

(2023 October 19) Beyond the Myth of Rural America (NYT)

<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2023/10/23/beyond-the-myth-of-rural-america>

"the rural United States is, in fact, highly artificial. Its inhabitants are as much creatures of state power and industrial capitalism as their city-dwelling counterparts. . . .

small, general farms "disappeared more than half a century ago, at least." Agriculture has become a capital-intensive, high-tech pursuit, belying the "left behind" story of rural life. Fields resemble factories, where automation reigns and more than two-thirds of the hired workforce is foreign-born. "To call 1,500 acres of corn, genetically modified to withstand harsh chemical pesticides and intended for a high-fructose corn syrup factory, a 'farm' is a bit like calling a highly automated GM factory a 'workshop'

U.S. agriculture is far from capitalist. 'When it comes to agriculture, there is no such thing as the free market'

The U.S. now contains more than four thousand military bases, with a combined acreage the size of Kentucky. Conn observes how this has fused rural people to the armed forces. By early 2007, nearly half the U.S. service members killed in Iraq had come from towns smaller than twenty-five thousand. A fifth were from towns smaller than five thousand."

- Daniel Immerwahl quoting Steven Conn