

# The Principles and Products of the Identity Market: identity, inequality and rivalry

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## Abstract

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This chapter explores the principles and products of the identity market and associated power relations through a closer look at collective rituals, ceremonies, commemorations, holidays and festivals (religious or national) in Europe. In view of Therborn's significant scholarly contributions about structures of inequality in the modern world within different nation-building arenas (see e.g. Therborn 1995, 2002, 2016; with Bekker 2012), collective rituals are here analysed as "power scripts" exposing related power struggles and inequalities. The following arguments are proposed for the purposes of this chapter: (a) Collective rituals constitute "symbolic repertoires" (Spillman, 1997) that make claims about identities through the (re-)production of values and norms. (b) Identity products, rituals and symbols, correspond to identity claims that, in turn, are embedded in official history narration. (c) Through closer inspection claims about identity and history expose "rival claims", identifiable through patterns of collective and national symbolism called "symbolic regimes" (traced alongside the establishment of symbols and rituals as these are adopted, modified, abolished during pivotal times of nation-building) within which appear "rival clusters" of rituals and counter-rituals in clusters of symbolism and counter-symbolism, (Elgenius, 2011, 2015). (d) Collective rituals are therefore intimately connected with official political memory and the choice of some histories at the expenses of others to reproduce and justify domineering structures (Connerton, 1989). Structures of inequality are thus embedded in all aspects of ceremonial development such as with the conceptual tools of membership (Bhamra, 2016), history narration, ritualization of official memory and access to these processes as well as access to actual participation (Elgenius 2014, 2016). In general terms, the working classes, women and ethnic groups gained access to collective rituals in Europe at a later stage than to other social institutions (Gillis, 1996) and the history of access to the ceremonial field and related contestations remains a significant function of social change and the democratisation of social and national memory. The various cases below are drawn from different socio-political, socio-economic and historical contexts and shed light on the arguments proposed in various forms and guises.

The nexus of principles and products of the identity market is thus one closely associated with political and economic power and includes the competition over history and heritage resources. Below a brief outline of the main identity producing principles in terms of self-reference, differentiation and recognition, before turning to the products these principles generate. In Therborn's writings, the basis for collective ritual expression in Europe is derived from Christianity, commemoration of war, and social class, the latter seemingly offering a lighter ritual baggage and symbolic repository than do the others.