

PĀR

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PĀR is a Research and Design initiative for *Projects on the Architecture of the Region*

Founded in 2020 by Larisa Ovalles Paulino and Aaron Weller, PĀR is an independent research and design practice that positions regional design and planning issues within the wider social and environmental justice movements, particularly through their study and work for underrepresented communities and geographies.

Larisa and Aaron are spatial thinkers, advocates, and pragmatic professional actors. PĀR is their platform to engage and collaborate with elected officials, private stakeholders, and community groups who are interested to understand and reform the physical environment for the common good.

Larisa has 8+ years of urban design and planning experience for the Urban Risk Lab, Architect Christian Kerez, and ORG Permanent Modernity. She holds a Master of Science in Urbansim from MIT and a Bachelor of Architecture from Cornell University. Aaron has 12+ years of urban design and building experience for ORG Permanent Modernity, NADAAA, and Gray Organschi Architecture. Aaron is a licensed architect in Michigan and Massachusetts.





Larisa Ovalles, Co-founder, Principal

- Research Scientist, Urban Risk Lab, MIT
- 8+ years of Urban Design and Planning experience
- Master of Science in Urbanism, MIT, Bachelor of Architecture, Cornell

LARISA OVALLES PAULINO co-founded PĀR in 2020. She is a Research Scientist at the [Urban Risk Lab](#) at the MIT School of Architecture and Planning. The Urban Risk Lab develops methods and technologies to embed risk reduction and preparedness strategies into local communities.

Larisa is currently working on a multi-year project to develop alternatives for FEMA post-disaster housing solutions across the US islands. She is leading the effort to develop processes that increase planning and preparedness at local and community levels. Larisa has led disaster housing and resilience planning workshops for the Municipality of Toa Baja in Puerto Rico and most recently with the City of Boston and the City of Chelsea, Massachusetts. She contributed to the development of “Keep Safe: A Guide for Resilient Housing Design in Island Communities” led by Enterprise Community Partners.

Larisa holds a Bachelor of Architecture from Cornell University and a Master of Science in Architectural Studies (SMArchS) in Urbanism from MIT. As a trained architect and urban designer, Larisa has previously worked in the offices of Architect Christian Kerez, ORG Permanent Modernity, and Design Earth. Larisa was a full-time Teaching Associate in the Architecture Department at Cornell University where she led sections in design studios. She also served as a design instructor at Singapore University of Technology and Design (SUTD). Larisa’s research and fieldwork in Puerto Rico has recently been published in the *Journal for Landscape Architecture*, titled “Retreat Critique: Deliberations on Design & Ethics on the Flood Zone.”



Aaron Weller, Co-founder, Principal

- Licensed Architect in Michigan & Massachusetts
- 12+ years of Urban Design and Building experience
- Master of Architecture, University of Michigan

AARON WELLER co-founded PĀR in 2020. Also, in 2020 Aaron created office AMW, a full-service architecture practice for small and large building projects. He is an NCARB registered architect with licenses in Michigan and Massachusetts.

Since 2014, Aaron has a long standing productive collaboration with ORG PERMANENT MODERNITY, a Brussels-based architecture and urbanism company, where he is Project Manager/ Architect for international architecture and urban design projects from early design to execution. Currently, he works full-time in ORG Brussels 3-months per year as project manager, and remotely in the USA where he leads business development initiatives..

From 2018-2020, Aaron was Project Manager/ Architect for the renowned Boston-based architecture practice NADAAA, Inc. He was lead project architect for the renovation of the Rhode Island School of Design Residence Halls (75,750 ft²). Aaron has also worked for architecture offices in Brooklyn, Mexico, New Haven, and Ann Arbor (2006-2012), including award winning projects for Gray Organschi Architecture and Design Earth.

After his graduate study at the University of Michigan (2010-2012), Aaron was a full-time visiting lecturer at the Tecnológico de Monterrey ITESM, in Querétaro, Mexico (2012-2014), where he taught architecture studios and seminars in collective housing, contemporary design theory, and digital culture and representation. His academic work has been published in Cal-Berkeley's Room 1000, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Architecture Boston, and Actar.

PĀR Design and Planning Services:

The region is a large-scale territory of complex social, economic, and ecological networks. Thinking beyond state and local borders allows a political body of the region to come together. Regional design and planning initiatives related to housing, infrastructure, and environmental stewardship for example, address systemic challenges often left to market forces or considered too big or complex to reform. A Regional Project is able to engage these challenges: “make public” existing paradigms, bring together a diverse constituency across large geographic areas, and propose alternative future scenarios via physical interventions.

(4) Primary components guide any project from early project definition to project implementation:

- Design Research
- Vision Advocacy
- Design & Planning
- Implementation

Design research sets the project ambition and framework. Vision Advocacy represents the project to a wide audience for acceptance and collaboration. Design Research & Planning documents precisely the project and coordinates the information required for implementation and completion.

DESIGN RESEARCH

- Project Definition
- Geographic & Environmental Mapping
- Land Use and Zoning Analysis
- Infrastructure Risk & Vulnerability Analysis
- Sustainability Assessment
- Data management

Design research is an analytical exercise in documenting, envisioning, and transforming space. Through cartography, data science, and other forms of representation, design research offers a *positive critique* of existing paradigms and identifies the key levers of change. History is contextualized, and multiple possible future scenarios are designed, measured, and compared as an ideal and feasible path forward.

- Establish a broad understanding of the project area, and its a regional context.
- Conduct field research, and a literature review of existing initiatives and programs.
- Compile and overlay empirical data and maps.
- Identify and visualize the projects physical and social “assets” and “vulnerabilities”.
- Develop the first project narrative into a format for engagement with a wider audience.

VISION ADVOCACY

- Feasibility Studies
- Vision and Conceptual Design Plans
- Stakeholder coalition building, community engagement, public outreach
- Resiliency Strategies
- Brownfield and Remediation Strategies

Vision advocacy is the advancement of a spatial project for a social, economic, and/or environmental motivation. A vision is a comprehensive narrative for a project that helps to build consensus around a particular proposal. The outcome is an *agreement* between many diverse stakeholders, and a shared framework of values and ambitions that serve to guide a project toward implementation.

- Communicate project ambitions, and receive feedback from all stakeholder interests
- Conduct workshops, outreach events, and community design sessions
- Facilitate engagement through project visioning and conceptual design of multiple scenarios
- Establish a shared set of guiding principles for subsequent design and planning.
- Arrive at a consensus where diverse interests are brought into productive alliance.

DESIGN & PLANNING

- Neighborhood Plan
- City-wide Plan
- Regional Plan
- Infrastructure Design & Planning
- Open and Public Space Master Plans
- Economic Modeling, Financial Analysis, Economic Impact Assessments

Design and planning works to develop a clear and comprehensive plan. Working with city leaders, stakeholders, community groups, and citizens a win-win scenario is able to ally a wide-range of community groups, stakeholder interests, funding streams and city assets to maximize the physical, social, economic, and ecological benefits of a project. Long-term planning and first stage pilot projects are the most strategic step toward implementation.

- Integrate all existing data, project goals, and visualize these aspirations on the project site.
- 3-dimensional digital and physical models, images and diagrams.
- Working groups or interim project meetings and reports for project evaluation and learning.
- A dynamic master plan with narrative, analysis and project design. A long-term phasing strategy is outlined with key pilot projects and critical infrastructure
- First-stage investments are detailed, budgeted, and made visual at an architectural scale.

IMPLEMENTATION

- Lead Project Curatorship / Project Management
- Pilot Project Development
- Request for Proposal Packages
- Capital Funding Proposals, Private Investment Outreach

Governments, communities, and private stakeholders work together to build the project. During implementation design and engagement roles transition to that of “Lead Curator”, to serve as liaison between multiple stakeholder interests, financial investors, and a multidisciplinary design team of engineers, architects, landscape architects, and other project experts.

- Oversee continued stakeholder engagement, design refinement, and construction
- Quality control to ensure implementation is consistent with an overall project vision.

SELECTED PROJECT EXPERIENCES

PAR: Projects on the Architecture of the Region

2022-ongoing	Lower Great Lakes Region: Continuous ecosystems
2021	Upper Mississippi Region: Geographies of Agriculture
2021	Grand Haven: Coastal Curation and Conservation
2020	South Bend: Thinking in terms of Space and Justice

SELECTED PROJECTS AT ORG

2021-ongoing	Vynckier Factory heritage monument renovation and adaptive re-use, Ghent, Belgium (w/ Alstadt)
2018	Mixed-use Development Plan (87-ha TEXAF Site), Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo
2017-2018	Regional Plan Association 4th Plan, Metropolitan NYC, USA
2017	Mixed-Use Urban block redevelopment of Allianz site (competition, 2nd prize), Brussels, Belgium
2017	Mixed-Use Urban block + Tower redevelopment of WTC site (competition, 2nd prize), Brussels, Belgium
2017	Brooklyn Army Terminal Master Plan, Brooklyn, NY, USA (w/ WXY)
2017	Brooklyn Navy Yards Vertical Manufacturing Typologies, Brooklyn, NY, USA (w/ WXY)
2016-2017	HUD Post-Sandy Rebuild by Design Implementation, New Meadowlands, NJ, USA (w/ AECOM & ZUS)
2014-2017	Mixed-use block development (feasibility, outreach, and visioning), Union Square, Somerville, USA.
2016-2017	Jersey City Resiliency Master Plan, New Jersey, USA
2016	Genk Central Artery Master Plan, Genk, Belgium (w/ ZUS)
2015-2016	Boston Metro Core - A Regional Analysis, Boston, USA
2015-2016	Marseille Aix-en-Provence Regional Transit Vision, France (w/ LIN and ZUS)
2014	Ghent 2030: City-Wide Plan, Ghent, Belgium
2014-2016	Mixed Use Urban Block, Ricky's Flower Market, Union Square, Somerville, USA
2014-2016	African Agribusiness Pilot Research facility, Afram Plains, Lake Volta, Ghana (w/ P-REX, Alan Berger)

SELECTED PROJECTS AT URBAN RISK LAB

2020 - ongoing	National EMS Memorial. USA
2018 - ongoing	FEMA Pre-planning Housing Toolkit. USA
2017- ongoing	FEMA Alternatives to Post- Disaster Housing. USA
2018	Toa Baja Resilient Housing Framework Planning for Housing. Toa Baja, Puerto Rico.
2018- 2019	Keep Safe: Resilient Housing Guide for Island Communities w/ Enterprise Community Partners.
2018	UV Bosai (+) Systems. Singapore University (SUTD), International Design Center, Singapore
2017	Water Collective. Open Space & Water Infrastructure for Disaster Preparedness. Asia Pacific. Nepal.

SELECTED PROJECTS AT DESIGN EARTH

2017	Boston Design Biennial installation, Rose Kennedy Greenway, Boston, MA, USA
2015	"Planetary Urbanism" Design Competition
2013	<i>Cutting Grounds</i> , Research on Landscapes of the Midwest
2012	<i>Geographies of Trash</i> , published Actar (2015)



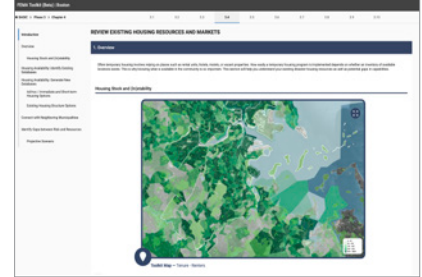
THE LOWER GREAT LAKES REGION
PAR

2022-ongoing: Design Research
Larisa and Aaron, Principal Investigator



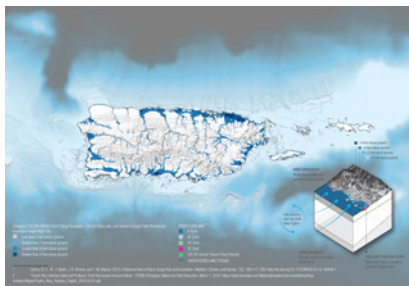
GEOGRAPHIES OF AGRICULTURE
PAR

2021: Design Research, Upper Mississippi Region
Larisa and Aaron, Principal Investigator



FEMA PRE-PLANNING TOOLKIT
Urban Risk Lab, MIT

2018-ongoing; Resiliency Planning & Advocacy
Larisa Ovalles, Project Manager, Lead designer



RESILIENT HOUSING GUIDE
Urban Risk Lab, MIT

2018-2019; Resiliency Planning & Advocacy
Larisa Ovalles, Project Manager, Lead designer



METROPOLITAN NY RPA 4TH PLAN
ORG Permanent Modernity

2017; Vision Advocacy, New York Metro Region
Aaron Weller, Urban Designer



AIX-MARSEILLE-PROVENCE PLAN
ORG Permanent Modernity w/ LIN & ZUS

2015; Regional Plan, France
Aaron Weller Lead Urban Designer



MIXED USE URBAN BLOCK
ORG w/ Hammer Development

2014-2016; Vision Advocacy
Aaron - Project Manager, Larisa - Urban Designer,



AFRICAN AGRIBUSINESS CENTER
ORG Permanent Modernity w/ P-REX

2014 - 2015; Masterplan and Pilot Facility, Ghana
Aaron - Project Manager, Larisa - Urban Designer,



GEOGRAPHIES OF TRASH
Design Earth: Rania Ghosn & El Hadi Jazairy

2012; Published by Actar 2015, Design Research
Aaron Weller Lead Designer

