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The economy and the town [1]

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There's an interesting point over at the Globalisation Institute [3]. Tim Worstall quotes the fact in the Telegraph [4] that this year for the first time in human history, more of us will live in towns rather than in the country. He rightly points to the abject poverty of rural life in many parts of the world, but quotes the Telegraph article on what urban conditions mean for some.

> *Shenaz and her husband, Subir, both in their early twenties, made their living sifting household rubbish for metal, squatting on the floor of their shack searching for anything that might be worth a few precious rupees - an iron bed spring, a brass door catch, a few strands of copper wire - anything that had a price with the scrap dealers. Like millions of others, they had come from a village in rural India to scratch a living in the city...*
>
> *Shenaz and Subir lived on the edge of an open sewer, in a wooden box not much bigger than two large packing cases, actually and metaphorically at the bottom of India's billion-man economic dust-heap. Surely village life was preferable to this, I wondered? Shenaz smiled. "Here we eat every night," she said, "and we even save some money."*

That's it in a nutshell. Poor though it is, it's still better than the miserable and precarious lot of many of the world's rural poor. As Tim says,

> *That peasant life, out in the villages, that hip wading, is even less attractive. Yes, of course, we all want the lives of those slum dwellers to get better: that means more development, more wealth creation, more trade, yes, you've guessed it, more globalisation.*

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