

POLITECNICO DI TORINO
FIRST SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE
Master of Science in Architecture (Construction)
Honors theses

Toward a humane architecture. Critical research on the relationships and the role of Architecture for Yona Friedman

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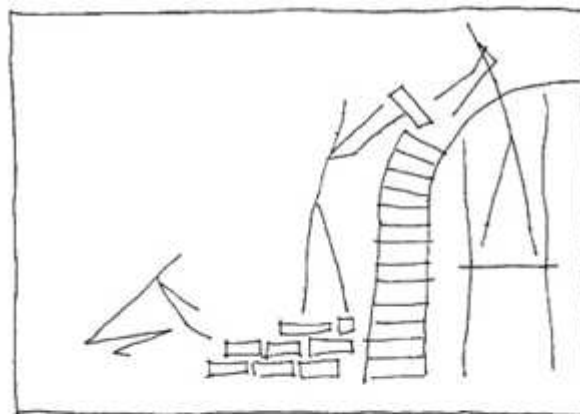
Two years ago I read *The architecture of survival*, written by Yona Friedman (*L'Architecture de survie*, L'éclat, 1977), that it talks about a reflection on architecture in the context of energetic crisis of the Seventies.

Politecnico di Torino
Laurea Specialistica Architettura Costruzione

Tesi di Laurea

Per un'architettura umana

Ricerca critica sulle relazioni e sul ruolo dell'Architettura per Yona Friedman



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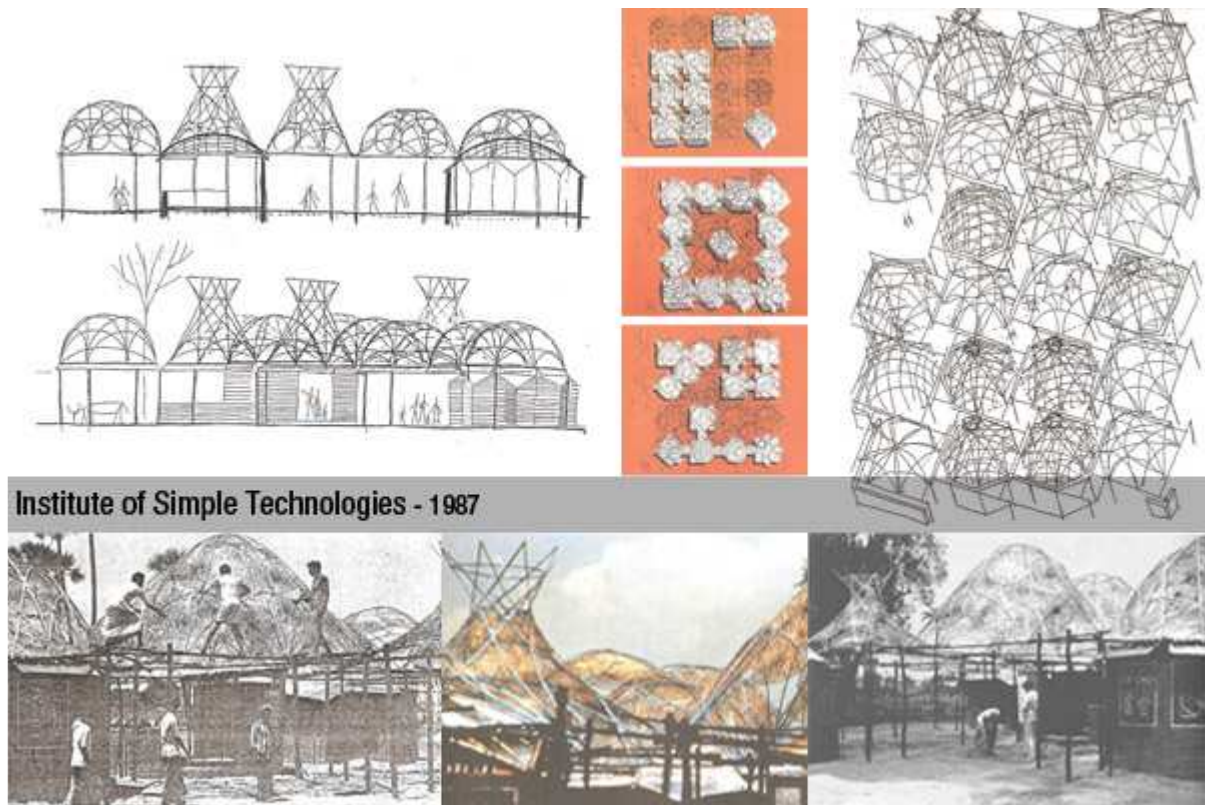
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In addition to the general content of this book, I found in it some concepts that came from Friedman's twenty years career that preceded the text. I began to deepen Friedman's works and I perceived a conceptual coherence in them. As Banham wrote "it would be unfair to call him a one-idea man, but (...) all his published work (...) leads always to the same type of architectural/urbanistic conclusion" (*Megastructure*, 1976, p. 60). In fact the main concept of Friedman's work is the user's free of choice.



In the Fifties, at the beginning of his career, the centrality of the user's involvement was based on Friedman's concept of *mobility*, represented by his *Ville Spatiale* (1956-'58). For Friedman, the inhabitant might have the right to follow his own needs and changes and Architecture is a neuter instrument with several and accommodating faces. In the Sixties, Yona Friedman abandoned the most visionary aspects of the *spatial cities*, and he dedicated his research to the new mathematical address of *design methods*, that represented for him some possible neuter instruments for giving free of choice to the inhabitants. Like him, Christopher Alexander, Christopher Jones (et al.) tried to do the same, thinking over mathematical prediction model. In 1968-1970, Friedman thought about the *Flatwriter*, a mathematical model applied to a computer program that allowed a common man to plan his own house.

At the beginning of the Seventies, Nicholas Negro Ponte asked Friedman to contribute to the realization of a computer software (very similar to the *Flatwriter*) that was called *Yona* in his honour. Negro Ponte was enamoured by Friedman's interaction between the electronic medium and the final user; indeed, until then, the research about computer-aided design was always focus on the relationship Computer-Architect.

Beside this project, in the Seventies, Friedman's interest in Architecture developed in the interest for the Habitat: now for him, User's freedom was linked to the interaction with its environment, both natural and artificial, both social and political. Like most of his contemporaries, these eco-systemic approach and new ecological sensibility raised from the energetic crisis at the beginning of this decade: *Utopies Réalisables* (1974) and *L'Architecture de survie* (1977) contained the main contents of Friedman's reflections, that he matured until that moment.

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For the Unesco, in 1973 Friedman began to write self-building manuals, above all for poorest countries in Africa, India and South-America: they were written in the form of comics, because for Friedman it represented the easier way of communication for people often illiterate. Thanks to these experiences, for Friedman Communication's theme gained a crucial importance on his reflections about the relationship between User-Architecture, enforced by the concept of *Critical-Group size*.

These thoughts were concretized later by the foundation of the *Communication Centre of Scientific Knowledge for Self-Reliance* (1981) and by the realization of the *Institute of Simple Technologies* in Madras (India) in 1987, always in collaboration with the Unesco. The Institute represents the most effective and poetic realization of Friedman's ethical ideal of building. In several aspects, this project is similar to Fathy's New Gournia and it was interesting to compare them. Despite the difficulty to analyze a temporal field so long, the main intent of this research was to understand the origin and the evolution of Friedman's idea on User and the charming connections with several historical contexts.

Finally, this study represented a precious occasion to reflect transversally upon the role of the architect and of the architecture, their social and environmental links and responsibilities.

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