

Revisiting Çömlekçi



Çömlekçi is a city district in Trabzon, between the main square and the Trazon harbour.



Trabzon is the Eastern hub of trafficking to Turkey. The cheap hotels along the Çömlekçi Cadde are the main concentration wherefrom women are traded to elsewhere in Turkey, often just for a holiday season.





Cleaning of Çömlekçi has been the election promise of many local politicians and the area has been on the drawing board of the urban planners for a long time.

The second-hand market 'Russian bazaar' was destroyed many years ago. But still the name remains in everyday language about the Çömlekçi Cadde, as if the market was still there.





A total demolition is planned with the exception of three churches, one mosque and a couple of other historical buildings.

Trafficking happens in only a number of hotels on the edge of the neighbourhood, but altogether in Çömlekçi live some 200 - 300 families. They have nothing to do with the trafficking and it doesn't affect their everyday life. Also they don't believe that with demolition of the area, trafficking will stop, it will just move somewhere else.



The regeneration project is called the 'Liman Kent Projesi' and the example is taken from similar transformations in Manchester and Barcelona. Old residential houses will be replaced by office towers, luxury hotels and recreational areas.

The demolition of the area was planned to start in 2011. In the end of 2010 residents of Çömlekçi still didn't know where they would be relocated. At that time I installed a neon text on the motorway wall above the area. It was planned to stay there permanently.









The funds for the reconstruction of the area were supposed to come from Japanese investors. Then came the Fukushima-accident and economic setback in Japan.





In February 2014 I returned to ömlekçi to
see what is left of the work.
And of the area.



The houses were still standing.
The work was gone.
New graffitis had emerged.





I approached two ladies doing housework underneath the wall where my work used to be. They said they don't know about any neon-text and they don't understand what I try to say. I then asked another lady walking past. She remembered the text, and knew to tell that one year earlier the Municipality came and took it away. She also told that no demolitions have yet been done in the area, but they will start in five years, after which the area will be rebuilt by TOKİ. She didn't know where the residents of Çömlekçi will then be relocated. A third group of ladies also remembered the neon text, but didn't know where it had gone. They said there is no justice in this country, and the Prime Minister is a dictator, so it was necessary for it to be taken away.



Minna Henriksson

2014