

Recall referendum and democracy An analysis of recent experiences in Bogota and Lima¹

El referéndum revocatorio y la democracia. Un análisis de recientes experiencias en Bogotá y Lima

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SUMMARY

From the early nineties, the Andean countries have undergone transformations of their legal frameworks to move from a purely representative model to include a wide range of institutions of citizen participation. Colombia and Peru were leaders in doing so and recently have been on the forefront again, activating for the first time the recall referenda against the mayors of the capital cities, Bogota and Lima. This article focuses on that experience in order to analyze the extent to which these express a good performance of democracy, the institutional design of the recall referenda, the role of the main actors involved and the results of both processes.

KEYWORDS: recall referenda, mechanisms of direct democracy, representation, democracy, legitimacy.

RESUMEN

Desde principios de los años noventa, los países andinos han experimentado transformaciones de sus marcos legislativos para pasar desde un modelo puramente representativo hacia un modelo con toda una gama de instituciones de la participación ciudadana. Colombia y Perú fueron líderes en eso y últimamente de nuevo han estado en la vanguardia, activando por la primera vez los referendos revocatorios contra

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los alcaldes de dos capitales, Bogotá y Lima. El artículo se enfoca en esa experiencia para analizar hasta que medida estos referendos constituyen una expresión del buen funcionamiento de la democracia, cual es el diseño institucional de los referendos revocatorios, el papel de sus principales actores y los resultados de los dos procedimientos.

PALABRAS CLAVE: *referendos revocatorios, mecanismos de democracia directa, representación, democracia, legitimidad.*

Introduction

Since the early nineties, the Andean countries have undergone meaningful transformations of their legal frameworks, moving from purely representative systems to the incorporation of institutions for citizen participation. Colombia and Peru were the first in promoting these changes, through constituent assemblies in 1991 and 1993, respectively. More recently, the attempts to promote recall referenda – a mechanism of direct democracy (MDD) initiated by the people to decide about the interruption of their elected officials' mandate – against the capital cities' mayors, Susana Villarán in Lima (2013), and Gustavo Petro in Bogota (2014), has placed these countries at the vanguard again. Despite the similarities, there are striking differences, starting with the recall itself, which took place in Lima, whereas it was canceled in Bogota, because the mayor was dismissed by the National Attorney before the scheduled elections. The aim of this paper is to analyze the consequences of these processes and their results for deepening democracy.

Ideally, the link between recall referenda and democracy can be seen through a double approach: on one hand, when a recall referendum takes place, it could be considered as a good democratic sign. This would be because – once the legal requirements are achieved – officials decide not to, or cannot, activate *ad hoc* mechanisms to avoid a legal process against them, demonstrating the strength of an institutional framework that promotes accountability. On the other hand, in contexts of crisis and polarization, the recall referenda could provide an institutional solution to conflicts of legitimacy, ensuring the survival of the rule of law and the same democracy's survival. This is to say that recall referenda could be seen as a consequence of good democratic performance, and, at the same time they could also operate as a mechanism to strengthen, or at least preserve, democracy in times of crisis. It can be assumed that this was the expectation that led the constituent assemblies to create the mechanism. But legislation does not necessarily build institutions.

Institutions are rules that enforce the action, assuming that they are understood, endorsed and accepted by those who are subjected to them (Osstrom 1986). O'Donnell (1996) indicates that institutions establish which of the agents – based on what kind of resources and procedures – are accepted as valid participants in the decision making process. At the same time, these

criteria are adapted by some actors and force others to redefine themselves. Institutions also suggest a likely distribution of results while they exclude others – for instance, democratic institutions renounce the use of the military force. Institutions might as well have an impact on the actions and organization of the agents that interact with them. In that sense, a participative mechanism with an ideal design that is never employed might have no impact², but it could also be the case that the legislators' expectations when designing such mechanism lead to totally unexpected behaviors, even the opposite of initial aims.

This article focuses on the recent recall referenda that took place in Lima and Bogota, in order to analyze to what extent these processes contributed to strengthen democracy. The text is structured as follows: (i) a review of the state of the art is offered in order to define our analytical, then (ii) the cases are analyzed, and finally (iii) the conclusions are drawn.

Citizenship and power

There is consensus that the MDDs that can be activated “bottom-up”, through signatures' collection and other requirements, allow the citizens to take part as a veto player and innovative actor in the political game (Tsebelis 1995), capable of proposing and deciding policies, because these devices allow the possibility of blocking laws (optional referendum), rejecting them (derogative referendum), proposing or modifying them (legislative or constitutional initiative), or revoking their representatives (recall referenda). These mechanisms reinforce government's accountability, so they should reduce the distance between the rulers' actions and the people's preferences.

However, their potential implications could be identified as the reasons why they are not widespread. Why would powerful actors share their power? This is even more evident when studying the recall, because those who were responsible for its incorporation could be the main ones affected by it. Research about the promotion of bottom-up MDDs suggests two possible variables to explain their development: (i) critical contexts in which there is a widespread perception of government inefficiency or corruption and (ii) emergence of social and political movements that stimulate citizen participation as a basic component of their ideological proposal.³ If the first general

² It should be also considered that a rule can stay ignored until it is incorporated to the political game. For example, the popular initiative in Uruguay (for constitutional reform) and the optional legislative referendum (for laws derogation) were introduced into the Constitution in 1967, but the first experiences were in the late eighties.

³ These ideas derive from literature about the introduction of direct democracy mechanisms into the sub national level in the United States (Spivak 2004, Garret 2004), research about participative democracy in Latin America (Goldfrank 2002; Schneider & Welp 2011) and in Switzerland (Auer 2009, Dardanelli 2011, Serdült 2014).

condition produces a favorable environment, the second one encourages the demands for institutional change.

The discussion about the viability of citizen participation mechanisms confronts an elitist vision of democracy (in which the fear for the “tyranny of the majority” and the assumed incapability of the ordinary citizen to make decisions related to the common interest predominate (Schumpeter 1961)⁴) with another perspective that associates citizen participation with more legitimate and evolved political systems (Almond & Verba 1963, Pateman 1970). This debate about the people’s role in politics between electoral periods has been complemented in recent decades by the crisis of representative democracy. This situation is observed in the decreasing number of political parties and syndicates and in the increasing loss of confidence in these institutions. The inclusion of participation mechanisms would be an effort to overcome this crisis (Dalton et al. 2001, Setälä 1999).

The introduction of MDDs was the result of an attempt to limit the excessive concentration of power in governments during centralization or decentralization processes. In the case of the countries with longer traditions – Switzerland and the United States –, the incorporation of MDDs dates from the foundation of the state. Nevertheless, whereas Switzerland is considered the first modern country to introduce MDDs at all levels of government (Auer 2009), in the United States they were introduced only at the sub national level (Spivak 2004). Regarding the recall, it is not present at the federal level in Switzerland and in the few cantons where it has been incorporated, it is almost in disuse (with the exception of recent attempts in Ticino⁵), while some authors have observed increased use at the American sub national level.

Analyzing the Swiss case, Serdült (2014) indicates that the few experiences – one single activation and some other attempts in more than a century – suggest that the recall has lost gravity, becoming a device practically disused. This could be due to: i) the consolidation and increasing importance of other mechanisms of direct democracy that empower the citizens to intervene in the definition of public affairs (instead of focusing on removing elected officials); and ii) the horizontal accountability which guarantees mechanisms to solve problems such as corruption. In the case of the United States this mechanism is identified as an alternative when the checks and balances (administrative penalties, judicial controls) are not working properly or when the political parties themselves appeal to the recall referenda to confront policies they reject (Spivak 2004; Qvordrup 2014).

⁴ Cronin (1989) and Bowler et al. (1998) describe this aspect in the debate about the inclusion of DDMS in the national level of the United States (rejected by the legislators).

⁵ The frequent conflicts and inter-party blockades in the Ticino have brought the mechanism back to the agenda. The cantons where the recall can be activated are Bern, Uri, Solothurn, Schaffhausen, Thurgau and Ticino (Serdült 2014).

In the Andean countries, the incorporation of MDDs – the recall referendum, among them – occurred principally since the nineties, through constituent assemblies (Colombia 1991; Peru 1993; Ecuador 1998 and 2008; Venezuela 1999; Bolivia 2009).⁶ In these cases, academics emphasize a series of obstacles that would either hinder the use of the recall or would indicate that its use is not the result of legitimate social involvement, but a consequence of political manipulation. Some scholars note that the recall referendum is difficult to hold because of restrictive requirements and citizenship apathy (Breuer 2010, Bustos 2002) or due to the lack of independence of electoral bodies, which discourage the activation of recall processes (Jimenez 2001, Welp 2013, Arques 2014). At the same time, it is observed that when it is used, promoters are usually political opponents in the shadows (Vásquez Oruna 2014, Franco Cuervo 2014). On the other side, however, recall advocates identify it as a potential instrument of control, capable of reinforcing democracy (Quintanilla 2012).

Exploring the conditions in which positive or negative outcomes are produced is one of the aims of this article. Our analysis is centered on the supposition that recall referendums would indicate good institutional performance when the following conditions are fulfilled:

(a) The citizenry promotes this mechanism to confront an authority that has lost legitimacy for reasons related to (bad) management duties;

(b) If the circumstances require a recall, the competent institutions call it and it takes place with appropriate guarantees for the rights of the parties and the citizenry, not only during the campaign but also in the elections.

On the contrary, the recall would indicate problems in the performance and consolidation of democracy if it is employed by other actors (for instance, political parties or defeated candidates) to settle political accounts not related to the management of the authority involved. The same would be the case if organized citizens find obstacles created *ad hoc* to avoid the use of the recall, even when the formal requirements are fulfilled.

Finally, the process would contribute to reinforce democracy if:

(d) Confidence in the political system increases;

(e) The confidence and administrative capacity of the confirmed government grows, or, if the official is removed, the conflict is solved through democratic procedures.

The mechanism would prove itself to be ineffective if the conflict remains, whether the authority is removed or not, and citizens do not increase their confidence in the system.

⁶ The recall referendum was previously introduced in Cuba and Argentina (Welp & Serdült 2014). For further details about the incorporation processes in the Andean countries see Welp & Serdült 2011.

Analysis

Before beginning with the analysis of the cases we will outline some aspects related to the introduction, regulation and practice of recall referenda in Colombia and Peru.

In Colombia, the recall was included by the 1991 constituent assembly gathered in Bogota that was called in response to a citizen demand expressed by the movement known as “la séptima papeleta” (the seventh ballot), which requested a constitutional reform to end with violence, narco-terrorism, corruption and the increasing citizenship apathy (for example, the level of abstention in the elections for the constituent assembly reached 75 per cent). An informal referendum, subsequently accepted by the authorities, asked for the reform and the inclusion of mechanisms of direct and participatory democracy (Thomas Acuña 2000).

In contrast to the popular pressure in Colombia, the constitutional process in Peru was promoted by Alberto Fujimori in 1993 to give a solution to the coup organized by the government itself, which closed the Congress. The international reaction to the breakdown of legality, particularly the role of the Organization of the American States (OAS) applying pressure for the restoration of legality, led to Fujimori’s compromise of calling for a constituent assembly. MDDs were introduced together with some controversial reforms, such as the elimination of one of the chambers of parliament and the abolition of death penalty (Levitsky 1999).

In Colombia, the debate about the incorporation included references to the democratic evolution required to make use of the participatory mechanisms.⁷ The constituent Antonio Galan Sarmiento suggested a recall referendum based on the programmatic: “As the sovereignty resides in the people (...) it consents a mandate to its elected authorities, whose clarity will depend on stating a program before the elections, which the candidate commits himself to defend and in case of incompleteness the people can revoke his mandate” (“Constitutional Journal”, 081/1991: 8–9). In Peru the recall was suggested as a compensation for the extension of the mayors’ terms from three to five years. It was introduced as a political right, so its activation demands justification but not proof. In both cases the recall can only apply against sub national officials (different than in Ecuador, Bolivia and Venezuela, where all the elected officials can be removed, even the president) (Welp & Serdült 2011). Nevertheless, in Colombia it is applied only to executive officials (mayors and governors) whereas in Peru it is also for legislators (see more details in the next section).

⁷ Comparative studies conducted to give information to the constituent assembly reached the conclusion that “the recall referendum is a figure that has been little expanded; as its existence entails a developed political culture, not only among voters but also within political parties, movements and groups. That said it is possible to affirm that democracy is still in progress and so we cannot transfer, not even copy formulas adopted by other countries.” (“Constitutional Journal”, 066/1991: 97).

The analysis of the experiences shows a deep difference about a basic issue: the frequency of use. In Colombia, from the time the mechanism was established by Law 134 in 1994 until 2013, only thirty six attempts led to a referendum and none of those succeeded since the threshold for participation was not reached. In Peru, more than five thousand officials have faced recall processes in less than twenty years (since 1997).⁸ This establishes a framework of analysis of these cases, which is presented in the following section.

Lima

Susana Villarán (Fuerza Social) became mayor of Lima after an unexpected victory in the elections held on October 3rd, 2010. In August of that year, Villarán's candidacy had hardly 6% support, however, when the National Jury of Elections (Juzgado Nacional de Elecciones, JNE) disqualified one of the two favorites, Alex Kouri Buchamar (he could not prove a permanent residence in Lima during the previous two years), the leader of Fuerza Social became the rival of Lourdes Flores Nano, from Popular Christian Party (Partido Popular Cristiano, PPC). Accused of being a representative of the radical left, Villarán faced the opposition of media corporations. Her candidacy was only supported by the progressives. From the start her administration was weak, winning the elections by a mere 0, 83%.⁹ Although the electoral law grants an absolute majority in the council, her party did not win in any of the 42 districts of Metropolitan Lima.

Once in office, Villarán made several decisions that would gain her powerful enemies. Barely a hundred days after she took office, she presented the results of an audit denouncing the mismanagement of public funds by the previous mayor, Castañeda Lossio; she was determined to regulate the local public transport system, controlled by mafias; and later, she gave support to the LGBT movement (lesbians, gays, transsexuals and bisexuals) in a country where the conservative faction of the Catholic Church has strong influence.¹⁰ In this context, an attempt to activate the recall was not unexpected.

In Peru, the recall referendum can be called between the second and third year of a term, the application must be properly based but not necessarily proven (some arguments need to be offered but it is not necessary to present proof and there is not an evaluation of the validity of the reasons). The referendum is

⁸ For detailed analysis see Welp 2013.

⁹ http://portal.jne.gob.pe/informacionelectoral/estadisticaelectoral/COMPENDIO_ESTADISTICO.pdf

¹⁰ Vásquez Oruna (2014) stresses the relevance that would have had the change in terms of government style, referred to the advertisement of public works. Different from what had happened in the previous administration, Villarán argued that "The resources are from the people and there is no reason why I should put my name on the public works made with the people's resources" ("Diario La Primera", *Las obras de Villarán*, July, 8th 2011).

individual, but if more than a third of the Council is revoked, the law mandates for a new election to be held in order to replace (only) those who were recalled. This promotes “perverse incentives” (Tuesta Soldevilla 2014), that generate conditions under which political leaders try to activate recall referenda in order to reach power, in scenarios of low institutionalization of political parties and high political party fragmentation and volatility. Twenty five percent of signatures is required to initiate a recall, but the total figure cannot surpass an absolute number of 400.000 signatures; this puts Lima in a special situation: in 2011, less than 7 percent of signatures were enough to promote a recall. Besides, there is not a deadline for signature collection¹¹, which allows the instigators to take advantage of any incident that may occur during the process.

The recall was requested by Marco Tulio Gutiérrez, a former local councilor from United Left (Izquierda Unida 1980–1983) who had been an adviser to Lucio Castañeda. From the very beginning, the recall was backed by carriers, street merchants from the city center, inhabitants on the left bank of Rimac River, organizations for the handicapped and some former Lima officials. Conservative factions of the Catholic Church also embraced it (Vásquez Oruna 2014).

In July 2012, the promoters presented 400,396 signatures to recall the mayor and the whole council (40 members), with the intention of calling new elections. Questions about the validity of the signatures started a long and disputed process between the promoters and the three institutions responsible for the electoral process in Peru (RENIEC, ONPE, JNE). Finally, the JNE (National Jury of Elections) announced a referendum scheduled by March 17th, 2013 “for inefficiency in administrative performance”.

The position of the political parties supports the idea that their fragmentation and low institutionalization could be an explanation for the constant use of recalls in small Peruvian districts, where volatility jeopardizes survival and feeds the anti-establishment attitudes (while parties with long-lasting expectations would be reluctant to initiate an endless dynamic of recall referenda). The recall was backed by the Aprista Party (Partido Aprista), and the evangelic “National Restoration. National Solidarity” (Restauración Nacional. Solidaridad Nacional), represented by Luis Castañeda, who gave support a few days before the elections were held. The conservative PPC, led by Lourdes Flores (who had lost the elections to Villarán), was against the recall, arguing that regular elections were the best mechanism to exercise accountability. Fujimorism (Fujimorismo), led by Keiko Fujimori, did not take a position and let supporters decide the issue. Ollanta Humala’s party did not release an official statement on the matter even though some of its leading members spoke out against the recall referendum. Other groups that pronounced against the recall were Popular Action (Acción Popular), We are Peru (Somos Perú), Possible

¹¹ This is different from other South American cases: in Bolivia 90 days and in Colombia 180 days.

Peru (Perú Posible), Alliance for Progress (Alianza por el Progreso) and the Nationalist Party (Partido Nacionalista) (“La República”, 12/13/2012)

Given the fact that in Peru the recall referendum is an individual process, a vote for each member of the council was required. As a result, the mayor was ratified¹², but the removal of most members of the council led her to lose the absolute majority after new elections were settled by proportional system (contrary to regular elections, that warrant absolute majority for the winner). Besides the governability crisis that recalls seem to induce, it apparently has not contributed to a solution of the conflict between the different actors, since those who intended to remove the mayor have continued with their demands, starting a process to remove her due to mismanagement and inefficiency (the alternative that happened in Bogota).

Bogota

Gustavo Francisco Petro Urrego, candidate from the Progresistas movement (Progresistas), became mayor of Bogota obtaining the 32,2% of the vote in elections that registered a 47,7% turnout. He was followed by the candidate from the alliance of the Green Party-Social Party of the National Union (Partido Verde-Partido Social de la Unidad Nacional), Enrique Peñalosa, who received 24,98% of the votes. Gina Parody (independent candidate) was the third, with the 16,76%.¹³

Petro’s administration began on October 1st, 2012. By December of that year, the National Attorney had decided to investigate presumed irregularities in the creation of a new cleaning and garbage collection system and the contracts related to it. This is one of many examples of officials who were investigated, penalized and dismissed by the current National Attorney, Alejandro Ordoñez (who dismissed 49 governors and ex-governors, and 828 mayors and ex-mayors between 2009 and 2013), representative of the Colombian conservatives (Franco Cuervo 2014).

Almost simultaneously, Petro had to face another challenge, due to the January 2013 request for a recall referendum presented by Miguel Gómez Martínez (representative for Bogota, member of the U Party). Among the many causes he alleged were the deterioration in mobility in the city, the garbage collection system and the national health care system (“El Tiempo”, 1/2/2014).

In Colombia, only mayors and governors can be removed. The causes that justify a request are general dissatisfaction of the citizenry and incompleteness of the government program; the recall referendum can be activated after one

¹² Among other reasons, the dissemination of a recording showing that the ex-mayor Castañeda (denounced by Villarán for mismanagement and misapplication of public funds) was related to the recall, even though he had denied it, convinced many voters to support the mayor.

¹³ Source: <http://w3.registraduria.gov.co/escrutinio/resultados>.

year in office at the Registry of the district (art. 65). According to the Law 131/1994, to call a referendum requires the support of 40% of the valid votes in the election of the official. The recall vote will only be valid if the level of participation is at least 55% of the vote in the original election. This requirement was a result of the modifications introduced by the Law 741/2012. Those modifications sought to reduce the legal obstacles and resulted in a great increase in the number of recalls requested since 2003 (Franco Cuervo 2014). Still, the country presents a weak tradition in the use of this mechanism in comparison with other cases (Welp 2013), and every time recall elections were held, the officials involved were ratified due to the high level of abstention, invalidating the elections. In order to remove the public official, that option must be supported by half plus one of the voters.

Once the signatures presented by the promoter were validated – a minimum of 289.263 were required – the Registry from the district gave effect to the recall in June. Petro appealed and was able to postpone the call for elections – expected for November 2013 – until March 2nd 2014. The participation threshold was 1.234.214 voters. Instead, in December 2013, the National Attorney removed the mayor and he was unable to exercise public functions (Res. 340/2014), a sentence that was considered disproportionate and initiated a discussion about the competency of the National Attorney. According to article 278 of the Colombian Constitution, among many other functions, the National Attorney is able to: “1. Remove from office, with previous hearing and justified reason, the public officer who commits the following offences: infringe with evidence the Constitution or the law; derive undue material advantage from the exercise of functions; hinder in serious way the investigations promoted by the National Attorney or any administrative or jurisdictional authority; act with manifest negligence during the investigation and penalization of disciplinary offenses committed by his employees, or related to complaints about punishable deeds with his knowledge while the exercise of office”. Therefore, Petro appealed to the Interamerican Court of Human Rights for legal protection; it asked the Colombian government to suspend the effects of the National Attorney’s sentence. Initially, the Santos’ administration did not comply with the Court decision, but Petro was finally returned to office on April 23, 2014.

The recall attempt became a national, and even regional, issue¹⁴, and the question about the power of the National Attorney to remove a democratic authority was debated by the public; indeed, the current Attorney was accused of imposing penalties according to political criteria (“La Semana”, 6/22/2013).

¹⁴ Even the “Red de Ciudades Sudamericanas” expressed worry for the removal of Petro through a public letter signed by mayors of many South American cities such as Augusto Barera (Quito), Mauricio Macri (Buenos Aires) and Susana Villarán (mayor of Lima, who had also faced a recall referendum) (“Noticias Quito”, 11/12/2013).

At first the mayor seemed to be in favor of the recall election in pursuit of democratic strength and as a way to (re) legitimize his administration against an increasingly unfavorable public opinion. According to a survey by Ipsos-Napoleon Franco from April, 2013, 61% were dissatisfied with Petro's administration, and only 28% were satisfied. However, once the recall was imminent, Petro complemented his strategy of supporting mobilization with legal proceedings to delay the elections and delegitimize the recall process. Nevertheless, when removal by the Attorney became the most urgent problem, the recall became an instrument of Petro to appeal to the popular will against the decision of a non democratic institution (Rey 2014).

Petro's supporters promoted the "no campaign", principally through the social networks – accusing the most important media of being a monopoly of the national government – successfully calling for multiple manifestations at Bogota's Plaza Bolivar. To promote the mobilization of supporters, the "Committee for the Defense of Human Bogota" ("Comité de Defensa de la Bogota Humana") was created, organized into more than thirty "nodes" gathering different social groups (animal defense groups, LGBT movement, political parties, indigenous groups, ex-members of M19, syndicates, recyclers, left-wing organizations, among others). The results were evident as Petro's positive image reached 62%; which seemed to show popular rejection to his removal ("La Silla Vacía", 02/09/2014).

Conclusions

The first question these conclusions try to answer is the legitimacy or social support for the recall process. That leads to a consideration of, among other things, the promoters of those initiatives and the quorum of the people necessary to endorse and validate the recall referenda. The previous analysis presents a complex image. Considering the number of signatures required to promote a recall, in both cases the evidence suggests that the signatures were collected. Furthermore, several surveys expressed people's dissatisfaction with both administrations. But then again, is that dissatisfaction unique to those two cases (the mandates of Villarán and Petro) or is it a common fact that affects all administrations in Latin American big cities, characterized by numerous problems and lack of resources to solve them? Vásquez Oruna (2014: 51) addresses this issue in her analysis about Lima and comes to the conclusion that the Villarán administration was not out of the spectrum compared to previous mandates. The high abstention and the numerous crises happening in Bogota, in particular, and Colombia, in general, seem to lead to a similar scenario. This is the context where people's disappointment converges with the interests of politicians who openly or secretly choose to manipulate the rules according to their convenience.

In Lima, once the formal requirements were fulfilled, the process was conducted. Though there were confrontations and controversies (false signatures,

among many other irregularities) Villarán's attitude and her respect for the rule of law seem to have contributed to keeping the electoral process going. On the other hand, the irregularities observed in the Colombian case, the questionable intervention by the National Attorney and the erratic attitude of Petro (first he declared himself in favor, then he was against it, and finally agreed to hold the referenda), reveal weaknesses of the institutional structure.

Finally, and despite the differences between the two cases, neither of them seemed to have contributed to the strengthening of democracy. In Lima, this could be attributed to the fact that even when Villarán was ratified, she lost her absolute majority and her government suffered transformations affecting its governability (it lived in a constant campaign first, with interim members later and without majority after the elections), while the opposition did not accept the results as legitimate and continued urging the removal of the mayor from office. In Bogota, the recall referendum was cancelled, exposing the deficiencies of Colombian democracy in terms of its institutional design (excessive power attributed to the National Attorney) as well as the lack of respect for the rules shown by the different actors.

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