New Europe College
Ştefan Odobleja Program
Yearbook 2013-2014

FILIP ALEXANDRESCU
FLORIN GEORGE CĂLIAN
IONUŢ EPURESCU-PASCOVICI
ANDREI GORZO
ALEXANDRU IONIŢĂ
VERONICA LAZĂR
ALEXANDRU MATEI
IOANA MĂGUREANU

Editor: Irina Vainovski-Mihai

FILIP ALEXANDRESCU

Born in 1976, in Bucharest

Ph.D., University of Toronto, Canada
Dissertation: Human Agency in the Interstices of Structure: Choice and Contingency in the Conflict over Roșia Montană, Romania

Marie Curie IEF (Intra-European Fellowship for Career Development) researcher at the University Ca'Foscari in Venice, Italy (2014-2015)
Scientific researcher in the poject TIMBRE within the Helmholtz-Zentrum für Umweltforschung – UFZ, Leipzig, Germany, Department of Urban and Environmental Sociology (2011-2014)
Scientific researcher within the Research Institute for the Quality of Life in Bucharest, Romania (2008-present)
Lecturer, University of Bucharest, Faculty of Sociology und Social Work (2010)
Teaching Assistant at the University of Toronto, Canada, Department of Sociology (2003-2006; 2008-2009)
Expert at the Ministry of Labour, Social Solidarity and Family, Bucharest (2002-2003)

Several publications in academic journals and edited volumes published both in Romania and abroad

THE DIALECTICS OF ESTRANGEMENT: A SIMMELIAN INTERPRETATION OF DISPLACEMENT AND RESETTLEMENT CAUSED BY DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Abstract

With some exceptions, research on development-forced displacement and resettlement has been confined to a theoretical ghetto, virtually severed from explicit social scientific reflection. While the processes accompanying displacements are of staggering magnitude and complexity, the theoretical tools to approach them are relatively rudimentary. This paper suggests that the injection of an explicit theoretical point of view and the articulation of a new argument could revitalize the social scientific imagination in understanding displacement and resettlement. By drawing on Georg Simmel's reflections on the stranger at the turn of the twentieth century, the paper suggests a possible interpretation of displacement in the form of a dialectic of estrangement which, it is assumed, accompanies displacements caused by development projects. The three moments of the dialectic – the making of the developer stranger, the estrangement of the locals and the new strangers – show how discontinuities emerge in the experience of resettlement. The main implication of this approach is that the complexities and ethical issues arising from development-induced displacements could be more adequately understood if resettlers are viewed as individuals capable of performing their stranger roles in highly variable ways.

Research on involuntary displacement and resettlement and social theory: defining the research problem

There is little doubt that displacement and resettlement caused by development projects, is a realm of superlatives. There are at least forty-five thousand large dams in the world today, which have displaced anywhere

between forty and eighty million people (Klingensmith 2007). The scale and acuteness of the problem has grabbed early on the attention of social scientists, especially of those involved in applied anthropological work. Research on development-forced displacement and resettlement emerged with the ambitious dam projects of the Tennessee Valley Authority during the 1940s in the United States (Muggah 2011). Another early case of development-forced displacement and resettlement analyzed by social scientists was that of the Tema Manhean village on the coast of Ghana, which had to be resettled in 1952 to make way for a harbor on the gulf of Guinea (Amarteifio, Butcher and Whitham 1966). In the late 1950s, anthropologists Elisabeth Colson and Thayer Scudder began their long-term field research on the consequences of the construction of the Kariba dam for the local Gwembe Tonga population inhabiting the valley of the Zambezi River (Colson 1960, 1971). Similar anthropological interest was devoted to the resettlement experience of damming the Volta River in Ghana (Chambers 1970). Based on these early ethnographic studies of successive changes undergone by displaced populations, the first musings over the "prospects of a 'sociology of resettlement'" emerged (Brokensha 1963: 286). What sort of sociology would this turn out to be, a theoretically informed or a predominantly applied one?

The intervening 50 years have witnessed a vigorous growth of social scientific research on displacement, guided by an overriding concern with understanding the negative consequences of displacement and devising ways to mitigate them. This was undoubtedly a valid concern and social scientists have brought, in their roles as consultants and employees of financial and government institutions, a truly respectable contribution to improving the lives of displacees (Muggah 2011). Unfortunately, this stream of applied work has not been accompanied by an equally sustained effort at theorizing the emergent and unfolding resettlement processes. The present paper aims to address this problem by starting from an explicit theoretical perspective and seeking to shed new light on concerns that seem to have grown all too applied to require theoretical attention.

After reviewing the state of the art in the current thinking on displacement processes, the paper will introduce and illustrate the merits of a theoretical lens drawn from classical sociological theory. If the dominant explanatory models in displacement research have been inductively derived from applications of social scientific knowledge, the proposed approach aims to unsettle prevailing ways of thinking by departing from the habitual approaches of development researchers. In a nutshell, we propose

to draw on one of the classical[1] essays of the German sociologist Georg Simmel, published under the title "the stranger" (1908). "The Stranger" is a "sociological form", conceived as a synthesis between wandering and attachment. Development projects that impose population resettlement can similarly be seen as syntheses of emplacement and displacement: states "wander" from afar and occasionally emplace objects such as dams or mines at specific locations, forcing individuals and communities to become themselves wanderers. In Simmel's interpretation, the stranger is not simply a "local" who happens to move from his place of origin to other places, where she is seen as a stranger. The sociological form of the stranger is the bearer of distinct qualities apart from mobility (and the attendant "synthesis of nearness and remoteness", Simmel 1971: 145), namely objectivity, freedom and abstractness. Regarded in this way, the presence of developers (states or companies) in local communities suddenly acquires a different meaning: strangers bring discontinuities in the experience of the locals *because they are strangers*. Moreover, by expanding Simmel's concept, one can postulate that certain kinds of strangers – which are called here *developer strangers* - have a further peculiar ability, namely that their presence leads to the estrangement of others. In fact, the paper advances a dialectical understanding of how this estrangement can happen, including three moments: the first, in which the developer stranger is created; the second is the moment of estrangement in which places and communities change while the locals remain unmoved; the third moment is the emergence of new strangers – the displacees – who become performers of their newly found stranger qualities.

The primary aim of the paper is to advance a coherent theoretical argument around the idea of the stranger. For this reason, only very brief empirical illustrations will be offered, drawing on the case of displacement and resettlement produced by the Bicaz dam in Romania. The present approach offers a promising way to explore cases such as Bicaz or similar ones, whereby the theoretical articulation of *displacement as estrangement* is the central goal.

The state of the art in theorizing development-induced displacement

The first anthropologists working at the time when the first "man-made lakes" were created in Africa carried out research in an interdisciplinary

23

context that included geographers, economists, lawyer and international relations scholars (Rubin and Warren 1968). The problem of anthropologists was in one way unique, as their object of study – the social organization of populations that were to be removed by dams – was fast disappearing. H. A. Fosbrooke from the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute was writing in the foreword to one of the first books on resettlement in Africa:

> …work commenced on the dam in August 1955 … In these circumstances speedy action was necessary. As incoming Director in March 1956 I appreciated that if an adequate record of the social organization of the Valley Tonga was to be made available to posterity, there was no time to let an anthropologist grow up in situ: one had to found ready-made (Fosbrooke 1960: v).

That anthropologist was Elizabeth Colson. As the overriding concern was with delivering an account of a threatened form of collective life to posterity, the resettlement itself was discussed only in the last chapter of Colson's book. At that early point, resettlement had not yet become an object of investigation in its own right. However, the magnitude of the changes induced by resettlement was apparent to Colson: the Lusitu area of Northern Rhodesia where the local population was to the resettled was an "alien country" for them (Colson 1960: 196). This first glimpse of the stranger or of estrangement was not pursued, however, and the more general significance of feeling in "alien country" was not problematized by later applied anthropologists.

Faced with the novelty and radical character of uprooting people to make way for development projects, anthropologists sought to convey the dramas of resettlement to their commissioners in direct, action-oriented terms. "Massive technological development hurts" wrote Colson (1971). In describing his career as the first staff-sociologist at the World Bank, Michael Cernea describes his experience as that of a "contact sport" (Cernea and Freidenberg 2007: 339).

Social scientists took a step further: they tried to unpack the problem of why resettlement caused by development projects has in most cases anti-development outcomes: the impoverishment of displaced populations. Their explanations were derived from their direct observations in the field. Together with Colson, with whom he had worked for many years, Thayer Scudder developed a four-stage framework to explain the behavior of resettlers. Following an explanatory logic that appears to

interpret the behavior of resettlers in synchronicity with the requirements and demands of planners, he describes how individuals pass from "the planning and recruitment stage" (1st) via the "adjustment and coping" (2nd) and "community and economic development" (3rd) stages, towards the "handing over and incorporation [or 4th] stage" (Scudder 2005, 2009). The framework is meant to make sense of successful cases of resettlement and thus assumes that the reconstruction following displacement will be the result of the collective efforts of resettlers (Scudder 2005). The four-stage framework seems, however, to face difficulties when dealing with the complexity of actual resettlement experiences (Scudder 2005: 43). The assumption appears to be that if the necessary inputs and opportunities are in place, resettlers will likely be able to simplify the challenges they have to deal with and achieve an improvement in living standards (Scudder 2005: 50). The four-stage framework appears to lead back to a situation which is, again, "normal" for the community that has been resettled: project-specific institutions hand over responsibilities to the second generation and to non-project related institutions and the children of resettlers achieve improved standards of living. This is what might be called a "continuitist" view that assumes, in a profound sense and with due caveats, that communities and ways of life can be brought back to what they were before or at least where they would have been without the development intervention.

The same overall logic applies to Michael Cernea's well-known impoverishment risks and reconstruction (IRR) model (Cernea 1997). He throws a wider net at complexity and considers different processes affecting resettlers than can be found in Scudder's model. For example, the IRR models considers the loss of land, of homes, of jobs, of access to common property resources, of food, of good health, the process of being marginalized in project decisions or at the resettlement sites and the disarticulation of social relationships (Cernea 1997). Yet, despite this comprehensiveness and in broad accord with Scudder, the approach to dealing with complexity assumes the reversibility of resettlement experiences: "the risk model [can] be read 'in reverse', turned on its head, and thus it maps the way for reconstructing the livelihoods of those displaced" (Cernea 2000: 3667). In this way, complexity is theoretically excluded from social scientific concerns with displacement.

While striving for practical relevance, it seems that both Scudder and Cernea's models have had the unintended effect of ghettoizing research on resettlement by severing its connections to broader theoretical

perspectives. Dwivedi has forcefully argued with regard to the IRR model that what the model gains as a planning tool for decision makers – by drawing attention towards the risks that need to be addressed – comes at the price of being able to "ask only certain questions" (Dwivedi 2002: 718). In particular, the IRR model is virtually silent on the question of the subjective dimensions of risks and it also lacks a systemic aspect, by overlooking the structures of power that generate displacement (Dwivedi 2002). By ignoring the connections between the agents of development and the subjects of displacement, this model obscures the discontinuities produced by resettlement. More recent attempts at theorizing displacement, in connection with the ethics of development, aim to open up and thus de-ghettoize this area. Interestingly, however, they do so while still working in a continuitist vein.

The theoretical value of the ethics of responsible development (Gasper 2014) is that it broaches displacement problems in terms of broader frameworks of value. The argument starts with Dwivedi's (2002) path-breaking distinction between two contrary orientations in research on displacement: managerial and movementist. According to this author:

> At one end of the spectrum is an applied category of scholars who consider displacement to be an inevitable and unintended outcome of development, and who focus on its consequences. At the other end are action research scholars to whom displacement is a manifestation of a crisis in development; they focus on its causes (Dwivedi 2002: 711).

Dwivedi's characterization of the two main currents is deemed path-breaking for, on the one hand, it makes explicit assumptions which have long gone unproblematized in research on displacement and, on the other, it helps connect resettlement research with broader debates in the social sciences, such as that between development anthropology and the anthropology of development (Escobar 1991, Edelman and Haugerud 2005). The empirical focus on what are the risks or responses of displacees to resettlement is set in contrast, through this distinction, to the problematization of what development is and through what sorts of processes it is accomplished. But while the distinction helps clarify what kinds of questions researchers animated by managerialism or social movements might ask, it does not aid in offering a constructive response to the issue of how to advance, theoretically, in thinking about development-induced displacement.

The ethics of development perspective seeks to move out of the polarization between the two perspectives. It posits a set of values that have received wide recognition among different actors involved in development – researchers, policy-makers or practitioners – and that are thus used as a unifying framework for further debates (Penz, Drydyk and Bose 2011). Underlying all these is a so-called trump value, which is the "value of non-maleficence", understood as the minimization of harm and neglect (Penz, Drydyk and Bose 2011: 118). Inspired by the latter approach, Des Gasper (2014: 1) argues in favor of a "global language of human rights, including principles of recognition, accountability and participation". Based on a case of displacement produced by mining in Peru, he advances a number of concepts that could help bring stakeholders with different interests, such as mining communities and mining companies, around the negotiation table: free, prior and informed consent, voluntary negotiation, intensive citizen participation, and finding ways of acceptable co-existence (Gasper 2014: 12). Both the values exposed by Penz et al. (2011) and the language of human rights articulated by Gasper (2012) seek to elevate discussions of resettlement to a normative level that is sufficiently abstract to allow the search for common ethical ground. This can be seen as a more sophisticated variant of the continuitist perspective.

Discontinuity in displacement experiences and Simmel's stranger

In opposition to the ethics-based approaches, we start with the question whether the search for common ground, however much ethically justified, can provide a new understanding of the experiences of development-forced displacement. We posit that highlighting the differences, rather than smoothening them away, is a more promising way to think of the encounter between infrastructural mega-projects and local communities. In other words, we endorse a point of view that brings to light the *discontinuity* of experiences related to resettlement. The theoretical grounds for this can be found in an interpretation of Zygmunt Bauman's *Globalization*, in which "megaprojects [are seen as] part of a remarkably coherent story, the 'Great War of Independence from Space'" (Flyvbjerg, Bruzelius and Rothengatter 2003: 2).

In analogy to Giddens' (1985) discontinuist reading of modern history, the assumption here is that there is a qualitative difference before and

27

after a displacement process and, more generally, before and after a development encounter. This perspective can be traced to both the more managerial and the radical-movementist approaches mentioned above. What we propose in addition to this perspective is a dialectic relationship of discontinuity that, in the case of displacement caused by development, we call the dialectic of estrangement.

In the managerial camp, the work of Ted Downing (1996) and Garcia-Downing (2009) comes closest to a "discontinuitist" position. With his concept of social geometry, Downing (1996: 36-41) shows how involuntary displacement disrupts multiple dimensions of the spatial-temporal order. More apposite for this discussion is the cyclical process proposed recently by Downing and Garcia-Downing (2009: 230), in which a community confronted by displacement moves from routine culture, through a "dissonant interval" towards a new routine culture[2]. The new routine culture, reestablished after the perturbation produced by resettlement, is qualitatively different from the pre-displacement culture. Nor is it necessarily stable, as communities can plunge once again into dissonant experiences before re-establishing a new routine culture.

Although not easily subsumable under the discontinuitist positions, de Wet's concern with complexity or what he call calls the "inherent complexity" of displacement and resettlement (de Wet 2004 as cited in Dear 2008: 40) articulates an increasing awareness that resettlement is not linear but rather open-ended (de Wet 2013). This suggests that, during resettlement, something profound is likely to change in such a way that the outcomes are not always predictable.

From a movementist perspective, discontinuist positions have been vividly formulated by Arturo Escobar. He uses the concept of difference, which can take economic, ecological and cultural forms, to underscore what characterizes the struggle over natural resources in the Colombian Pacific (Escobar 2006). The sense that displacement creates momentous and irreversible change is shown by his argument that "modernity is essentially about displacement – conquering territories, uprooting peoples from place, restructuring spaces, such as creating plantations and urban sprawl or ghettoes" (Escobar 2004). We subscribe to this view that modernity makes it possible to alter places and communities beyond recognition. However, to explore how conquering, uprooting, restructuring and creating actually take place we refresh our view with a concept that is no usually found in the toolkit of development scholars.

Simmel's essay entitled "The Stranger" was published in 1908 [1971]. How is the stranger a useful concept? In the skilled hands of his creator, the stranger is defined and interpreted in a way which makes it highly interesting for exploring what Escobar (1991) calls "development encounters". To the early twentieth century German sociologist, the stranger is a sociological form, which expresses both spatial and symbolic relationships among humans. The stranger can be interpreted (anthropologically) as being simultaneously near (in a spatial sense) and far (culturally distinct from its host community). He has settled in a place but, at the same time, "has not quite got over the freedom of coming and going" (Simmel 1971: 143), which draws attention to her transformability (ability to transform himself and others). The stranger stands inside the group but confronts it at the same time, through his otherness. Also, the stranger has no place in the pre-existing economic structure, therefore he often engages in trade, which "alone makes possible unlimited combinations" (Simmel 1971: 144). Trade also signifies mobility or the ability to "come incidentally into contact with *every* single element" (1971: 145, emphasis in original) of a place, but without being linked organically to any one of them. The stranger is also objective, unencumbered by "custom, piety or precedent" (Simmel 1971: 146). It is not difficult to see how strangeness defined in this way is part of virtually any development encounter, especially in those cases where the stranger introduces strangeness by means of a material form (dam, mine, canal). Looking at development projects from a stranger perspective might be a stimulating mental exercise –discovering perhaps similarities and differences between different kinds of strangers – but it does not help address the problem of discontinuity. For this reason, this paper deals with the following question: how does the arrival (or making) of the stranger explain the discontinuity in resettlement experiences and what are the consequences of this discontinuity?

To address this question one needs to transform the static characterization of Simmel's stranger into what may be called a dialectics of estrangement. In short, the assumption is that displacement and resettlement experiences are interpretable in terms of three successive moments: (I) the making of the stranger as developer or the "developer stranger"[3]; (II) the process of estrangement; (III) the birth of new strangers. The first moment indicates that from all the forms of strangers who have been discussed in the sociological literature (McLemore 1970 and Levine 1977), the protagonist of development encounters is singled out as a special kind of stranger, identified as the "developer". The second moment describes how the

arrival of a developer stranger is less innocuous than that of Simmel's generic stranger and this is due to the power of the stranger as developer to transform locals through a process called estrangement. The third moment captures the effects of this transformation, namely how the resettlers-turned-into-strangers can assume two possible forms, which are called the taming vs. the performativity of the stranger.

The dialectics of estrangement

Anthony Giddens identifies in the advent of modernity four institutional clusters: private property, surveillance, military violence and the transformation of the natural world. All of them represent sharp breaks with the past. The latter, which he identifies as the emergence of the created environment, is "quite distinct from anything occurring before" (Giddens 1985: 312). In the early industrializing societies of Western Europe, the commodification of land was intertwined with the development of the absolutist state (Giddens 1985: 148). In societies that industrialized later, such as those of the post-colonial regions and the emerging socialist societies after World War II, the development of productive processes involving land (agriculture and industry) was the task of the national rather than of the absolutist state. In post-war Romania, for example, the consolidation of the socialist state was linked, among others, to the creation of infrastructure in the backward areas of the country (Turnock 1970).

If regarded from the point of view of the backward areas, one can see the states undergoing industrialization as displaying a certain "wandering quality" as they seek the appropriate spatial locations for their modernizing projects. Wandering can thus be seen as movement in relation to any preexisting local communities, which have fixed locations. At this initial moment, there is still no stranger as the pure wanderer is, in Simmel's terms, "beyond being far or near" (1971: 144). It is only when it settles somewhere – in the vicinity or the midst of a human community – that the wandering state becomes a stranger. David Turton (2010) makes a similar observation when he writes that the dams and conservation areas established in the basin of the Omo river in Ethiopia extended the presence of the state in "spaces within its boundaries where its writ did not run [before]".

Simmel contends that the "fundamental fact" about the stranger is that "his position [within a spatial circle] is fundamentally affected by the fact that he does not belong in it initially and that he brings qualities

into it that are not, and cannot be, indigenous to it." This is directly applicable to infrastructure that aims to produce electricity, irrigation or improved agricultural outputs at the expense of "local people [who are] left displaced, disempowered and destitute." (Oliver-Smith 2009: 3). The peculiarities that a dam or similar project introduces into a local community are seen as deeply negative in the literature on forced displacement, but what is important from the perspective discussed here is the element of "strangeness" introduced into these communities. This strangeness is not the mere source of "socio-psych-cultural disruption", which concerns Downing and Garcia-Downing (2009: 225), but, we would argue, an ontological quality of the stranger.

The stranger is the synthesis of wandering "considered as a state of detachment from every given point in space" (Simmel 1971: 143) and attachment to a given point in space. The quality of being simultaneously detached from and attached to particular locales obviously applies to a variety of social forms (individuals, groups, institutions etc.), depending on how attachment and detachment are defined in each context. There is one instance, however, in which the simultaneous attachment and detachment appear as particularly salient: in the creation of development objects. Dams, mines, highways are physically attached to certain places but at the same time detached from them in the intents and purposes of their creators. Using Simmel's words in a metaphorical sense, they are not wanderers that "come today and go tomorrow" but potential wanderers, that "come today and stay tomorrow" (1971: 143). More importantly, for Simmel the stranger is the one who "although he has gone no further, has not quite got over the freedom of coming and going." In a first instance, going no further is associated with a condition that tends towards permanence, a fact which is obvious for any infrastructure project. From a second point of view, having not overcome the freedom of coming and going may suggest that the stranger is both present (through its objective creation) and absent (because the creator moves on). But absolute presence and absence are perhaps not the most fruitful ways to think about relationships with strangers. Simmel offers two relative concepts that are more suitable to the dialectical interpretation pursued here.

The stranger is characterized by the "union of closeness and remoteness: the distance within this relation indicates that one who is close by is remote, but his strangeness indicates that one who is remote is near" (Simmel 1971: 143). One may venture to say that there might be an inverse relationship between distance and strangeness: the closer the

distance, the *stranger* the non-indigenous features of the stranger appear to be. It may further be assumed that the making of the development stranger occurs over a succession of steps, which bring the stranger ever closer to its "host". Each step is irreversible and highly consequential for the encounter between the stranger and the local group, and will be discussed in the remainder of this section. The second moment of the dialectic, which occurs temporally at the same time with the first, means that the stranger is at the same time an *estranger*. The resettlers become progressively estranged from their local social and ecological matrix, in a process that Giddens (1990) has called disembedding. Without having moved yet, they are rendered *out of place* in the project of the developer stranger. When the distance between the developer stranger and its host is reduced to zero, as it is bound to happen when the stranger gets so close that it displaces and evacuates the locals, something of a qualitative change – akin to the second law of dialectics – will be completed. The estranged hosts become themselves strangers and confront others – host communities but also the development stranger and even themselves – in the terms described by Simmel: attached but also wandering, close and remote, with enhanced capacities for "unlimited combinations", displaying mobility and objectivity. This third moment completes what we call the dialectics of estrangement (see Figure 1).
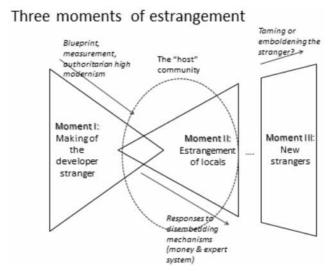

Figure 1: A graphic depiction of the three moments of estrangement

Without aiming at an exegesis of Simmel's social philosophy, it seems safe to say that the three moments do not appear to do violence to his conception of the stranger as it is outlined in the essay (1971). In the remainder of the paper the three moments will be fleshed out in more detail, by pointing out what insights could be gained into involuntary resettlement experiences, beyond the dominant reading of these experiences in the literature. For the first moment we draw on Simmel and on James Scott's (1998) discussion of the state as developer stranger. The second moment is inspired by Giddens' (1990) discussion of disembedding as a peculiar feature of modernity. The third moment of the dialectic returns to Simmel but also draws more tentatively on an open-ended interpretation of modernity, in which the experiences of the new strangers span a continuum stretching between what might be called the taming of the stranger at one end, and the performativity of the stranger at the other.

(I) The making of the developer stranger

Many kinds of strangers have been discussed in the sociological literature since the publication of Simmel's essay. Dale McLemore (1970) reviews the works that have identified the stranger either with the "marginal man" or the newcomer. Donald Levine (1977) adds to these two types of strangers a distinction that is only implicit in Simmel, namely that between strangers as individuals and stranger communities. However, McLemore (1970: 93) opens the door to potentially "even broader contribution[s]" in the interpretation of the stranger. In this section we deal with the developer stranger. In addition to his characteristics as a universal stranger, it is argued here, he is also distinguished by the special features of the developer.

When a new coming stranger arrives, argues McLemore (1970: 87), "he is outside the system of social relationships and poses a set of problems for the existing order". The host group will likely be altered to include the newcomer, which suggests that the stranger is always a source of external change. The developer stranger is a special kind of stranger because when he arrives, he brings his own blueprint for change. In development projects that involve dams, Dwivedi (2006) identifies the blueprint approach as one in which infrastructure projects pass through defined and time-specific stages that comprise the project cycle. These stages correspond to specific modes of transformative simplifications undertaken by states aiming at

an administrative reordering of social and ecological relationships (Scott 1998). In the terminology used here, these steps describe the making of the developer stranger and the consequences of this process.

The blueprint itself is made possible by what Simmel calls the objectivity of the stranger and it is made necessary by the ideological commitments of states that assume the role of developer strangers. Objectivity "signifies the full activity of a mind working according to its own laws, under conditions that exclude accidental distortions and emphases" (Simmel 1971: 145-146). How does the stranger developer express the "full activity of a mind working according to its own laws"? In a remarkable interpretation of Goethe's *Faust*, Marshall Berman outlines the grand scope of the developer stranger's "mind":

> 'Fast in my mind, plan upon plan unfolds' (Goethe). Suddenly the landscape around him metamorphoses into a site. He outlines great reclamation projects to harness the sea for human purposes; man-made harbors and canals that can move ships full of goods and men; dams for large scale irrigation […] (Berman, 2010: 62).

The necessity of the development blueprint is unmistakable for the late industrializing states. The countries of the Eastern Bloc after World War II, especially the less industrialized ones, needed to catch up with the Soviet blueprint. Lenin's earlier proclamation that "Communism is Soviet power plus the electrification of the whole country" (Lenin 1920)[4] might have resounded as an impervious necessity. Gail Kligman and Katherine Verdery (2011: 50) speak of the creation of copycat regimes throughout Eastern Europe, "in a process of technology transfer of almost unprecedented scope." In the decree of the Romanian National Assembly (*Marea Adunare Naţională*) for the expropriation of the properties located in the area of reservoir of the hydroelectric dam "V. I. Lenin - Bicaz" (in force since May 31, 1957), the construction of the dam was justified as "one of the great socialist constructions, being now built in our country, which is meant to constantly improve the living standard of working people in towns and villages" (MAN, 1957).

Development blueprints leave "little room for maneuver" (Dwivedi 2006: 12). This means that their translation on the ground requires multiple operations. The first such operation is the simplification and standardization of measurement (Scott 1998). The measurements that were in use in communities were unquestionably practical, interested

and historically specific, argues Scott (1998). Especially where the aim of the developer stranger was to find a common metric to compensate the inhabitants that it endeavored to relocate, it is quite likely that the attempt at simplification ignited resistance from the residents whose measurements of their own land were rooted in their practical knowledge of the land. The second operation is the achievement of "legible" landscape with which the state could – without understanding the actual use of land – develop its compensation rules:

> In an agrarian setting, the administrative landscape is blanketed with a uniform grid of homogenous land, each parcel of which has a legal person as owner and hence taxpayer. How much easier it then becomes to assess such property and its owner on the basis of its acreage, its soil class, the crops it normally bears, and its assumed yield than to entangle the thicket of common property and mixed forms of tenure (Scott 1998: 36).

It is thus to be expected that rules were at variance with the local interests. If we follow Simmel, it should be possible to see that this process is far from innocuous. This is because the objectivity of the stranger is also defined as freedom: "this freedom that permits the stranger to experience and treat even his close relationships as from a bird's eye view contains many dangerous possibilities" (Simmel 1971: 146). The stranger developer can thus be expected to be authoritarian as his "actions are not confined by custom, piety or precedent" (1971: 146). This claim is supported by the fact that in many development projects requiring involuntary resettlement, the developers frequently resorted to the use of force. This was also the case with the construction of the Bicaz dam, in which the national army was called upon to nominally "help" the resettlers break down their homes. There is, however, a second source of the stranger's freedom which has, in turn, a different consequence.

"In the whole history of economic activity", writes Simmel (1971: 144), "the stranger makes his appearance everywhere as the trader, and the trader makes his as a stranger". How are development projects to be understood as traders? Dwivedi (2006) describes such projects as investments to create productive and tradable assets. Albert Hirschman provides an even more suggestive image: "development projects […] are privileged particles of the development process" (1967: 1). They may be mere particles for the overall development plans of the state, but true behemoths for the communities in which they are located.

In any "closed economic group", where "all economic positions have been occupied", the trader appears as a supernumerary. It can only thrive if it engages in the "unlimited combinations" afforded by trade (Simmel 1971: 144). The trader is also no owner of land. This is an important observation since developers expropriate local communities not for ownership but for trade. Simmel's characterization of land is also telling for the position of the development stranger in local space: "The stranger is by his very nature no owner of land – land not only in the physical sense but also metaphorically as a vital substance which is fixed, if not in space, than at least in an ideal position within the social environment" (1971: 144). The lack of land ownership corroborated with intermediary trade "gives the stranger the specific character of mobility" (Simmel 1971: 145). For the developer stranger, mobility means that its range of action is located in space rather than in a specific place. In turn, the places touched by the development stranger tend to become "phantasmagoric". For Giddens (1990: 19), this means that the factors which structure the place are nothing inherently local, but rather distanciated relations. For the making of the Bicaz dam, this process can be seen in the unprecedented welter of individuals – engineers, farmers, workers, political prisoners – that have seen themselves set in motion (or obstructed) by the developing Romanian state.

In sum, the making of the developer stranger suggests that there are different processes – measurement, regulation, compensation – that constitute the stranger as developer in a given community. There is nothing automatic about this process, as it is likely to encounter various shades of resistance. The point to underscore here is that the stranger always leaves an enduring mark on its host community.

(II) The process of estrangement

The making of the developer stranger discussed above and the process of estrangement appear as two sides of the same coin. By estrangement we mean the transformation of locals into potential strangers *before* they have actually moved from place. At this stage, before becoming strangers in Simmel's sense, they undergo a process of estrangement. The steps taken by the developer stranger have the effect of turning them into estranged locals. When this process is completed, which means that the displacement has run its full course and those estranged have become strangers in their

own right, something interesting is likely to happen: the new strangers confront both the developer strangers and the new host communities with their own ways of being strange. They appear as simultaneously close and remote, mobile and economically intermediary, objective and ultimately free. This, however, is the third moment of the dialectic to be discussed in the next section.

Estrangement can be conceptualized using Giddens' notion of disembedding, which "mean[s] the 'lifting out' of social relations from local contexts of interaction and their restructuring across indefinite spans of time-space" (Giddens 1990: 21). One can assume that development projects create a quick form of disembedding, in which the familiar time and space reference of locals break down and are reconfigured as the developer stranger creates his development object, to which he subordinates her hosts. Giddens further distinguishes between two disembedding mechanisms, which he calls the creation of symbolic tokens (such as money) and the establishment of expert systems. For Giddens, both are generally implicated in disembedding, which is a source of discontinuity in the experience of modernity. In this discussion, the aim is to suggest a way in which money and the expert system may work to create a space in which the micro-responses of locals to the actions of the developer stranger bring a discontinuity in their experiences. They become estranged (separated) from their environments of daily practice under the weight of the developer stranger and his creation. This process is irreversible and represents for the locals a compressed form (because of its brevity) of experiencing the discontinuity of modernity.

For Giddens, expert systems are "systems of technical accomplishment or professional expertise that organize large areas of the material and social environments in which we live today" (1990: 27). Our aim is to find out how the construction of such an expert system, for example of a dam, unsettles the previous relationships of the locals in a way that makes the local time and space appear progressively removed from the habitual practices. In short, the aim is to see how the dam as expert system creates the separation of time and space for the locals. For example, as the reservoir behind the dam is gradually filled up, the topography of the valley becomes a function of time: spatial referents change as the lake encroaches on the pre-existing landscape. As disembedding is also linked with trust (Giddens 1990), locals are likely to redefine their trust relationships in ways which makes them more objective.

In the previous section, we have shown how Simmel equates the stranger with the trader. The developer stranger makes no exception. He aims to make money with her development project (dam) and offers money in exchange for the properties which will make the dam and reservoir possible. In the terms proposed here, money creates discontinuity in the time and space relationships in which the locals were involved. In his *Philosophy of Money*, Simmel describes the change as follows (Giddens 1990):

> The power of money to bridge distances enables the owner and his possessions to exist so far apart that each of them may follow their own precepts to a greater extent than in the period when the owner and his possessions still stood in a direct mutual relationship, when every economic engagement was also a personal one (Simmel 1978: 333).

Even if money is a disembedding mechanism, its operation is not instantaneous. Before accepting the compensation, in other words, the locals have to find ways to extract their land and homes, tools and draft animals from the matrix in which their daily practice had situated them over the centuries. Exploring the micro-social processes through which this has happened enables an understanding of how estrangement – the setting into motion of local relationships of property before the locals were themselves set into motion via displacement - took place. It is worth inquiring how money, or the financial compensations made available by the developer stranger, have the effect of pushing locals in a cauldron not unlike the modern metropolis (Simmel, 1950[1902-1903]). Not more than a series of conjectures can be formulated in this paper, but these will form the basis for a more extended case study of the construction of the Bicaz dam as a dialectics of estrangement.

(III) The new strangers: between taming and performativity

So far the discussion has aimed to make sense of what happens when a powerful stranger – a stranger who is able to emplace his strangeness through material objects such as development objects – comes into a host community. This section will deal with the implications that this stranger perspective may have on conceptualizing resettlement after displacement. Our argument is that the first two moments of the dialectic,

the making of the stranger as developer and the subsequent estrangement of locals *while they are still* in their community will structure the third moment. The resettlers are thus no merely displaced locals but, we would argue, strangers who confront the development stranger and other host communities in a new way. Resettlers are thus expected to exercise their mobility (the synthesis of closeness and remoteness), the objectivity and freedom, their intermediary economic roles and abstract outlook to varying degrees. There is no predetermined relationship between the estrangement experienced in the community of origin and the subsequent quality of stranger. Indeed, it may be inferred that being a new stranger is a matter of performativity. This refers to the practices in which resettlers engage and which express to a greater or lesser extent the typical features of the stranger (those in Simmel's original formulation).

Recounting the theoretical distinction between continuitist and discontinuitist experiences of resettlement, the implication of the stranger approach is that resettlers have shed their previous characteristics as locals – bound by localized and contextual habits – and have acquired the potential for being someone else, namely wanderers who settle somewhere else but how have not really got over the freedom of coming and going. This should be a fundamental break in their trajectories as human beings who have been removed from the realm of immediate experiences and have been thrust into the welter of experiences "at a distance" to follow Giddens' interpretation. The extent to which they are in a position to embrace such experiences – or even capitalize on them – is an open question. The empirical exploration of possible trajectories of becoming strangers can flesh out the range of experiences in specific cases of displacement and resettlement. Preliminary research in the area of the Bicaz dam revealed three main directions of movement out of the reservoir area. The first was the relocation to higher elevations within the same valley (the "up-hill" resettlers). The second was the relocation to lowland agricultural areas ("the plains" resettlers), while the third involved movement to nearby urban centers ("the city" resettlers). Each of these choices expresses a specific configuration of stranger characteristics, but these will be fleshed out in a larger paper.

Another intriguing possibility of the perspective sketched here is to rethink the existing research on involuntary displacement and resettlement. Two vantage points seem to warrant consideration, namely the problem of dealing with complexity and the question of ethics in development-induced displacement.

Anthropologists and sociologists have often been at pains to make sense of the complexities involved in practical interventions meant to alleviate the distress and impoverishment of displaced populations. For example, in the introduction to Scudder's study on new land settlements, Cernea claims that "agricultural development through new land settlement is socially one of the most complex development interventions." (1985: 119, as cited in Scudder 2005: 49). A few years later, Cernea (1991: 145, as cited in Scudder 2005: 49) wrote that "*involuntary* population displacement has turned out to be a process even more complex and painful." De Wet (2004) speaks of complexity in resettlement that "arises from the interrelatedness of issues of different orders: cultural, social, environmental, economic, institutional and political issues – all of which is taking place in the context of imposed spatial change" (as cited in Dear 2008: 41). Finally, Scudder (2005: 49) cites Colson who wrote in the margins of an early draft of his chapter: "how many negative cases to you need to establish futility?", thus suggesting a feeling of helplessness due to the inability of planned resettlements to achieve their intended outcomes.

From the perspective advanced here, one could argue that looking only at the resettlers as the problem to be solved, their situation appears to be, indeed, puzzling: few schemes designed to resettle them "successfully" seem to be working. An alternative approach can be suggested. The first step is to recognize that the agents of development (states or corporations) are ontologically distinct from local populations. According to Simmel, the stranger has its own position (near and far), its own specialization (trade), its own outlook (objectivity), all of which sets it in contrast to the local communities in which he comes. Simmel does not refer to the possibility that the stranger might somehow "go native" and take the standpoint of the local. It that would be possible, one would suspect that the complexities of stranger – local interactions would "naturally" dissolve. The fact that they persist prompt us to seek an explanation in a different direction. The second step is therefore to maintain Simmel's (implicit) view that a stranger always remains a stranger. Moreover, a developer stranger is a stranger who not only does not move on, but uses the host community for her development blueprints. This estranges the locals by altering their spatial and temporal coordinates through disembedding mechanisms (money and expert systems). At the end of this process, the developer stranger confronts a new being, different from the one encountered at first: a category of strangers of their own making.

The failure to successfully resettle the displacees might therefore stem from the fact that whom project authorities (the developer stranger) seek to resettle are not pre-modern (embedded) locals anymore, but resettlers who have become much more mobile, objective, free and abstract than before. Moreover, they are likely to perform their new roles as strangers in highly variable ways. Seeking one-size-fits-all frameworks to "successful resettlement" might be ultimately futile if the performativity of stranger roles is not grasped for a variety of particular cases.

Finally, the ethical implication to this view is that it appears questionable to apply an ethical framework that emphasizes the preservation of the status quo – which is "to identify and avoid wrong-doing" (Penz, Drydyk and Bose 2011: 8) – to a group that has experienced a discontinuity in the existential referents (space and time) of its life experience. Perhaps the relevant ethical question is not simply how to smoothen ("make more friendly") the development process. If one assumes that the stranger developer has irredeemably altered its host communities, the relevant task might be to seek ways to enhance or deepen the stranger experience, rather than tame it. Then, the question is not one of economic and cultural re-establishment, but perhaps of fostering a superior condition of the stranger that we may call cosmopolitanism or the sense of being anywhere at home. The implications of this view certainly need to be worked out in more detail than is possible here.

Concluding remarks and future research

In a general sense, this paper asks whether modernity, or certain features of it, can engender reactions on the part of rural (non-modern) communities that are neither forms of resistance nor instances of wholesale destruction. The assumption is that the state who assumes the role of developer brings into its host communities characteristics which are not simply alien to local ways of life, but rather strange. The stranger is, however, a relationship. The implication is that strangers and locals, developers and those to be developed, displacers and displacees constitute each other as development projects unfold. Perhaps even more ambitiously, the paper suggests that the qualities of the stranger can be somehow transferred – via estrangement – to locals who thus become new strangers. There is no predetermined process through which one becomes a stranger, but rather a matter of agency and performativity.

The value of this idea depends, to a great extent, on how closely it can guide empirical research on resettlement. If the assumptions underpinning the dialectics of estrangement are to generate new knowledge, one needs to be able reconstruct the three moments of estrangement in a historically and interpretatively convincing way.

At the same time, the proposed approach opens a wide field of possible empirically-based interpretations. The resettlement caused the by the Bicaz dam in the Eastern Carpathians could profitably be used as a case in which to explore – over a several-year project – how the state appeared as a stranger, how locals were estranged in this process and whether, indeed, the resettlers were more than simple victims. Estrangement in Bicaz can thus be explored as a specific spatial and social context for development encounters under modernity. This would require extended archival research (for the first moment of the dialectic), the collection of life histories as well as historical and artistic accounts of estrangement (for the second moment) and comparative research among resettlers and non-resettlers (for the third moment).

Acknowledgments

NOTES

1   The essay is called classical because it has inspired numerous studies, especially within the Chicago School of Sociology (e.g. Park and Burgess 1921).

2   Routine culture refers to the sets of rules and constructs through which individuals respond to the primary questions ("who are we? where are we?" etc.) In contrast, dissonant culture is a "temporary reordering of space, time, relationships, norms [etc.]" (Downing and Garcia-Downing 2009: 227, 230).

3   The wording is chosen in analogy to the literature that has used the concept of stranger in phrases such as the "Jewish stranger", the "Polish stranger" or the "Black stranger".

4   Thanks are due to Ionuţ Anghel for suggesting this idea and reference.

References:

Amarteifio, G.W., D. A. Butcher and D. Whitham. 1966. *Tema Manhean: A study of resettlement.* Accra, Ghana: Ghana Universities Press.

Berman, Marshall. 2010. *All that Is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity.* London, New York: Verso.

Brokensha, David. 1964. "Volta Resettlement and Anthropological Research." *Human Organization* 22(4): 286 – 290.

Cernea, Michael M. 1997. "The Risks and Reconstruction Model for Resettling Displaced Populations." *World Development* 25 (10): 1569–1587.

Cernea, Michael M. 2000. "Risks, Safeguards and Reconstruction: A Model for Population Displacement and Resettlement." Economic and Political Weekly 35(41): 3659-3678.

Cernea, Michael M. and Judith Freidenberg. 2007. " 'Development Anthropology is a Contact Sport': An Oral History Interview with Michael M. Cernea by Judith Freidenberg." *Human Organization* 66(4): 339 – 353.

Chambers, Robert. 1970. *The Volta Resettlement* Experience. London: Pall Mall Press.

Colson, Elisabeth. 1960. *The Social Organization of the Gwembe Tonga.* Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Colson, Elisabeth. 1971. *The Social Consequences of Resettlement: the Impact of the Kariba resettlement upon the Gwembe Tonga.* Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Dear, Chad. 2008. "Causes and Consequences of Displacement Decision-Making in Banhine National Park, Mozambique" Dissertation thesis at the University of Montana, Missoula, MT.

De Wet, Chris. 2013. "Complex Systems Analysis: A Useful Vantage Point for the Ethics of Development and Forced Displacement?" Paper presented at the *14th Conference of the International Association for Studies in Forced Migration* (IASFM), Kolkata, India January 6 - 9, 2013.

Downing, Theodore. 1996. "Mitigating Social Impoverishment when People are Involuntarily Displaced." Pp. 33 – 48 in *Understanding Impoverishment: The Consequences of Development-Induced Displacement*, edited by Christopher McDowell. Providence, Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Downing, T. and C. Garcia-Downing. 2009. "Routine and Dissonant Cultures A Theory about the Psycho-socio-cultural Disruptions of Involuntary Displacement and Ways to Mitigate Them without Inflicting Even More Damage." Pp. 225 – 254 in *Development and Dispossession: The Crisis of Forced Displacement and Resettlement*, edited by A. Oliver-Smith. Santa Fe: School of Advanced Research Press.

Dwivedi, Ranjit. 2002. "Models and Methods in Development-Induced Displacement (Review Article)." Development and Change 33 (4): 709–732.

Dwivedi, Ranjit. 2006. *Conflict and Collective Action: The Sardar Sarovar Project in India*. London, New York, New Delhi: Routledge.

Edelman, Marc and Angelique Haugerud. 2005. *The anthropology of development and globalization: from classical political economy to contemporary neoliberalism*. Oxford, Malden: Blackwell.

Escobar, Arturo. 1991. "Anthropology and the Development Encounter: The Making and Marketing of Development Anthropology." *American Ethnologist* 18(4): 658-682.

Escobar, Arturo. 2004. "Development, Violence and the New Imperial Order". *Development* 47(1): 15–21.

Escobar, Arturo. 2006. "Difference and Conflict in the Struggle Over Natural Resources: A political ecology framework." *Development* 49(3): 6–13.

Flyvbjerg, Bent, Nils Bruzelius and Werner Rothengatter. 2003. *Megaprojects and Risk: An Anatomy of Ambition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Giddens, Anthony. 1985. *The Nation-State and Violence: Volume Two of a Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism*. Polity Press.

Giddens, Anthony. 1990. *The Consequences of Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Gross, Matthias. 2003. "Sociologists of the Unexpected: Edward A. Ross and Georg Simmel on the Unintended Consequences of Modernity." *The American Sociologist* 34(4): 40 – 58.

Hirschman, Albert O. 1967. *Development Projects Observed*. Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution.

Kligman, Gail and Katherine Verdery. 2011. *Peasants under Siege: the Collectivization of Romanian Agriculture (1949 – 1962)*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Klingensmith, Daniel. 2007. 'One Valley and a Thousand' Dams, Nationalism and Development. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.

Lenin, Vladimir I. 1920. *Our Foreign and Domestic Position and Party Tasks*. [Cited July 10, 2014]; available at: http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1920/nov/21.htm.

Levine, Donald O. 1977. "Simmel at a Distance: On the History and Systematics of the Sociology of the Stranger." *Sociological Focus* 10(1): 15 – 29.

Marea Adunare Naţională (MAN). 1957. "Decretul nr. 254/1957 privind exproprierea unor bunuri situate in zona lacului de acumulare al Hidrocentralei V.I. Lenin Bicaz, reg. Bacau (Conditiunile de stramutare a populatiei din zona lacului de acumulare al Hidrocentralei V.I. Lenin - Bicaz, regiunea Bacau. Stabilite prin H.C.M. nr. 877/1957)."

McLemore, Dale S. 1970. "Simmel's 'Stranger': A Critique of the Concept." *The Pacific Sociological Review* 13(2): 86 – 94.

Oliver-Smith, Anthony. 2009. "Introduction: Development-Forced Displacement and Resettlement: A Global Human Rights Crisis" Pp. 3 – 23 in *Development*

and Dispossession: The Crisis of Forced Displacement and Resettlement*, edited by Anthony-Oliver Smith. Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research Press.

Park, Robert E. and Ernst W. Burgess. 1969[1921]. *Introduction to the Science of Sociology: including the Original Index to Basic Sociological Concepts.* Chicago, IL and London: University of Chicago Press.

Penz, Peter, Jay Drydyk and Pablo S. Bose. 2011. *Displacement by Development: Ethics, Rights and Responsibilities.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rubin, N. and W. M. Warren. 1968. *Dams in Africa: An Inter-disciplinary Study of Man-made Lakes in Africa.* London: Frank Cass & Co.

Scott, James C. 1998. *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

Scudder, Thayer. 2005. The Future of Large Dams: Dealing with Social, Environmental, Institutional and Political Costs. London, Sterling: Earthscan.

Scudder, Thayer. 2009. "Resettlement Theory and the Kariba Case: An Anthropology of Resettlement." Pp. 25 – 47 in Development and Dispossession: The Crisis of Forced Displacement and Resettlement. Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research Press.

Simmel, Georg. 1950 [1902-03]. "The Metropolis and Mental Life." Pp. 409 – 426 in *The Sociology of Georg Simmel, translated, edited and with an Introduction by Kurt H. Wolff.* Glencoe, Il: The Free Press.

Simmel, Georg. 1971. *On Individuality and Social Forms. Selected Writings, edited and with an Introduction by Donald N. Levine.* Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

Simmel, Georg. 1978. *The Philosophy of Money. Translated [from the German] by Tom Bottomore and David Frisby.* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Turton, David. 2010. "In the Shadow of Leviathan: River Basin Development in Ethiopia's Lower Omo Valley". Paper presented at a workshop on 'Economics, Social Justice, and Ethics in Development Caused Involuntary Migration', held during the 15th International Metropolis Conference, The Hague, 4-8 October 2010.