# Linguistic Resistance: Establishing, Maintaining and Resisting Truths

**Eva Lilja and Mona Lilja,** *University of Gothenburg*

*Abstract*

*Human rights-, gender- and environmental-activists struggle hard to get their messages heard. This paper discusses communicative strategies and the establishing of norms, in general, and the impact of repetitions, in particular. It contributes to previous research on meaning-making and discusses how/what patterns of repetition are of central importance when activists are resisting certain discourses by way of negotiating and enhancing different norms. Overall, we use linguistic theories on repetitions and suggest different ways of repeating words, images or sounds in conversations and media that might transform the boundaries and content of contemporary discourses. This paper displays four different patterns of repetition – in the nexus between the symbolic and the material – that can be employed in order to establish, maintain or resist certain political truths. In this paper, we consider the repetition of representations, with the aim of accomplishing a transformation of values, to be a powerful practice of dissent and linguistic activism. Hereby, this paper answers to the call of a number of leading critical sociologists who urge us to place the future well-being of society at the centre of our current sociological research.*

## Introduction

Political organisations and resistance movements struggle hard to get their messages heard. Human rights-, gender- and environmental-activists, among others, try to establish certain discourses in order to work towards public awareness of their causes. Often their resistance is enacted in the form of negotiating norms or establishing new truths. This paper contributes to previous research on meaning-making and discusses how/what patterns of repetition are of central importance to resistance activities. Overall, we suggest different ways of repeating representations

in conversations and media that might transform the boundaries and content of contemporary discourses. In this paper, we consider the repetition of words, objects or figures, with the aim of accomplishing a transformation of values, to be a powerful practice of dissent and linguistic activism (Butler, 1990; Hall, 1997; Foucault, 1975/1991).

Social science researchers such as Stuart Hall (1997), Norman Fairclough (1992, 1999), Michel Foucault (1993) and Judith Butler (1988, 2018), have explored how the repetition of different representations can establish, maintain or challenge various norms. Their research has recently been added to by posthumanist researchers, who argue that the nexus between discourses and matter must be embraced when discussing meaning-making (Alaimo and Hekman, 2008). Exploring the existence of materiality can, as displayed here, contribute to our understanding of discursive production. Various aspects of materiality contribute to the development and transformation of norms (Colebrook, 2000; Grosz, 1994). In the crossroad between the symbolic and the material, a number of communicative strategies impact on how and why discourses are created, maintained or challenged.

Sometimes the acts of resisting contemporary discourses and accomplishing a transformation of norms involve the repetition of words, objects or figures. This paper displays four different patterns of repetition – in the nexus between the symbolic and the material – that can be employed in order to establish, maintain or resist certain political truths. Among other things, the repetition of words, sentences, images or sounds that are too similar might result in an automatised reading of these representations. This implies that when one seeks to advance political claims, approximate speech-acts might be more effective than exact repetitions. This and other patterns are suggested and elaborated on below.

The article is structured as follows: In the next three sections, the concepts of repetitions and resistance, as well as the methodological points of departure are outlined and developed. The fourth section, 'Repetitions and Change: The Art of Establishing Political Discourses', adds to previous research by suggesting four communicative patterns that contribute to the establishment of certain truths. These patterns can, in some senses, be regarded as tools for practicing resistance by way of

providing means for civil-society actors to promote political discourses. Hereby, the paper answers to the call of a number of leading critical sociologists such as Klaus Dörre, Stephan Lessenich, and Hartmut Rosa, among others, who urge us to place the future well-being of society at the centre of our current sociological research (Dörre, Lessenich, and Rosa, 2015; Rosa's speech at the 13th Conference of the European Sociological Association, 2017, Athens). Or as formulated in the policy statement of the *Journal of Resistance Studies*, we need to 'advance an understanding of how resistance might undermine repression, injustices and domination of any kind'.

In the final section, some conclusions are summarised. The article uses linguistic theories on repetitions to shed light upon productive resistance that produces new truths, while negotiating different dominant discourses. Resistance may sometimes transcend the whole phenomenon of being against something and turn into proactive forms of constructing alternative counter-discourses (cf. 'constructive resistance' Baaz, Lilja, Schulz, and Vinthagen, 2017; Koefoed, 2017; Sørensen, 2016). This paper proposes a number of possible ways in which repetitions could matter, when constructing these kinds of competing truths. In doing so, the paper adds to previous research within resistance studies.

## Resistance Studies and Productive Forms of Resistance

Robert Dahl (1967), Steven Lukes (1974) and Michel Foucault (1978) all touch upon a type of power that can be seen as a form of direct decision-making, 'power-over' or even as violent forms of repression. Power in this understanding is frequently used in liberal forms of analysis where power is defined as individuals' procession of power or ability to force their will upon others (Kabeer, 1994: 224–229; Haugaard, 2012). In Foucault's argumentation, this form of power is displayed with the concept of 'sovereign power'; that is, the (often repressive) legal sovereign power, which exists side-by-side with bio-power. Foucault presents sovereign power as legislative, prohibitive and censoring. (Dean, 1999: 105–106, Foucault, 1994: 83–85; Baaz, Lilja, and Vinthagen, 2017). Resistance against this repressive power – sometimes sovereign power – can be understood as counter-repressive resistance.

The counter-repressive resistance against repressive forms of power can be exemplified with Marta Iñiguez de Heredia's definition of resistance where resistance is: 'the pattern of acts undertaken by individuals or collectives in a subordinated position to mitigate or deny elite claims and the effects of domination, while advancing their own agenda.' (de Heredia, 2013: 6). This definition establishes resistance as a practice that is directed towards elite claims and the experience of domination (de Heredia, 2017). The emphasis on elite claims, agendas and the effects of domination could be read as an attempt to put repressive forms of power, rather than truth regimes, in focus (Lilja and Vinthagen, 2018).

The notion of counter-repressive resistance could, however, be complemented with another form of resistance, that is, productive resistance, which produces societies, truths, identities and practices. Or in other words, another part of the field of resistance studies – instead of elaborating counter-repressive resistance – embraces reverse discourses, meaning-making and the negotiating of truths, as well as the creation of other ways of life through counter-conduct and techniques of self (Foucault, 1981, 1988, Baaz, Lilja, Schulz, and Vinthagen, 2016; Butler, 2018; Bleiker, 2000). This research indicates that the most powerful practices of dissent might work in discursive ways, by engendering a slow transformation of values (Bleiker, 2000). Researchers who belong to this part of resistance studies emphasise '"less than tangible" entities such as texts, signs, symbols, identity and language' (Törnberg, 2013 Lilja 2017b). Overall, within this subfield of resistance studies, there is a focus on cultural processes, ways of life, subjectivities and shared meaning systems and how these can be understood from the concepts of dominant discourses and resistance (Lilja and Vinthagen, 2018).

According to Butler (1995), a key way in which resistance towards discourses (in general) and discipline (in particular) is possible – from a Foucauldian perspective – is through reiteration, re-articulation or repetition of the dominant discourse with a slightly different meaning. Subalterns might, for example, involve the categories and vocabularies of the dominating force or superior norm to produce a reverse discourse against the very regime of normalization (Butler, 1995: 236). Reverse discourses resist regimes of normalization by which it is produced. Thus, resistance appears as the effect of power, as a part of power itself and

the reverse discourses are parasitic on the dominant discourse that they contest (Butler, 1995: 237; Mills, 2003; Lilja and Vinthagen 2018).

Regardless of type, resistance exists in relation to power (or violence) and the type of power often affects the type of resistance employed as well as the effectiveness of various resistance practices: violent or nonviolent, open or hidden, organised or individual, conscious or unconscious, et cetera. Still, as indicated above, power and resistance should not be seen as binary. Resistance in the form of communicative practices might not only undermine power but can sometimes create or recreate power through exactly the same resistance that it provokes (Baaz, Lilja, and Vinthagen, 2017).

This paper embraces the more productive form of resistance by studying patterns of repetitions as a powerful form of dissent. How is it possible to repeat against constructions of power and what patterns of repetitions are important to recognise when practicing a more 'linguistic' form of resistance? This is elaborated below.

## Methodological Point of Departure

The 'material turn' often departs from, and adds to, the 'linguistic turn'. This paper embraces both language and matter, and acknowledges that the material is more than just a passive social construction, but instead it stands out as an agentic force that interacts with and changes discourses (Alaimo and Hekman, 2008: 4–7). In the text below, this means embracing the repetition of words and sentences, as well as more material representations such as practices, bodies and images, and how the repetition of these material things impacts on the formation of discourses. Foucault also embraced the importance of language while still emphasising the role of matter and material space in the shaping of subjects. Matter, among other things, predominates in Foucault's discussion of Bentham's Panopticon as an architectural configuration (Lilja, 2017a). He also positions the body as the locus of productive forces:

> (we must) show how the deployments of power are directly connected to the body–to bodies, functions, physiological processes, sensations, and pleasures; far from the body having to be effected, what is needed

> is to make it visible through an analysis in which the biological and the historical are not consecutive to one another (...) but are bound together in an increasingly complex fashion in accordance with the development of the modern technologies of power that takes life as their objective. Hence, I do not envision a 'history of mentalities' that would take account of bodies only through the manner in which they have been perceived and given meaning and value; but a 'history of bodies' and the manner in which what is most material and most vital in them has been invested. (Foucault, 1981)

Foucault stresses the linguistic without 'throwing out' matter – as does this paper. In addition, the paper has a forward-thinking approach. By drawing on Lundquist (1993), contestations can be studied empirically, normatively and constructively. Empirical research is directed towards describing various contestations and, by extension, seeking to explain or understand them. By adding a normative perspective, the spotlight is directed towards types of contestations that are preferable or most effective, as well as the desired outcome of the contestations. Finally, if we as scholars are interested in what the future social order could look like and what role contestations can play in achieving this utopia, then our focus is constructive; that is, this paper is interested in giving recommendations of how we can achieve as much as possible of what is desired, given the circumstances of the world, or, perhaps more correctly, how we think it is constructed (Baaz, 2002; cf. Lundquist, 1993, 1998; Baaz, Lilja and Vinthagen 2017: 13-14). This paper is primarily normative and constructive in its outline, and draws on previous research and theoretical suggestions in order to try to understand what forms of resistance are the most preferable or effective, and how we can achieve as much as possible of what we desire in a socially constructed, but still material world (Baaz, 2002; Lundquist, 1993: 85; 1998: 28; Rothstein, 1994; Baaz, Lilja and Vinthagen 2017: 13-14).

## Repetitions and Resistance

We know today that various forms of resistance have the capacity to drastically disestablish and (re)structure societies. According to Chenoweth and Stephan (2011) '…in recent years organised civilian

populations have successfully used nonviolent resistance methods, including boycotts, strikes, protest, and organised non-cooperation to exact political concessions and challenge entrenched power'. Chenoweth's and Stephan's studies have greatly contributed to our understanding of how mass-mobilised resistance works, still their research mainly discussed more visible forms of resistance struggles in highly repressive contexts. Thus it does not display linguistic performativity and how resistance involves communicative practices that can generate norm changes. This paper, however, seeks to understand resistance through meaning-making and the advancement of political claims through communicative strategies; in particular, forms of repetition of representations that create the possible means for norm-changing resisting practices.

Mass-mobilised resistance entangles with, or departs from, shared discourses that mobilise people into action. These discourses are established by the repetition of different words, objects or figures. Or in other words, repetitions contribute to the establishment of patterns or truths, which have the potential to provide people with a common ground for political action. Michel Foucault argues that: 'Truth isn't outside power (…) Each society has its regime of truth, its "general politics" of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true, the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements' (Foucault, 1980: 131). In this article, it is argued that discourses, which promote different truths, can be established by various strategies of repetition.

Repeated words, images and sounds are both a copy of and, simultaneously, a reinvention of earlier linguistic or material representations. Repetition means the establishment of patterns and a steady return to what is already stated. Judith Butler refers to anthropologist Victor Turner when explaining the repetitions of our social world. According to Turner, social action requires a performance that is repeated. This repetition is a re-enactment and a re-experiencing of a set of meanings that have already been socially established (Turner, 1974). Instead, just as a play requires both text and interpretation, the body also acts within the limitations of pre-existing directives: 'One is not simply a body, but, in some very key sense, one does one's body and, indeed, one does one's body differently from one's contemporaries and

from one's embodied predecessors and successors as well' (Butler, 1990: 272). Thus repetition, similarity and difference are three dimensions of the same process.

Repetitions are at the core of Butler's theorising of gender and performativity. Butler argues that gender is constituted through the repetition of acts. This repetitive doing of gender, in Butler's outline, produces the fiction that an individual has a stable gender that they are expressing in their actions (Butler, 1990/1999). In her later texts, Butler emphasises the importance of matter and material bodies; thereby, she embraces some of the ideas from the 'new materialism' (Alaimo and Hekman, 2008; Butler, 2018).

Gilles Deleuze displays how repetitions lead to the establishment of patterns. In Difference and Repetition, Deleuze argues that repetitions change something in the mind of those who harbour them (Deleuze, 1968/1994). As a point of departure, Deleuze takes the repetition of cases of the type A-B, A-B, A-B, A-[...]. Whenever the A appears, the reader of the A-B reiteration expects the appearance of -B. Or in the words of Deleuze: 'When A appears, we expect B with a force corresponding to the qualitative impression of all the contracted ABs' (Deleuze, 1968/1994: 70). The expectations of the appearance of a -B has nothing to do with memory. According to Deleuze, contraction is not a matter of an individual's reflections. He argues: 'Does not the paradox of repetition lie in the fact that one can speak of repetition only by virtue of the change or difference that it introduces into the mind which contemplates it?' (Deleuze, 1968/1994: 70). The above reflections clarify how the modes and operations of repetitions contribute to the regulation of practices, identities and discourses. By following the works of Deleuze, it can be argued that the repetition of cases leads to the expectations of the appearance of new cases. Thus, repetitions lead to repetitions. This makes repetitions even more interesting (Lilja and Baaz 2016).

In the old art of rhetoric, repetition embraces the repetition of an expression as well as the repetition of an idea (Lausberg, 1960; Vossius, 1990). Repetition is a resource by which speakers create discourses and create grounds for belonging, which is the very condition that is required for social interactions (Tannen, 1987, 2007). The repetition of different

representations is, for example, an engine of affects and emotions; and emotions and cognition can be seen as inseparable.

Verbal repetitions depend on both sameness and differences. The repeat borrows recognisable elements from previous repeats (the 'original') through reference to it, although in contextual separation from it. Thus, each time a word or phrase is repeated, while expressed in a new time/space, its meaning is (slightly) changed (cf. Derrida, 1976).

The above discussion on sameness and differences, as well as automaticity, creativity and variation, could be related to Barbara Johnston's claim that repetitions are both constructive (through reinforcement, emphasis, confirmation, validation, patterning, etc.) and destructive (by creating fragmentation, by copying, becoming automatic, etc.). There are also different types of repetition such as mirroring the continuous presence of happenings (such as violent incidents), or multiple signs of a single event (Johnston, 1994).

Repetition might be placed along a scale of fixity in its form, ranging from (almost) exact (the same words uttered in a similar rhythmic pattern) to paraphrased (similar ideas in different words). Rhetoric also makes a difference between strict repetitions and approximate ones. In some situations, the solution will be to repeat something as carefully as possible, but in other cases approximate repetitions will, as is displayed below, enrich or maintain the discourse (Lausberg, 1960; Vossius, 1990). There is also a temporal scale or variation, which ranges from immediate to delayed repetition (Tannen, 1987: 585–586).

Repeating in different ways has different impacts and effects. Among others, repeating first foregrounds and intensifies the part that is repeated. Simultaneously, however, repeating the repeat also foregrounds and intensifies the part that is different (Jakobson and Pomorska, 1983: 103). Repetition functions on an interactive level and accomplishes social goals, or simply deals with different practices of conversation. The various functions of repetitions can include getting the attention of an audience, showing listenership, postponing, display humour and play, and/or showing appreciation of a good line or a good joke (Tannen, 1987, 2007; Lilja and Baaz 2018).

Below, different patterns of repetition, which are to be seen as means of resistance, are discussed. The resistance that is suggested in

this paper – resisting through different patterns of repetition – targets dominant norms, and is parasitic on, nourishes and/or undermines different discourses. Still, it is productive resistance that fuels new truths and practices that emanate from these truths.

## Repetitions and Change: The Art of Establishing Political Discourses

Above, different functions and forms of repetitions were outlined in order to provide a background for the forthcoming argumentation. The sections below continues the discussion by unfolding four different patterns of repetition, which are of central importance when communicating and enhancing different norms as a form of resistance. We want to draw upon the above theories of resistance and explore both constructive and destructive patterns of repetitions (Johnston, 2017). We will also draw upon the idea of strict repetitions and approximate repetitions that are mentioned above (Lausberg, 1960; Vossius, 1990). Finally, we will display how repetitions function on an interactive level and accomplish social goals, such as when we 'twist' concepts around (see below) (Tannen, 1987, 2007; Lilja and Baaz, 2018). Departing from these various functions of repetitions, we will explore the following themes: 1) Maintaining by Change; 2) Simplifications, Reductions and Repetitions; 3) Twisting the Cause-and-Effect Linkages; and 4) Repeating Concrete Signs.

### Maintaining by Change

As previously stated, repetitions are vital for the establishment of truths and for promoting different political agendas. As stated above, repetitions link one speaker's ideas to another's and tie parts of discourse to other parts, but they also tie participants to the discourse and to each other (Tannen, 1987, 2007; Lilja and Baaz, 2018). An example of this is a development that has occurred over the last two decades that may be termed the 'global discourse of human rights'. The rhetoric of human rights is used by numerous forms of agencies such as state leaders, civil-society activists, business executives, academics, journalists, lawyers, celebrities, et cetera. The discourse is characterised by the call for various practices, phenomena and policies to be addressed in the name of human

rights. By repeatedly addressing and interpreting torture, war crimes, religious intolerance, gender-based discrimination, mistreatment of immigrants, poverty and under-development as human rights abuses, the new discourse becomes rapidly advanced (Manokha, 2010).

However, repeating certain words, sentences or images in order to establish a discourse – such as the human rights discourse – is not as simple as it sounds. Several patterns complicate the process. One such complication can be displayed by drawing on Ann Danielsen's research on funk songs. Danielsen's analysis links up Deleuze's concept of repetition with James Brown's molecular microsound repetitions of funk songs (Danielsen, 2006). By departing from Danielsen, it appears that if we hear the same rhythm over and over again, after a while what we hear is changing. This is because our listening becomes automatised and we hear the rhythm in a different – a more reluctant way. Thus, the meaning attached to the rhythm changes with time, even though it is the very same rhythm that is repeated over and over again (Lilja and Baaz, 2016). Every time we hear the same message, we interpret it differently. If we look again and again at the same picture, the semantics are gradually emptied and the image's meaning has changed. For instance, when we drive a car our perception of a road-sign that warns us about mooses, changes each time we pass it. While at first we think that a moose might show up, once countless road-signs have been passed and no moose has appeared, the significance of the sign has changed (Lilja and Baaz, 2016; Lilja and Baaz 2018). Thus, even if it sounds like a paradox, the lack of difference, in fact, changes the meaning of a repeated utterance.

If one wants to maintain the original meaning, the repetitions must change or the message must be repeated via another medium or from another subject position. For example, when warnings by an 'expert' on the car-radio add to the road-signs, the new 'repeat' makes us return to the original feeling of 'Huh, a moose might turn up!' Thus, to change (the expression or position) is to strengthen. Or in the words of Danielsen when commenting on James Brown's funk songs: 'The funky wah-wah riff is extended so that the gesture gradually gets bigger and looser, occupying more space and more time. However, we never think of the change as a change, probably due to the fact that it is contained in the act of producing in the act of producing the same' (Danielsen, 2006: 159).

To repeat things slightly differently is then a way of producing the same discursive truth. A small change in the utterance does not change the discourse. On the contrary, it will strengthen it. However, the variation must be kept within the limits of the discourse – it has to be the same message.

The above can help us understand how dominant public opinions can be established in regard to various political issues, such as human rights or environmental issues. As stated in a previous section, approximate repetitions and paraphrases can, due to their variation, enrich or maintain the discourse (Lausberg, 1960; Vossius, 1990). A resistance strategy of signification is therefore to repeat in new ways that keep the listeners' attention. For political messages to have an impact, they must use different speakers who talk from different subject positions and express slightly different messages in order to be effective. This means, in practice, that resistance must be composed of a multitude of linguistic statements that are mixed with other representations and use different subject positions in order to succeed.

## Simplifications, Reductions and Repetitions

When different norms are iterated over and over again it matters for the impact of resistance, which aims at negotiating norms. This paper suggests different ways of repeating words, sentences, images and/or practices so as they transform the boundaries and content of contemporary discourses. Above, we have drawn upon Ann Danielson's important conclusions on funk music in order to display how our listening is automatised when we hear a particular sentence, rhythm or see the same image over and over again.

Another complication in the production of discourses is displayed by Sum and Jessop (2013), who state that complexity is reduced in sense-making and meaning-making as individuals adopt specific entry-points and/or standpoints in order to participate in, describe and interpret meaning-making processes. In these processes: 'sense and meaning-making not only reduce complexity for actors (and observers) but also give meaning to the world' (Sum and Jessop, 2013: 3). Processes of meaning-making, and the repetitions of words, sentences and longer argumentations, thus tend to change and simplify the discourse. In

communication, less and less will be perceived and the discourse will become coarse and simplified by time, and will often lose its previous meanings.

This can be exemplified by the climate change discourse, which has a material-semiotic character and is repeated by, among others, the multiple materialities of bodies, flooding, sea-water levels and flood mitigation. The interconnectedness of matter and the climate change discourse can be exemplified by, and become evident in, the storm-water solutions that have multiple purposes, such as one that has been implemented in a newly developed area near Copenhagen. A large skateboard bowl has been built to handle storm-water by serving as a reservoir on the surface during flooding events, but it can still be utilised as a normal skateboard bowl during dry weather. The storm-water system serves the double purpose of being a recreational facility for skating and ball games and, at the same time, makes the whole area climate change resilient. The matter involved (concrete, storm-water) and the visions of a creative, 'recreational' future merge into the big skateboard bowl and display how the climate change discourse emerges in the nexus between the material and the discursive.

Climate change is often traced back and claimed to emanate from human actions, lifestyles and social patterns, which, according to environmental activists, must be challenged and transformed in the face of these recent meteorological and very material changes. These truths have been repeated and 'confirmed' by, for example, the latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report (2014), which has established that we must radically reduce greenhouse gas emissions, otherwise people's lives and quality of life will be exposed to imminent danger, and that our current lifestyle choices and actions will cause irreversible damage to the ecosystem (IPCC, 2014). The IPCC's report is quite complicated in its character, and displays scientific details and formal language. The summary of the report indicates its complexity:

> Future climate changes, risks and impacts (Topic 2) presents information about future climate change, risks and impacts. It integrates information about key drivers of future climate, the relationship between cumulative emissions and temperature change, and projected changes in the climate system in the 21st century and beyond. It assesses future risks and

> impacts caused by a changing climate and the interaction of climate-related and other hazards. It provides information about long- term changes including sea-level rise and ocean acidification, and the risk of irreversible and abrupt changes. (IPCC, 2014)

As the quotation above shows, the IPCC report embraces complexity and interconnections that are sometimes hard to grasp. However, when translated into media language, the contents of the IPCC reports often create casual 'around the water cooler' or just flippant, everyday conversations. The reports are embraced and converted into popular versions or scandal articles in evening newspapers. The complicated, scientific language of the IPCC is reduced, simplified and becomes denser (Jansson and Brandstedt, 2014). For example, in one of Sweden's biggest daily evening newspaper, climate change was addressed in the following terms during November 2016: 'Scientists warn of the pollen monster' (Aftonbladet, 2016a), 'the 16-year-old who leads a climate movement' (Aftonbladet, 2016b) and 'Blueberries decrease, ferns increase' (Aftonbladet, 2016c). Even though these articles seem to present specific, simplified, and dense aspects of climate change, they still repeat the overall climate change discourse with the help of their mutual similarities. Still, the articles of the daily evening newspaper also redefine the discourse by simplifying, and in some senses storytelling, the material-semiotics of climate change of which we are collectively a part. Just as suggested by Sum and Jessop (2013), specific entry-points and standpoints are adopted by the newspapers, so that when readers are participating in the meaning-making processes around climate change, they are repeating, simplifying and reducing the discourse.

Overall, the reduction in the complexity of the content of repeated messages is a recurrent pattern and a repeated message often means, in practice, a simplification. As time passes and the message is repeated, the meanings of IPCC reports, and others, have a tendency to get stronger and simpler. The message becomes abridged and invokes the most important or scandalous things; for example, 'Don't eat red meat' or 'Our blueberries disappear'.

Repeating complex messages means a return to what has already been stated, which is simplified while passing it on. Given this, three

possibilities must be displayed, which is important for how different forms of linguistic resistance inform current discourses. First of all, a simplified utterance can become more distinct and entrenched when details disappear, which could form a perfect base for establishing new truths. However, the loss of information can also be disastrous if the meaning of the message is removed (Lilja and Baaz 2018). Secondly, when a message gets reduced too much, or becomes too simple, streamlined or ordinary, the listener might stop listening. Complex statements that have not been expressed before are sometimes better received by the listener than simple and dense messages. In these cases, the listener has to concentrate on the new message, which slows down the interpretation or decoding process, and makes the receiver concentrate more on the message. Tsur (2012) calls this 'delayed categorisation', and here he comes close to the main points of Daniel Kahneman (2011), who states that two patterns can illustrate how we think. The first system refers to when we sometimes read things in a fast, shallow and intuitive way, which, in some senses, prevents us from embracing the complexity of reality. The other, however, is when we think more slowly, deliberately and logically. This slow thinking, which embraces complexity, sharpens our judgments and decisions (Kahneman, 2011).

In summing up, discourses tend to lose complexity when repeated over time in new venues. One reason for this is that the participants in the meaning-making processes adopt specific standpoints or entry-points; thereby, the discourses get simplified and reduced. The loss of information in the simplification process confuses the discourse. It also makes the reader lose interest – it becomes too readable, boring and dense – and the message is read in a reluctant way. This implies that repetitions of political messages should preferably be done in a way that is simple – in order to strengthen the positive discourse – but still in a way that embraces complexity. Linguistic resistance must, thus, balance the messages between the dense and the complex in order to have an impact and produce counter-discourses as a form of productive resistance.

## Twisting the Cause-and-Effect Linkages

Above, two patterns of repetitions have been discussed, which impact upon processes of signification and how discourses are perceived

and unfold. It has also been discussed that these patterns might be considered in acts of resistance.

In this section, another way of reiterating 'repeats' is suggested. As Edkins (1999) argues, there is a fluid relationship between the real and the symbolic that enables us to twist our interpretations of the interpreted. Edkins exemplifies this with the word 'famine'. According to Edkins, this name – famine – appears as a signifier connoting a cluster of supposedly effective properties – 'general and widespread shortages of food, leading to widespread death by starvation' (Edkins, 1999: 99). Thus when interpreting and mapping the 'world out there' we label these occurrences as 'famine'. Or in other words, when we observe widespread death by starvation that is caused by shortages of food, we categories it and label it as famine. However, in the next moment the relationship is inverted. Suddenly we conclude that people are dying because there is a famine. This twist, which slightly changes the discourse, is made possible in the nexus between the real and the symbolic. It is also enabled by the repetition of a concept, which is used in a slightly different way as time goes by. At one moment we are calling and naming objects, figures or happenings, by referring to the concept through which they are interpreted. In the next moment, however, we repeat the very same object, figure or happening, but now as the reason for the observed situation.

A similar, but maybe more complex pattern can be seen when discussing gender. When interpreting bodies that move in everyday life, we tend to label certain bodies; for example, bodies wearing skirts are labelled as 'women'. However, in the next moment the story-telling is reversed; women have skirts because they are women. Or in other words, the repetitive and in some senses forced 'doing' of gender, in Butler's outline, produces the illusion that an individual has a stable 'gender', which they are just 'expressing' in their actions (Butler 1990/1999: 178–179).

The pattern of repeating differently – using the name/category but twisting it from a 'label' to a 'cause' or 'reason' – tends to strengthen our discourses by making 'famines' or 'women' understood as natural and static phenomena; concepts that could be used to explain the 'world out there'. Hall writes: '"Naturalization" is (…) a representational strategy

designed to fix "difference", and thus secure it forever. It is an attempt to halt the inevitable "slide" of meaning, to secure discursive or ideological "closure"' (Hall, 1997: 245). This means that if power works through processes of normalisation then resistance must react to these processes. As stated several times by Foucault (1982), specific forms of power give rise to specific forms of resistance. Power and resistance are entangled, and in order to understand power, it is possible to study resistance:

> I would like to suggest (…) using this resistance as a chemical catalyst so as to bring to light power relations, locate their position, find out their point of application and the methods used. Rather than analysing power from the point of view of its internal rationality, it consists of analysing power relations through the antagonism of strategies. (Foucault, 1982: 329)

Thus, dominant discourses are naturalised and made static as they are twisted. And as we twist our interpretations of the interpreted, this must be resisted in deconstructing ways. Environmental movements, for example, in regard to the perceived issue of climate change, must formulate their resistance so that they repeat against normalising moves. There are probably different patterns that intersect here, and that must be resisted: Firstly, an increased average global temperature and more frequent extreme weather events are observed, and we are labelling it 'climate change'. In the next moment, however, we argue that these occurrences happen, *as there is* an on-going climate change event. Climate change is twisted and is now being repeated as a phenomenon on its own, which makes the bad weather logical and understandable. The act of repeating things differently, as a reason rather than as a label, becomes an obstacle when discussing climate change. It removes human actions as the source of climate change and takes away the personal responsibilities. It also, in some senses, makes climate change appear as natural and unchangeable. Resistance here becomes a matter of revealing the twisted character of the used vocabulary. Climate change must be repeated as a label and consequence, rather than a cause of catastrophes, which would then simultaneously put human beings back as the origin of these weather-related disasters.

## Repeating Concrete Signs

As stated above, the fact that *natureculture* (Åsberg, Hultman and Lee, 2012) is fluid and that meanings can never be fixed, forms a powerful instrument for challenging, changing or contesting different discourses. However, in the practice of resisting by renaming, deforming or parodying the old meanings, it is important to recognise the power that the reader of the new message has. The reader of a repeated message might refuse to acknowledge it in the way that the producer of the meaning would like it to be understood. Thus, when deciding where to draw discursive borders, the readers are just as important as those advancing different political claims. (Hall, 1997: 32–33).

According to Tornborg, some types of words and sentences have a stronger capacity to evoke images in the minds of the readers. Concrete nouns, like car or flower, create mental pictures more easily than an abstract noun, such as justice. Thus, a message with several concrete nouns would have a greater capacity to evoke mental images for the reader rather than a sentence with several abstract nouns. Moreover, an argumentation or a text that contains multiple passive verbs, such as rest or solidify, has a greater capacity to evoke a internal picture rather than a text with several active verbs, such as running. Other things that can make a reader see (inner) images are references to, for example, visual arts and photography (Tornborg, 2014).

Mental images presumably strengthen the impact of speech-acts on the part of the reader. It is likely that readers will more easily embrace argumentations, if what is repeated contains concrete nouns that evoke different visual (inner) images. When practicing resistance through speech-acts, and in order to communicate political claims effectively, the language should, at least in theory, be made concrete and contain concrete nouns, thereby creating mental images in the mind of the reader. Words and mental images entangle and strengthen each other, and prolong the discourse.

The assemblage of words, (inner) images and associations have the ability to evoke emotions – at least when they represent gender inequalities, refugees, poverty and tortured animals – which raise public attention, trigger emotions, ethical dilemmas, moral shocks, and shape

political subjectivities. Triggered emotions come in the form of intensities that are evoked in the encounter between the affected body and other affected bodies and representations. Emotions appear to be an engine of resistance and remove the effects of disciplinary technologies, create non-governable subjects and entangle in 'moral shocks' that motivate people 'to do something' (Goodwin, Jaspers and Polletta 2001; Jasper 1997). Moreover, emotions are also important in the embodying of different activist subject positions or 'figurations'; thereby, they contribute to various resisting practices. Repetition is a resource by which speakers create discourses and create grounds for belonging, which is the very condition that is required for social interactions (Tannen, 1987, 2007). It is also, as displayed above, a ground for resistance. However, the impact of the resistance is due the reader's evaluation of the repetitions.

## Conclusion

Political organisations and resistance movements aim to establish certain discourses that work towards increased public awareness of their causes. Departing from this, this paper discusses communicative patterns, in general, and the impact of repetitions, in particular. The overall aim has been to unfold, or suggest, four patterns of repetition, which are argued to be of central importance when communicating and establishing truths as a form of resistance. By elaborating on how repetitions are important for launching, maintaining as well as questioning certain truths, the aim is mainly constructive; that is, the spotlight is directed towards recommendations of how we can achieve as much as possible of what is desired, given the circumstances of the world and, specifically, different technologies of repetitions.

We were inspired by posthumanist perspectives when we began to write this article. Although this particular article does not specifically focus on the material/discourse nexus, we recognise that discourses and materiality interplay in the processes of establishing meaningful significations. Overall, the four different kinds of reiterations that are suggested could possibly contribute to creating and maintaining norms and thus create social change. Firstly, it is argued that repetitions create simplifications that further strengthen discourses. Discourses are established when different norms are reiterated. In the process of

repeating, the representations that are repeated sometimes lose their complexity. For every repetition less and less will be included and there is both a simplification and reduction of the message. The simplified discourse, in some senses, becomes more distinct and entrenched when details disappear, making it easier to establish the discourse. As time passes it gets stronger and simpler. But the loss of information may also be disastrous as the meaning of the message is removed as the discourse has been simplified. Complexity is needed in order to motivate the reader to fully pay attention to the message.

Secondly, another argument promoted in the article is that to strengthen or maintain a discourse, it must be repeated in a slightly different way. The first time one hears about climate change, one might become shocked or surprised. But when the same sentence/message (representation) is repeated and read for a second, third or fourth time, the reader's understanding of the representation has changed. Now the message is not read with surprise or shock, but is read in a more reluctant way. Thus, in theory, this means that every time a representation is repeated, it is read and understood in a new way even though it is exactly the same representation that is being repeated. It also implies that after seeing the same representation again and again, we do not listen as carefully and are not as interested as the first time that we heard it. Thus, for example, to maintain an interest in the discourse about climate change, the discourse needs to be constantly added to, altered or expressed in new ways. One must change a discourse in order to maintain it.

Thirdly, to strengthen a discourse, naturalise it and make it static, another strategy could be to twist it; instead of using the discourse/concept to label and categorise the reality, it could be used, so to speak, to explain our empirical observations. This could be a strategy of resistance. However, it is mostly a strategy that is used when dominant discourses are strengthened or naturalised. This is also of interest from the perspective of climate change communication. We observe an increased average global temperature and more frequent extreme weather events, and label it 'climate change'. However, thereafter we seem to twist the argumentation inside out, now state that the increased average global temperature happens, as *there is* an on-going climate change event. The latter makes the bad weather logical and understandable and must/should

be deconstructed by the climate change movement. Resistance must be about repeating against processes of naturalisations.

Finally, we would like argue that repetitions of representations (such as, words/sentences/images), which have the ability to conjure up or foster images in the mind of the reader, strengthen an argumentation and make the impact of it more effective. One strategy would be, for example, to repeat concrete nouns in order to make the reader embrace different arguments.

This article summarises four patterns of repetitions that might inspire activists who are concerned with and work on public awareness of human rights, gender, environmental issues, et cetera. In all, it theorises a number of communicative patterns that might influence a new form of political activism and resistance. In order to understand how to reach a broader audience, patterns of repetitions should be analysed and acted upon as a communicative strategy.

## References

Aftonbladet. 2016a. Forskare varnar för pollenvärsting, 26 November 2016. Available at http://www.aftonbladet.se/senastenytt/ttnyheter/inrikes/article23992031.ab/, accessed 15 January 2017.

Aftonbladet. 2016b. 16-åringen som leder en klimatrörelse, 3 November 2016. Available at http://www.aftonbladet.se/senastenytt/ttnyheter/utrikes/article23972517.ab/, accessed 15 January 2017.

Aftonbladet. 2016c. Blåbär minskar, ormbunkar ökar, 16 November 2016. Available at http://www.aftonbladet.se/senastenytt/ttnyheter/inrikes/article23927830.ab/, accessed 17 January 2017.

Ahmed, S. 2004. Affective economies. *Social Text*, 79, 22 (2):117–139.

Alaimo, Stacy, and Susan Hekman. 2008. Introduction: Emerging Models of Materiality in Feminist Theory. *In*: Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman, eds. *Material Feminism*, pp. 1–24. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Baaz, Mikael 2002. A Meta-Theoretical Foundation for the Study of International Relations in a Global Era: A Social Constructivist Approach. Göteborg: Padrigu Papers. PhD thesis.

Baaz, Mikael, Mona Lilja, Michael Schulz, and Stellan Vinthagen. 2016. Defining and Analyzing 'Resistance': Possible Entrances to the Study of Subversive Practices. *Alternatives* 41(3):137–153.

Baaz, Mikael, Mona Lilja, and Stellan Vinthagen. 2017. *Resistance and Social Change: A Critical Approach to Theory and Practice*. London and New York, NY: Rowman & Littlefield International.

Bleiker, Roland. 2000. *Popular Dissent, Human Agency and Global Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Butler, Judith. 1988. Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory. *Theatre Journal* 40(4):519–531. Available at http://www.jstor.org/stable/3207893/, accessed 17 January 2017.

Butler, Judith. 1990. Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory. *In*: S-E Case, ed. *Performing Feminisms: Feminist Critical Theory and Theatre*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Butler, Judith 1995. 'Subjection, Resistance, Resignification', in John Rajchman (ed.), *The Identity in Question*. New York: Routledge, pp. 229–50.

Butler, Judith. 1990/1999. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Butler, Judith. 2018. *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Chenoweth, Erica, and Maria Stephan. 2011. *Why civil resistance works: the strategic logic of nonviolent conflict*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Colebrook, Claire. 2000. Introduction. *In*: Ian Buchanan and Claire Colebrook, eds. *Deleuze and Feminist Theory*, pp. 1–17. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Dahl A. Robert 1967. *Pluralist Democracy in the United States: Conflict and Consent*. Chicago: Rand McNally & Company.

Danielsen, Ann. 2006. *Presence and Pleasure. The Funk Grooves of James Brown and Parliament*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.

Dean, Mitchell. 1999. *Governmentality Power and Rule in Modern Society*. London: Sage.

de Heredia, Marta Iñiguez. 2013. *Everyday Resistance in Post-Conflict Statebuilding: The Case of Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo*. A thesis submitted to the Department of International Relations of the London School of Economics and Political Science for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, London.

de Heredia, Marta Iñiguez. 2017. *Everyday Resistance, Peacebuilding and state-making: Insights from Africa's World War*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Deleuze, Gilles. 1968/1994. *Difference and Repetition*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Derrida, Jacques. 1976. *Of Grammatology*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Dörre, Klaus, Stephan Lessenich, and Hartmut Rosa. 2015. *Sociology, Capitalism, Critique*. Verso.

Edkins, Jenny. 2003. *Trauma and the Memory of Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Fairclough, Norman. 1992. *Discourse and Social Change*. Cambridge, UK: Polity.

Fairclough, Norman. 1999. Global Capitalism and Critical Awareness of Language. *Language Awareness* 8(2):71–83. Published online 29 March 2010. Available at https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09658419908667119, accessed 9 May2018.

Foucault, Michel. 1975/1991. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Foucault, Michel. 1980. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings* 1972–1977. Colin Gordon (ed.). Translated by Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham, and Kate Soper. New York, NY: Pantheon Books.

Foucault, Michel. 1981. *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*. vol 1. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Foucault, Michel. 1982. The subject and power. *In*: H.L. Dreyfus and P. Rabinow, eds. *Beyond structuralism and hermeneutics*, pp. 208–226. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago.

Foucault, Michel. 1988. Technologies of the self. *In*: L.H. Martin, H. Gutman, and P.H. Hutton, eds. *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault.* Amherst, MA: The University of Massachusetts Press.

Foucault, Michel. 1993. *Diskursens Ordning: Installationsföreläsning vid Collège de France den 2 December 1970* [The order of discourse: inaugural lecture at the Collège de France, 2 December 1970]. Translated by Mats Rosengren. Stockholm och Stehag: Brutus Östlings bokförlag Symposion

Foucault, M. 1994. two Lectures, in *Critique and Power: Recasting the Foucault/ Habermas Debate*, edited by M. Kelly. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 17–46.

Goodwin, J., Jasper, J.M., and Polletta, F. 2001. *Passionate politics: emotions and social movements*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Grosz, Elizabeth. 1994. *Volatile Bodies: Towards a Corporeal Feminism*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Hall, Stuart. (ed.) 1997. *Representation. Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. London: Sage Publishing.

Haugaard Mark. 2012. Rethinking the four dimensions of power: domination and empowerment, Journal of Political Power, 5:1, 33-54.

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). 2014. *Climate Change 2014 Synthesis Report Summary for Policymakers,* 2014. Available at http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar5/syr/AR5_SYR_FINAL_SPM.pdf/, accessed 17 January 2017.

Jakobson, Roman and Pomorska, Krystyna. 1983. *Dialogues*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Jansson, Tulsa, and Eric Brandstedt. 2014. Praktisk kunskap saknas för att hantera klimathotet. *Göteborgs-Posten*, 17 November 2014. Available at http://www.gp.se/nyheter/debatt/1.2547631-praktisk-kunskap-saknas-for-att-hantera-klimathotet#sthash.582zj42T.dpuf/, accessed 21 June 2017.

James M. Jasper, *The Art of Moral Protest,* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997.

Johnston, Barbara. (ed.) 1994. *Repetition in discourse: Interdisciplinary perspectives.* 2 vols. (Advances in discourse processes, 47–48.) Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Kabeer, Naila. 1994. *Reversed Realities: Gender Hierarchies in Development Thought*. London: Verso.

Koefoed, Minoo. 2017. Martyrdom and emotional resistance in the case of Northern Kurdistan: hidden and public emotional resistance, *Journal of Political Power*, 10:2, 184-199

Kahneman, Daniel. 2011. *Thinking, Fast and Slow*. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus & Giroux.

Lausberg, Heinrich. 1960. *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik: eine Grundlegung der Literaturwissenschaft*. München: Hueber

Lilja, Mona. 2017a. Layer-cake figurations and hide-and-show resistance in Cambodia. *Feminist Review* 117(1):131–147.

Lilja, Mona 2017b 'Dangerous bodies, matter and emotions: public assemblies and embodied resistance'. *Journal of Political Power* 10(3): 342–352.

Lilja, Mona, and Mikael Baaz. 2016. Resistance, rupture and repetition: Civil society strategies against intimate partner violence in Cambodia. *Global Public Health* 11(1-2):95–107.

Lilja, Mona and Mikael Baaz. 2018. Replicas and Repetitions: Theorizing the Significance of 'Repeats' as Resistance. Submitted to International *Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*.

Lilja, Mona, and Stellan Vinthagen. 2018. Dispersed resistance: Unpacking the spectrum and properties of glaring and everyday resistance. Submitted to *Journal of Political Power*.

Lukes, Steven. 1974. *Power: A Radical View*. London: Macmillan.

Lundquist, Lennart. 1993. *Det vetenskapliga studiet av politik*. Lund: Studentlitteratur.

Lundquist, Lennart. 1998. *Demokratins väktare : ämbetsmännen och vårt offentliga etos.* Lund: Studentlitteratur.

Lundquist, Lennart. 2001. *Medborgardemokratin och eliterna*. Lund: Studentlitteratur.

Manokha, Ivan. (ed.) 2010. *The Global Discourse of Human Rights: Some of the Latest Policy and Research Issues*. Available at http://www.ceri-sciences-po.org/, accessed 28 March 2016.

Mills, Catherine. 2003. 'Contesting the Political: Butler and Foucault on Power and Resistance', *Journal of Political Philosophy*, vol. 11, no. 3, pp. 253–72.

Rothstein, Bo. 1994. *Vad bör staten göra?.* Stockholm: SNS förlag

Sørensen, Majken Jul. 2016. Constructive Resistance: Conceptualising and Mapping the Terrain. *Journal of Resistance Studies*.

Sum, Ngai-Ling, and Bob Jessop. 2013. *Towards a Cultural Political Economy: Putting Culture in its Place in Political Economy*. Cheltenham and Northampton: Edward Elgar.

Tannen, Deborah. 1987. Repetition in Conversation: Toward a Poetics of Talk. *Language* 63(3): 574–605. (retrieved 101317: http://www.jstor.org/stable/415006/).

Tannen, Deborah. 2007. Talking voices: Repetition, dialogue, and imagery in conversational discourse. 2nd edition. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Tornborg, Emma. 2014. *What Literature Can Make Us See: Poetry, Intermediality, Mental Imagery*. Doctoral Thesis. Lund: Bokbox förlag.

Tsur, Reuven. 2012. *Poetic Rhythm. Structure and Performance. An empirical study in cognitive poetics* (2nd ed.). Brighton: Sussex Academic Press.

Turner, Victor. 1974. *Drama, Fields and Metaphors*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Törnberg, Anton 2013. 'Resistance Matter(s): Resistance Studies and the Material Turn'. *Resistance Studies Magazine*, RSM.

Vossius, Gerhardus Johannes.1990. *Elementa Rhetorica eller Retorikens grunder*. Övers. o. utg. av Stina Hansson. Göteborg: Univ.

Åsberg Cecilia, Martin Hultman and Francis Lee. 2012. *Posthumanistiska nyckeltexter*, Lund: Studentlitteratur.