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Publication Date

Monday the 28th of December, 2020

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## **Abstract**

In the first two decades of the 21st century Cartagena de Indias registered unprecedented rates of economic growth. However, prosperity was uneven and a high percentage of the population still lives in a state of poverty. This paper focuses in the study of the economic progress of the city and, at the same time, on the relative stagnation in social indicators during the period 2005-2018, using information from the last two population censuses and comparing with five of the main cities in Colombia. The city received significant investments in the industrial, construction and port logistics sectors which expanded the local productive capacity. On the side of social indicators, progress was achieved in coverage, both in education and in health, but without significant improvements in the quality of these services. The constant changes of the mayors which led to poor governance that could prevent the local administrations from meeting the needs of the most vulnerable population.