Dear Diego,

Many thanks for sharing this fascinating proposal with me and for allowing me to delve into your original and insightful work. It is a compelling, unique topic and your book will contribute to the growing literature on land grabbing, particularly in the context of armed conflict, and its political and ecological effects. I believe with a few revisions, your proposal will find many interested readers. It requires both some general and detailed revisions to make it as effective and convincing as it should be given such a timely topic.

You will find 72 comments in the proposal itself: they are both broad and detailed. In what follows, I will single out some general trends and offer some recommendations that matter most in my opinion. Let us begin with recommendations for “selling it” and the targeted audience.

**Book Prospectus Suggestions**

* First, you will need a brief cover letter
* Start immediately with an explanation of what the book is about - your biographical information can come a little later.

— visually, the prospectus will gain from a clearer presentation: I suggest

headings for each section:

1. The Book and some background about it

2. Book’s Contribution

3. Your biographical information in brief as it pertains to the book. Be sure to reference your complete academic biography as attached to the proposal.

4. Intended Audience (here you may want to add additional biographical information about how your connections can help give the book broader exposure)

5. Competing/Other Literature

6. A Table of Contents (Optional)

7. Chapter Review, with a separate heading for each chapter

8. Elements of the Book (pages, figures, illustrations, etc.)

9. State of Completion/Expected Completion

10. Some publishers want to see a prospective Bibliography – you should have one prepared in the event it is requested.

— who is the audience? You mention many different groups, but little is said about what these (very) different groups might *gain* by reading the book. Explain what these readers will learn by offering concrete examples.

— what are the three selling points? Why should this book be read by all scholars and students that are interested in land grabbing and the political and ecological issues around it?

— for a prospectus, the theoretical section seems too large: can you summarize it with three or four general directions/topics?

— relatedly, try to give several reasons “why you” are the best to write about this topic. What is your “sphere of influence”? Who are you in conversation with? What is your social media presence? This also means giving more background on your research experiences so far (you mention many conferences and presentations)

**Scope and Justification**

The first few paragraphs start broadly (21st century, worldwide, different regions) to then narrow it down to the case study of Colombia. It is what some writers call the *Martini glass* — starting with a general issue, then choosing an individual case, then offering a solution/analysis. An even more powerful way for you to start, I would argue, is with the paradox itself. It could go like this:

*Why is it that during transitions to peace and conflict resolution, involving many state and non-state actors and protagonists, land grabbing accelerates and even worsens the (already unstable) socioeconomic and ecological conditions on the ground, despite these actors’ claims to support sustainable development? How can we explain variations in these land grabbing processes?* (as you demonstrate so well comparatively).

I believe starting with this paradox is a better way to grab the reader’s interest and get the topic off to a great start. It is best to explain immediately what the book is about, and what your contribution will be.

This would also allow you to clarify the *relation* between your case study and the comparisons you reference on pages 1 and 5. Indeed, you *do* propose comparative perspectives, but *within* the framework of the Colombian case study: make this clear from the start. In this way, you can also nicely highlight the fundamental paradox you tackle — you do not go enough in this direction and are not clear enough about the stakes of your book because of specialist terms (see the highlighted red terms throughout and my comments on p. 2). An example: when you speak of the “conventional wisdom” p. 2 — what narrative(s) do you exactly challenge? The general reader, and especially any student — whom you want to include, as you say — will find that there are difficult terms, such as atomized criminality; property REconcentration (as opposed to property concentration? What happened before the transition negotiations? You do mention “preexisting land structures”, but consider being more explicit: who owned these land structures in Colombia? What dynamics were at play before the acceleration of land grabbing in the 1970s? What happened between the 1950s and 1970s in that case, and why the peak during the 1990s?). Other terms include environmental wealth; egalitarian rural landscape; and land markets: they need to be explained in each context. Since you are trying to appeal to such a broad audience from many different disciplines (and thus many different sub-discussions in each field), you need to be as clear about your terms as possible. There is sometimes a lack of conceptual clarity as well, such as p. 3. illicit vs licit economies, crops, etc. For example, on p. 4, you argue that the boundaries between licit and illicit are often thin and many actor groups shift between them: this needs to be made much clearer in the first paragraphs. In short, we have to know more about what you mean and why you decide to use these concepts and terms.

**Organization and Argument**

To be even more effective, your argument needs not to be made chronologically, but upfront. Yours develops only over time (see my comments about this). In a way, you can read my comments as a discovery journey to the core themes of the book (p. 1-2, certain parts of the chapter outline p. 3-4). I’d recommend rewriting the first three paragraphs with the following in mind:

*What is the paradox of land grabbing in Colombia, and what challenges does your analysis bring to what we believe on conflict resolution and peace transitions, especially in its rural, landed, and material aspects?*

The first paragraph mixes both the general and the case study, and the language is not clear. It is only over time that one understands where you go with this book, and I believe that needs to change on p. 1. (A great summary of your core argument can be found on p. 4, the first two lines, among others, and the excellent summary of chapter 7, p. 5.)

This also implies writing people and groups back into the text: it often reads very abstract and lacks actual people. Land grabbing is done by many interest groups, as you powerfully demonstrate. You do mention “the State” (I was wondering why it is capitalized, perhaps because several groups, paramilitary ones, for example, also lay claim on state-sponsored violence and legitimacy? I am speculating, but you see the point that readers should not wonder why.) There are other actors you mention on p. 4, but this comes already late for the reader.

What you are dealing with, in reality, is a complex web of actors, often with conflicting goals, whose actions and behaviors have a deep impact on the distribution and management of land, especially in high-activity, and therefore, violent areas. Corporate rurality, in this sense, also needs to be accounted for: where, by whom, and why? In general, the idea of some green/sustainable development (“corporate greening;” “monocrop-related sustainable development,” p. 4) seems secondary although it is central. You should make this more explicit, to illustrate how land grabbing follows certain social and political dynamics (revolving around, but not limited to the state, p. 3).

**Literature and Scholarly Debates**

I think you do an excellent job detailing how your book fits into the larger literature, although some revisions should be done to make it more powerful (see comments p. 3, notably changing the order of the second and first line of inquiry).

Despite the strong presentation, it needs to be even more specific. Think about the four or five books/articles/edited volumes that have inspired you. What are the driving forces behind your topic?

What is also missing, I believe, is a short presentation of the *frontier* and its massive literature. Indeed, it is a charged concept in the context of land extraction, conquest, and violent occupation. To satisfy this, mention some vital references from settler colonialism, violence, and the frontier in subaltern contexts (such as the hotly debated Dirk Moses, *The Problems of Genocide*, 2020; Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview*, 2010). In the same vein, an editor would like to see more references on corporate rurality and illicit crops. In essence, as I understand it, you treat violence and conflicts — multilayered and complex relations among various organizations and non-state actors with state structures — through the lens of land grabbing. If you can make this sharper on the first two pages, your proposal will win over its readers much more easily.

**Missing Pieces**

One major gap I see: you mention archival material in your impressive list of sources, but I could not find other mentions of this material afterward or even a brief explanation of how you approached it. What archives did you look at, and how did you fit written materials into the overall analysis? For some readers, methods such as “spatial panel linear regressions” on p. 2 also need to be explained. As it stands, the targeted audience is very large; it might be worth thinking more about some more specific groups that you want to engage with on specific questions.

You will find many more targeted comments in the proposal itself. All my comments intend to make your proposal stronger: the most time-consuming part has been done — the research and the writing. I wish you all the best in revising this thoughtful proposal. I believe you hold all the elements to end up with a persuasive and impactful book. Good luck with all — full steam ahead — and I’m remaining available.