

Country Capitalism: How Corporations from the American South Remade Our Economy and the Planet, by Bart Elmore. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2023. 248 pp. Notes, index. \$28.00 hardcover. \$21.99 e-book.

Reviewer Camden Burd is Assistant Professor of History at Clemson University. He explores the history of the relationship between American capitalism and environmental change. He is the author of *The Roots of Flower City: Horticulture, Empire, and the Remaking of Rochester, New York* (Cornell, 2024.).

On I-80, near Wolcott, drivers are invited to stop at an iconic Iowa destination, The World's Largest Truck Stop. The interstate oasis sits on 225 acres, features a retail space measuring nearly 100,000 square feet, and boasts 900 parking spaces for trucks. I used to stop there regularly at the beginning and end of each academic year, while commuting between my childhood home in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and my undergraduate institution in Salt Lake City, Utah. It was ideal. I could fill up my tank, grab a Coke, and get back on the road in just a few moments. Situated on one of America's major thoroughways, The World's Largest Truckstop was a business designed for the commuter—where convenience, consumption, and carbon reigned supreme.

What I did not realize during those Iowa stops was just how embedded I was in the southern commercial landscape—or the in the corporate structures that several southern companies had replicated across the country. That entanglement is central to Bart Elmore's recent *Country Capitalism*, a book that explores the commercial ecologies of five southern companies. Elmore seeks to "turn our gaze outward, to see how firms and institutions born in the American South have reshaped global environments far beyond their home region"(4). By examining the history of Coca-Cola, Delta Air Lines, Walmart, FedEx, and Bank of America, Elmore argues for the centrality of southern environments and businesses in shaping economies and environments across the globe. Readers follow how executives at Coca-Cola turned a small Atlanta beverage into a mammoth corporation by re-imagining rural logistics and refrigeration. They learn how Delta Air Lines reimagined the flight industry by transforming itself from a rural-serving trunk line airline into a massive firm innovating a hub-and-spoke flight system. The parcel shipment company FedEx did the same for overnight mail. Elmore shows how Walmart transformed the rural South by designing a new computer inventory system to quickly restock shelves and keep costs low. The author also highlights the rise of Bank of America—a financial firm born of the cotton-growing South that gobbled up various firms in the oil-producing West. Though each company's story is unique, there are some similarities between them. Each company was shaped by

the rurality of the South. Along the way they also partook in some aspect of labor busting, benefited from Federal and State deregulation, and largely relied on military Keynesianism during the middle decades of the twentieth century. Each growing from the South, the firms' business dealings would define economies across the globe.

In addition to his business history, Elmore outlines each firm's massive environmental impact: the carbon footprint from Coca-Cola's refrigeration logistics, fossil fuels burned (and refined) by Delta Airlines, wasteful and unsustainable practices built into the fabric of Walmart's supply chain, FedEx's role in accelerating global semiconductor industries, and Bank of America's financing of carbon-intensive industries. By the turn of the twenty-first century, the influence of these five firms could be felt everywhere—even at the World's Largest Truck Stop in Iowa. While drinking a Coke, filling my tank, swiping my credit card, and watching the trucks pass in and out of the lot, I could easily overlook or ignore these connections. It's just one stop on a long road trip. But Elmore reminds us that we can't escape these firms' impacts. They warm our planet and poison our bodies.