**Author:** Mar Loren-Mendez

**E-mail:** marloren@us.es

**Department:**  Architectural History, Theory and Composition and Research Group “Contemporary City, Architecture and Heritage”

**Institution:** Seville University

**Title:** “Urban imaginaries: Malaga, the Mediterranean and Europe's Far West; from City of Paradise to the 21st century Picasso fiction and the recreation of urban tourism.”

**Abstract:**

Vicente Aleixandre, 1977 winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature, was instrumental in forging an imaginary of Malaga as *City of Paradise*, *flying city between the mountains and the abyss* (1960). The research considers this classical, paradisiacal perception of Malaga as underlying the tourist imaginary, and ultimately accounting for the current *Picassization* of the city (R. López Cuenca, 2010). A historical account of the city’s identification with paradise begins with an overview of the Islamic *Jamat* (A. A. M. Al-Idrisi, 12th Century). In contrast with the physicality of Islamic architecture in cities such as Cordoba or Granada that has dominated Andalusian iconography,Malaga has elicited intangible, almost ethereal values deriving from its atmosphere, geographical enclave, fertile land, complex landscape (Carter, 1777), vegetation (P. E. Boissier) and the brightness of its houses (T. Gautier, 1845).

The paper continues by reflecting on the intentional creation (Graburn and Gravari-Barbas, 2016), at the onset of the twentieth century, of Malaga as a tourist destination, a city that had once briefly peaked, in the eighteenth century, as Europe’s third largest industrial port. In spite of the absence of monuments attesting to this, the first guidebooks elaborated an exotic past. The construction of an image of Andalusia for tourism was thus dominated by a *Romantic stubbornness in the politics of tourist promotion* (J. Hernández Ramírez, 2007). Subsequently, shedding its romantic dependence on an exotic past, the ethereal qualities of the place were revived (J. M. Souvirón, 1958), faithful to the original perception of Malaga: history was thus not obviated, but instrumental and useful only if it helped to perpetuate the idea paradise.

Leisure architecture was constructed on the outskirts of the city, colonizing an untamed waterfront. Hotels and bathing areas within walled gardens were indeed the formalization of paradise: the local and the cosmopolitan, austerity and hedonism met in a Mediterranean spatialization of *Pairi Daiza,* where wine instead of water literally poured from its fountains (M. Loren-Mendez, 2012). During the second half of the 20th century, as the city grew, urban development reached secluded enclaves; tourism was then displaced to the *Costa del Sol* on the littoral west of Malaga, in search of new untamed, idyllic locations. By the end of the century, a conurbation more than 100 kilometers in length (M. Loren-Méndez, 2014) was fully consolidated, and the province of Malaga turned again to the city for fresh approaches in tourism.

The study concludes by describing the revitalization of the city of Malaga in the 21st century, having as its core theme the international figure of Picasso. The artist was born in Malaga, but only lived there until the age of ten. The thematization of the historic center around culture and heritage is framed within the city’s globalized tourist market (E. Ramírez, 2010). Malaga offers the tourist a controlled experience, justifying its inclusion in cruise ship itineraries. The waterfront has been refurbished and transformed as the new entrance to the city.

Detonator of an urban cultural park, the *Museo Picasso Málaga* was the first of a series of international museums to set up, followed by branches of the *Centre Pompidou* (Paris), the Thyssen Museum (Madrid), and San Petersburg’s State Russian Museum. Rather than emphasizing form as spectacle (Ockman, 2004), the museums are integrated within the fictional urban experience. The *Museo Picasso Málaga* is embedded within the historical fabric of the city; the *Pompidou* museum occupies an underground space at the heart of the new port development area, while a grid of palm trees prevails when the city is viewed from the distance; the San Petersburg’s Collection is displayed inside the former tobacco factory. In the meantime, the proliferation of restaurants and bars, ice-cream parlors and souvenir shops, meeting the instant demands of this type of tourism, has provoked changes in the historical urban landscape as aggressive as the insertion of so-called stararchitecture(s) (Gravari-Barbas and Renard-Delautre, 2015). The *Picassization* of Malaga, and the *Malagization* of Picasso have become the ultimate intangible tourist simulacra.

**Author Bio:**

Mar Loren-Mendez is a Professor of History and Theory of Architecture and Cities at Seville University, Spain. She is the director of the Research Group *Contemporary City, Architecture, and Heritage*. A specialist on *Coastal Transformation and Tourism,* she founded a research line in tourism within the group in 2005. Since then, she has directed a number of projects including “Costa del Sol. Architecture, City and Territory” (2006-2008, grant-aided by the Andalusian Ministry of Development and published in *Coastal-graphies* 2014), and the Malaga section of the “Registry of Andalusian Contemporary Architecture” (2004-2007, supported by the Andalusian Ministry of Culture). Both projects were awarded prizes by the Malaga Board of Architects.

Loren focuses on the urban transformation of the Costa del Sol, on a territorial to an architectural scale, particularly its spatial history and heritage assessment, with both national and international publications. Between 2010 and 2014, she designed, taught, and directed the academic and research module entitled: *Coastal Transformation; urban development, heritage, and cultural landscape* for the European Master Program “Architecture Studium Generale” (BTU, Cottbus, Germany). Since 2014, she has coordinated the research topic: *Littoral, Tourism, Infrastructure, and Sustainability* for the International Doctoral Program in Architecture at Seville University.

In recent years, Loren has focused on the heritage characterization of the coast as an infrastructural corridor. Between 2014 and 2015, she directed “The coastal N-340 roadway corridor as the historical axis of the Andalusian Mediterranean littoral: methodology for its heritage characterization and sustainable regeneration,” grant-aided by the European Regional Development Fund. This project has developed an online heritage database integrated with GIS. She has presented and published her work nationally and internationally. Her last publication appeared in *Geographical Review* (October, 2016).