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**TÜRKİYE’NİN KENTLERİNDEN
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“The middle income trap” is one of the most pertinent and popular economic issues in Turkey. Numerous formulas have been produced and discussed to overcome the problems and pressures related to the middle income trap and the administrative structure in Turkey. Capturing an inclusive economic growth dynamic that enables Turkey to escape its middle income trap and achieve more political inclusion and lasting democracy requires a new institutional reorganization that comprehends the dynamics of urban growth and unleashes cities’ potential.

This two-stage research project, conducted by the Local Democracy and Governance Forum, set out with the intention of working on Turkey’s economic and administrative problems in the urban context, finding solutions and opening the issue to the public with a different perspective.

The aim of this long-term study, which will be conducted over a period of two years, is to understand the transformation of cities during Turkey’s globalization adventure and to analyze the parameters and conditions of a kind of restructuring that will open up the possibilities of capital accumulation emerging at the urban scale in accordance with economic efficiency and social inclusion principles. Thus, it aims to propose an alternative governance model to the current administrative structure, which will pave the way for cities to bring their potential to action in today’s world.

This report includes the first stage of our research and provides an in-depth analysis of socio-economic data of twelve cities (Adana-Mersin, Ankara, Antalya, Bursa, Diyarbakir, Eskişehir, Gaziantep, Izmir, Kayseri, Konya, Samsun, and Van). This report is penned to reveal the dynamics and potentials of city-region formation in Turkey based on specific criteria.

The sub-sections of the report aim to test the hypotheses that we have formulated in order to examine the gap between the potential opportunities and constraints of Turkish cities that are affected by global production, consumption, and circulation relations. Therefore, as for the next stage of the study, it is aimed to consolidate the four phases (in-depth interviews, focus group meetings, public opinion survey, and data analysis) of the research process in four different cities (Izmir, Konya, Erzurum, and Van) and to solidify foundations of the model that will have been produced after this research.

Recent demographic, economic, and political trends have placed cities in an unprecedented and important position. The dynamics that shape the lives of each of us are being produced in cities and spread across the globe.

The city-regions that constitute the conceptual basis of the report are a new and different spatial phenomenon brought on by globalization, which has matured since the 1970s and accelerated in the 1990s. Cities in this category are not simply a by-product of globalization but are spatial units that make globalization possible to form and shape itself. For this reason, the understanding of the processes of city-regional formation is essential in terms of academic as well as policy making processes.

The economic policies that were adopted in Turkey after 1980 also deeply affected urban economies and changed the spatial division of labor in the country to a considerable extent, although without completely turning it upside down. One dimension of this change is the tendency of large-scale industrial enterprises to move their locations of production. Another dimension is the rise of new, small firms in Anatolian cities, which are much smaller in scale compared to large-scale companies of the previous period, producing for the whole internal market. By bringing these two dimensions together, “the new industrial cluster,” popularly referred to as “Anatolian Tigers,” emerged.

Popular discourses about globalization tend to portray globalization as an entirely technical process. Accordingly, with the development of transportation and communication technologies, economic relations on the global scale have been transformed, and this transformational dynamism has spread in a way that tends to affect all social formations similarly and equally, from the West to the East. Of course, in reality, globalization is neither a purely technical-economic phenomenon nor a historical widening and deepening in such a one-dimensional form.

In this report, each of the twelve cities (Adana-Mersin, Ankara, Antalya, Bursa, Diyarbakir, Eskisehir, Gaziantep, Izmir, Kayseri, Konya, Samsun, and Van), differing in their developmental stages as they are affected from the latest wave of globalization according to their unique local historical processes, are evaluated by their socio-economic characteristics. Focusing on the capital accumulation processes in these cities, the objective situation regarding the present and potential dynamics of the urban-regional formation process in Turkey is also portrayed.

This report, which was prepared to analyze the city-region concept, overlaps with the results of the "Competitiveness Index for Turkey" study published by TURKONFED and EDAM in November. Pelin Yenigün Dilek, who led the Competition Index study, conducted an additional study for the report in order to evaluate the 12 cities in line with the competition index data. This study, which overlaps with the report results, has been added to that report.

It is not claimed that each of the cities studied is currently a city-region or that they will definitely come to this point in the near future. Moreover, it is not possible to claim that these cities will follow a single model of success in the socio-economic sense. For that reason, it is foreseen that there may be a separate development trajectory for each case studied.

As a result, there is a need for political restructuring in order to expand the capital accumulation process in cities today, to enable the dynamics that allow their potentials to be unleashed, and to transform this potential into action. In this sense, the intertwinedness with economic and political spheres is palpable in the context of the city-region debate. For that reason, the goal of achieving an inclusive economic growth dynamism that will enable Turkey to escape the "middle income trap" is a goal that cannot be considered apart from the goal of achieving a more inclusive and lasting democracy.