

# A Look at Governance in the City of Cartagena De Indias - Colombia, 2012 to 2023

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## Abstract

Cartagena de Indias is one of the most important cities in Colombia due to its economic development in various sectors such as tourism, industry, hydrocarbons and shipbuilding. Since its foundation, it has been a national reference due to its strategic position, which favors the development of many other sub-sectors of those already mentioned. However, from its inhabitants there has been a malaise for several decades and it is the setback in the conditions of the quality of life and the development of the city, for which, through the qualitative paradigm it is intended to conduct a research where the relationships between the actors of governance in the city of Cartagena de Indias are established. However, from the social imaginaries of young Cartageneros as a surveyed group, there is a lack of knowledge of what governance is, which is the perfect scenario for the city to remain intervened in its budgetary and financial performance as a territorial entity on account of politicians and financiers who undermine the public finances of the city through acts of corruption.

**Keywords:** Governance, Governability, Corruption, Youth, Social Imaginary.

## 1. Introduction

The Independence of our beloved Cartagena de Indias more than 200 years ago was concretized with the end of the siege of Morillo, which lasted 105 days from August 22, 1815; plunging the city into the death of a third of its population, a total of 6,613 Cartagenans, due to the blockade of food, bombings and other restrictions typical of that siege.(Caracol Radio, 2021)

From there, the name of La Heroica for the City of Cartagena arises for having resisted the siege in mention, which it revives for more than two decades (2012 to 2023) keeping the city once

again mired in apathy on the occasion of the administrative interim that the city has experienced in its governance, for which in the reference period there were 14 mayors in the city.

Thus, in the period 2012 to 2019 a city project was not consolidated in Cartagena de Indias and rather each mayor is concerned with the execution of operating expenses and acquisition of debt for which social investment and infrastructure was null, either due to the non-execution of a development plan to which is added the corruption of the leaders, where cases such as the health posts and hospitals of the city promised and not built, the Construction of the San Felipe Neri Mega School with more than 4 years of delay are highlighted; as well as the famous breasts at \$40 thousand in the School Feeding Program (PAE) of Cartagena during the government of Manuel Vicente Duque, not to mention other cases.

Now, for the 2019 elections, Mr. William Dau Chamat was elected as mayor for the period 2020-2023, which for many is the result of the opinion vote associated with a response to the fraud suffered by the people of Cartagena of the promises and more promises made by traditional politicians with links to political houses. This aforementioned had to overcome the political blockade in the City Council plus the Covid-19 crisis that hit the world between 2020 and 2021; therefore; The effects of the political interim already mentioned were exacerbated. Well, in addition to the fact that this mayor has contributed to this exacerbation by inciting de facto justice but not based on law in the city, plus his tongueless way of governing!

Thus, the Heroica currently presents the highest level of monetary poverty taking as a reference the main cities of the country, with a total of 47.8% of its population, which is estimated at 1,043,926 Cartagena according to the National Population and Housing Census (CNPV) carried out by DANE in 2018.

To have an idea of these figures, there are 491 thousand Cartagenans who have economic resources worth \$360,187 at most to live, which represents \$12,000 pesos per day for an average of 4 to 5 people per household in Cartagena de Indias, the average number of children is 1.89 plus their parents and in view of the increase in the elderly population, Each household has at least one person at this stage of their life, with the majority of women living longer.

Now, of the 491,000 Cartagenans in conditions of extreme poverty, there are 129,000 Cartagenans (12.6% of the total population), who are in absolute misery for which they do not have more than \$147,600 pesos to live on in a month, to which is added the lack of access to education, the null coverage of basic needs and the fragility of being added to informal employment or illegal activities due to exclusion of formal work as a consequence of what has already been mentioned.(Cartagena como Vamos, 2022)

Worse still, are the conditions experienced in rural areas, which reach a total of 36.8% of multidimensional poverty; and for the urban area the highest rate of multidimensional poverty occurs in the Margin of the Ciénega de la Virgen, Las Faldas de la Popa and the Loma de Albornoz, to which it is paradoxical the fact that all these scenarios of poverty are found in the vicinity of the main centers of development of the city such as the sector of La Boquilla with its majestic hotels and viaduct of La Paz. as well as the Manga and Pie de la Popa neighborhood with its urban development in horizontal properties and without leaving behind the Cargo

Corridor, the port area and the Mamonal sector, in the vicinity of Albornoz; for which there is also evidence of a displacement of the populations settled there and those that still exist are marginalized since they are characterized by school backwardness, illiteracy, informal work, child labor, overcrowding, without access to public services, among other conditions typical of multidimensional poverty, for which it is pertinent to ask: What has been done from the governance of the city to mitigate the new siege experienced by Cartagena de Indias?

Continuing, from the 2021 Quality of Life Report of the Cartagena Como Vamos Program, what has been said can be complemented with the following figures:

- 7 out of 10 Cartagena residents eat less than 3 meals a day.
- Poor results in the saber PRO tests for most Official Educational Institutions.
- More than 3900 Cartagenans still without health affiliation.
- High rates of teenage pregnancy with 16% of total births in 2020.
- Conditions conducive to the proliferation of tropical diseases such as dengue.
- Decline in the number of employed people, which represents 46% of the population in a working condition, a figure equal to 2003.
- To the above, an increase in informality is associated, which is estimated at 58.1% with a cut-off to 2021.
- The level of unemployment with the greatest impact on young people doubles.
- Increase in violent deaths, with a significant increase in homicides in areas of extreme poverty and multidimensional poverty.
- Increase in theft from people and businesses.

In short, the Heroic now remains in a permanent social siege detonated by the acephalous administration of the legislative and executive power for as long as we can remember, added to it the atomization of the public budget in its execution only for operating expenses, payment of debt and little social investment and infrastructure; but not before clarifying that the first two destinations of public resources are plagued by corruption scandals as glimpsed in the White Paper on Corruption in Cartagena.

Likewise, the siege is maintained by the flourishing of the Chabacana culture where individual interest prevails, self-esteem for justice and the null importance for social control, love for the city and sense of belonging.

Therefore, all Cartagenans must in the next elections in October 2023, be aware of what it would mean to make mistakes again, not only in the exercise of the vote, but also in maintaining a passive, irreverent and forgetful attitude towards our city and its needs, we cannot continue to be two cities in one.

## 2. Methodology.

This research focuses from the qualitative paradigm because it allows establishing the relationship between the citizens of Cartagena de Indias and their perspective on the governance of the city where they live. (Tinoco, Nasly; Cajas, Margarita & Santos, Ofelia, 2018)

To this end, initially the article presents a description of governance and later, based on the review of web contents, as a technique driven by information literacy, it proceeds to access information related to the relationship of governance from the theoretical point of view and then consult detailed information published among the actors of the political system of the city to ultimately present at the end a chapter where Analyze the data collected by applying 24 surveys to young people in the city with open-ended questions to capture their perception in an exploratory way.(Uribe, Alejandro & Uribe, Astrid, 2012)

### Theoretical Foundation.

The study of governance is recent, since the concept began to be instrumentalized on the occasion of the end of totalitarianism in Eastern Europe and the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 90s.

As for Latin America, the lack of political training had an impact on the proliferation of dictatorships as it was believed that social and economic development was faster with this type of authoritarian governments, for which the veil on this thought fell for the decade of the 90s when Latin American countries began to experience a process of economic opening.

Likewise, not only these latitudes experience social changes where the civilian population gets tired of governance as the fact of exercising authority and control from the government without taking into account social needs, but also in Asia and Africa a process of demanding good governance begins and from there the birth of governance as a way of reaching consensus among the actors of society occurs.(Velit, Juan, 1999)

Therefore, governance is the perfect marriage between public and private autonomy, which are related through intangible devices of authority, command, loyalty and even empathy, in short, without incurring in accusations of social classes or political parties, governance is the perfect interaction in the social sphere of all those who make up a collective to achieve the same interests of well-being and development.

In the words of , he points out that governance is the successful interaction between all the actors participating in a society, who come together through equity, solidarity, justice and co-responsibility; regardless of whether they are part of the sectors of the State, the free market or society.(Guerrero, Miguel, 2021)

These three sectors put aside their individual interests to establish a relationship of tolerance aimed at forming institutions capable of positively influencing the interactions of social life for the construction of politically trained citizens to show a broad discernment of what governance is in the context of a democratic society.

Therefore, governance cannot be seen as the actions of state institutions and those who direct them, since, as has been explained, governance is an interaction at the societal level that depends

on the alignment of the actors to manage the development and social well-being of what they are, of what they represent; which is encompassed in the advancement of society itself.

According to; Governance has become relevant as a solution to the problem of governing, and points out that this is nothing more than the horizontality of the sectors of a society to seek social efficiency. In this sense, he agrees with Guerrero (2021), who points to governance as an articulating device to carry out the objectives of a collective.(Pacheco, Alberto, 2011)

However, Pacheco (2011) establishes that governance has had little attachment at the global level, since in the face of the migratory crises faced in Europe and Latin America recently, there has not been a rapid linkage of these new participants in local governance.

In the same way, it points out that multilateral entities such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank establish governance programs, but at the same time promote practices of interventionism in the economies in which they have acted as financiers of the state.

In short, governance is an interdisciplinary field where a horizontal relationship prevails between the various actors, such as government, business, non-governmental organizations, civil society, individual citizens and even multilateral entities.

Governance in Cartagena de Indias from the Perspective of Governance, the Financier and the Citizen.

It is already clear that governance is a relationship between actors, by which the triple helix analyzed in this research dates from the actions executed from Governance as a relationship of power and authority, the Free Market represented by the Financiers of political campaigns and the citizen as the main overseer of democracy.

It seems contrary to what is said above to what is conceptualized as governance, but in essence for the City of Cartagena a null exercise of governance is foreseen because there is no horizontality between the actors and each one has turned out to be transformed into a Machiavellian perverse being, that is, each of the actors mentioned here has done during the period 2012 to 2023 everything necessary to achieve their end individually.

The foregoing generates corruption scenarios in the city of Cartagena de Indias, which will be detailed below between the years 2012 to 2019, as part of a deficient governance process.

#### 1. False Service Orders.

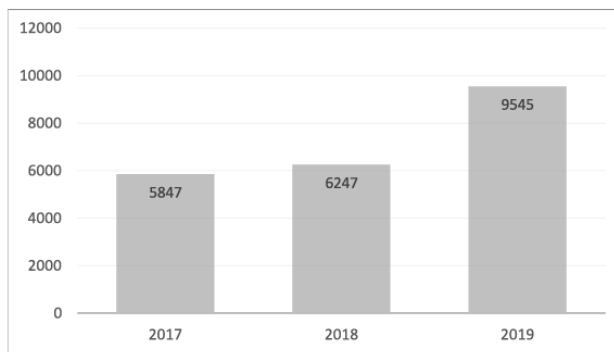
In Colombia, a service provision order (OPS) is a mechanism for hiring personnel under the modality of fees to fulfill strategic and support functions. In the city of Cartagena de Indias, during the period under analysis, the district budget was improperly usufructed by the distribution of fictitious jobs between the financiers and the political houses under this modality, with the purpose of returning the investment made in the campaign of mayors and councilors.

In the White Paper on Corruption in Cartagena de Indias, issued in 2020 by the Mayor's Office of Cartagena de Indias, the practice is indicated as follows:

The repeated practice involved a negotiation between the mayor on duty and his secretaries, who received the resumes and made the appointments or contracts in accordance with the order given by the respective "owners" of the secretariats. The instruction for many was that they did not have to show up for work and that the only task was to collect the salary or fee and give a percentage to the "owner" of the stall; for others; that, if they had assigned functions, the instruction was that they should only receive orders from the "owner" of the post (p.28).

The above situation is favored by an organizational structure of the Mayor's Office of Cartagena that since 2003 has mostly personnel under OPS contracted, which is taken advantage of under the corrupt mode of operation already mentioned. In Cartagena de Indias, between 2017 and 2019, the contracted PAHO were from:

Graphic 1. PAHO Contracted between 2017 and 2019 in Cartagena de Indias.



Source: White Paper on Corruption in Cartagena de Indias, .(Alcaldia Mayor de Cartagena de Indias, 2020)

For the year 2019, the increase in PAHO is part of the political strategies to favor the vote, for which there is an increase of 3,698 additional PAHO contracted between 2018 and 2019.

## 2. The Clan of the ESALES.

In Colombia, a Non-Profit Entity (ESAL) is a legal entity that is constituted by the will of association or creation of one or more persons (natural or legal) to carry out activities for the benefit of associates, third parties or the community in general. The ESALES do not pursue the distribution of profits among their members.(Camara de Comercio de Bogota, 2023)

This type of entities are very desirable to be constituted on "paper" with false information and in this way hold public procurement agreements with the different dependencies and secretaries of the Mayor's Office of Cartagena de Indias, these being a mechanism of deterioration of the general budget of the territorial entity for the benefit of the political classes and their financiers.

## 3. Conflict of Interest and Irregularities in Public Procurement.

In matters of contracting, it is also taken on behalf of public officials who, being advisors to the different agencies, formulate projects and contracts to be publicly tendered, having in the end the obtaining of the contract by companies founded by themselves and with social objectives even different from the contracted need. This type of modality was predominant between 2015 and 2019.

The contracts with irregularities were presented in several dependencies such as the General Secretariat and Infrastructure, with the ultimate purpose of taking advantage of the economic resources destined for investment in infrastructure.

Likewise, in many of these contracts, the companies do not have the licenses, registrations or operating permits and did not comply with the contracted service, but the payment of the contract was executed in full.

Continuing, there are also irregularities in contracting such as lack of plurality of bidders, contracts without analyzed documentation or the performance of prior studies, as well as contracts signed with their execution without any updated information on the web portal of the Electronic Public Procurement Service (SECOP).

### 3.1. Irregular Management of Programs, Plans, Budgets and Inter-Administrative Agreements.

The mode of operation was to intervene in the contracting of Programs such as the School Feeding Program (PAE), Plans and Budgets such as the Integrated Solid Waste Management (PGIRS), having as a form of misappropriation of resources the extra cost in the services and products supplied, or failing that, the total exhaustion of the budget in hiring care personnel. management, support, maintenance or transversal with a high value of their fees to later request compensation of a percentage of the payment received.

Likewise, there was a compendium of administrative agreements without the supervision of their correct execution and correct allocation of resources, such is the case of the Workshop School of Cartagena de Indias, which received more than \$6,000 million pesos, which were destined for the maintenance of the entity when the purpose was to promote the formation of the social capital of Cartagena de Indias.

### 4. Parallelism in Information Systems and Deficient Technological Infrastructure.

As for the Ministry of Finance, the agency that is in charge of generating the Free Destination Current Revenues (ICLD), it was evident that the delinquent portfolio of district taxes had differences of more than \$2,000 billion pesos between the maturity alert software and the district's accounting software.

In the same way, each of the agencies or secretariats in the management of the inventory of their fixed assets still kept furniture, appliances and technological equipment outdated, without the correct use of licenses to operate, in addition, it is also necessary that many of these fixed assets were not found.

### 5. Missionary Failures, Neglect of the Citizen & Proliferation of judicial processes against the district.

These three scourges of governance are triggers for each other, since the District of Cartagena de Indias during the years of administrative interim with its exacerbation between 2016 and 2019, experienced due to non-compliance with the missionary functions of each secretary judicial processes for the restitution of constitutional rights via tutela.

Likewise, the lack of attention to the citizen generated an outdated population database, for which the central government issues subsidies and other subsidies for the social welfare of children, young people and the elderly, among other population groups. This also generated an expansion of judicial processes via tutela.

Also, the District of Cartagena de Indias, for being in deficit due to the improper budgetary and financial execution of this territorial entity, filed lawsuits at the executive level for non-payment to contractors of works, services and other kinds.

#### 6. Deficient Infrastructure in Education and Health.

In relation to the educational and health infrastructure, there is a total deterioration of the Official Educational Institutions, to which is added the cessation of their activities due to the late contracting of surveillance and cleaning services.

On the issue of health, since the mayor's office of Mr. Dionisio Vélez, local hospitals and priority care centers (CAPS), were left in gray work and some others were not built. This contracting has had many interventions that have led one consortium and another to have disciplinary processes for non-compliance.

#### 7. On Social and Infrastructure Investment.

During the last two decades, few investments have been presented which have had the main intention of defrauding the district finances, since significant works for citizens such as the Transcaribe Mass Transportation System (SITM Transcaribe), in its trunks began to show subsequent deterioration, as well as in its stations.

In general terms, if one observes, the budget execution of the district has been undermined by political intentions to appropriate the resources of the district of Cartagena de Indias in order to return the investment given for political campaigns.

In short, the city has not seen works that have a broad impact on social and development in terms of infrastructure, only the few executed have had a great impact from the central government.

By way of conclusion, the scourges of governance presented in these seven paragraphs are easily executed in the city of Cartagena de Indias because from governability actions are carried out serving the financiers of political campaigns, by which this element of the triple helix is intervened, remaining only as a counterweight to the corrupt actions generated. citizens who do not manifest themselves in actions of law and even in fact to a large extent because it is presumed to have a low political education.

Social imaginaries of youth in the face of the governance of Cartagena de Indias between the years 2012 to 2023 and the next regional elections in October 2023.

In Colombia, the electoral census has increased in the last two decades, so that a large number of adolescents, pre-adolescents and even children at the beginning of the century are now participants in the democratic exercise of national and regional elections. This has not been different for Cartagena de Indias, where the population pyramid presents a transition due to the narrowing of the middle area of the population pyramid and the decrease of its base by which there is less birth rate and the population able to vote represents 75.7% of the total.(DANE, 2019)

Therefore, young people are increasingly important, so their perception as citizens counts in determining their social imaginaries in the face of the exercise of governance that takes place in the city.

To determine the social imaginaries of young people in the governance of the City of Cartagena, 24 young university students of the Public Accounting program were surveyed, taking a survey of 10 questions related to the issue in the temporality from 2012 to 2023, because the last complete period of government was that of Judith Pinedo between 2008 and 2011 and from there there was interim in the elected mayors until 2019 when Mr. William Dau Chamat was elected mayor by popular vote. The above is given to establish temporalities in the minds of each of the respondents since the exercise of governance of a city does not depend on periods of government.

In relation to each of the responses, they were initially categorized in the Atlas.ti version 23 software; by codes represented in positive, negative or neutral feelings. Thus, from the perspective of the youth, a tendency towards neutrality and negativity is evidenced when expressing their answers, as shown in image 1.

Image 1. Categorization of respondents' responses by sentiment.

	◆ Sentimiento ⑪ 240	◆ Sentimiento: Negativo ⑪ 141	◆ Sentimiento: Neutro ⑪ 184	◆ Sentimiento: Positivo ⑪ 16
◆ Sentimiento ⑪ 240		141	184	16
◆ Sentimiento: Negativo ⑪ 141	141		86	5
◆ Sentimiento: Neutro ⑪ 184	184	86		10
◆ Sentimiento: Positivo ⑪ 16	16	5	10	

Source: Prepared from Atlas.ti, version 23. In original language Spanish

The fact of having a large number of responses with a neutral association of feelings is a consequence of not having a rigorous political education in the years prior to his coming of age, since the negative categorization of feelings is associated with experiential scenarios as a citizen where he realizes in previous times of his life that in the City of Cartagena de Indias there has been no social welfare whatsoever.

In contrast, the positive expressions are related to the fulfillment of a full term of government between 2020 and 2023, which was not customary in the city from 2008 to 2011. Likewise, the positive scenario is associated with changes for the good of governance starting with the 2023 regional elections.

Continuing, a cloud of concepts is made by which the concerns of young people are determined in the exercise of governance, the first correlation in terms of the interpretation of governance being the scenarios of City, related in turn to the word Govern – Governance – Cartagena and Corruption.

Image 2. Concept Cloud derived from surveys of young people in Cartagena de Indias on governance.



Source: Prepared from Atlas.ti, version 23. In original language Spanish

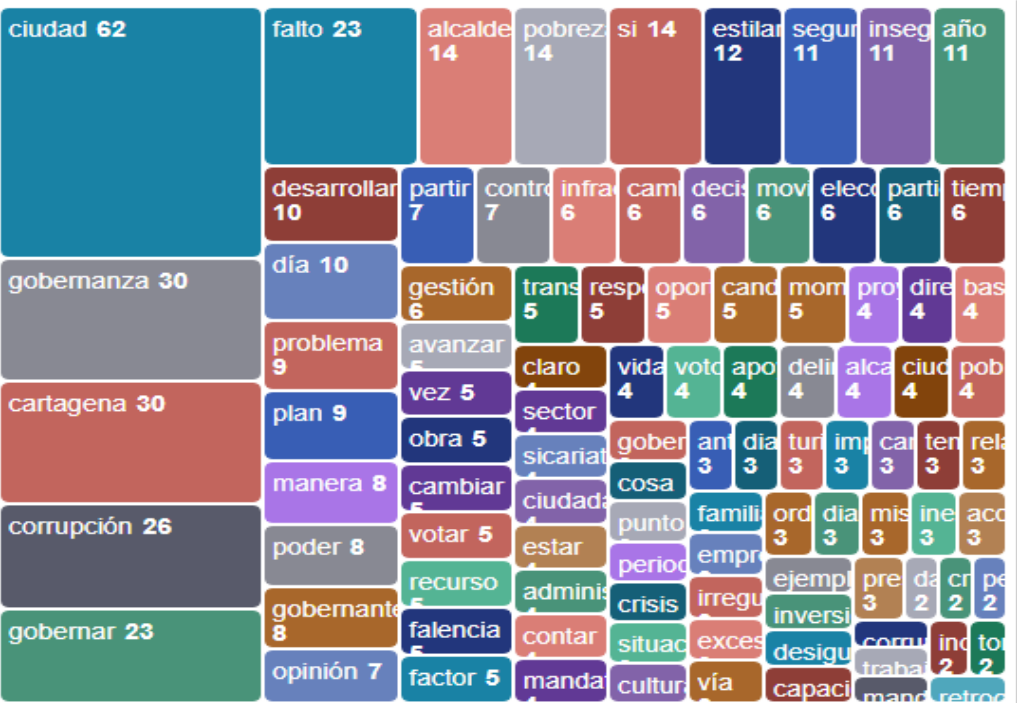
From image 2, aspects such as Poverty – Ruler – Mobility – Management – Security – Infrastructure – Opinion – Mayor are correlated in the social imaginary of young people.

Therefore, when the concept cloud is analyzed with the conceptualization given in the theoretical foundation on governance, it is evident that young people from Cartagena associate governance with governance, which is the authoritarian and power relationship between the authorities of a territorial entity and its citizens, which is very different from governance as a multidisciplinary field where all actors equally manage the development of their context.

In short, it seems that young people have the perception that the positive and negative effects on their social well-being only originate from the entities that govern when in the political system and in democratic terms the city belongs to everyone, not only, the act of exercising democracy is associated with a vote but with the oversight of the acts given in society from the horizontal relationship of the different sectors.

To determine, in precise terms, the number of times each concept is mentioned, a tree map was made as shown in image 3.

Image 3. Tree map derived from surveys of young people in Cartagena de Indias on governance.



Source: Prepared from Atlas.ti, version 23. In original language Spanish

To conclude, the social imaginaries of Cartagena's youth are a metamorphosis of the philosophy of language by which it is customary to provide responsibility over expectations as a citizen in

the authority figure of the executive power, since if the cloud of concepts and the tree map are analyzed, the mayor is mentioned as a ruler when all the actors, whether it is the State, civil society, non-governmental entities, multilateral entities and others contribute to the construction of society.

Therefore, training in political education seems to contribute to the metamorphosis of social imaginaries that young people have, which is worrying because through the discourse of the political classes and the veil of corruption they can be easily manipulated, thus maintaining a negative cycle of governance in the city of Cartagena de Indias.

### **3. By way of discussion.**

In Cartagena de Indias for the period 2012 to 2023, it is evident from the social imaginaries of young people as part of society that there is not a construct of governance in the mind of the population but of governability, which is a confusion given by the little political formation of the being, as well as a dependence on the political as a belief in well-being and development; which has allowed corruption scenarios to be consolidated because, as is customary for regional or national elections, work teams are formed to "exercise democracy" through voting, which is even affected in its intention by the abstinence of population groups such as youth, which has, as evidenced in the analysis by feelings, a negative perspective.

However, from the theoretical perspective, in the city of Cartagena de Indias there is no exercise of governance either, since corruption is evidence of having a territorial entity intervened by the autonomy of politicians and their financiers; which further distances the possibility of creating governance scenarios where there are collective agreements, consensuses and debates to promote development and well-being in the city of Cartagena de Indias, which is a rally for the deterioration of the quality of life of its inhabitants.

Likewise, it cannot be established as governance to have had a mayor in office again during the entire period of government for which he was elected, it is necessary to take into account that this is only a position from the perspective of governability and which is frequently mentioned when talking about governance due to the population's ignorance of what governability is. good governance and governance.

In short, what is exposed here will be part of a generational carousel as it has already been, if it is not possible to build a collective mentality from the citizenry regarding governance.

### **4. By way of conclusion.**

Young people from Cartagena are pessimistic when it comes to talking about politics, the future of the city, what the management of the government is; They tend to confuse governance with governance due to lack of knowledge and also associate the figure of the mayor only with governance, when the State has the City Council as co-administrator and active member of Cartagena society.

In the daily thinking of the young man from Cartagena, colonial behaviors seem to be rooted where the exercise of power is left only to the employer and all the achievements or faults will depend on him, homologating in this case the figure of the mayor as that of the patron. This thought is not new if we extend the study of governance at least since the economic opening, since adults also maintain the same attitude and aptitude in the face of the scenario to exercise their democratic voice, which seems limited to the act of voting in elections.

It is peremptory, an explosion in the thinking of young people because it is the only way to establish governance scenarios and from there permeate good governance and fair governance without interventionism of political and financial classes. But, as long as this explosion does not originate, we will continue to be the Cartagena de Indias where there are two cities in one, the first being the Vista as the Heroic, historical and cultural heritage of humanity; and the second is that where there are thousands of people in conditions of poverty without equal conditions; because social welfare and development cannot be understood only as investments made for the profit of investors, but also as the capacities of a society to migrate towards sustainable and sustainable development.

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