



Opinion (<https://indiahousingreport.in/category/outputs/opinion/>)

Impact of resettlement in the Kathputli Colony transit camp 9 min read

Drawing on over a decade of research on the Kathputli Colony in Delhi, this two-part series focuses on the complex processes involved in the in-situ rehabilitation of squatter settlements. While the first part focused on the differentiated nature of the resettlement processes, this second piece focuses on the transit camp, examining the multidimensional impact on the residents who are endlessly awaiting their final rehabilitation.

By Véronique Dupont (<https://indiahousingreport.in/author/veronique-dupont/>) and MM Shankare Gowda (<https://indiahousingreport.in/author/mm-shankare-gowda/>) | May 4, 2021

This second piece on the [Kathputli Colony](https://indiahousingreport.in/outputs/opinion/transient-and-differentiated-resettlement-the-case-of-kathputli-colony-delhi/) (<https://indiahousingreport.in/outputs/opinion/transient-and-differentiated-resettlement-the-case-of-kathputli-colony-delhi/>) slum redevelopment project examines the multidimensional impact of resettlement in the transit camp, with reference to the residents' situation in their previous settlement. The

findings are based on two systematic surveys, one conducted in 2015, one year after the first families' arrival, and the second in 2019, two years after the last group's arrival. It does not cover the effects of the 2020-21 Covid-19 pandemic.

Impact on housing conditions and living environment

The first comers to the transit camp are families who lived earlier under the most precarious conditions, in cramped shacks of makeshift materials, and a 12-sqm room in prefabricated blocks was an improvement on their previous condition. Conversely, the most prosperous families in Kathputli Colony had over time consolidated houses of two or more rooms, sometimes an additional floor, a roof terrace, an exclusive courtyard, or even a private bathing place on their premises. For them, living in the transit camp entailed a consequent loss of space and comfort, even of status. Since the allotted floor area is the same for all, irrespective of the household size, adjustment was obviously more difficult for extended families. Accepting constrictive housing conditions requires believing in a short transitional period, with a view to a better future.

The massive arrival of the last batch of families in November 2017 increased the strain on basic infrastructure and services. In summer, water scarcity has become chronic, often entailing two-hour queues, at irregular times, to get a limited amount of water (two jerrycans) from shared outdoor taps. Furthermore, the quality of "drinkable" water has deteriorated. All camp residents interviewed in 2019 complained the water was unclean; several reported skin diseases, some who can afford it buy drinking water in containers. Paradoxically, public water supply was better, in quantity, regularity, and quality, when they lived in Kathputli Colony, despite it being categorised a slum. Similarly, residents complained of daily electricity cuts for a couple of hours in the camp, whereas power cuts were rare in the "slum". There, each dwelling was equipped with an individual electricity metre and dwellers paid the bills. In the camp, electricity supply is paid and regulated by the developer. Regarding street cleanliness, maintenance, and solid waste disposal, the residents generally acknowledged that the situation in the camp was better compared to Kathputli Colony.



(https://indiahousingreport.in/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2021/04/Fig6-DELHI-KC-TransitCamp-collecting_waterMarch2021-scaled.jpg)

Filling water at the public taps in the Kathputli Colony transit camp, Delhi, March 2021.

The camp was initially built for a two-year transit period, and overall well maintained when only the first batch of families occupied it. After six years of occupation and the arrival of the last batch, the prefabricated structures and the physical infrastructure, especially evacuation pipes, concealed drains, cemented alleyways and platforms, started deteriorating. Altogether, over-crowdedness, inadequate basic services, badly maintained public toilets, and degrading infrastructure tend to reproduce slum conditions.

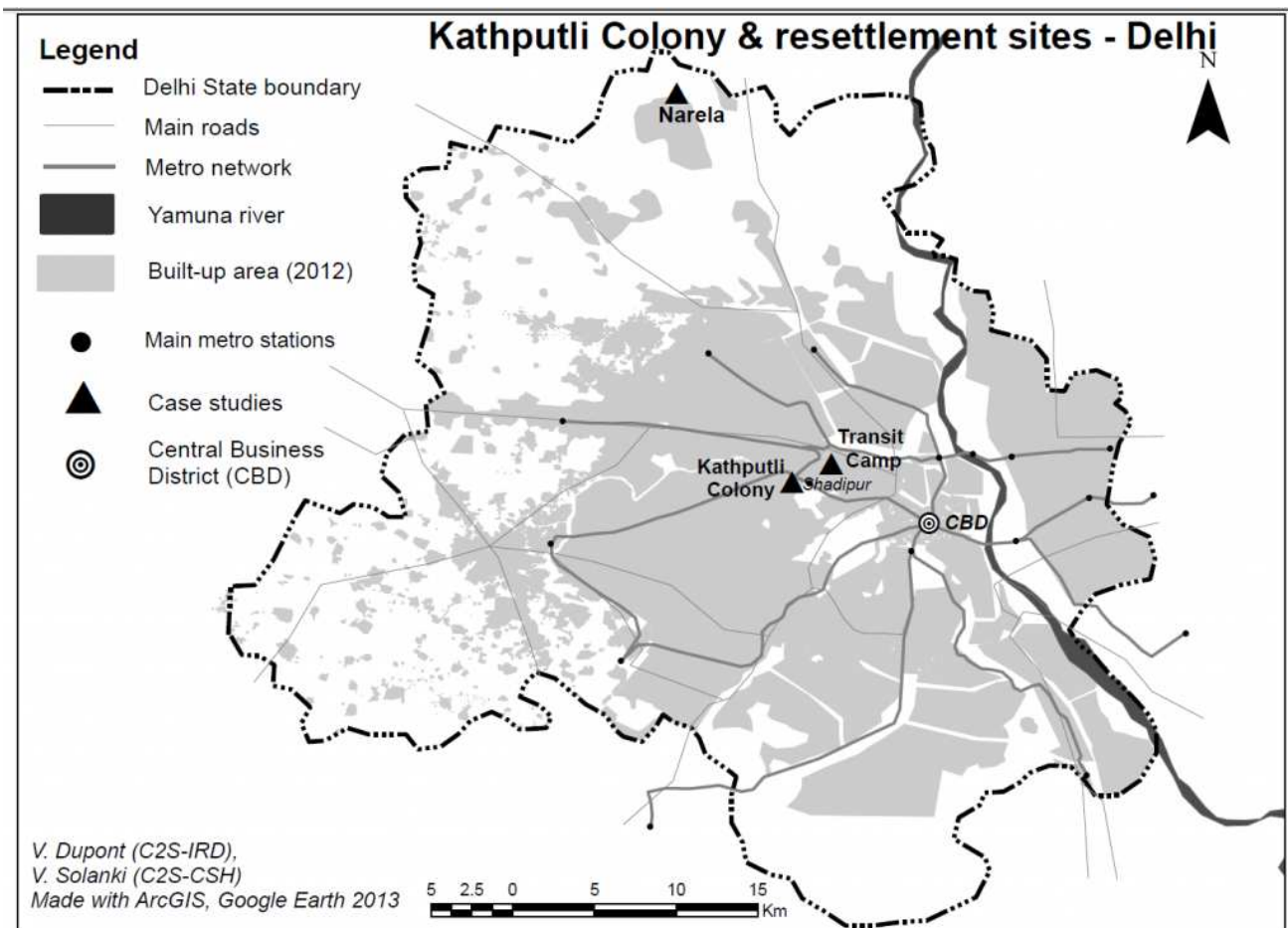


(https://indiahousingreport.in/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2021/04/Fig8-DELHI-KC-TransitCamp-closed-_verandahNov2019-scaled.jpg)

A row of dwellings with closed verandas in the Kathputli Colony transit camp, Delhi, November 2019.

Impact on spatial practices and major spheres of life

When seen on a map the transit camp seems close to the initial settlement, only around three kilometres away. Nonetheless, this distance combined with much poorer connectivity affected everyday spatial practices. Kathputli Colony was located on a main road where cycle- and auto-rickshaws were easily available and its proximity to a bus depot and a metro station connected it particularly well to the rest of the city. In contrast, the camp is located on an out-of-the-way hillock, and bad transport facilities and dependence on electric rickshaws to reach the main road are general complaints. This entails increased commuting time and cost for the many camp residents who depend on public transport or rickshaws.



(<https://indiahousingreport.in/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2021/04/Screenshot-264-e1619514260552.png>)

Kathputli Colony and resettlement sites, Delhi.

The majority of people could retain their previous employment. Nevertheless, when commuting to work becomes unaffordable, it results in longer walking distance and time, which may eventually make it hard for people to continue working. Notably, women domestic workers who used to walk to their workplaces in the adjoining neighbourhood had to leave their earlier jobs after moving to the camp. For some, this meant being unemployed for some time before finding workplaces closer to the camp. For others it meant stopping work definitively, with subsequent loss of income for the household.

The community of folk artists and artisans has been particularly impacted by the resettlement in a remote place unknown to their potential clients. Because of transportation difficulties, several interviewees complained that they missed their shows, or had to refuse impromptu performance opportunities, with resulting falls in earnings. They often face similar transportation problems compounded by inflated night fares to come back after the shows. Furthermore, several artisans making puppets and other artefacts could easily sell these when they lived in Kathputli Colony, which was known for these artefacts. But due to lack of space in the dwellings and lack of customers in this new place, they have now stopped or reduced this trade, while some try to find new market channels. Within the family, handicraft production was combined with performing activities, and involved many women. They were the first ones to be impacted, entailing losses in the household incomes. In the Colony, an artisan cooperative provided the

woodcarving craftsmen with working space, advance money to buy the material, and occasional orders. All this support ceased with the demolition of the settlement and the disbanding of the cooperative society. Older woodcarvers stopped their activity, while others turned to repair work, or focused on puppet and other shows. In Kathputli Colony like in other informal settlements, shops, workshops, and miscellaneous economic activities were commonplace. In the camp, there is no dedicated space provided for economic activities. This underlines a generic shortfall of resettlement schemes in India: they tend to address only the shelter issue and overlook the livelihood dimension.



(<https://indiahousingreport.in/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2021/04/Fig7-DELHI-KC-TC-streetshopsMarch2017-scaled.jpeg>)

A street with makeshift shops in the Kathputli Colony transit camp, Delhi, March 2017.

The planners also neglected the difficulties in accessing schools, post-relocation. The poorest families, unable to afford the commuting costs, stopped sending their children to school thereby reducing their children's future chances of rising out of poverty. Another adverse effect of relocation to a new place involved security issues. The camp location entails crossing a major road with heavy traffic to reach the primary school where the Kathputli Colony children used to go. This was a worrying factor for several parents. Other parents were reluctant to send their daughters out alone since they perceived the new, unfamiliar surroundings as unsafe for girls. The artist community who used to send their children to a vocational NGO-run school in the colony itself was especially impacted. The school was demolished along with the settlement and this interrupted the children's studies. It took around a year for this NGO to reopen a vocational school in the transit camp, but not all children resumed their studies. Altogether, these various disruptive factors resulted in marked dropouts from school, affecting the young generations negatively and limiting their future prospects.

Convenient access to fair-price shops, through which subsidised food rations and

essentials are dispensed under India's Public Distribution System, is essential for the economically weaker sections. The camp residents, with their old address on their ration cards, remain administratively attached to the ration shop adjacent to the demolished settlement. They have to hire an electric rickshaw to reach the old place and bring back all their subsidised supplies. This involves additional commuting cost and time, as well as advance planning to ensure that the shop will be open and stocks available. More generally, most residents lament the lost facilities of having well-stocked and cheap markets round the corner.

Impact on social networks and socio-spatial organisation

The resettlement to the transit camp has also affected the residents' social and political networks, as well as social organisation among the relocated communities.

First, the relocation has severed some social connections, especially important for poor people. Thus, the long-term relations that the residents had built with shopkeepers in the market adjoining Kathputli Colony allowed them to buy on credit, a facility that the transit camp residents cannot benefit from. Furthermore, charitable organisations were active in the well-known colony and used to supply free medicine and food to the poorest sections, but until at least the time of our survey in 2019, the camp remained out of their scope. Second, the transit camp is under the developer's purview and not under the municipality for the provision of basic services. Hence, the residents are unable to address problems of street maintenance, garbage removal, water supply or other local issues by petitioning elected representatives.

The relocation to the transit camp has disrupted the previous socio-spatial organisation. The pattern of community-wise quarters inside Kathputli Colony, each one with its own local leader, was not reproduced identically. Although some blocks in the camp are occupied exclusively or mainly by a single community, in many others different communities are mixed. Women often feel less secure – or at least less comfortable – in mixed-community blocks than in their earlier homogenous and confined clusters inside Kathputli Colony, where social control by the community prevailed. This particularly concerns the third and largest batch of families, who moved in late 2017 under chaotic circumstances after the final demolition. In the socio-spatial reconfiguration of the camp, the local leaders have lost their authority and are less able to perform their traditional role of conflict resolution and control over people. Communities, sometimes families, were also split due to differentiated allotment: either in the transit camp or in Narela DDA flats 30 kms away, not to mention the complete exclusion of those ineligible for allotment.

Conclusion

Although the relative proximity between the transit camp and the initial settlement mitigates the disruptive effects usually observed in resettlement programmes, relocation has nevertheless affected housing conditions, livelihoods, everyday spatial practices as well as social organisation and networks. Among the most affected are the poorest families for whom accessibility of urban resources is contingent upon their close proximity.

Furthermore, habitat conditions in the camp tend to deteriorate under population pressure combined to inadequate basic services.

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