

# Crafting Redistribution: Unarmed Civilians and Land Reform in Civil War Bargaining\*

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Online Appendix

Why is land redistribution enshrined in civil war peace settlements? I argue that peace processes provide critical opportunities for redistribution when unarmed, rural movements deploy mobilization strength to influence bargaining. When movements sustain contention and credibly assert autonomy from warring factions, they reshape the fixed and competing preferences of warring parties, rendering reform urgent and legitimate. Using the 2012-2016 Colombian peace talks as a case, I apply a mixed-methods design combining natural language processing, regression models, and process tracing to examine whether and how rural movements influenced redistributive dispositions. Employing text similarity measures between citizen demands and land-related provisions, I show that rural movements shaped commitments to redistribution. Through interview and archival evidence, I demonstrate that movements shifted the costs of elite resistance—the crisis credibility mechanism—and positioned redistribution as civilian mandate—the moral credibility mechanism. These findings highlight the crucial role of unarmed civilians in resolving conflict-related inequalities.

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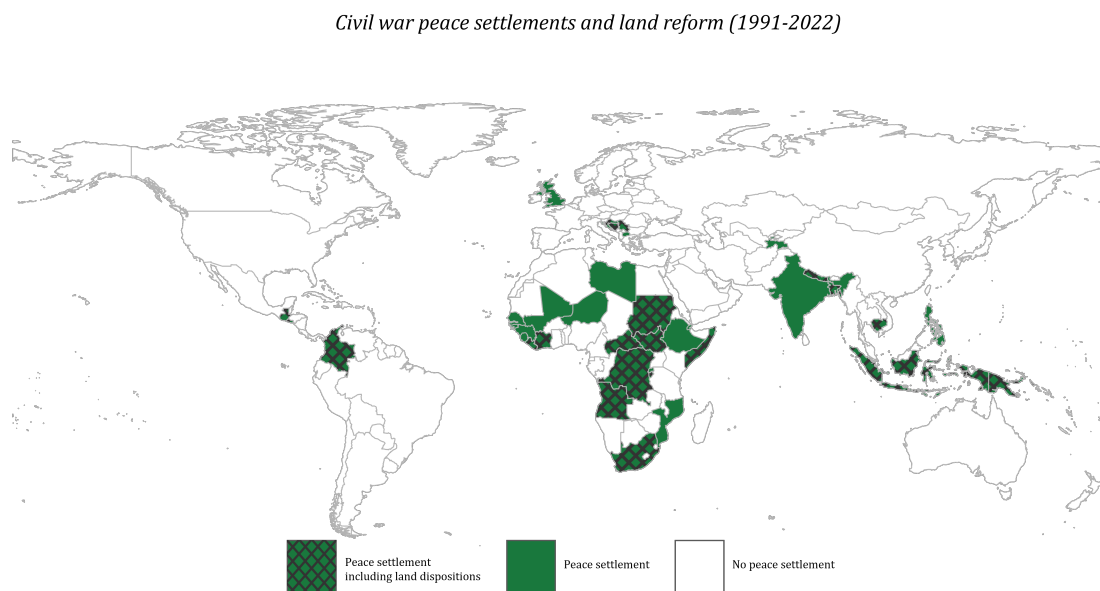
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# 1 Introduction

Civil war often exacerbates deep-seated inequalities, casting civilians in an ever-growing pool of dispossessed communities. Amid uncertainty and coercion, armed actors, state officials, and economic elites forcibly strip poor communities of their homes and land (Tellez, 2022; Steele, 2017; Cramer and Wood, 2017). However, as war draws to an end, peace negotiations have increasingly become crucial instances for addressing such inequalities, particularly in land ownership and resource management. Figure 1 shows that, from 1991 to 2022, 40 out of 79 peace settlements—ranging from comprehensive peace agreements to post-conflict conflict constitutions—addressed land reform. These dispositions targeted issues such as land ownership, agricultural support services for the rural poor, and property returns (Bell and Badanjak, 2019). Notably, 30 of these settlements included provisions for land ownership by ethnic and tribal communities. In contrast to land expropriation, which served as the flagship mechanism of twentieth-century reform, land reform in peace settlements often involves transfers of land ownership from large landholders to landless peasants through state-sponsored compensation and financing (Keels and Mason, 2019).

**Figure 1:** Civil War Peace Agreement Provisions on Land Reform (1991-2022)



*Note:* Countries colored in green record at least one peace agreement or post-conflict constitution, while countries with patterned shading include at least one provision on land reform.

This trend challenges the conventional wisdom that economic redistribution is often sidelined in civil war bargaining (Doyle, 2012; Richmond, 2006). Canonical political tran-

sition theory predicts that transitional pacts primarily address political incorporation for the opposition yet preserve wealth inequality (O'Donnell et al., 1986). While the opposition may push for both political incorporation and wealth redistribution, incumbent parties are generally more willing to grant costly concessions on political incorporation—such as competitive elections, power-sharing arrangements, or civil liberties—if the existing distribution of wealth remains untouched. This challenge becomes even more pronounced when elites control fixed assets like land, since landed elites will only acquiesce to democratization if they believe their property will be well-protected under democratic rule (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2001; Ansell and Samuels, 2010; Boix, 2003; Ziblatt, 2008). Civil war bargaining compounds such elite resistance in three ways. First, governments face acute pressure to preserve elite support to sustain stability during uncertain negotiations, constraining their capacity to make concessions threatening business and landowning interests (Joshi and Quinn, 2015). Second, revolutionary insurgents are unlikely to forgo redistribution as a core demand, which is central to their ideological program and potentially expands their electoral base among rural constituencies in postwar politics (Balcells and Kalyvas, 2025). Third, even if governments initially compromise on redistribution to reach a settlement, they cannot credibly commit to protecting elite property rights afterward, since former rebels may leverage postwar organizational capacity to extract further reform, making any initial concession at the table the first step in an open-ended redistributive process (Crisman-Cox, 2022; Sticher, 2021). Thus, the theoretical expectation states that redistribution should be the least likely outcome of civil war negotiations.

However, the empirical record runs counter to this theoretical expectation. *Why is land redistribution enshrined in civil war peace settlements?* In this article, I develop and test a theory highlighting why and how *unarmed opposition mobilization* drives land redistribution in civil war peace settlements, focusing on rural social movements—such as Indigenous, Afro-descendant, and peasant organizations—who are often at forefront of civilian activism. In contexts of massive violence, I argue that non-belligerent, rural movements emerge as the most consequential actors for redistribution. Peace negotiations create openings for redistribution when rural movements show mobilization strength, which I understand as the degree to which they sustain contention—organizational capacity—and credibly assert autonomy from armed groups—distancing capacity. As autonomous

and unarmed actors, these movements act as informational conduits, introduce new policy agendas, and reshape the fixed, competing preferences of warring sides who are often gridlocked over redistribution. Rural movements with mobilization strength render redistribution as an admissible concession by activating two mechanisms. First, through crisis credibility, these actors impose material costs on elite resistance, altering the strategic calculus of warring parties who believe that reform is an urgent response. Second, through moral credibility, movements recast land redistribution as a legitimate civilian imperative rather than a rebel concession.

To test the observable implications of my argument, I examine the 2012-2016 Colombian peace negotiation between the Santos moderate administration and the revolutionary guerrilla group FARC-EP (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia - Ejército del Pueblo*). Colombia represents a least-likely case for land redistribution in civil war peace settlements, since it endured a long-running civil war marked by massive dispossession and elite resistance to land reform. I employ a mixed-methods research design integrating natural language processing, OLS regression analysis, and process tracing. Qualitative analyses of in-depth interviews and archival sources allow me to identify pivotal events in the causal chain, elucidate the causal mechanisms, and address alternative arguments. Quantitative methods help me evaluate internal validity by estimating variation in outcomes within the peace negotiation through natural language processing and regression models. Building on political science computational studies (Lin, 2025), I apply a Sentence-BERT (SBERT) model to capture semantic similarity—that is, whether words used in two different documents convey similar meaning—and a Bag-of-Words (BoW) model to measure lexical similarity—or word overlap between documents. While BoW models are widely used in computational political science for measuring text alignment (Manning et al., 2008; Garrett and Jansa, 2015; Hazelton and Hinkle, 2022; Ash et al., 2024; Hager and Hilbig, 2020; Blumenau, 2019; Carlson, 2019), SBERT is increasingly used to extract meaning in political texts (Bestvater and Monroe, 2022; Widmann and Wich, 2022; Licht, 2023).

My data collection includes a novel dataset recording 8,238 civilian petitions submitted to the Havana peace table, negotiation records, protest agreements signed between movements and the government, as well as 47 in-depth interviews with government and insurgent negotiators and social movement representatives collected during 16 months

of fieldwork. The original dataset on citizen proposals provides a robust proxy of rural mobilization for land redistribution during peace negotiations in Colombia.

The combined evidence supports the argument that rural movements shape land commitments in peace settlements. First, I observe that proposals endorsed by at least one rural movement exhibit higher similarity scores to the agreement's land dispositions. These results remain robust to alternative operationalizations of the dependent variable and robustness checks. Second, I show how rural movements allowed the Santos government and FARC-EP overcome negotiation deadlock to commit to redistributing land in the settlement by raising the costs of ignoring land claims and bolstering legitimacy for redistribution. Third, I demonstrate that variation in mobilization strength offers a more compelling explanation than the alternative hypotheses of elite concession and rebel extraction. Despite similar government and rebel preferences and elite resistance within the same negotiation process, coca growers influenced dispositions on illicit crop substitution while peasants failed to include provisions on collective property rights in the final agreement.

The bargaining theory of land redistribution developed in this article contributes to scholarship on negotiated transitions, non-violent collective action, and the political economy of redistribution. First, building on growing scholarship on civilian agency in civil wars (Good, 2024; Berman et al., 2023; Nilsson and Svensson, 2023; Arjona, 2016; Kaplan, 2017), I bring non-armed social movements to the center of war termination explanations. More specifically, I suggest that civilians are not passive victims nor subordinates to warring factions and international organizations in conflict resolution (Fearon, 1995; Findley, 2013; Hartzell and Hoddie, 2007; Walter, 2021). While prior conflict resolution research focuses on the effects of formal civilian engagement on negotiation outcomes (Nilsson et al., 2020; Paffenholz, 2014), I demonstrate that unarmed, organized civilians can shape costly concessions regardless of their formal standing.

Second, I specify the causal mechanisms through which unarmed social mobilization affects redistribution in civil war settlements. Extending prior scholarship on the effect of nonviolent tactics on regime change (Pinckney, 2020; Chenoweth and Stephan, 2013; Gause, 2022; Kadivar and Ketchley, 2018; Amat and Trilling, 2025), I specify the conditions under which unarmed, civilian mobilization extracts costly concessions from recalcitrant elites. Together, material disruption and moral legitimacy allow non-armed

civilians to influence warring factions at the table. Third, I identify civil war peace processes as a novel pathway to redistribution. While the political economy literature mostly understand authoritarian incumbent calculations, revolutionary victories, and electoral incentives as the primary drivers of land redistribution (Albertus, 2015; Boone, 2014; Lapp, 2004; DeMare, 2019), I demonstrate that civil war bargaining creates openings for unarmed civilians to reconfigure property relations for the poor.

## 2 A Bargaining Theory of Land Redistribution: The Role of Rural Mobilization Strength

Land inequality operates both a driver and a consequence of civil war. Disputes over land access and use serve as a catalyst for rebellion and rural-poor mobilization (Lopez-Uribe and Sanchez Torres, 2024; Mitchell, 1968; Wood, 2003). In turn, armed confrontation exacerbates land inequality, leading to a growing number of dispossessed peasants and widespread grievances (Cramer and Richards, 2011). Under such circumstances, land becomes a central issue in peace negotiation, as addressing these grievances is essential for resolving the underlying sources of conflict (Keels and Mason, 2019). *Why is land redistribution enshrined in civil war peace settlements?*

I argue that the strength of *unarmed opposition collective action* compels warring parties to compromise on land redistribution in civil war peace settlements.<sup>1</sup> I define unarmed opposition as the collective action of *non-elite* civilians, who do not engage in insurgent action, but instead rely on their organizational and moral resources to mobilize their claims under the high-risk circumstances of civil war.<sup>2</sup> In contrast to elites, these actors draw on their territorial networks of activism rather than wealth or institutional prestige. Unlike armed groups, they do not wield the power of weapons; instead, they

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<sup>1</sup>Drawing on prior political economy scholarship (Albertus, 2015; Borras, Saturnino, 2012), I understand land redistribution as a specific form of land reform, which extracts land from prior holders—whether formally titled owners or *de facto* claimants—to poor populations. Land redistribution encompasses uncompensated or compensated expropriation of large estates to provide land for smallholders, the reallocation of contested public and private land for marginalized communities, and voluntary transfers with compensation for prior owners and free-of-charge for beneficiaries.

<sup>2</sup>I choose not to employ the term “civil society,” which is commonly used in the literature on civilian mobilization in peace processes (Paffenholz, 2014; Nilsson and Svensson, 2023; Haass et al., 2022). This label collapses diverse civilian organizations with starkly different financial capacity, prestige, and territorial presence—such as political parties, NGOs, think tanks, business associations, and social movements—into a single category.

claim legitimacy as civilians who have borne the brunt of conflict. Nor are these actors reducible to insurgent action: while they may at times share agendas with armed groups, they mobilize as autonomous civilians.

Unarmed opposition actors involve a wide range of grassroots organizations—such as labor unions, faith-based communities, neighborhood or shantytown associations, and social movements—that contest inequality and exclusion. Rural movements are often at the frontline of unarmed opposition, as the rural poor are disproportionately exposed to dispossession. Despite differences in their standpoints—such as race, ethnicity, or gender—these movements share a common plight, namely the lack of land ownership necessary for securing their livelihoods, preserving cultural practices, and exercising political autonomy.

I posit that peace negotiations create the initial conditions for redistribution. While these negotiations recalibrate government preferences and weaken the veto power of recalcitrant factions resistant to economic reform, they often introduce novel institutions—such as public forums, citizen assemblies, or constitutional conventions—that expand political space for formerly excluded actors and their suppressed demands (Fearon, 1995; García-Montoya, Güiza-Gómez, and Saffon, 2025). Peace negotiations usually involve two warring factions, who hold competing redistributive preferences. Moderate elites—often center-right or center-left governments—view peacemaking primarily as a vehicle for market integration rather than redistribution (Martin et al., 2008; Stewart and Fitzgerald, 2000). In contrast, revolutionary insurgents—who are committed to overthrowing previous orders (Balcells and Kalyvas, 2025, p. 5)—advocate for radical wealth redistribution. Their maximalist preferences are rooted in both ideological and instrumental concerns. First, highly committed insurgents often prioritize deontological reasons over strategic calculation when determining the terms of the agreement (Ginges and Atran, 2011). Second, rebel leaders perceive land reform as a potential victory they can claim credit for in post-settlement elections in which organizational survival stands a priority (Matanock, 2017).

Negotiation over land redistribution begins when revolutionary insurgents introduce land reform as a bargaining issue. Yet, rebels cannot unilaterally force the government to concede. Governments face strong incentives to resist redistributive policies, which threaten rather than advance the interests of their core constituencies (Joshi and Quinn, 2015). Business firms and landowning elites, in particular, marshal their financial and

political resources to constrain the government’s bargaining capacity to make concessions that would jeopardize their wealth, even when doing so might facilitate a settlement.

In response, insurgents seek to overcome such resistance by demonstrating military might on the battlefield. Escalated guerrilla operations signal both their capacity to prolong war and the risks of excluding redistribution from the settlement agenda (Leventoğlu and Metternich, 2018). While insurgent attacks may persuade economic elites and the government to see concessions as a less costly option compared to prolonged instability, they also cast doubt on the government’s ability to provide stability. Prolonged violence risks framing concessions as capitulation rather than negotiation, heightening elite opposition (Crisman-Cox, 2022). For instance, elites exploit temporary ceasefire breaches by insurgents, portraying costly concessions as rewards for rebel treachery, which in their view ought to be punished rather than accommodated (Sticher, 2021). Therefore, insurgents find themselves in a bind: while continued combat strengthens their bargaining position on incompatible demands central to their political program and support base, it simultaneously constrains the government’s concession capacity.

I argue that rural social movements with mobilization strength allow warring parties to overcome such redistributive gridlock. Rural movements are uniquely positioned to influence peace bargaining. Rooted in the daily grievances of the rural poor, these actors draw on embedded territorial networks to organize collective action and scale local contention outward through occupations, protests, and blockades (Kadivar and Ketchley, 2018; Thurber, 2021; Della Porta, 2014; Rossi, 2017). As local actors, movements also bridge constituencies dispersed by war, turning scattered grievances into collective demands that carry weight at the negotiating table (Berman et al., 2023; Gause, 2022; Brockett, 2005; Scott, 1992).

Mobilization strength constitutes a key property for rural movements to shape the fixed and competing preferences of government and insurgents toward redistribution. I understand mobilization strength along two dimensions: organizational capacity and distancing capacity. Mobilization strength requires a baseline of both capacities. Movements that fail in either dimension lack the organizational and credibility endurance to influence peace negotiations. Organizational capacity refers to a movement’s ability to mount multiple mobilization events—such as protest, demonstrations, or petitions—that span geographical areas and target centers of political or economic power (Collier and

Collier, 2002, p. 67). Rural movements demonstrate high organizational capacity when they launch several actions in locations central to government authority and economic development, even if these events are geographically clustered. Conversely, movements are weak on this dimension when their actions are sporadic and confined to areas outside the reach of state or capital.

Distancing capacity refers to a movements' ability to *credibly* organize as autonomous from the infrastructure and claim-making of armed actors. Building upon Bermeo (2003), I argue that distancing capacity extends beyond than mere condemnation of rebel violence. It involves maintaining independent leadership, networks, resource flows, and holding civilian demands distinct from rebel agendas. Movements exhibit high distancing capacity when both infrastructure independence and claim-making differentiation are present. A movement cannot credibly claim autonomy from armed factions if it couches demands in democratic framings but continues to operate within insurgent networks.

When movements show mobilization strength, they play three key roles in peace negotiations. First, they act as informational conduits toward both warring factions who are filled with mistrust and lack accurate knowledge of rural grievances after years of armed confrontation. Second, rural movements introduce new policy agendas that neither the government nor insurgents initially prioritize. Prolonged war often severs ties between rural populations and formal or insurgent forces, leaving both factions with outdated or incomplete expectations. Third—and most importantly—movements reshape the redistributive preferences of both parties, allowing both sides to shift toward a shared willingness to include redistribution in the settlement. Hence, I expect that:

**H1.** Rural social movements with high mobilization strength are more likely to influence the inclusion of land redistribution in civil war peace settlements.

I posit that two causal mechanisms connect the strength of rural mobilization to the inclusion of land redistribution commitments in peace settlements: crisis credibility and moral credibility. Crisis credibility arises when sustained mobilization renders land redistribution urgent for reaching a negotiated settlement. Unlike insurgents, who extract concessions through military threats, rural movements draw on organizational capacity to deploy unarmed strategies, including strikes, land occupations, and protests. These disruptions raise the costs of resistance for governments and business elites, who come to see land reform as the least costly path to stability (Collier and Collier, 2002; Garay,

2016; Wood, 2000). At the same time, mobilization provides external validation for insurgents' redistributive claims, strengthening their bargaining position. Ultimately, crisis credibility shifts the costs of sidelining redistribution from negotiated settlement. Therefore, I hypothesize that:

**H2.** Rural social movements with high mobilization strength are more likely to shape land reform in peace settlements by raising the perceived costs of excluding redistribution—that is, the crisis credibility mechanism

Moral credibility emerges when rural mobilization demonstrates that land redistribution is a legitimate demand of autonomous civilians rather than a concession coerced by armed actors. For insurgents, this civilian mandate allows them to fold redistribution into their negotiation agenda without appearing to bargain solely for organizational survival. For governments, it provides political cover to grant concessions without appearing weak or complicit. In sharp contrast to armed groups, unarmed movements often enjoy broader moral legitimacy, particularly among aggrieved rural populations and sympathetic urban constituencies (Kadivar and Ketchley, 2018; Chenoweth and Schock, 2015; Leventoğlu and Metternich, 2018). This second mechanism affords political legitimacy for redistribution, widening the scope for agreement. Hence, I hypothesize that:

**H3.** Rural social movements with high mobilization strength are more likely to shape land reform in peace settlements by increasing the legitimacy of redistribution—to wit, the moral credibility mechanism.

This argument assumes a baseline capacity for rural mobilization under conditions of civil war. Yet this capacity is not uniformly present across all conflicts. In wars where repression escalates to genocidal violence, civilian agency is often decimated, rendering movements devoid of leadership, networks, or territorial bases. Under such extreme conditions, the rural poor face significant barriers to reconstituting collective action and influencing negotiations (Stoll, 1994; Beswick, 2010, 2013). Even when rural mobilization persists, movements often confront severe stigmatization, particularly in contexts where elites collapse peaceful tactics and legitimate claims into rebellion—as observed during Cold War-era civil wars (Brockett, 2005; Carroll, 2011). In such radicalized environments, distancing capacity becomes key to signaling civilian agency and thus building legitimacy at the negotiating table.

### 3 Empirical Case: the 2012-2016 Peace Negotiation in Colombia

To test the observable implications of my argument, I examine the 2012-2016 peace negotiation between the moderate government of Juan Manuel Santos and the guerrilla group FARC-EP. Colombia constitutes a least-likely case for land redistribution in civil war peace settlements. The country experienced one of the most protracted civil wars in the Western Hemisphere, where approximately 8.3 million hectares of land—roughly twice the size of Belgium—were forcibly taken from peasants, particularly in the 1990s and 2000s (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2013, p. 76). Landed elites long resisted land redistribution despite several policies aimed at reducing land inequality (Gutiérrez Sanín, 2010; Albertus, 2015). In wartime, paramilitary groups, state forces, and rebel groups repressed civilians and dispossessed peasants of their land (Tellez, 2022; Bandiera, 2021). By design, Colombia provides a hard test of my argument: if rural social movements can shape warring factions’ commitments to redistribution under these inhospitable conditions, the argument plausibly extends beyond this case.

From the outset, land inequality emerged as a central concern at the bargaining table. In addition, the warring factions established proposal-making forums and consultation meetings to gather citizen input from a diverse array of actors, including social movements, business groups, NGOs, and political parties. Proposal-making forums entailed state-sanctioned, nationwide meetings facilitated by nonpartisan actors like the United Nations Development Program and Universidad Nacional de Colombia. To minimize citizen co-optation, neither Santos’ administration nor FARC-EP could participate in these meetings (Oficina del Alto Comisionado para la Paz - Presidencia de la República, 2018, p. 46). Consultation meetings invited external actors to offer in-depth insights given their technical expertise, academic work, and first-hand experience (Oficina del Alto Comisionado para la Paz - Presidencia de la República, 2018, p. 45-46) (interviews 20, 29, 26, 47). Adhering to principles of confidentiality, non-mediation, and celerity, the negotiating parties facilitated these participatory spaces while retaining their own bargaining capacity. Thus, civilian organizations formally lacked decision-making authority and were unlikely to shape negotiation outcomes directly.

At the same time, rural movements staged widespread protests and strikes, notably

during the nationwide 2013 agrarian strike (Belgioioso et al., 2024). Demonstrators included small- and mid-sized farmers from well-integrated areas, as well as poor peasant settlers, landless workers, and indigenous peoples from marginal frontier regions. Key demands included land redistribution, state restrictions on extractive industries, and tariff protections for domestic agriculture. Between 2013 and 2014, coca-growing peasants also launched regional strikes across the country, demanding state-sponsored crop substitution programs, land ownership and collective rights, and reparations for forced eradication (Cruz Rodríguez, 2017; Ramírez, 2017).

On August 26, 2016, the warring factions signed a comprehensive peace agreement, which includes three cornerstone land reform mechanisms. First, the accord established a land fund aimed at granting poor peasants farmland property rights free of charge, which contrasts with other land mechanisms outlined in peace accords, such as the Guatemalan land fund that allocated land through credits (Granovsky-Larsen, 2019). This fund re-allocates 3 million hectares of land from private owners who had unlawfully acquired property to landless peasants. It also formalizes property rights for 7 million hectares already occupied by small-scale farmers.

A key component of land reform is the crop substitution program for coca-growing peasants. This program offers land property rights, agricultural services, and cash transfers and food aid to support peasants in ceasing coca cultivation. Unlike previous programs that forcibly eradicated crops, this initiative encourages peasants to voluntarily cease coca cultivation through participatory institutions at the local level. Second, state agricultural services encompass housing, technical assistance, public infrastructure, and credit for land reform beneficiaries. Third, the peace accord boosts the 2011 land restitution program aimed at recovering property rights and use over dispossessed land by strengthening agricultural service and return programs for victims of forced displacement and dispossession.

## 4 Mixed-Methods Research Design

I employ a mixed-methods research design that integrates natural language processing techniques, regression models, and process tracing. The quantitative analysis assesses *whether* rural movements shaped peace agreement content (Hypothesis 1), testing the

internal validity of my argument. The qualitative analysis probes *how* these actors influenced the accord, elucidating the causal mechanisms of crisis credibility and moral credibility (Hypothesis 2 and 3). Drawing upon Causal Process Observations (CPOs) embedded in an analytical narrative, I evaluate two main rival explanations—the elite concession hypothesis and the rebel extraction hypothesis. Together, quantitative and qualitative evidence allows me to evaluate both the average effects of rural mobilization on the 2016 peace agreement and the process through which movements influenced redistributive commitments.

My data repertoire includes in-depth interviews, novel negotiation archives, and an original dataset on citizen proposals sent to the peace table, which were collected over four fieldwork waves between 2021 and 2023. I conducted 47 interviews with government and FARC negotiators, advisors to each negotiating team, and movement leaders, who directly participated in negotiation to varying degrees. More details on recruitment strategies, interview questionnaires, coding, and saturation can be found in Online Appendix Subsections 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, and 5.4. Archival materials include peace negotiation records, rural movements’ demands, and protest agreements, which were retrieved from open-source digital archives and fieldwork collection. A full list of archival materials can be found in Online Appendix Subsection 5.5.

The dataset documents civilian organization proposals submitted to the Havana peace table through participatory fora between 2012 and 2016. I take advantage of access to a comprehensive dataset recording 67,371 proposals submitted by 18,766 individuals (46,17% men, 31,83% women, and 21,99% unspecified gender) and 4,101 international, national, and local organizations. Since the original data do not assign unique IDs to individual petitioners, I focus on variation within collective petitioners. I constructed a new database disaggregating 8,238 rural-related proposals from 1,390 collective petitioners, coding organization profiles, represented constituencies, issue classification across the peace agenda, and geographic scope of each.

To test Hypothesis 1, I estimate correlations between the type of civilian organizations that submitted petitions to the Havana peace table and the degree of similarity between these proposals and land provisions in the 2016 agreement. The dependent variable is the inclusion of commitments on land redistribution in the 2016 peace settlement.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Following Joshi et al. (2015), I understand peace agreement commitments as dispositions that en-

To operationalize this outcome, I measure the degree of similarity between each citizen proposal and land-related provisions in the peace agreement, using both semantic and lexical similarity metrics. First, I apply a Sentence-BERT (SBERT) model to capture deeper semantic relationships between proposals and agreement content (Reimers and Gurevych, 2019). SBERT generates contextual embeddings by encoding dense vector representations that reflect sentence meaning accounting for both word order and surrounding context. In my dataset, SBERT similarity scores range from 0.137 to 0.769, with a mean of 0.453. Alternatively, I implement a Bag-of-Words (BoW) model with term frequency–inverse document frequency (TF-IDF) weighting, which captures shared vocabulary or identical text segments between proposal and the agreement. This method converts each document into a high-dimensional vector of word frequencies and compares them by calculating the cosine of the angle between these vectors. Scores range from  $-1$  (completely dissimilar) to  $1$  (identical); in my dataset, they span from 0.02 to 0.716, with a mean of 0.306. Appendix Section 1.2 details the implementation of BoW cosine similarity.

The key independent variable is the strength of rural mobilization, which is measured as a binary indicator—equal to 1 if at least one rural movement signed the proposal—and the proportion of rural movements per proposal. I manually coded citizen organizations into rural movements or non-rural movements for each proposal submitted to the Havana peace table. Rural movements include grassroots organizations—such as community action boards (or village- and neighborhood-level organizations), or territorial organizations (or *movimientos de base*)—that represent the rural poor—including indigenous *resguardos* or Afro-descendant collective territories and peasant organizations. Non-rural movements encompass NGOs, think tanks, business firms, economic interest groups, and political parties. Coding procedures are detailed in Appendix Section 1.3.

To evaluate the relationship between rural mobilization and the inclusion of land-related provisions in the 2016 peace agreement, I estimate OLS regression models with year-fixed effects and heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors. The unit of analysis is the individual citizen proposal submitted by civilian organizations. To improve comparability across variables and enhance interpretability, I standardize continuous covariates. The general model is specified as follows:

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shrine concrete, executable policies.

$$Y_{jt} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \cdot \text{RuralMobilization}_{jt} + \beta' \text{Controls}_{jt} + \gamma_t + \varepsilon_{jt} \quad (1)$$

Where  $Y_{jt}$  is the standardized similarity score for proposal  $j$  submitted in year  $t$  and  $\text{RuralMobilization}_{jt}$  is either the binary indicator of rural signatories or the proportion of rural movement signatories.  $\text{Controls}_{jt}$  is a matrix of standardized proposal-level controls. The vector  $\gamma_t$  captures year fixed effects, which absorb time-specific shocks—such as changes in peace negotiation—that might otherwise confound the relationship between mobilization and agreement content. Since the dataset is aggregated at the proposal level and does not retain grouping identifiers such as organization or municipality codes, clustering standard errors at those levels is not feasible. Therefore, I employ HC3 heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors, which provide finite-sample corrections for high-leverage observations and are asymptotically equivalent to clustered standard errors when within-group correlation is absent.

I include proposal-level covariates that may influence proposal-agreement similarity scores. Proposal length (logged word count) controls for the possibility that longer petitions might be more likely to show high similarity with the agreement as they elaborate more detailed arguments. Thematic coverage is a binary variable that takes 1 when a proposal addresses more than one peace agenda item. Proposals connected to multiple agenda items might be more likely to resonate with warring factions. Endowed organizations is a variable measuring the number of civilian organizations reliant upon prestige or institutional access—such as political parties, non-grassroots NGOs, and think tanks—that submitted petitions independently. These actors may shape dispositions through credibility or institutional access rather than grassroots organizing. As per hypothesis 1, I expect that proposals endorsed by at least one rural movement will show higher similarity to land commitments in the peace agreement.

To test Hypotheses 2 and 3, I use process tracing to probe the causal mechanisms of crisis credibility and moral credibility. I draw on qualitative causal-process observations (CPOs) embedded in an analytic narrative that reconstructs the causal chain wherein rural movements influenced negotiations over redistributive land reform (Collier et al., 2004). I then evaluate this evidence based on my main hypothesis against the alternative hypotheses of elite concession and rebel extraction (Liu, 2024; Zaks, 2017). Holding constant government and rebel preferences and elite resistance, I examine whether rural

mobilization strength explains divergent outcomes in two negotiation deadlocks over illicit crop substitution and communal property rights. Table 1 lays out key qualitative and quantitative pieces of evidence (CPOs).

**Table 1:** Causal-Process Observations In Colombia’s Peace Bargaining of Land Redistribution

CPO	Evidence	Description	Likelihood under Main Hypotheses	Likelihood under Elite-Concession Hypothesis	Likelihood under Rebel-Extraction Hypothesis	Test
1	Emergence of Negotiation Deadlock over Land Redistribution	While the Santos government pursued non-redistributive land policies, FARC-EP took a maximalist stance (Interviews 5, 17, 20, 22, 23, 26, 29, 30, 46; negotiation records).	Likely	Likely	Likely	Straw-in-the-Wind
2	Rural Movements as Enablers of Commitment	Movements performed as information conduits and agenda-setters (Interviews 1, 3, 4, 16, 17, 20, 23, 29, 46, 47; negotiation records).	Highly Likely	Unlikely	Unlikely	Smoking Gun
3	Crisis Credibility	Movements raised the costs of resistance to redistribution (Interviews 5, 20, 29, 30; news coverage)	Highly Likely	Unlikely	Unlikely	Smoking Gun
4	Moral Credibility	Movements increased the legitimacy of redistributive demands at the table (Interviews 5, 9, 15, 23).	Highly Likely	Unlikely	Unlikely	Smoking Gun
5	Variation in the Effects of Rural Mobilization	Under similar conditions, coca-growing peasant movements succeed in compelling the signatories to address their demands, while, other movements failed to force the negotiating parties to include communal property demands (interviews 2, 4, 12, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 22, 23, 24, 26, 27, 28, 30, 37, 39, 40, 41, 44; negotiation archives; news coverage)	Highly Likely	Highly Unlikely	Highly Unlikely	Doubly-Decisive

## 5 Assessing the Inclusion of Rural Demands into Peace Agreement Content (H1)

To assess whether rural movement demands incorporated into the peace agreement—and to strengthen the internal validity of the argument—I estimate whether proposals submitted to the Havana peace table by rural movements exhibit higher textual alignment with the agreement’s land provisions than proposals from other civilian organizations in the full corpus of 8,238 observations. Table 2 reports estimates from OLS models, using alternative operationalizations of the dependent variable. Models 1–4 employ the SBERT algorithm that accounts for semantic alignment, while Models 5–8 rely on the bag-of-word algorithm that captures lexical overlap. Models 1, 2, 5, and 6 present baseline specifications, whereas models 3, 4, 7, and 8 include year fixed effects. All models employ HC3 heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors. Before reporting estimates, it is worth noting that SBERT similarity scores in the sample span a relatively narrow range from 0.302 at the 5th percentile to 0.615 at the 95th percentile. This distributional range is essential for interpreting coefficient magnitudes.

OLS regression estimates indicate that rural mobilization is associated with greater semantic alignment between citizen proposals and the peace agreement’s land commitments at a statistically significant level (H 1). In Model 1—the baseline specification—proposals endorsed by at least one rural movement score 0.186 standard deviations higher on semantic similarity compared to those without rural movements’ endorsement ( $p < 0.001$ ), holding other variables constant. In the full specification with year fixed effects (Model 3), this estimate is 0.193 standard deviations ( $p < 0.001$ ). Converting to the raw similarity scale, these coefficients correspond to increases of approximately 0.017–0.018 similarity points relative to a sample mean of 0.454, which is equivalent to roughly 5 percent of the observed distributional range and a shift of approximately 7 percentile ranks up the similarity distribution. Using the continuous measure of mobilization strength, Models 2 and 4 show that a one-standard-deviation increase in the proportion of rural movement petitioners is associated with increases of 0.092 and 0.086 standard deviations respectively ( $p < 0.001$ ), corresponding to raw increases of approximately 0.008 similarity points or roughly 3 percent of the observed spread.

**Table 2:** Main OLS Results

	SBERT Similarity				BoW Similarity			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Rural Movement (Dummy)	0.186*** (0.031)		0.193*** (0.030)		0.103** (0.038)		0.126*** (0.032)	
Rural Movement (Proportion)		0.092*** (0.014)		0.086*** (0.014)		0.057*** (0.016)		0.058*** (0.014)
Number of Signatures (std)	-0.025** (0.009)	-0.011 (0.009)	-0.036*** (0.009)	-0.020* (0.009)	-0.003 (0.010)	0.005 (0.010)	-0.017 (0.011)	-0.007 (0.011)
Proposal Length (log, std)	0.463*** (0.012)	0.464*** (0.012)	0.443*** (0.012)	0.444*** (0.012)	0.384*** (0.011)	0.385*** (0.011)	0.341*** (0.010)	0.342*** (0.010)
Thematic Coverage	0.088*** (0.020)	0.090*** (0.020)	0.146*** (0.020)	0.147*** (0.020)	0.123*** (0.021)	0.124*** (0.021)	0.144*** (0.021)	0.144*** (0.021)
Endowed Organizations (std)	0.032* (0.014)	0.031* (0.013)	0.042** (0.014)	0.034* (0.014)	-0.009 (0.021)	-0.006 (0.019)	0.002 (0.017)	-0.002 (0.016)
Observations	8238	8238	8238	8238	8237	8237	8237	8237
Mean of Dependent Variable	0.454	0.454	0.454	0.454	0.306	0.306	0.306	0.306

\* p < 0.05, \*\* p < 0.01, \*\*\* p < 0.001

Similarity measured via SBERT (M1–M4) and Bag-of-Words (M5–M8).

Models 5—8 show that these results hold across specifications employing the bag-of-word algorithm. Yet the effect sizes are relatively smaller in magnitude. Proposals endorsed by at least one rural movement score 0.103 standard deviations higher on lexical similarity in the baseline specification (Model 5,  $p < 0.01$ ) and 0.126 standard deviations higher in the full specification (Model 7,  $p < 0.001$ ). These coefficients correspond to raw increases of 0.010—0.013 similarity points relative to a BoW sample mean of 0.306. In Models 6 and 8, the proportion estimates are 0.057—0.058 standard deviations ( $p < 0.001$ ), equivalent to approximately 0.006 similarity points.

These findings may still raise concerns based on two main threats to inference. First, these correlations might be spurious if both citizen proposals and the peace agreement drew on a shared, previous agrarian discourse that circulated long before peace negotiation. If that were the case, movement-endorsed proposals would only share surface-level jargon with the agreement and these petitions would exhibit systematically higher similarity across land-related sections of the peace agreement. To address this possibility, I operationalize the dependent variable through SBERT similarity measuring whether citizen proposals and the peace agreement align in policy content. Had movement-endorsed proposals only shared common vocabulary with the agreement regardless of policy content, they would have scored higher on BoW similarity—which registers lexical overlap—but lower on SBERT similarity. Consistent with expectation, the estimates are positive and significant across SBERT and BoW models, strengthening the inference that rural movements shaped the agreement’s content rather than merely its vocabulary.

As a robustness check, I recompute semantic, SBERT similarity by restricting comparisons to specific thematic sections. Table 3 reports estimates along the themes of land reform, ex-combatant economic reintegration, land reform in coca-growing areas, and victims’ land restitution. Contrary to the common-cause expectation, the results show that rural mobilization is not associated with uniformly higher similarity across all topics. Models 1-4 and 9-12 show that rural mobilization is positively associated with semantic similarity in provisions related to broad land reform (peace agreement’s first chapter) and land reform in coca-growing areas (accord’s fourth chapter). By contrast, Models 13-16 show no statistically significant relationship between rural mobilization and similarity in provisions on victims’ land restitution. As shown in Models 5-8, neither measure of rural mobilization is statistically associated with similarity on ex-combatant economic reinte-

gration. This finding runs counter to the rebel-extraction hypothesis—which I examine at length below—which posits that rural protest primarily enhances rebels’ bargaining leverage to secure benefits—such as land allocations—targeted at former combatants. Instead, the absence of such relationships suggests that rural mobilization is not simply an epiphenomenon of rebel bargaining.

Second, these estimates might only reflect self-selection into proposal-making forums. Organizations engaged with these participatory forums may differ from those that did not in mobilization resources or linkages with either the government or guerrilla group. If this selection is correlated with proposal-agreement similarity—because, for instance, better-equipped, well-connected organizations may anticipate negotiator preferences—it biases these estimates against finding a positive rural movement effect, as endowed organizations such as NGOs or political parties would instead produce higher-similarity proposals. Moreover, the main results remain robust after accounting for potential confounds, such as proposal length and endowed organizations. Particularly, the positive and significant coefficients on endowed organization in the SBERT models indicate that resource-rich organizations such as business associations or political parties exert some influence on policy alignment, yet it does not attenuate the rural movement estimates.

The Online Appendix Subsection 2.1 presents results from these model specifications that retain variables at their original scale. I also conduct two robustness checks. First, I re-estimate the models on a restricted sample of proposals submitted before the parties announced partial agreements on each negotiation item, yielding a lower-bound estimate of the relationship. As shown in Table 5 in Online Appendix Subsection 3.1, the main results remain robust. Second, I replicate the analysis using cosine similarity scores between proposals and the revised peace agreement signed on November 24, 2016, following the October 2 plebiscite in which citizens rejected the peace accord by a narrow margin of 0.4% (See Online Appendix Subsection 3.2). In addition, I implement a placebo test using security-sector reform proposals matched to agreement sections that addressed security issues. Since the final agreement did not provide for security sector reform, this test allows me to assess whether the observed associations are artifacts of the similarity metric or text length. As shown in Online Appendix Section 4, no statistically significant correlations are found in this placebo sample, lending support to the measurement validity of the main results.

**Table 3:** OLS Analysis of Proposals and Agreement Similarity Per Thematic Section (SBERT, standardized)

	Land Reform				Ex-combatant Economic Reintegration				Land Reform in Coca-Growing Areas				Victims' Land Restitution			
	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6	M7	M8	M9	M10	M11	M12	M13	M14	M15	M16
Rural Movement (Dummy)	0.166*** (0.043)		0.175*** (0.044)		0.225 (0.199)		0.219 (0.192)		0.292 (0.154)		0.243 (0.143)		0.124* (0.050)		0.086 (0.048)	
Rural Movement (Proportion)		0.073*** (0.020)		0.071*** (0.021)		0.007 (0.089)		0.007 (0.085)		0.128* (0.052)		0.100* (0.047)		0.042 (0.022)		0.036 (0.021)
Number of Signatures	-0.007 (0.013)	0.004 (0.013)	-0.014 (0.013)	-0.002 (0.013)	0.025 (0.062)	0.040 (0.063)	0.082 (0.074)	0.097 (0.075)	0.083** (0.031)	0.105*** (0.030)	0.093** (0.031)	0.111*** (0.030)	0.046** (0.017)	0.057*** (0.016)	0.071** (0.023)	0.080*** (0.022)
Proposal Length (log)	0.438*** (0.015)	0.438*** (0.015)	0.423*** (0.015)	0.424*** (0.015)	0.429*** (0.068)	0.426*** (0.069)	0.363*** (0.072)	0.361*** (0.073)	0.404*** (0.049)	0.404*** (0.049)	0.372*** (0.051)	0.371*** (0.051)	0.485*** (0.023)	0.486*** (0.023)	0.523*** (0.023)	0.524*** (0.023)
Thematic Coverage	-0.299*** (0.027)	-0.297*** (0.027)	-0.183*** (0.030)	-0.183*** (0.030)	0.026 (0.137)	0.012 (0.138)	0.234 (0.153)	0.224 (0.154)	0.207** (0.079)	0.211** (0.079)	0.282*** (0.082)	0.285*** (0.082)	-0.136*** (0.035)	-0.136*** (0.035)	-0.105** (0.035)	-0.105** (0.035)
Endowed Organizations	0.012 (0.021)	0.005 (0.021)	0.023 (0.022)	0.011 (0.023)	0.194* (0.095)	0.120 (0.090)	0.201* (0.095)	0.127 (0.090)	0.035 (0.104)	0.021 (0.053)	0.030 (0.092)	0.014 (0.037)	0.047* (0.021)	0.033 (0.019)	0.033 (0.019)	0.028 (0.019)
Num.Obs.	4713	4713	4713	4713	251	251	251	251	539	539	539	539	2735	2735	2735	2735
R2	0.199	0.199	0.217	0.216	0.196	0.190	0.251	0.246	0.214	0.213	0.242	0.241	0.231	0.230	0.258	0.258
R2 Adj.	0.198	0.198	0.215	0.214	0.179	0.174	0.223	0.218	0.207	0.206	0.230	0.228	0.230	0.229	0.255	0.255
Std.Errors	HC3	HC3	HC3	HC3	HC3	HC3	HC3	HC3	HC3	HC3	HC3	HC3	HC3	HC3	HC3	HC3
FE: Year			YES	YES			YES	YES			YES	YES			YES	YES

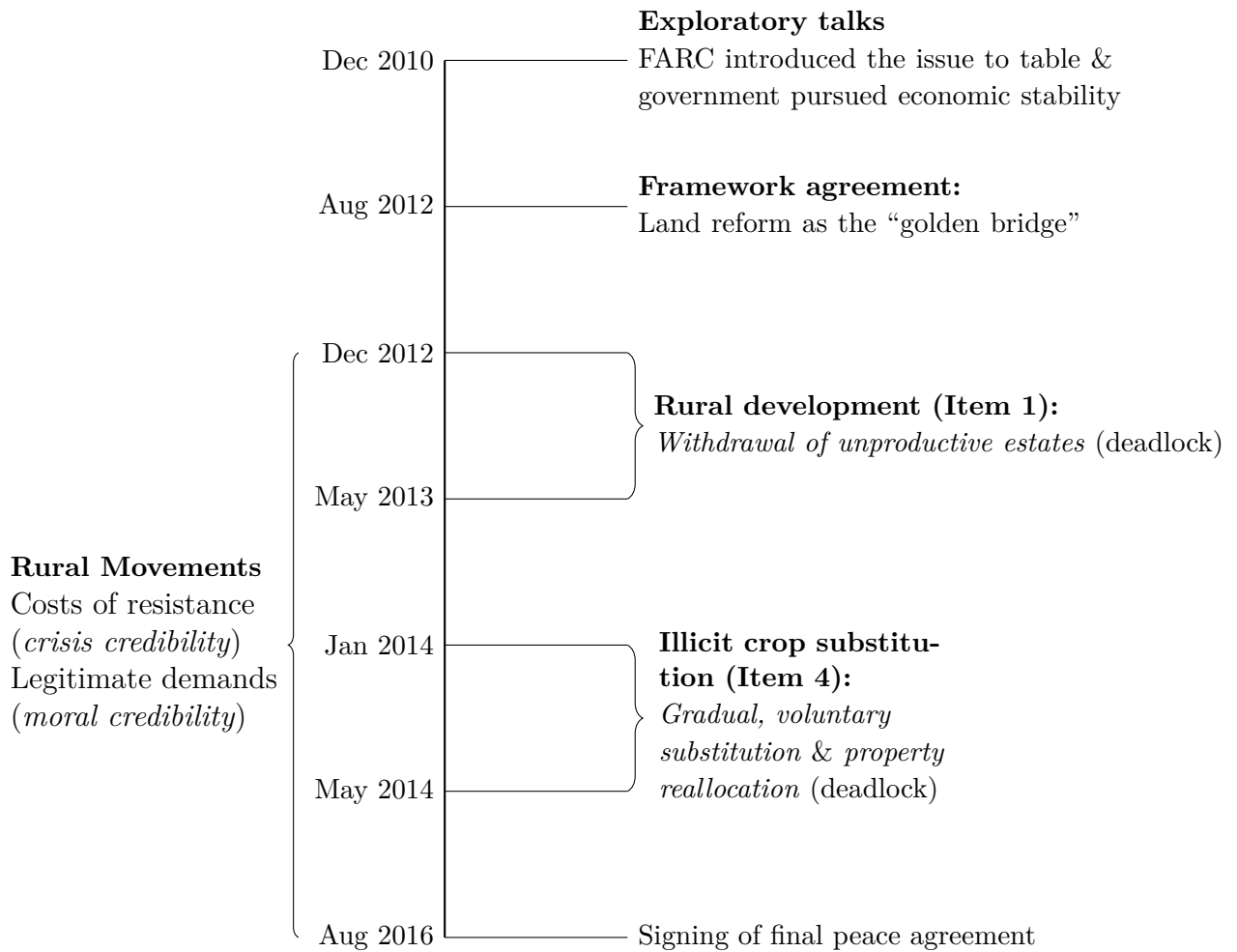
\* p &lt;0.05, \*\* p &lt;0.01, \*\*\* p &lt;0.001

## 6 Tracing Deadlock and Commitment in Land Redistribution Bargaining (H 1, 2, and 3)

Natural language processing and regression analyses suggest that rural movement proposals are positively associated with land reform stipulations in the peace agreement. Through process tracing, I track down the causal chain connecting negotiation deadlock over land redistribution and the inclusion of redistributive commitments into the 2016 peace agreement. Employing CPOs embedded in an analytic narrative (Collier et al., 2004), I trace how the negotiating parties entered deadlocks over redistributive reform and rural movements allowed them to reach compromise (H 1) by activating the mechanisms of crisis credibility (H 2) and moral credibility (H 3).

In the Colombian peace process, land redistribution emerged as a central bargaining issue at the table yet it rapidly became subject to negotiation impasses due to the warring sides' divergent redistributive preferences. The signatories addressed land claims in the first agenda item on rural development between December 2012 and May 2013, and the fourth item on illicit crop substitution from January to May 2014. In both instances, rural movements deployed their organizational and moral assets to shape the terms of compromise, performing as informational conduits, agenda setters, and drivers of preferences. As autonomous, unarmed civilians, these movements engaged in formal participatory platforms introduced by the negotiating parties—such as proposal-making forums and parallel talks—and nationwide protest activity. Figure 2 maps the critical events along the causal chain connecting initial deadlock over land reform to the signing of the peace agreement that incorporated land redistribution commitments.

**Figure 2:** Peace Bargaining of Land Redistribution



## 6.1 The Bargaining Problem of Land Redistribution

Between December 2012 and August 2012—when peace negotiation remained behind doors at an exploratory stage—both the Santos’ administration and FARC-EP held fixed, competing preferences toward redistribution, which locked them in negotiation impasses (CPO 1 in Table 1). Land inequality surfaced as a central issue early in the talks when FARC-EP conditioned the formal launch of negotiation on including land reform in the agenda (interviews 17, 22, 23, 26, and 46) (Acosta, 2010). Initially, insurgents insisted on expropriation as the chief mechanism for land reform, reflecting both this guerrilla group’s ideological commitments and recruitment base (interviews 22, 26, and 46). Expropriatory land reform had long represented “FARC-EP’s DNA,” as former high commanders

described it (interviews 23 and 26).<sup>4</sup> The group’s composition reinforced this stance: Of the 10,015 combatants who demobilized in 2017, 7,012 (70%) were peasants (Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2017).

In contrast, the Santos government held minimalist preferences, viewing peace negotiation as a vehicle for global market integration rather than redistribution (interviews 5 and 20). As a high-ranked official noted, “diminishing land concentration was not necessarily incompatible with foreign investment in the countryside (...) where there was enough farmland to address rural unrest and boost food production for international supply chains” (interview 5). Such position aligned closely with the administration’s development strategy, which prioritized mining and agribusiness over redistributive policies for the rural poor (Jaskoski, 2022; Shenk, 2022; García-Montoya, Güiza-Gómez, and Montoya, 2026).

Against this backdrop of competing preferences, the August 2012 framework agreement marked an inflection point. The Santos government agreed to place land issues on the negotiating agenda (Gobierno de Colombia, nd). Officials described this concession as “the ‘golden bridge’ for FARC-EP” (interviews 5, 20, 29, and 30) (Gobierno de Colombia, 2012b). Declassified drafts from February and April 2012 included an agenda covering land titling, restitution for victims of civil war dispossession, and state support for illicit crop substitution under the rubric of ‘agrarian development and rural poverty’ (Gobierno de Colombia, 2012b,a).

Following this framework agreement, peace talks moved toward agrarian development and rural poverty yet the warring factions remained deadlocked over redistribution. Guerrilla negotiators agreed to forgo blanket expropriation, acknowledging that radical land reform is rarely achieved through negotiated settlement and instead often follows revolutionary victories—as seen in China, Russia, and Cuba (interviews 22, 26, and 46). Still rebels insisted on land reform mechanisms aimed at reclaiming large, unproductive estates and the reallocation of land property to peasants who gradually moved away from coca-leaf cultivation (interviews 23 and 26) (FARC-EP, 2012). By contrast, the govern-

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<sup>4</sup>At the seventh conference held in 1982, the group issued a “revolutionary agrarian reform bill” mandating *de facto* redistribution from large landowners to landless peasants. Land reform had previously been a key theme in peace talks, including the 1984 La Uribe accord and the 1999 FARC-EP Shared Agenda for Change discussed during the El Caguán peace talks. At these talks, the guerrilla group also proposed an illicit crop substitution plan—which was crafted by its high commander Manuel Marulanda Vélez—advancing a broader understanding of land reform that extended to war economies.

ment narrowed land inequality issues down to violent dispossession, insecure property rights, and agricultural services for peasants who were no longer involved in the coca-leaf economy (interview 5). For Santos' team, farmers could legitimately hold vast tracts of land—regardless of use—so as long as ownership was not tied to drug trafficking or wartime seizure (Bermúdez Liévano, 2018, p. 84).

## **6.2 Rural Movements as Enablers of Commitment: Crisis and Moral Credibility**

Rural movements emerged as autonomous, unarmed civilians, who helped the factions overcome such deadlocks by playing three main roles in peace negotiation (CPO 2 in Table 1). First, these movements transmitted local grievances to both sides to the negotiating table. Government and insurgent representatives alike drew upon movement demands to refine their proposals, viewing rural organizations as “ears on the ground” after a long war that had left both sides disconnected from land grievances (interview 29). Government negotiators used movement demands to gauge whether proposed policies “would resonate with affected communities” (interview 20). Similarly, insurgent negotiators grounded their demands on rural populations' grievances, systematically aligning their negotiation documents with the language of rural grievances (interviews 16 and 23).

Second, rural movements introduced substantive policy inputs that expanded the scope of warring side's preferences. Advisors emphasized that movements directed attention beyond land titling to issues such as agricultural subsidies (interviews 29 and 47) and land reform tailored to coca-growing regions (interview 30). FARC-EP negotiators also used rural movement demands to update their stance on economic redistribution at the bargaining table, aligning it more closely with contemporary rural conflicts (interviews 4, 16, 17, 23, and 46). A former high-ranking commander acknowledged that movement claims updated his understanding of rural grievances: “I had never encountered demands like food sovereignty until I read proposals from the first nationwide proposal-making forum in December 2012” (interview 17). Echoing this point, peasant leaders noted that while FARC-EP “had historically framed peasants as agrarian wage-laborers within a class-based paradigm” (interview 1), the guerrilla group “adapted its approach to incorporate claims linking land access to political incorporation, which had been largely overlooked in rebel agendas” (interview 3).

Third, rural movements shaped the fixed and competing preferences of warring factions through two mechanisms: crisis credibility and moral credibility. Through crisis credibility, rural mobilization increased the government's capacity to make costly concessions despite business resistance (CPO 3 in Table 1). Although expropriation was swiftly ruled out, alternative land reform measures encountered strong opposition from economic elites, who only pursued property rights security (interviews 5 and 29). Business groups closely monitored peace talks, holding regular checkup meetings with officials and appointing key representatives to the government's negotiating team (Portafolio, 2015; RCN, 2015). Figures such as Sergio Jaramillo (High Commissioner for Peace, formerly head of the business-led think tank *Fundación Ideas para la Paz*), Frank Pearl (former CEO in major private firms), Alejandro Éder (a prominent figure in the Valle del Cauca sugar industry), and Luis Carlos Villegas (president of the National Business Association, ANDI) worked to align peace commitments with private sector interests (interviews 5, 20, and 29).

Rural movements drew on their organizational capacity to stage widespread protest across Colombian municipalities, raising the costs of resisting reform. Government negotiators recalled that demonstrations compelled them to broaden the range of acceptable concessions. One official emphasized that “the negotiation team actively coordinated with local government branches tasked with managing protests, both to contain rural contention and to ensure that local negotiations with protesters aligned with peace dispositions under discussion in Havana” (interview 30). However, such grassroots influence was largely unanticipated. Santos' administration had merely regarded citizens as instruments for triggering political buy-in. As one government negotiator remarked, “citizen engagement was a small concession” because “citizens cannot act as referees or mediators” (interview 5).

Through moral credibility, rural movements increased legitimacy for land reform by reframing it as a civilian demand rather than a rebel reward (CPO 4 in Table 1). Initially, FARC-EP claimed a spokesperson role for rural grievances, borrowing movement petitions to bolster its stance. A former commander noted: “In Havana, we simply demonstrated that land reform demands came from rural communities rather than just insurgents” (interview 23). Yet this strategy risked backfiring because elites could brand costly concessions as rebel victories. Government negotiators warned against meeting

maximalist guerrilla demands, which would erode public support for the peace process by raising the question of why the government “should address policies with those who bore weapons?” (Gobierno de Colombia, 2012b, p. 5).

To counter this perception, movements cultivated distancing capacity to detach land reform from insurgent ownership and recast it as a broad civic mandate. Interviewees consistently highlighted how grassroots organizations leveraged their moral authority as *unarmed* civilians who did not participate in the war. As one activist put it, “peasant organizations conveyed a clear message to the government: we raise land demands on our own terms, seeking to influence reform in the agreement” (interview 15). An indigenous leader echoed this point, noting that “ethnic movements articulated their claims as civilians who were not represented by any side to the table—particularly FARC, which sought to claim the role of spokesperson for rural communities” (interview 9).

The unarmed nature of rural mobilization provided a credible counterweight to government and elite skepticism. An official underscored: “If the government was negotiating peace with a guerrilla group, how could it ignore unarmed civilians raising parallel rural claims?” (interview 5). Taken together, this evidence suggests that rural movements positioned land reform as an urgent and legitimate commitment in the final peace agreement, thereby supporting the main hypothesis.

## **7 Alternative Explanations: Elite Concession and Rebel Extraction**

I now turn to assess two main alternative explanations for redistributive commitments in the 2016 peace agreement (CPO 5 in Table 1). The elite concession hypothesis holds that negotiated settlements include redistributive provisions when moderate governments gain autonomy from recalcitrant factions and adopt pro-poor preferences (Albertus and Menaldo, 2017; García Trujillo, 2020). Applied to Colombia, this account expects that President Santos would pursue redistributive reform in the peace agreement, since his administration had gained autonomy from Alvaro Uribe’s faction, which represented rentier capital opposed to peace negotiation and redistribution. Signaling preferences for pro-poor policies, Santos’ administration had already enacted a land restitution program in 2011—a year before the Havana talks began. In contrast, the rebel extraction hypothesis

posits that redistribution is forged in negotiations when rebels exploit civilian mobilization to strengthen their bargaining leverage at the table (Leventoğlu and Metternich, 2018; Fearon, 1995). In the Colombian case, this alternative account expects FARC-EP would extract redistribution from the government by channeling peasant protest into bargaining power at the table.

To test these explanations, I compare two negotiation deadlocks, namely illicit crop substitution and communal property rights for peasant communities. Both cases involved costly concessions, elite resistance, government minimalist preferences, and rebels' hard stance. Yet the peace agreement ultimately enshrined commitments on crop substitution yet excluded provisions on communal land ownership. This most-similar comparison probes whether variation in mobilization strength—rather than elite concessions or rebel extraction—better accounts for why some redistributive demands enter peace settlements while others do not.

In the first case, illicit crop substitution remained a contentious issue at the table between January 2013 and May 2014. Nearly a year before the topic was formally addressed, FARC-EP proposed the transfer of land rights and agricultural support for coca growers, along with the legalization of drug cultivation for cultural and therapeutic purposes (Bermúdez Liévano, 2013c). This proposal stood in sharp contrast to the government's militarized "war on drugs" strategy, which had relied on forced eradication and criminal prosecution. Between 1994 and 2015, 1.8 million hectares of coca leaf were fumigated, causing environmental and health crises (Rodríguez, 2020; Lyons, 2018). From 2005 to 2013, approximately 1,500 peasants were imprisoned on drug-trafficking charges (Gobierno de Colombia, 2014a). Such militarized approach excluded coca growers from land reform, offering only conditional cash transfers once crops were forcibly eradicated and promoting agribusiness projects on cleared land (Presidencia de la República, 2008; Gutiérrez Montenegro, 2016). Against the elite concession hypothesis, Santos' administration did not endorse pro-poor reform.

This issue reached deadlock at the bargaining table. On June 11, 2013, peasant movements launched a 53-day strike in Catatumbo—a coca-growing region bordering Venezuela that ranked third in coca cultivation in 2012 (Oficina de las Naciones Unidas contra la Droga y El Delito, 2013). Approximately 7,000 participants demanded the reallocation of property rights to the poor, communal-use programs, and a halt on forced

eradication and criminal prosecution (Tiempo, 2013b; Cruz Rodríguez, 2017). These demands nonetheless encountered resistance from oil palm firms, refinery companies, and drug-trafficking networks, which each sought to preserve control over land for extraction (interviews 19 and 24) (Espinosa Rincón, 2018). Protest raised the costs of excluding redistribution from the negotiated settlement. Movements blocked major transportation routes for oil palm and refinery companies while cutting off commerce with Venezuela (Tiempo, 2013a). Oil palm firms reported losses of over 1.2 million hectares of produce, amounting to roughly \$5 million USD during the protests (Fedepalma, 2013).

Nonetheless, state officials initially rejected engagement with movements. President Santos and the Minister of Defense alleged that guerrilla fighters, disguised as civilians, were orchestrating the protests to establish an autonomous zone for coca cultivation and arms trafficking (Tiempo, 2013d). The police and military cracked down unarmed civilians, leaving 4 dead and over 200 injured (interviews 18, 19, 24, and 41).

Civilian casualties, however, sparked condemnation of state repression among local authorities, members of Congress, and the UN Office for Human Rights in Colombia (The Governor of Norte de Santander et al., 2013; Semana, 2013b; Marcha Patriótica, 2013). The Vice-President publicly sided with coca growers, remarking that the government “should not pose heavier hand on those who comply with the law than those who act outside it.” As such, this statement questioned the government’s dual approach to rural grievances wherein Santos’ administration advanced peace negotiation over agrarian issues with FARC-EP in Havana yet refused to engage with unarmed civilians protesting in Colombia’s countryside (Tiempo, 2013c).

Between August and December 2013, sustained mobilization forced the government to seal agreements with peasant organizations, allocating cash transfers and agricultural assistance for agricultural transition. These agreements also halted forced eradication and provided reparations for fumigation victims. Importantly, they mandated administrative agencies to prioritize property rights allocation in coca-growing areas (Mac Master and Quintero, 2013; Escobar Arango and Abril Abril, 2013; Escobar Arango et al., 2013). These Catatumbo protest negotiations set a precedent for similar strikes in other coca-growing regions, such as Cauca, Arauca, and Putumayo (interviews 28, 37, and 39).

Through the crisis credibility mechanism, protest agreements drew boundaries for acceptable concessions on this issue at the peace table. As a peasant leader noted, “The

strikes forced the national government to recognize us as legitimate interlocutors and to accept that our negotiations needed to be linked to the peace talks in Havana” (interview 37). A government advisor further confirmed this influence: “In Havana, we [the government] monitored protest agreements from Catatumbo, Putumayo, Cauca, and Caquetá to draw the boundaries of concessions in the peace agreement. We could not commit to anything that conflicted with what other branches had already agreed with rural communities back in Colombia” (interview 30). Alongside protest, peasant movements engaged in parallel talks with insurgent negotiators, tempering their hard stance. Activists from coca-growing regions—such as Catatumbo, Nariño, Meta, Caquetá, and Guaviare—met with insurgent representatives to co-draft proposals on a gradual, voluntary, and participatory substitution program (interviews 22, 23, 26, 28, 37, 44) (FARC-EP, 2014a).

Simultaneously, government negotiators began to view coca growers as autonomous organizations from guerrilla groups, who advanced legitimate claims. As one official recalled, “the legitimacy of the peasant’s voice—who actually cultivated coca crops and suffered criminalization—became undeniable for both the government and FARC” (interview 30). This evidence suggests that peasant organizations influenced negotiation outcomes by increasing legitimacy for their claims through the mechanism of moral credibility. It also indicates that peasant organizations acted as autonomous actors in peace negotiations, challenging a key assumption under the rebel extraction hypothesis.

By combining crisis credibility and moral credibility, these movements reshaped the fixed and competing preferences of Santos’ administration and FARC-EP. By December 2013 and January 2014, both sides had agreed on a substitution program, which shifted state response from militarization toward transfers of land property and agricultural services in coca-growing areas (Gobierno de Colombia, 2013e; FARC-EP, 2013c; Gobierno de Colombia, 2013d; FARC-EP, 2013a; Gobierno de Colombia and FARC-EP, 2014b). Nonetheless, negotiations stalled over implementation timelines and forced eradication. Officials cautioned against the reallocation of property rights to peasants still engaged in coca cultivation, citing risks of drug-trafficking expansion and international obligations (Gobierno de Colombia, 2014b; Gobierno de Colombia and FARC-EP, 2014a; Gobierno de Colombia, 2014d,c) (interviews 20, 29, and 30). In contrast, FARC-EP insisted on delivery of land and services in tandem with coca-leave eradication on a voluntary basis (Gobierno de Colombia and FARC-EP, 2014b; FARC-EP, 2014b) (interviews 22, 23, and

26).

On May 16, 2014, the warring sides reached a partial agreement that allowed coca growers to gain land rights and state support as they transitioned to licit production. The program also established participatory institutions for local communities to shape development projects in former war-economy enclaves. While the government rejected a fully gradual rollout, it conceded to start support before forced eradication, reserving it as a last resort.<sup>5</sup> The 2016 final agreement closely mirrored peasant demands. A Catatumbo peasant put it, “When compared to the 2013 protest agreement, the 2016 peace accord enshrined core principles we proposed.” (interview 19).

In the second case, collective land ownership for peasant communities remained as a contentious issue at the table between October 2012 and May 2013. Until late 2012, land negotiations significantly stalled over the withdrawal of property rights on unproductive land (Bermúdez Liévano, 2018). In December 2012, peasant organizations demanded communal property rights (interviews 2, 19, 24, 27, 40, and 44). In January 2013, FARC-EP formally integrated these claims into its agenda (interviews 4, 16, 17) (FARC-EP, 2013b). Against what the alternative hypotheses would expect, this evidence suggests that movements brought a new outcome to the table that neither the government nor rebels had initially introduced.

By March 2013, however, the government firmly rejected peasants’ proposal, arguing that collective ownership should remain exclusive to Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities (Gobierno de Colombia, 2013c,a,b). Further, the Ministries of Defense and Agriculture, along with military officials, alleged that peasant reserve zones served as guerrilla strongholds (Oficina del Alto Comisionado de Naciones Unidas, 2013; Semana, 2013a). At the same time, the Ministry of Mines and Energy reassured extractive companies that peasant collective land rights would not interfere with mining and hydrocarbon projects (Bermúdez Liévano, 2013a). Elites also closed ranks against communal land ownership. The National Cattle Ranchers’ Federation (FEDEGAN) dismissed peasant reserve zones as “guerrilla enclaves” (El Nuevo Siglo, 3 14), while agribusiness and mining firms feared that extending communal property rights to peasants would undermine their ongoing projects. At the time, local communities had engaged in open confrontation

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<sup>5</sup>The agreement ambiguously referenced aerial fumigation, which was later banned in 2015 after the World Health Organization classified glyphosate as a carcinogen (BBC News Mundo, 2015).

with the extractive sector by threatening mining and energy projects at the ballot box in popular consultations (Shenk, 2022; Jaskoski, 2022; Rodriguez-Franco, 2017). Official government statements and alliance with elites indicate that Santos' administration prioritized elite economic interests and security concerns, thus undercutting the elite concession hypothesis.

As negotiations reached deadlock, peasants convened a national summit where 3,000 rural leaders ratified the proposal for communal property in March 2013 (interviews 12 and 15) (Bermúdez Liévano, 2013b; García-Reyes, 2013). Movements also sought to take their demands directly to Havana, but unlike coca growers, they were denied formal participation in peace talks (FARC-EP, 2013d) (interviews 2, 19, 24, 27, 40, and 44). Excluded from official channels, peasants instead engaged in parallel talks with FARC-EP, co-drafting a communal land ownership proposal (interview 44). This evidence suggests that movements were not passive instruments of insurgents but rather pursued autonomous strategies to shape negotiations.

On May 26, 2013, negotiators reached an agreement on rural development, which pledged to boost the implementation of peasant reserve zones yet did not upgrade them to communal property. Three months later, movements staged the largest agrarian strike seen in the country since the massive protests of the 1960s and 1970s (interviews 12, 15, 21) (Ardila Arrieta and Nicolás Guillot, 2013). Peasant movements from 641 municipalities submitted 98,550 protest demands, including 14,312 claims on land access for the rural poor, the recognition of landholdings as communal property, state protection for national agriculture, and a halt to extractive projects (Fundación Ideas para la Paz, 2014; Roa-Clavijo, 2023; Cruz Rodríguez, 2017). Unlike coca-growing organizations, however, peasant movements failed to convert protest into bargaining leverage at the Havana table. Instead, the government effectively insulated peace talks from peasant protest, thus keeping communal property rights off the agenda (Bermúdez Liévano, 2014). Because movements did not develop both organizational capacity and distancing capacity, they lacked the ability to alter elite resistance or provide legitimacy for their demands before the signatories.

The divergent outcomes of illicit crop substitution and peasant communal property suggest that variation in mobilization strength better explains why rural movements shape redistributive commitments in peace settlements. In both cases, Santos' administration

held to a minimalist approach, which contradicts the expectation that moderate governments would concede redistribution. The rebel extraction hypothesis does not explain these outcomes either. FARC-EP maintained maximalist preferences for redistribution across both issues, but their demands alone did not move negotiations forward. This evidence demonstrates that variation in mobilization strength better explain such divergent outcome.

## 8 Conclusion

In civil wars, land reform lies at the core of war termination, as land inequality often underpins armed rebellions (Daly, 2012; Wood, 2003; Keels and Mason, 2019). I developed and tested a bargaining theory of land redistribution in civil war peace settlements. I argued that peace negotiations trigger political openings for non-armed civilians to delineate the range of acceptable concessions at bargaining tables. Yet whether redistributive reform is enshrined in peace settlements depends on the previous existence of unarmed, rural movements who deploy their organizational and moral endowments to shape the warring sides' fixed and competing preferences toward redistribution. I then showed that rural movements largely shaped land commitments outlined in the 2016 Colombian peace agreement by increasing the costs of resistance and folding reform as a civilian mandate.

The influence of rural mobilization on land reform in peace settlements is not unique to Colombia. In El Salvador, for instance, the 1992 Chapultepec peace accords established a land transfer program that combined market-based and state-led mechanisms to reallocate 11% of farmland ownership to landless peasants and former combatants (De Bremond, 2007; McReynolds, 2002; De Bremond, 2007; ?). While the guerrilla group FMLN initially placed land inequality at the center of its bargaining agenda, the Christiani administration opposed any redistributive reform, thus giving rise to negotiation impasses (Wood, 2000). Similar to the Colombian case, unarmed peasant movements rendered reform as an unavoidable commitment at the bargaining table, posing costs on political and economic stability, including in the capital (Wood, 2000; Almeida, 2008).

Future research may further investigate the conditions under which unarmed civilians grow in mobilization strength as armed conflicts draw to an end. In settings marked by genocidal violence or extreme repression, social movements may encounter severe barriers

to articulating grievances and influencing warring factions at the table. Commitments to redress dispossession in peace settlements are a crucial breakthrough, but they mark only an initial step in preventing relapse into violence (Keels and Mason, 2019). More research is needed to examine when and how these commitments translate into transfers of land to the rural poor, thereby addressing entrenched inequalities and consolidating peace.

These findings carry implications for other instances where organized civilians pursue costly concessions at bargaining. Distributive disputes—such as welfare expansion or labor rights—and accountability demands—like human rights trials and reparations—encounter similar barriers to land redistribution at bargaining tables, as competing preferences among negotiating actors and elite resistance generate impasse. Post-authoritarian settlement and constitutional conventions entail comparable uncertainty with civil wars, wherein political and economic arrangements are open to reconfiguration. Across these issues and settings, organized civilians can expand the range of concessions when they sustain contention and credibly distance themselves from discredited political actors.

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