



Gabinete do Vereador Nabil Bonduki (45°GV)

MOTION OF CONDOLENCE

Motion of Condolence on the passing of the architect and professor at Peking University, **Kongjian Yu**

Pursuant to Article 228 of the Internal Rules, this Council Member submits this **Motion of Condolence** to honor the architect and professor Kongjian Yu.

An architect and professor at Beijing University, Yu was the victim of the tragic airplane accident that occurred on the night of September 23, 2025, in the Pantanal region of Mato Grosso do Sul, together with cinematographer Luiz Fernando Feres da Cunha Ferraz, documentary filmmaker Rubens Crispim Jr., and the pilot of the aircraft, Marcelo Pereira de Barros.

Yu Kongjian, a global reference in architecture and urbanism for planning cities in harmony with nature, created the concept of “sponge spaces and sponge cities.” He recognized in Brazil the immense potential for applying his theories, noting that, in his words, we possess all the key elements to do so: abundant water, generous space, rich vegetation, a technically capable workforce, and, when combined with political will, the ability to adapt our cities to flooding challenges, mitigate inundations, and balance urban temperatures.

He often stated that we need to “embrace water, slow the speed of runoff, and create landscaped spaces for social interaction and leisure” in our cities. He also urged us to look back to solutions rooted in our cultural traditions, which respected nature and sought to coexist with it rather than dominate it. His thesis revives a legacy of knowledge from Asian countries and stands in contrast to the approaches adopted over recent centuries, when rapid urbanization and the relentless expansion of urban populations led to viewing nature as an obstacle or even an enemy. We remain dependent on water, yet the most common solutions still involve straightening and enclosing rivers, fully occupying their banks, and paving over the land without regard for the watersheds that sustain our tropical water abundance.

In China, his “sponge city” concept was adopted as a national policy in 2013 and has guided projects that combine nature, technology, and urban design to retain, cleanse, and reuse rainwater and urban river water, making cities greener, more resilient, and more sustainable.

During his mission in Brazil for the filming of the documentary [Planeta Esponja, I had the honor of accompanying him on September 15 to a visit to the Tiquatira River](#). Together, we observed how



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the linear park of the same name embodies the “sponge city” concept, hosting a small urban forest nurtured by Mr. Hélio da Silva, who over 21 years planted more than 41,000 trees of 170 different species. [We also visited Jardim Keralux](#), in the city’s East Zone, where the precarious housing along the riverbanks highlights the challenge of reconciling the protection of waterways with urgent housing needs.

Throughout September, Yu shared the concept of the “sponge city” with Brazilian architects and urban planners, presenting two theses and several of his implemented projects. On September 6, he spoke to more than 4,200 professionals at the [International Conference of the Architecture and Urbanism Council \(CAU/BR\) in Brasília](#). On September 19, he was the keynote speaker at the opening of the [14th São Paulo International Architecture Biennale](#). At both events, he reinforced the importance of international cooperation and the commitment to innovative solutions to confront climate challenges.

On the eve of his passing, Professor Kongjian Yu was in Brazil’s Pantanal, the “lungs of the Earth,” where he posed a poignant question: [“When even the last Garden of Eden is retreating, where can humanity find hope for survival?”](#). His contribution, which transcends borders, remains a profound legacy and an inspiration for present and future generations. Although he has left us, his journey to heal the planet will not cease, and the work he began will surely remain alive and flourish for many generations to come.

São Paulo City Council expresses its solidarity with the people of China, the professors and students of Peking University, the professionals of the Turenscape office, and the families and friends of the victims, recognizing the irreparable loss of such inspiring professionals and role models to so many.

It is requested that this be communicated to Peking University and the Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in Brazil at the following email addresses: outreach@pku.edu.cn , turen@turenscape.com , info@turenscape.com , chinaemb_br@mfa.gov.cn .

Session Hall, September 2025

NABIL BONDUKI

CITY COUNCILOR