

The backlash against Airbnb

Notes & Cues:**Article:**

If Uber was the terrible toddler of the sharing economy, Airbnb, which celebrates its tenth anniversary next month, behaved as the quieter older sibling. Uber preached (and practised) disruption and chaos, and generally lost its scraps with regulators in Europe. But Airbnb spun a gentler tale of tourists swapping the anonymity of hotels for the authenticity of districts.

But tourists packing for this year's holiday season might brace themselves for an awkward welcome. From Amsterdam to Berlin to Madrid, city officials are tightening the screws, limiting the number of days for which an apartment may be rented and slapping fines on violators.

Yet the platform can hardly be blamed for every woe of the mass-tourism age. In contrast to the cruise-ship hordes that have made the centres of Venice and Dubrovnik unbearable, Airbnbbers by definition stay in a city. There is some evidence that Airbnb encourages new trips or at least lengthens existing ones, which suggests tourists are spending cash that would otherwise have stayed at home.

"Great hotels have always been...mirrors to the particular societies they serve," wrote Joan Didion, a Californian author. Airbnb highlights a quirk of our own age, in which the thirst for the authentic can come at the expense of the locals who are supposed to provide it. Your columnist is among those who have found themselves turning away from Airbnb's ersatz authenticity in favour of hotels that do not aspire to be anything other than what they are.

Summary: