

# Urban Cages and Domesticated Humans

**Sadri, H.**

**Published PDF deposited in Coventry University's Repository**

**Original citation:**

Sadri, H 2017, 'Urban Cages and Domesticated Humans', Journal of Contemporary Urban Affairs , vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 76-84.

[https://dx.doi.org/10.25034/1761.1\(1\)76-84](https://dx.doi.org/10.25034/1761.1(1)76-84)

DOI 10.25034/1761.1(1)76-84

ISSN 2475-6156

ESSN 2475-6164

Publisher: Alanya Hamdullah Emin Paşa Üniversitesi

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# Urban Cages and Domesticated Humans

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## ARTICLE INFO:

### Article history:

Received 24 March 2017

Accepted 10 April 2017

Available online 10 April 2017

### Keywords:

Human Domestication;  
Urbanization;  
Power;  
Industrialization;  
Deurbanization;  
Permaculture.

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## ABSTRACT

*In this article, the study assessed the domestication process of humankind within the frame of urbanization and power accumulation. Within this framework, by giving various examples from chicken farms. The study express the author's opinions on the analogy of the "liberated human beings" in cities and the "free range" chickens in farms. It has also been tried to explain how a city acts as a human farm. Cities are governed by the ones holding power similar to the farms are ruled by farmers and humans during their history of civilization have lost their right of deciding on their lives and fates against this power as the domesticated animals in farms. It is necessary to give up these cities which are models of life organizations from the Old and the Middle Ages. Models of settlements which became even more inhumane as results of modernization and neoliberalization strategies. The study revealed that With the scientific and technologic improvements and the developments of in science and humanities, it is possible to easily replace the city model of communal life with a better one -The one in which people can be more free and happy and will give more life to the earth and contribute to the aliveness within it.*

JOURNAL OF CONTEMPORARY URBAN AFFAIRS (2017) 1(1), 76-84.

[https://doi.org/10.25034/1761.1\(1\)76-84](https://doi.org/10.25034/1761.1(1)76-84)

[www.ijcua.com](http://www.ijcua.com)

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The chickens in the below picture (Figure 1) demanding their rights and freedom. They want the industrial farms to be banned. They dream to derive a natural life. More precisely, this is not fully possible. Because these are birds tamed by humans from various phasianidae for approximately 6000 years (Clauer, 2017). They did not exist in a pure and untouched nature. Instead, they came into existence with the help of humans as a result of the domestication process. They lived by accompanying human societies for many years. In my opinion, rather than going back to an untouched nature, their

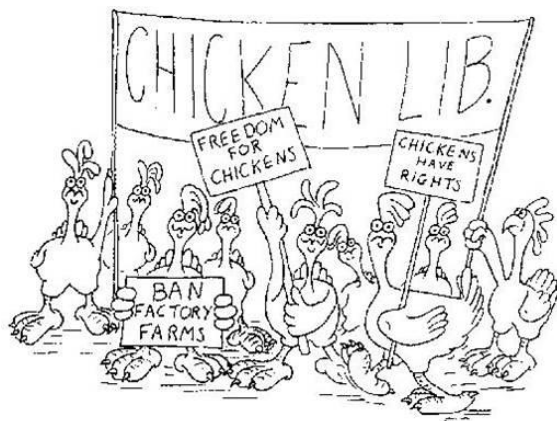
demands only involve freedom. Perhaps, they do not remember that kind of nature. They, just like us, may not even have any ideas about that nature. The freedom they desire is to escape from the human dominance and its accumulated power. They want to have equal rights and wills with humans in sharing their habitats with them. They claim to be able to decide for their own destiny. They reject the existence for humans and request the conditions

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that they can exist only for life. In principal, these chickens want to have a kind of freedom which actually all of us are dreaming it; a freedom including all the "developments" we have reached today and without going back to the pure nature.



**Figure1.** Freedom for Chickens (United Poultry Concerns, 1999).

## 2. HUMAN DOMESTICATION AND CHICKEN FARMS

While writing the history of domestication, historians state that humans were tamed when domesticating animals (Mikanowski, 2016). In fact, we are now domesticated humans, so, we are not humans of nature. Just as dogs, the human species we recognize in today's context do not exist in nature. The living being called human is a domesticated animal species, similar to the chickens above. This domestication started as a result of agriculture and moving into the settled life. Accordingly, the food habit of humans changed and, their jaw structure and digestive system developed in a different way. More importantly, modes of their movements were changed and their mobility was decreased. As humans settled, their dreams, fears, the way they use their mind and socialize, shortly, everything related to them was transformed. In other words, they became domesticated. In time, within the settlements built by themselves in the nature they came from, they turned into farm animals. As the settlements expanded and the cities were formed, things got out of control and the management of the farm passed to a smaller

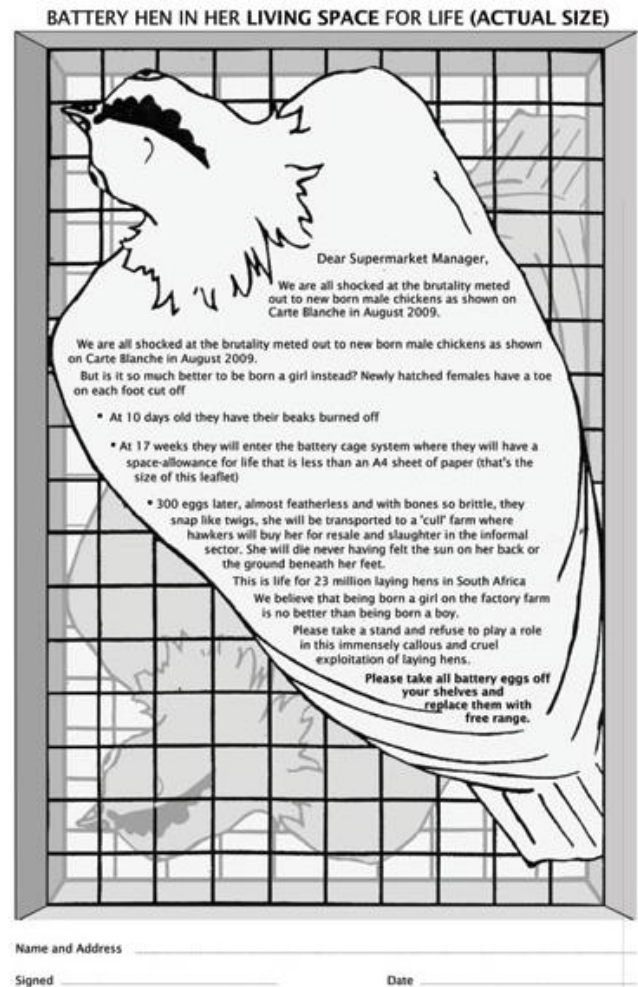
class. Autodomesticated Humans were taken captured in the urban farms they have built themselves. They lost their sovereignty on their destiny and became slaves. They were exploited. However, what is worse is, despite all, they learnt to be happy for having food to eat in the farm in which they are running day and night after the interests of the farm owners while concerning about their future. As the power accumulated and technology improved, humans became less distinguishable from chickens living in the industrial farms.

Life difficulty of the workers arising from the industrialization in England in the 19<sup>th</sup> century came with oppositions and resistances. Observing the poverty and exploitation in London and parallel to this some attempts to organize struggles against it, Marx came to the point that the workers would make a revolution and this tyranny would be destroyed. In 1848, collaboratively with Engels, they wrote a text and introduced the reasons of this desperate situation and the ways to get over them. Assuming that no one could tolerate these conditions, they anticipated that the workers would revolt, capture the entire farm and establish a new order in which such injustices, violence and oppressions would not exist (Marx, and Engels, 1848). In fact, the workers did revolts and achieved great successes in their conflicts. However they did not change the order. In accordance with the structure of their fights which was mostly in the format of the trade union movement and concentrated in a national level, they could accomplish significant results in increasing the welfare level of workers in the so called developed countries. As a result of this one and a half century old organized conflict, the shape, format and geography of the industrial production, exploitation and war was changed. Thus, the poverty tragedy, started in England in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, is being experienced today in Asia in the worse conditions (figure 2).



**Figure 2.** Cage Homes, Hong Kong, Picture: by Alex Hafford (cited in: Thomas, 2009).

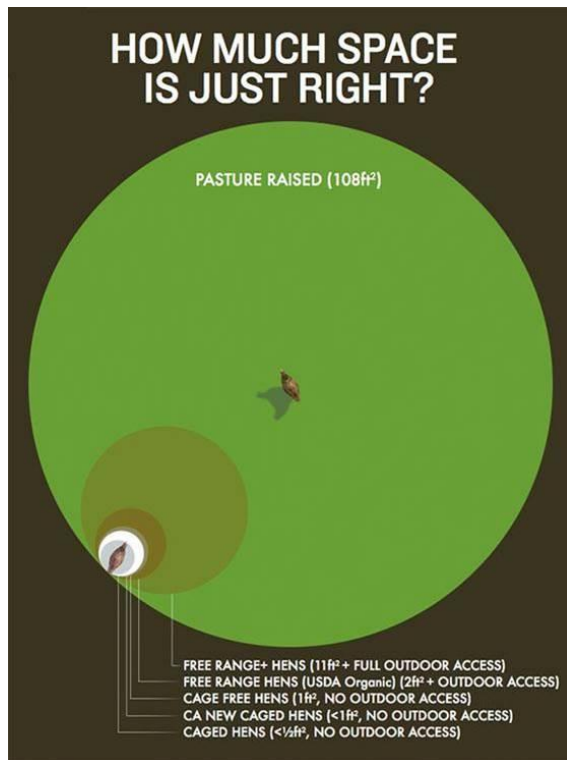
It is understandable that the battery hens living in the cages approximately equal to their size, desire a revolution (figure 3). However unfortunately, these chickens within the industrial farms could not make a distinction between being free range chickens walking freely within the cages and being free by means of escaping from the human oppressions and power. As their fight for freedom questioned their living conditions instead of existence of the farm, the farms continued to be in existence by changing their forms.



**Figure 3.** Dear Super Market Manager Please Take All Battery Eggs Off Your Shelves and Replace Them with Free Range (Activist Campaigns).

### 3. FREE RANGE CHICKEN AND URBAN DENSITY

Therefore, free range chicken movement started in terms of being able to walk within a larger area. Accordingly different kinds of farms were built based on the size of these areas. The farms today are distinguished by the density of their hens in caged areas. They are ranked with dissimilar names and codes in respect to the area each chicken is living in. Price of the chickens and eggs are determined accordingly.



**Figure 4.** What Should Be the Width of the Area, Naming of the Farms According to The Living Space of Per Chicken (Barron, 2016).

As shown in the above image (Figure 4), while a caged chicken lives in an area of 465 square centimetre (approximately 15 to 30 centimetres), a cage free hen in 930 square centimetres (approximately 24 to 38 centimetres) and organic free range chicken in 1860 square centimetres (approximately 30 to 60 centimetres). In other words, 20 caged chickens, 10 cage free hens or 5 organic free range chickens fit into per square meter. According to this description, the maximum area per chickens raised by humans in farms is 10 square meter. This is 54 times bigger than the area of organic free range chicken. Even though in compare with the free range or caged chickens, these pasture raised chickens are able to walk freely within a grass and are most probably the happiest of the chickens in farms, however they are still farm chickens. As this area expands, the chickens become more likely to get over the strict forms of human hegemony. However at least an area of 60 square metres is needed for every chicken for being able to live in a natural environment,

creating a harmony with the other livings beings within that environment and providing a mutual contribution to one another (0.3 Acre, meaning 1200 square metres for 20 chickens) (Pesaturo, 2015). This number corresponds to an area in which 322 organic free range chickens or 1288 caged chickens live. For instance, considering that a jungle fowl naturally existing in nature lives in an area of approximately 10 thousand square metres, all these numbers above gain a greater meaning (Pesaturo, 2014).

When looking at the picture, it becomes more noticeable, density within a land, directly affects the quality of life. There is a major difference between the chicken in this open prison and the other caged ones. Thereby, if there was a universal declaration of chicken rights, it would be stated that all chickens have the right to live as a pasture raised chicken living within the largest area. Of course, it is a fact that the chicken placed in a cage equal to its own size is exposed to some kind of torture. Therefore, we cannot ignore the significance of the fight for improving the living standards of all chickens. However, this is not the final goal. Because all of these chickens actually subsist in a farm order that only pursue human's, or rather, farm owners' interests and they do not have their own free will. If the universal declaration of chicken rights did exist and if the rights of the chickens stated in it, were fully fulfilled, moreover, if even genuinely all chicken in the world could be really "happy chickens", they would still only be a victim as a farm product and the purpose of their existence would be to provide the continuity of the farm order.

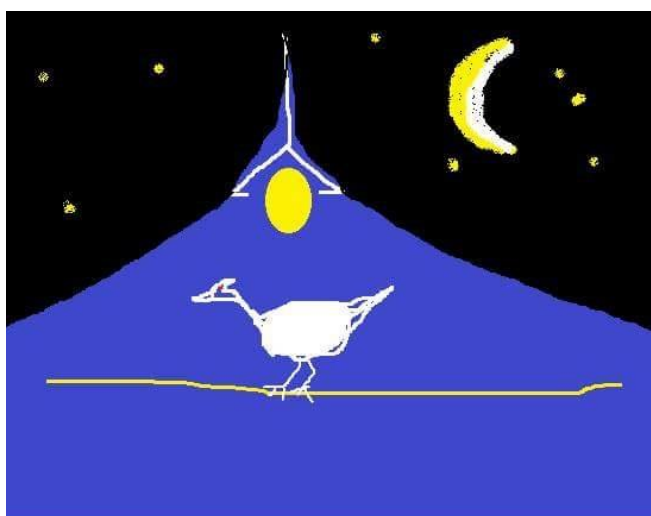
According to studies, 1796 people fit into per square kilometre in Adana, Seyhan (Nufus.Mobi 2017a), meaning that there is an area of 556 for each person. This number is 54 square metres for Istanbul, Esenyurt (Nufus.Mobi, 2017b). This indicates that 10 people in Istanbul-Esenyurt are settled within a living space which corresponds to an area that one person live in Adana, Seyhan. In other saying, an area a person lives in Istanbul-Esenyurt is two times larger than a L-type



prison (N.A., 2005). Does being squeezed into a particular area means humans can be exposed to more dominance as in chickens? Summarily, is the real problem the city or urbanization?

#### 4. Urbanization and Human Domestication

My colleague, Kenan Güvenç shared the below sketch with me (Figure 5). It contains a crucial answer to my above questions. It also includes a great example and metaphor on how the city domesticates human beings. Güvenç expresses that the cities created by capitalism are devices imposing a hyper-domestication upon humans and life, and transform them to the chicks under a lamp. He claims that this operation of the daylightization of everything and everywhere destroys the spatial difference of days and nights which is the sharpest division about life and domesticates spaces, times and their inhabitants.



**Figure 5.** Sketch of Kenan Güvenç (Güvenç, 2016).

This quote gives us important clues about the city and the domesticating power of all its mechanisms. It explains the direct ratio between density and living under oppression. The existence of density in cities obligated us to various contraptions. For instance, what you are seeing in the below images (Figure 6) is a human type. As obvious, when necessary, he sprays something in everywhere; to the plants, to the

chickens and to the humans. He can sprays depending on the situation, but, he is always the same type. This type is one of the favourites of the farm owners- of course, mentally. Not only the actions in these images are similar, but also the clothes, posture and the existential philosophy of them are identical.



**Figures 6.** The one spraying to the plants (ISHN, 2016), to the chickens (Viral FX, nd), to the humans (BBC NEWS, 2015).

This human type exists for managing the farm in order to establish an unconditional hegemony and high level authority and, a strict domination. His role in an industrial farm is to spray herbicides, pesticides, drugs, chemical fertilizers and hormones to acquire a single product extraordinarily in a maximum level. His eyes are only focused to see the product that he wants to raise. Aside from that product, he tries to kill every other living beings. He destroys the soil and microorganisms within it, all the insects and animals within the field and, all "uninvited" plants, without hesitation. As a result of this, today we are facing with carcinogenic, poisonous, tasteless, GMO, hormone and drug injected, and very harmful foods with no nutritional value which can be described as dangerous garbage. Still, the "options", such as the organic presented to us by the farms or free range chicken seen in the above examples, cannot solve the problem. The main reason of this is approaching it with

farm logic and farmer perspective. They pay no attention to protecting and strengthening the microorganism structure of soil with a blindly anthropocentric and egocentric attitude. More importantly farmers do not care about the life of millions of species which their lives are strongly tied to each other and to us, basically because humans do not eat them and or we do not have any knowledge whether they are useful or not. This urbanization model and urbanized food system do not protect our nature and world. According to the report of WWF - World Wide Fund for Nature, half of the species living in earth was extinct over the past 40 years (Carrington, 2014). Each year tens of thousands of species becomes extinct (WWF, nd).

## 5. DEURBANIZATION, PERMACULTURE AND RETURN TO HUNTING - GATHERING

In order to stop this, we have to replace the farm system with the farmers who only cares about their own powers and wallets with free ecocentric deurbanized settlements with communities who cares about each other and the world.. As a sample of this kind and alternative to the frightening "sprayer" guy, we have a nicer human figure seen in the below image (figure 9). S/he is a kind of human being protecting the earth, whole creatures, water and humans, regardless of their usefulness or benefits to human societies. This is permaculture, a science generated by David Holmgren and Bill Molison by analysing the function of forests. These two scientists proposed an alternative way of approaching to agriculture with the information produced regarding the creation of an ecosystem similar to the ones in forests in the agricultural fields (Holmgren and Mollison, 1978). Even though this science and philosophy highly based on the ethical values with a non-anthropocentric approach, however, it introduces a radical solution for humans' problems. Sciences as permaculture fundamentally question the tyrannies based on this egosystem and work on transformation of it.



**Figure 9.** Industrial Agriculture and Permaculture Difference (Mahe, 2015).

Today we are watching the rolling over of our world together with us towards a cliff. We are experiencing life in the edge of disaster. The highly dependent, urbanized, polluted, controlled and poisoned world created by many of us who only think themselves with a great ego and ignore the holistic solutions. For this very reason, by demolishing this ego and the thought of being in the centre, it is necessary to form a better and more liveable world notion based on solidarity between beings for the next generations.

Ideas similar to permaculture, which provide us the ways we can reach to the foods from the food forests, help us to organize more independent communities. In fact, the significance of permaculture is to provide us an opportunity to leave the settled and urbanized and industrial agricultural life and once again live as hunter and gatherers. These self-sufficient

hunter-gatherer communities and their solidarist and communal environments can be alternatives for today's urbanized and over urbanized cities. We have to start to subtract from the cities and add more wild life to them. Destruct and deconstruct all the urbanized areas and remove them with the self-controlled, democratic, non-anthropocentric and free habitats. If we want to save the life of our children, we have to start this deurbanization as soon as possible.

As long as we live as a crowded population in the cities, we will be dependent upon the system in every situation. We will be in need of supermarkets, petrol, electric, water, communication networks and everything being managed from the centre and making us to have only the status of consumer. Therefore, the urbanization we have established, the industrial agriculture and the forms of our approaches to technology, they pave the way for us to be domesticated and exploited by the powerful ones like the farm products and to have no control over our own lives. What is more saddening is they cause all living creatures, the nature and the whole our world to be sacrificed. With today's sustainable and environment friendly technologies, our fund of ethical knowledge and the science accumulation created from social and ecological studies, we can and we should create a much more beautiful world. We have no other solution.

## 6. CONCLUSION

In this study the author has been tried to explain the domestication power of urbanization and its hegemonic structure. As it is revealed through the study, nowadays, we have different ways of coexistence suggested by several scientists like Murray Bookchin who approaches the ecology in tandem with the social reform. We have knowledge about community and settlement types which:

- are the places of decentralized and even distributed power,

- are fully governed by the locals,,
- can become integrated with their environment,
- protect their surrounding nature,
- contribute to its existence,
- can be independent in every sense,
- contain high ethical values,
- can improve the world and solidarity in real terms,
- became a part of much bigger network by coming together with the other similar settlements and fund worldwide solidarity and peace (Bookchin, 1996) .

The study revealed that it is need to establish settlements that can be a sustainable habitat in real terms, provide a happy life both for people living in it and all other beings there, and a system based on their contributions to each other's lives. We have information and technology for actualizing this; however, we do not have enough will. As a result of the comfort and lethargy arising from the foods put in front of us in our coops, many of us may still prefer to stay within the farm with the pride of having the opportunity to existing more freely in comparison with the ones in prisons or cages. Ignoring that one day it will be our turn to be sacrificed, we are most of the times busy with wasting our lives with the fake happiness of still being alive and, some of us try to put off this fact with throwing the other chickens in front of the farmers, when necessary. We have to stop this, regain consciousness and re-build our world as a habitat for all of us who are free and equal and respectful to the world and its earth, water, air and fire.

### Note:

This article is developed from two public lectures of the author in 2016 and 2017:

a) Sadri, H. (2016) "City and the Rights of Domesticated Humans", in the Panel entitled: "Urban Transformation and Human Rights, Organized by the Chamber of Architects Adana Branch, the 9th of December 2016, Adana TURKEY.



b) Sadri, H. (2017) "Domesticated Human Beings and Urban Cages", Eastern Mediterranean University, the 22<sup>nd</sup> of March 2017, Famagusta CYPRUS

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