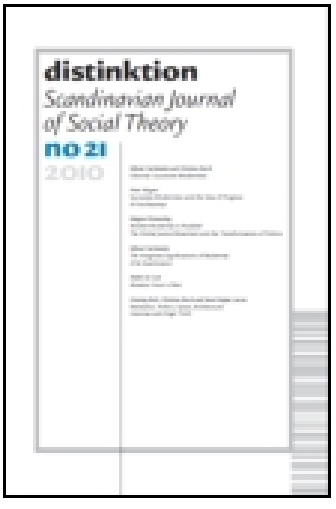

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Listing the global: dis/connectivity beyond representation?

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This paper explores the topic of the special issue – global operations: (dis)connections – by approaching it through an analysis of lists. The list is understood as a communicative device which structures global operations as well as becoming a token for the global. The paper asks how the affinity between the logic of the list and the global is generated. For doing this, a model of the basic characteristics of lists is introduced, focusing on how lists organize the interplay between connection and disconnection. Eventually, the paper argues for an understanding of global lists which does not only account for its cognitive mapping of the global, but also for its affective dimension.

Keywords: communication; globalization; Goody; list; operation; ranking

The 'global' is not simply there, waiting to be discovered, as an objectivist view of globalization might have it (e.g. Castells 1996) – it has to be produced by social, cultural, and technical means (e.g. Radhakrishnan 2001; Staeheli 2003). This production of the 'global' exceeds the limits and requirements of traditional means of representation: 'doing' the global does not only demand the performativity of symbolic processes; it is not achieved through the mere proliferation of global pictures, symbols, stereotypes, and other forms of global representation. Drawing from Niklas Luhmann's systems theory (1997a), we can distinguish between *observations* of the global (e.g. self-descriptions of global culture) and *operations* of the global (e.g. flows of pictures and movies linked together in a worldwide network). Often, global representations (such as the globe) are juxtaposed to global operations, which sometimes might even be understood as more 'real' than the descriptions. Looking at this operative dimension of the global may take many different forms: one might turn to a global ethnography of practices (Tsing 2004), or one might analyze network structures or flows of events. What I argue in this essay is that global modes of operating and their techniques might themselves become one of the best tools for observing the global. I contend that an ancient cultural technique, the list, works simultaneously as a way of organizing global flows and representing the global.

The list is certainly not a new communicative technique; rather, it is one of the oldest.[1] Contemporary lists – such as global black lists, global best-of lists, and global ratings – are means of channeling and controlling global flows of communication,

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goods, and people. It is, for example, on the basis of a list that a passenger may be caught at the airport, forbidden to continue her journey; and it might be a list of the world's most underrated tourism spots that makes the adventure-seeking tourist go there. However, lists are not only devices for controlling and directing streams of people, goods, and other items; they also become a token of what they try to regulate. It is precisely through the addition of items, often quite heterogeneous items, to a list that a sense of the global is created, without the use of classical means of representation which rely on symbols. Rather, lists seem to embody temporary global gatherings – one might, following Bruno Latour (2005), even speak of collectivities – that are not based on a representational logic. In this paper I focus on this oscillation, on the list's ambivalent status as both a technique of control/steering and a device of making the global visible.

I. Lists and crisis of representation

Although lists are one of the oldest communicative devices, they have become a central technique of communication in a globalized world. There are many reasons for lists' success, not least their importance for information technologies (e.g. Fuller 2005), be it in its very basic form in Mesopotamian culture, or be it in contemporary information technologies. Today, lists are indispensable tools for organizing global flows of information, people, and goods. They are often invisible techniques, helping to create and organize global connectivities.

Lists simultaneously 'do' the global; furthermore, lists become a privileged tool for making the global visible, which often also lends more visibility to the list as communication device. But why does the list lend itself so well to performing the difficult task of showing globality? In my view, lists do so because they offer an alternative to classical models of representing the global (such as the symbol of the globe). What makes lists attractive – apart from their ability to control global flows – is that they replace the problem of finding the right symbol with a very pragmatic solution: the logic of possibly infinite addition. If you don't know how to represent something and if you don't know what is essential to an entity, then just create a list of what seems noteworthy! A list allows one to add more and more items instead of following the restriction of a discursive grammar or of producing the closure contained in a synthesis. Thus, a global list deals with the global by adding, combining, and possibly ordering items – without the obligation to create a totalizing signifier of the global.

Let me elaborate this argument by looking at *The Aleph*, a short story by Jose Luis Borges ([1949] 2000). This story concerns an author who visits Carlos Argentino Daneri, a mediocre poet in Argentina and a cousin of Beatrix, a woman the narrator once loved. Daneri is working on a long poem, 'The Earth', that aims to 'versify the entire planet' ([1949] 2000, 122). This poem, the narrator remarks, is incredibly boring, including artful but endless descriptions of landscapes and everything else – and is, naturally, not yet finished.

The poem draws its energy and its inspiration from the Aleph, which is hidden in the cellar of the poet's house. The Aleph, Daneri explains, is 'one of the points in space that contain all points' (Borges [1949] 2000, 126). The Aleph is one point that encompasses the whole universe: it is in the world, and it is the world. It is 'the place where, without admixture or confusion, all the places of the world, seen from every angle, coexist' ([1949] 2000, 127). To speak about the global ideally presupposes the

existence of such a point – and if one wants to grasp the global theoretically, even more so: according to conventional thought, a theory of the global should be clear and distinct, should not be confused by the complexity of the world. When the narrator wonders about this strange phenomenon of the Aleph, he asks himself how a writer could possibly describe such a point. The first answer, which he quickly disavows, is the solution of the mystics: they fall back on symbols and emblems ([1949] 2000, 129). The mystics try to arrive at an impossible representation of the infinity of the world. Many accounts of the global try to accomplish precisely this, albeit in a less subtle and less elaborate way. They search for a representation of the global, a symbol that expresses what makes the global truly global. Some might speak of global norms and human rights; some might think of world events as something that – like a flash – embodies the spirit of the global; others might allude to a global economic principle that creates financial crises and global inequalities. The mystical basis of such accounts is their belief in the possibility of representing the global, of identifying a principle that encompasses everything.

Eventually the story's narrator steps into the cellar of the poet so that he can see the Aleph himself – and there he has to face the problem of describing it. Borges emphasizes that this glance at the Aleph suffers from the structure of language. It has to put what exists simultaneously into a successive order:

> I saw the populous sea; [. . .] saw the multitudes of America; [. . .] saw a broken labyrinth (it was London); saw endless eyes, all very close, studying themselves in me as though in a mirror, saw all the mirrors on the planet (and none reflecting me) [. . .] saw clusters of grapes, snow, tobacco, veins of metal, water vapor, saw convex equatorial deserts and their every grain of sand, saw a woman in Inverness whom I shall never forget, saw her violet hair, her haughty body, saw a cancer in her breast; [. . .] saw a country house in Adrogué, saw a copy of the first English translation of Pliny (Philemon Holland's), saw every letter on every page at once (as a boy, I would be astounded that the letters in a closed book didn't get all up together overnight) [. . .], saw a sunset in Querétaro that seemed to reflect the color of a rose in Bengal, saw my bedroom (with no one in it), saw in a study in Alkmaar a globe of the terraqueous world placed between two mirrors that multiplied it endlessly. (Borges [1949] 2000, 130)

The experience of the Aleph cannot be described through a mere symbol; rather the narrator creates a very heterogeneous and self-referential enumeration of that which is perceived as simultaneous. Thus, we are confronted with a list, alluding to an impossible list that would contain everything – even itself, all of its sub-lists, and the onlooker. As is typical for Borges, the list becomes self-referential: for example, it lists not only a series of books but also, from within each book, a list of letters whose order seems highly precarious.

Borges is one of the great modern thinkers and artists of list-making; most famously in his Chinese encyclopedia (in *The Analytical Language of John Wilkins*), which Foucault (1970) popularized in the preface of *The Order of Things*.[2] I believe we should take seriously Borges' fascination with lists and his decision to replace symbol-reliant mysticism with the technique of list-making (which still bears the risk of generating a mysticism of its own[3]). Borges' list produces and shows the global at the same time – and it is this function of lists that is central to my argument. But what is the affinity between the list and the global? Even at first glance, Borges' list shows us, first, that lists may encompass infinite elements. The medium of the list, as it were, would be able to contain all the elements of the world: not only landscapes and cities, but also books and their letters, unknown persons, past and future lovers,

colors, pain ... Borges points also at a second dimension that I will discuss later in greater depth. A list may seem to be a simple artifact, but it easily generates a hyperconnective dynamic of its own. A sunset in Querétaro reflects the colors of a rose in Bengal. Precisely because the list has no narrative structure and no pre-given order, its elements can easily relate to each other in many unforeseen ways. The list opens up a topological space – in contrast to many topographical symbols (such as the globe). The Aleph embodies this characteristic of the list. This impossible object is a point connected with everything – a point of pure hyperconnectivity, not yet restricted by elaborate rules governing combinations. However, the Aleph itself is only a place-holder – what the narrator and the sociologist must confront are simply empirical lists. A list generates a *combinatoire* of infinite possibilities, possibilities that would be excluded in a list-less world: How could one establish a relation between Querétaro and Bengal, a relation between a sunset and a rose, without the topological space of the list, which differs from the geographical space of classical thought? How difficult would it be to construct a plausible narrative linking all of the items on such a list – a narrative exhausting all of the list's potentialities? And thirdly, Borges' list performs an enumeration which contains highly heterogeneous elements, thus opening up to the multiplicity of the world.

II. Lists as communication devices

What I propose is a social analytics that can grasp how lists work and can account for how lists perform globality. To do this, I understand the list as a communicative device, a cultural technique that allows one to collect, organize, and memorize items. There are many examples of global lists, and I will refrain from positing a long list of them. Still, let me just mention a few examples of global lists: lists of most-wanted terrorists, lists of deportation, no-fly lists, passenger lists, world heritage lists, best pop songs of the world, best universities of the world, shopping lists containing 'global' products with very different geographical origins, and so on. Lists have become a permanent element of popular culture worldwide, fascinating in their easy use and their global reach.

Before looking more closely at the nexus between list and the global, I will sketch out how lists work by selectively drawing from Jack Goody's work, especially his seminal and still pioneering paper 'What's in a list' (1977), which posits the list as the interface between oral and writing cultures. This sketch is also inspired by Bruno Latour's actor-network theory (1987; 2005), a sociology that not only looks at how lists work in the laboratory, but also uses the list as epistemological tool for thinking the social (Staeheli 2011).[4] Let me minimally define a list before elaborating more carefully some of its dimensions. A list is a written series of isolated items, collected in one material or virtual place. However, the notion of the list I am interested in goes beyond their mere description as an object. That lists are also practices is already indicated by the use of the word 'list' itself as both a noun and a verb. The verb 'to list' is pivotal to an understanding of the list: it signifies a process of abstraction from that which is not a list and a process of compiling these abstracted items (the latter meaning is already indicated with the military usage of 'to list', cf. OED).

Lists, then, are seen as communicative devices and practices that enable global processes and, through these processes, make configurations of the global visible. To understand lists' cognitive and – I would add – affective capacities, it is crucial to

understand the logic of the list, also accounting for the momentum of this communicative device. For doing this, I want to distinguish seven dimensions of the list, which describe the minimal structure of any list. Apparently, my own working with lists adheres to the logic of the listing by suggesting this list of characteristics of the list. It is by pointing at these basic characteristics that the epistemological affinity between the logic of lists and that of the global can be explored[5]: (1) the call for a list; (2) the collective inscription on a list; (3) the discontinuity of listed items; (4) the continuous space of a list; (5) the 'weak' identity of the list; (6) the seduction of a list, and (7) the circulation of a list. Each of these dimensions is discussed in more detail below.

1. The call for a list

Lists do not simply exist by coincidence; they are specific answers to a social or cultural problem. In Mesopotamian and early Greek culture lists arose as tools for dealing with the complexity of economic and political administration (Goody 1977). Looking at the use of lists in contemporary times, now that the technique of list-making is fully established and has a tradition of 4000 years, it is even more apparent that lists do not arise accidentally. Rather, lists are based on a question that has to be answered, on a problem for which a list seems to represent a perfect solution (Ziegler 2007). This question often assumes the form of an order. For example, a list may answer the question 'Who are the most dangerous terrorists of the world?' Or it might answer the question 'Which are the most beautiful beaches of the world?' or 'Which global regions are best for investments?' This 'originary' call for a list is quite ambivalent in several ways. Often the meaning of the initial order/question is not fully fixed; it may even change during the list's production. Similarly, the criteria of selection are not fixed at the outset, but evolve during the list's use. Even the common denominator – such as 'global terrorist' – might be ambivalent from the beginning (relying on additional definitory lists of terrorism) and/or might be altered during the list's life. In fact, the very term that has started the query is being defined and redefined by the enumeration in the list.[6]

This ambivalence of the call for a list is far from being a weakness. Indeed, lists do not necessarily suffer from the permanent redefinition, negotiation, or even transformation of the initial question and their criteria of inclusion. The success of lists might result partly from their ability to survive shifting foundations as well as shifting rules of inclusion. Reading a list does not reveal these myriads of small changes, struggles, and ambivalences that may have happened during its composition – the list looks perfect in itself, a homogenized and objectivized collection of cleanly separated items, in a space out of time. The very act of collecting clearly separated items produces an objectivity and factuality of its own.

2. Collective inscription on a list

List-making is a material and potentially collective process. Items have to be inscribed into a material or virtual list. The process of inscription is prefigured by the materiality of the infrastructure: the material space of the columns of a waiting list, the software structure and hardware performance of digital lists, and so forth. This media infrastructure of the list enables collective and distributed modes of inscription.[7] Typically, the author of a list is a distributed collective, relying on a

media infrastructure for collecting and producing data: secret service agencies compiling no-fly lists, a digital community of TripAdvisor users producing lists of most desirable places to travel to, and so on.

3. *The discontinuity of the list*

Lists are highly artificial objects relying on isolated items that one can clearly distinguish from each other: 'The list relies on discontinuity rather than continuity' (Goody 1977, 81). In this sense, lists are essentially digitally organized devices. The digits of a list do not come naturally; they have to be made. Words, events, goods, or persons have to be abstracted from an analogous flow – 'a flow of speech, and indeed, from almost any context of action except that of writing itself' (Goody 1987, 275). Thus, lists are machines of abstraction that, by isolating items from this flow, disembed and decontextualize them and turn them into versatile items.

4. *The space of a list*

The list opens up what I call the abstract space of a list. This space provides the imaginary common ground for the collection of isolated and possibly very heterogeneous items. The discontinuity of the items is thus met by a continuous space that allows one to assemble even the most heterogeneous elements. This becomes possible only through the process of abstraction mentioned above. The items on a list lose the marks of former contexts and relations; moreover, they lose all the traces of their history. They are now collected on the list where they simultaneously reside. The space of a list is a space without an elaborated ordering structure or an immanent grammar; although it might provoke the creation of new grammars, the basic form of the list itself does not yet have any pre-given syntax. The elements of a list 'simply' follow the logic of the 'and' (Dolezalova 2009, 6); the only ordering principle of a list – a very basic and simple principle – is that each item sits next to another element. In rhetorical terms, the list opens up a paratactic space – that is, a space where one can place items side by side without a conjunction, and thus without connecting these elements (Spivak 2000, 338). For Spivak, parataxis opens up a new space precisely because it suspends the connective power of communication and language. Parataxis, then, is 'the power of language to withhold its own power of making connections' (Spivak 2000, 338). In this sense, a list opens up a horizon of possible connections which, in turn, may be reduced by ordering principles emerging from this space. But even the paratactic structure of the list may produce an ambivalent effect: On the one hand, it opens up this space of virtual connections, not yet realized, but immanent in the list; on the other hand, the isolated items may assume a factual mode of existence, standing for themselves, not yet being integrated into an overreaching narrative structure. It is in this sense that the list constitutes a space of the factual, exemplifying what Scott Lash has called a 'post-hegemonic empiricism' (2007, 64), bombarding the user with its wealth of items, but having no narrative that would produce a meaningful and causal chain of events.

5. *The 'weak' identity of a list*

One of the most fascinating characteristics of lists is that their identity is rather 'weak'. A list defies classical categories of identity. There is no essence of a list; lists

may have foundations, but, as we have seen, these foundations are rather shaky, and one can replace a list's foundation without doing any serious harm to it. In this sense the list is a primary example of what Gabriel Tarde (followed by Bruno Latour) has called a 'philosophy of having': having – or possessing – is for Tarde/Latour the very logic of the social: 'the family of ''to have'' is much richer than the family of ''to be'' because with the latter, you know neither the boundary nor the direction' (Latour 2005, 217). 'Having' is a quantitative notion that allows us to think along a continuum between 'having less' and 'having more'. (Actually, Borges' literary experiments with lists are trying to show what 'having all' might mean, thus exploring one of the extremes of this opposition.) And there is no strict line separating 'having less' and 'having more'. In contrast, classical ideas of identity framed within a notion of being must work with contradictions or even antagonism (cf. Tarde [1895] 2012, 52 f.).[8] A list, then, exemplifies this logic of 'adding up'. There is no kernel to the list, no master signifier temporarily closing its horizon – there are no indispensable, constitutive elements whose loss would destroy the list. Although there is a clear boundary between what is exterior to the list and the list itself, a list does not need a logic of the other (a logic deeply embedded in a philosophy of being). There is an outside to lists, but no 'constitutive outside' (Laclau 1991) – there is no need to negate the interior of the list for being a list, therefore that which is external to the list neither undermines nor threatens the inside.

Again, this does not mean that lists have no outside: any list relies on a process of selection and exclusion, often governed by categories. However, because the category works primarily on the operative level of controlling the access to the list, its function is not on a semiotic level such as for example that of an empty signifier (Laclau 1996). In addition, what can and cannot be included in a list often depends on the list's material structure (Siegert 2006): the size of a registry, the logic of software, the performance of hardware, its visual organization. There may be quite arbitrary rules limiting the size of a list: for instance, the number of items might be restricted (as it often is in best-of lists). The list performs a post-hegemonic model of identity (Beasley-Murray 2010; Lash 2007): There is no empty signifier opening up a totalizing discursive horizon; there is no psychoanalytical logic of foreclosure, creating an excluded other that haunts the inside. To summarize: the communicative device of the list produces a new and very modest form of identity – a mode of identity regulated by questions of proximity, access, and materiality rather than by an (impossible) foundation such as the empty signifier. Speaking about the 'weak' identity of lists is not intended as a normative statement. In political terms, the logic of the list produces an array of very different effects. One might think of new social movements which follow the logic of adding up, of producing affinities (e.g. the Occupy movement); however, one should also acknowledge that this 'weak' identity produces the terrain for a radical decisionism. The question who belongs to the list and who is outside is not regulated by an imaginary discourse and may not depend upon agreed rules of inclusion.

6. The seduction of a list

The list opens up a space of its own with a very simple, basic order – an order following the logic of the 'and'. This simple structure makes lists extremely versatile. However, it would be a mistake to reduce the list to its basic order. As Goody puts it:

'Most importantly it encourages the ordering of the items, by number, by initial sound, by category' (1977, 81). There are two reasons for this seduction to order – a seduction that highlights the affective structure of an apparently boring and uninteresting medium. First, the items of the list are not linked to other items; they withhold the power to connect, just as in the case of parataxis. However, the paradoxical effect of creating such disconnections is the emergence of a new mode of hyperconnectivity: Every item can now be combined with any other item. That is why parataxis (disconnection) is deeply intertwined with hypotaxis (connection): 'Parataxis (a sequence of this and that, ''ands'') always involves a virtuality that is hypotactic (concepts and things, nested, meshed, and writhing). It puts into place a virtual syntax. How *can* they be connected?' (Fuller 2005, 15) This is the question that the list asks. Precisely because the list has no intrinsic order, numerous groupings and regroupings are possible. The suppressed connections within the paratactic order produce resonances, new affinities – in brief, they establish new connections (Friedman 2007, 37) The basic order of the list (which seems often as totally unordered) offers not simply chaos but calls for a more complex order. It generates a virtual space for recombinations, inventions, and narratives. This invitation and seduction to order has been explored most successfully in literature, popular culture, and art. Think, for example, of Francois Jullien's (2006) essay on the Confucian art of producing lists, and also of many literary experiments, such as Borges' story *The Aleph* or Gertrude Stein's drama *A List*. But even when we deal with lists in everyday life, we are normally tempted to alter and expand their items' order. Or, an ordinal ordering of the list – e.g. a ranking of the best universities of the world – has to account for its foundational contingency. The very form of the list points at the possibility that the list could have a different ordering principle.

7. The circulation of lists

Due to their minimal ordering structure as well as their affective cathexis, lists easily circulate, whether they are material or digital objects. A list is a generalized communication device that can be used in many different contexts. Lists' syntactic simplicity makes it easy to quote and spread them. It is easy to translate a list; it nearly works – due to the lack of a syntax – as pan-linguistic device, only requiring the knowledge of the vocabulary (Tankard 2006, 339).

I have mentioned seven characteristics of lists: the call for a list, the inscription in a list, the discontinuity of listed items, the space of a list, the identity of a list, the seduction to order, and the circulation of lists. These characteristics circumscribe a minimal understanding of what constitutes a list. Certainly, empirical lists have very often much more elaborated, often ordinal ordering structures (e.g. global rankings) than the minimal structure described here. But it is important to acknowledge that the list, in order to work as a device, has not to presuppose these intricate structures. In this sense it becomes possible to understand the list not only as an actual, positivized phenomenon, but also as a virtual space, suggesting myriads of connections and calling for ordering principles.

III. The logic of the list and the global

How do lists contribute to the production of globality? Or, to rephrase this question on a systematic level, do lists embody a communicative logic that is typical for global

processes? Proceeding from my interest in the operative dynamics of globalization, I will approach these questions in terms of connectivity and disconnectivity.

Many accounts of globalization tend to see globalization as an increase of connectivity: globalization is conceived of as a process of producing more and more connections between people, goods and regions. Most radically, Luhmannian systems theory states that we live in a world society – a society defined by global connectivity, where any communicative address might be linked with any other address within globally operating functional systems (Luhmann 1995; Stichweh 2005). Thus, in a world society there are no permanent 'holes' of connectivity; in principle, everyone can be linked with everyone else.[9] From such a perspective, globality is put in terms of connecting operations between myriads of points; however, it does not account for the 'ecology' that makes these global connections possible. My argument is that the list provides one of the 'global ecologies' by collecting these items in one place. The listed items, addresses, and goods are not (yet) interlinked, but their presence on a list produces the potential of global ordering structures and increased connectivity. In principle, an infinite number of linkages is possible; the list is the materialized mode of global virtuality.

Global lists perform a crucial task that is one of the preconditions for global connectivity: they disembed items from their 'local' places and narratives precisely by identifying and listing them. Thus, the list does not simply collect what is already there; rather, a global list produces those 'local' items by disconnecting and isolating them. In this sense, the list resembles an analog/digital-converter (Schroeter and Boehnke 2004; Wilden 1972): it translates analogous flows, based on continuity, into digital units, which one can clearly distinguish. The list finds itself in a world with uncountable narratives, affective streams, traditional identities that are the material for making a list. Thus, what a social theory of the list requires us to think about are the acts of separation, practices of interruptions, and modes of producing disconnections. The production of a list such as the 'best' lists of TripAdvisor exemplifies this digitalization of units. TripAdvisor produces different best lists such as the yearly Travellers' Choice Winners of best destination, best beaches, best food and wine destination, best hotel (family), and best hotel (romance). Moreover, TripAdvisor users may generate best lists of their own, for example, of hotels within a region. Consider the best beach list: A list of the 10 most beautiful beaches of the world relies on disembedding these beaches, making them items which can be distinguished from other items. TripAdvisor provides the classificatory frame; the users are allowed to suggest new entries of the list. Foremost, however, they produce content for the empty categories. For doing this, they have to abstract from narratives about what constitutes a beautiful beach. Producing beaches as distinct entities performs a cut in geographical, territorial space, but also in the narrative and experiential continuities.[10] Thousands of individual stories about how one has discovered a secluded beach, of what one has experienced at that beach, of the imaginaries that are linked to these ideas of a good beach will never enter the list. What enters is only the naming of a beach, perhaps a short description – and such a list may then be reordered by new criteria such as the price of hotels nearby; criteria that may have been irrelevant within the narratives that led up to the suggestion of this beautiful beach. Such a list may generate new imaginaries of the world – a world as an ever-shifting topological collage of beaches. Thus, producing a list means cutting through local narratives and the continuity of landscapes for identifying elements that can be listed. It is this work of separation and disconnection that the list is based on, but that is also concealed by producing the abstract space of

the list. On the list, all items look as if they had always been there; the hard and often contested work of disconnection that has produced them is forgotten. What we might call the politics of lists thus does not start with the question of which items should be included and which not. Although this is certainly a crucial question, often debated on TripAdvisor. One user, for example, complains that Williamsburg (NY) is not a destination of its own: 'Williamsburg is a destination ["'destination'' is the TripAdvisor category in question] and deserves its own listing. ... Yes, it is a neighborhood of Brooklyn, but these neighborhoods need their own listings, not as a subset of Brooklyn'.[11] The question of being included or not is even more important in global lists such as the Unesco World Heritage list where the inclusion into the list grants higher visibility and possibly funding (Schuster 2002). However, the very question of inclusion/exclusion presupposes elements which can be included. It is this making of 'listable' elements and the practices of disarticulating and disconnecting them which are often overlooked. Interestingly, most accounts of social or media connectivity neglect to mention their reliance on producing disconnections – and we lack concepts of how to think disconnection. The production of globality depends on such disconnections: what is far away, what belongs to a plethora of different local narratives, can only be transformed into a global list by cutting elements that can be recombined.[12]

Once items are compiled on a list, their former ordering principles – geographical space, historical time, or social and cultural narrative identities, existing relational networks, and so on – lose their structuring power. We are left with isolated items – names, brands, addresses, places – that no longer have a fixed position within a system of differences. Often, globalization is understood as a process of universalization and homogenization. However, looking at the global through the lens of list-making opens up a different perspective. The list points at the need to produce disconnections for producing items that can be combined globally. This does not imply that the items on a list are homogeneous. On the contrary, what is remarkable about lists is precisely their 'weak identity', which I mentioned above – that is, their ability to encompass and endure highly heterogeneous sets of items. Certainly, the list is still governed by a principle of equivalence (Goody 1977), distinguishing the members of a list from its non-members. But this equivalence is much weaker and much more open to new items than a logic of equivalence such as discourse theory would suggest (Laclau 1996). The reason for this is that the list has no 'essence' – not even a contaminated being – but, rather, follows a 'logic of having'.[13] Thus, global lists present to us the global as a heterogeneous collection of items, opening up the potential for global ordering principles. Such a list invites or even calls for different models of orderings: exclusive lists such as the world heritage list (Schuster 2002), global comparisons (Heintz 2010), or rankings (Adelmann 2011). The criteria for global orderings are often not at all transparent, possibly hidden and shifting. TripAdvisor is a good example for the intransparency of global ordering principles: These best lists are not simply the result of a global community of travelers, constituting a world electorate. Rather, the result from mixing the wisdom of the crowd with a secret algorithm produces the best-of list (Scott and Orlikowski 2012). By doing so, the preferences of the users are taken into account, but other criteria such as time become relevant. More recent reviews do have more influence than older reviews. Additional sources such as travel guides are also used for producing the global popularity algorithm.

For Goody, lists are not only administrative tools; they have introduced new cognitive structures. This also applies to lists in the era of globalization: lists invite a

new way of a cognitive mapping of the global; they invite us to do something with the listed items. However, lists do not work only within a cognitive register, and their function goes beyond controlling global flows. In addition to and also intertwined with global cognitive mapping, lists pulsate with affective energies; they are part of affective 'mattering maps' (cf. Grossberg 1992, 283 f.). I want to distinguish between the internal and external dimensions of this affectivity. Externally, lists produce the urge to produce more lists. We can use Gabriel Tarde's theory of imitation for understanding the contagious nature of list-making. Lists themselves are imitated. They are not restricted to one area of social life but instead are – sometimes ironically – imitated in nearly all cultural and social spheres: think of to-do lists, best boy- and girlfriend lists, shopping lists, lists of the most important sociological theorists, etc. This ubiquity of lists cannot simply be reduced to a process of rationalization or to a neo-liberal logic of economization. Often we produce lists because we simply like them, because list-making is fun, because others have produced lists elsewhere, and because they catch attention.[14] One of the reasons that list-making is so fascinating and contagious is precisely its simplicity: list-making is a communicative technique that can be easily transferred from one context to another, often thereby producing *Verfremdungseffekte*, such as with 'best-boyfriend' or 'best-girlfriend' lists. Recently, quite a number of coffee-table books have been published that collect different sorts of everyday lists. Some authors even speak of a 'glazomania' (Cagen 2007) – that is, an uncontrolled urge to produce lists and a fascination with list-making.

This leads me to the 'internal' aspect of lists – the affective structure of list-making. Lists certainly have a bureaucratic and administrative origin and still continue to work as administrative tools. Even the earliest forms of lists (the Mesopotamian lists of gods) were lists for administering religion and the economy. However, the production of religious lists was not a mere technical matter, not only an efficient bureaucratic technology. Rather, listing gods was also a means of describing what cannot be put into words: listing an infinite number of characteristics of gods is a way of describing what a god essentially is. This adding up turns itself into a ceremony, an enjoyable act of collecting more and more characteristics of a god or more and more gods (cf. Eco 2009). This ceremonial dimension also structures many lists that we use today, non-religious lists in particular.

Let me illustrate this using the example of Wikipedia. Wikipedia is itself a big project of producing a global list. Wikipedia reflects the technique of list-making and the special cognitive and emotional competencies that go along with it, notably when dealing with incomplete lists. Due to Wikipedia's collective spirit, it features many incomplete lists that are supposed to be expanded through the help of the Wikipedia community. Just to name a few examples of the lists tagged as incomplete: the list of converts to Islam, the list of EU-standards, the list of conflicts in Africa, and so on. What is telling for our context is the warning with which Wikipedia tags this list: 'This is an *incomplete list*, which may never be able to satisfy particular standards for completeness. You can help by *expanding it* [with *reliably sourced* entries]'.Wikipedia also urges users to be tolerant of incomplete lists:

> Some lists, however, are either not yet fully filled out or are difficult to keep current because the list is constantly changing. These are both referred to as *incomplete* lists. It's important that our readers understand that these lists should not be considered complete, or even representative of the class of items being listed. As such, we recommend inserting the {{Expand list}} tag either before or after any incomplete list. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:WikiProject_Lists)

'Expand list' – this is the battle cry of globalization: Add to the list, even if you know that you will probably never succeed in completing the list. Incomplete lists thus produce a pressure to universalize, a desire to become more – without ever becoming fully complete.[15] This is the universalism of the global, a universalism that does not rest on universal principles such as human rights or global norms; neither does this universalism rest on the production of empty signifiers, as Laclauian discourse theory would have it. It is true that post-structuralist accounts emphasize the impurity and the impossibility of universalism, their necessary failure. However, the universalism of the list is different from a deconstructive notion of universality. Deconstructive concepts of identity still rest on the logic of the other, of a constitutive outside, of subversion. We might be able to grasp the nature of this impossibility if we return to Tarde's distinction between a philosophy of being and a philosophy of having. The impossibility of the list is not an impossibility of being, of achieving a full identity; it is, rather, the impossibility of having it all. Such a philosophy of having is no less affectively structured than a philosophy of being – but its structure is different. The urge to expand a list is an affective and aesthetic experience. The literary scholar William Gass has described this experience in the context of literary lists very well: 'Lists, then, are for those who savor, who revel and wallow, who embrace, not only the whole of things but all of its accounts, histories, descriptions, justifications' (Gass 1995: 178).

Lists – especially incomplete lists – lend themselves to dealing with the global: the logic of adding replaces that of a symbolic synthesis. The global imaginary of the list differs heavily from that of more classical symbols such as that of the globe. The list radically loosens itself from a topographical imagination of the globe and its territorial order; instead it opens up a topological space of proximity and simultaneity. For example, places that seem to be far away can suddenly become close neighbors on a list without relying on any necessary or fixed order. It is in this sense that lists produce a virtual space of global connectivities. Focusing on this hyper-connective space allowed me to highlight the process of disembedding which is often overlooked. Even prior to the usage of money, lists require acts of disconnection and decontextualization in order to produce the items which will be compiled on a list. Making something global, then, does as much rely on new connectivities as it does on producing disconnections. While connection and disconnection mingle in any list, global lists fully exploit this relationship: either by recombining 'local' items from the whole world (e.g. in complete lists such global best lists); or by succumbing to the desire of infinite expansion, of adding more and more to the list (e.g. in incomplete lists such as in Wikipedia). Now, the pleasure of listing the global becomes the pleasure of adding the global.

Notes

1. Belknap (2004, 8) drawing from Gaur's *History of writing*.
2. For Foucault this list points at the absence of a 'common ground' which would make the collection of the different items intelligible.
3. Borges ([1949] 2000, 129) alludes at his possible complicity with mysticism: 'It is not for nothing that I call to mind these inconceivable analogies [of the mystics, author]; they bear a relation to Aleph.'
4. Cf. also the research on lists in literary studies (Belknap 2004; Eco 2009; Gass 1995).
5. These dimensions may well be used for a social analytics of global lists. In this paper, however, I will only be able to show some exemplary cases.
6. This is analogous to Latour's (1987) analysis of lists in the laboratory: things are being produced by 'test scores' of experiments, collected on a list.

7. There are, of course, also many individual lists, such as to-do lists, but the communicative technique of the list does not rely on a single author. Typically, the author of a list is unknown.
8. By contrast, nothing could be clearer than the concepts of *gain* and *loss*, of acquisition and divestment, which take this place in the philosophy of Having, if we may thus name something which does not yet exist. Between being and non-being there is no middle term, whereas one can have more or less. Being and non-being, ego and non-ego: barren oppositions which obscure the real correlatives. The true opposite of the *ego* is not the non-ego but the *mine*; the true opposite of being, that is of having, is not non-being but *what is had* (Tarde [1895] 2012, 53).
9. Cf. the 'small world' hypothesis (Watts 1999).
10. Cf. 'Travelers' Choice 2011: the best beaches' (www.tripadvisor.com).
11. http://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g60827-d258219-r128581263-Williamsburg-Brooklyn_New_York.html
12. This is not to deny that some lists use ready-made categories such as 'nation-state'. However, we should not overlook lists' performative power, that is, their power of producing the categories that are being listed.
13. Sociological literature speaks about disembedding mostly in economic terms; notably, money is seen as a primary medium and force of disembedding (Granovetter 1985). Looking at the communicative technique of the list shows us that such a disembedding is not necessarily economic (unless one wants to understand the list as purely economic device).
14. Cf. Lawrence Grossberg (1992) on fun and the affective structure of popular culture.
15. Wikipedia is visibly struggling with the additive logic of the incomplete list and a desire of completion and even representativeness:

> It is our hope that other Wikipedians will pick up where we leave off, and add more items to the list, bringing it closer, if not to completion, then at least to a mature state in that only minor updates are required as times change. Of course, it's not clear for all lists what should or shouldn't be on it, and so completion may never be clear for these lists, but there should at least come a point where most representative and widely agreed upon entries are present. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:WikiProject_Lists)

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