

A-Peel-ing Perspective: Expo 2035

Bangkok, Thailand

Lopburi, Thailand, offers a compelling illustration of urban adaptation, where Lopburi Monkey (long-tailed macaques) have seamlessly integrated into the human-dominated environment. These intelligent primates navigate the city with an inherent understanding of its verticality, treating buildings as part of a continuous, climbable landscape and power lines as natural connectors. Their perception of urban space stands in stark contrast to our own; walls and defined pathways, so crucial to human movement, offer minimal restriction to their tree-like nimbleness. It's as if the city unfolds for them as an unrolled map, a fluid terrain where our attempts at rigid control through architecture become largely irrelevant. This unique co-existence highlights the remarkable adaptability of wildlife and prompts a reconsideration of how we design and manage our urban landscapes, particularly in sprawling metropolises like Bangkok.

Inspired by Lopburi's interspecies dynamic, the conceptual architectural project 'A-Peel-ing Perspective' explores the potential for ecological rewilding within Bangkok. This vibrant capital, despite its cultural richness, grapples with significant challenges to its ecosystem. The rapid pace of urbanization has led to habitat fragmentation, reduced green spaces, and a decline in biodiversity, impacting the overall ecological balance of the city. In response to these pressures, the project proposes a carefully considered introduction of urban-adapted monkeys into Benchakitti Forest Park. This initiative is not intended as an uncontrolled influx, but rather as a strategic intervention to act as a catalyst for a more resilient urban ecosystem. The underlying principle acknowledges the growing importance of rewilding initiatives in contemporary urban planning, seeking to reintegrate natural processes within the built environment to address issues of ecological imbalance.

At the heart of this vision are specially designed pavilions, intended to facilitate the monkeys' transition and integration into the park. Drawing inspiration from Lopburi's architectural vernacular, these structures are conceived as fragments of the familiar shophouse. This typology offers a degree of familiarity for monkeys accustomed to the urban fabric of Lopburi. However, the interiors are deliberately unstructured, featuring arrangements of primitive sticks that define spaces for various monkey activities. Smaller, enclosed areas could offer secure sleeping quarters, while larger, more open configurations would allow for leaping and social interaction. Crucially, the design aims to provide a framework that respects the monkeys' autonomy, allowing them to adapt and utilize the space according to their own needs and social dynamics, mirroring their self-determined existence in Lopburi.

The anticipated ecological impact of introducing these monkeys extends beyond mere habitation within the pavilions. Their natural diet, consisting of fruits and plants already present or planned for Benchakitti Forest Park, is expected to contribute to the park's biodiversity through seed dispersal and the encouragement of new vegetation growth, aiding in the re-establishment of natural processes. Furthermore, Thai cultural perceptions of Lopburi's monkeys as akin to Hanuman, the revered monkey warrior, may foster a level of tolerance and discourage human interference, potentially smoothing the integration process. Over time, it is envisioned that the monkey population will establish itself, contributing to a more dynamic and self-sustaining ecosystem within Benchakitti Forest Park, offering a nature-based solution to some of Bangkok's ecological concerns. 'A-Peel-ing Perspective' offers a resilient and thought-provoking experiment, suggesting that by embracing the perspective of another intelligent species and learning from existing urban wildlife adaptations, we can unlock innovative approaches to urban ecology and create more vibrant and balanced cities.