from the inside out. It has a logic of its own. It is not being created but proliferates.
- As to a mode of (re)presentation, modern city are accessible through a variety of «dialogical» relations with different kinds of social icons/ iconization processes. Actually, in this case, there is no difference between being and being accessible, or represented. Hence, the spaces of modern cities are mostly iconic ones.



Iconization processes and urban spaces

Icons, pictures, images

- **Icons** are material surfaces configured (aesthetically formed) in a such manner that their experience generates collective reactions and feelings
- **Iconization processes** are some events and practices leading to the emergence of iconic surfaces
- **Pictures** are the signifying, or representing surfaces, some of which are able to intensify iconic effects (not all depictions, or signifying surfaces are iconic ones) and (re)present images
- **Image** is a meaningful whole, accessible exclusively through sensual experience and hence (re)-presented by icons and pictures (Of course, the question remains: how does language contribute to forming images and social icons?)

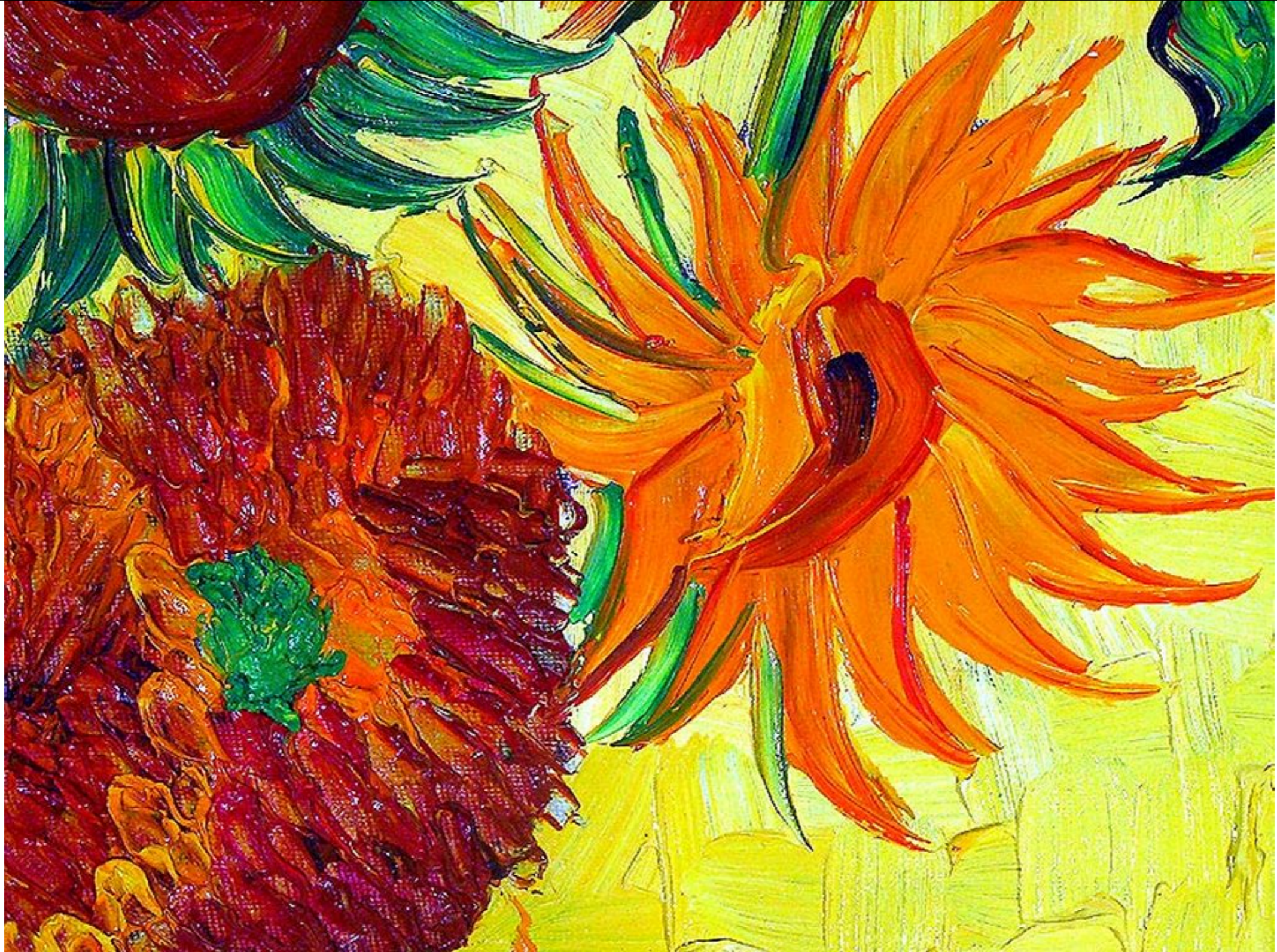
Jeffrey Alexander (Cultural Sociology):

- Understanding and dissemination of social meanings through perception of material, aesthetically designed, surfaces (transformation of an object into social icon)
- Surface and depth, (material) texture and (meaningful) structure
- Social/ideal-typifying effect of iconic surfaces perception (shift from identification of an object to «immersion in the materiality of social life»: «iconic way» of signifying)



Space and icon

- Iconization as immersion
- Immersion as a «double process»: (1) subjectification and (2) materialization (object becomes drawn into the perceiving subject; subject, in turn, «falls into the object»)
- Model of picture: between perception, understanding and spatial presence



Van Gogh

Sun Flowers (fragment)



Hans von Aachen

Joking Couple

postmodern cities:

Purposeful iconization activities as a prevailing mode of space formation/
perception/appropriation

Dangers/challenges: over-iconization