

"SMALL ADS - ITALY FOR RENT"

Manuele Bonaccorsi

contributor: Lorenzo Di Pietro

SIGFRIDO RANUCCI IN THE STUDIO

Welcome back. In this wonderful short film we are about to show you, Pierluigi Ferrandini hypothesizes that in 2037, in the village overlooking the splendid sea at Polignano, in Apulia, most of the population speaks English, to the point of distorting the name into "Polineano". One day, the quiet life of a British family who had bought a villa in the historic centre of the village is disturbed by an elderly Apulian gentleman who knocks at the door. He is suffering from Alzheimer's and only wants to look at the sea from a window.

SHORT FILM BY PIERLUIGI FERRANDINI

SIGFRIDO RANUCCI IN THE STUDIO

His grandson finds out later on that this grandfather was attracted so strongly to that place, that window, simply because he was born there. Well, the erosion of the memory of identity is affecting the whole of Italy. And a big shove is coming from Airbnb, the web multinational handling short-term rents of our apartments to tourists. The most coveted are those in historic town centres. It mostly uses mediators, and the one who has the most apartments to rent in Italy is a certain Mr. Guido - known as the king, since he even lives in a castle. Second place goes Mrs. Bettina, is isn't really a lady at all.... Our Manuele Bonaccorsi.

MANUELE BONACCORSI OFF-SCREEN

A group of activists protesting against Airbnb, which manages over 7,000 announcements in Venice. They accuse the City Council, which wants to reach an agreement with the multinational over the payment of the tourist tax, of selling itself for a pittance. Protesters, instead, would like to block tourist rentals.

WOMAN

The historic centre is losing over a thousand residents every year. Venice is made by the people who live here and decide to stay in our beautiful city, without being pushed out by Airbnb.

LADY

People here are leaving BY now and this is simply a mechanism to encourage renting to tourists and no more. This will be the end of the city.

MANUELE BONACCORSI OFF-SCREEN

The American start-up, which has over two hundred thousand ads in Italy, has become a powerful economic player capable of changing the face of our cities. Here we are in the centre of Florence. Five square kilometres, ten million visitors a year.

GIAMPAOLO CASTELLI

Here we are in Via De Neri, 50 metres from Piazza Signoria. I've lived here for fifty years.

MANUELE BONACCORSI

How many of you are still living in this area?

GIAMPAOLO CASTELLI

Out of about 50 friends and neighbours, I think only or one or two of us still live in the centre.

MANUELE BONACCORSI

Apartment C, apartment E, F. Are they all rented?

GIAMPAOLO CASTELLI

Sure.Sure.

MANUELE BONACCORSI

There are no names.

GIAMPAOLO CASTELLI

Sure.They are anonymous.

MANUELE BONACCORSI

But all rented? Isn't there anyone from Florence here?

GIAMPAOLO CASTELLI

No, I can assure you. Can I tell you something else?

MANUELE BONACCORSI

Of course...

GIAMPAOLO CASTELLI

An old lady died in an alley hereabouts. Her body was still in the house, there was the hearse outside next to a truck with Ikea furniture to install so the flat could be rented.

MANUELE BONACCORSI

Where are you from?

TOURIST

Singapore.

MANUELE BONACCORSI

Singapore.And where are you staying here in Florence?

TOURIST

Airbnb.

TOURIST

From Massachusetts.

MANUELE BONACCORSI

Hotel? Apartment?

TOURIST

An Airbnb apartment.

TOURIST

We're from Germany. Airbnb, the website.

ANTONELLO ROMANO - RESEARCHER UNIVERSITY OF SIENA

Approximately 18% of the property assets in the historic centre of Florence are on offer through Airbnb.

STEFANO PICASCIA - RESEARCHER UNIVERSITY OF SIENA

Lumps of Italian cities are permanently dedicated to a transient population by definition - tourists - and preclude a potentially stable, resident population.

MANUELE BONACCORSI OFF-SCREEN

And in 70% of cases, it is not a question of rooms in shared apartments but whole buildings. In Rome, for example, properties rented on the web increased from 9,500 in 2015 to 17,000 in 2017. In Florence from 3,800 to 7,500. In Naples, the number of ads even increased fivefold, from 1,200 to over 6,000.

To reduce the impact on large cities, Airbnb has launched a project to take tourism to small villages. Yet only 1 tourist in 10 chooses rural areas. This is Vincenzo Simoni, 80 years old, who lives in the historic centre of Florence. He is the president of one of the most important unions involved in homes: the Unione Inquilini (Tenants Union).

VINCENZO SIMONI - PRESIDENT UNIONE INQUILINI

I'm the only one left here. Everything has been renovated here and rented to foreign tourists, Americans, Japanese.

MANUELE BONACCORSI

Was this area originally home to families?

VINCENZO SIMONI - PRESIDENT UNIONE INQUILINI

Yes, yes. We can only resign ourselves now. There goes a whole group of Japanese tourists; do you want to come and see? Look at them, look at them.

MANUELE BONACCORSI

What are the figures for the housing emergency here in Florence?

VINCENZO SIMONI - PRESIDENT UNIONE INQUILINI

These figures are up to date as of this morning, so ... it is not the entire housing emergency but it is the one that has been allowed in order to apply for a council house. There are 2.455 families.

MANUELE BONACCORSI

And how many of these families will be able to find somewhere to live?

VINCENZO SIMONI - PRESIDENT UNIONE INQUILINI

No more than 120 a year.

MANUELE BONACCORSI

An immense building heritage offered without rules for short-term rent and homeless people?

DARIO NARDELLA - MAYOR OF FLORENCE

So? Put like that it is, how shall I put it, a strong contradiction. When referring to tourist rentals, we are talking in any case about private property.

MANUELE BONACCORSI

You, as mayor, have no power to govern the phenomenon of short-term rentals.

DARIO NARDELLA - MAYOR OF FLORENCE

Precisely.

MANUELE BONACCORSI

What powers would you like to have?

DARIO NARDELLA - MAYOR OF FLORENCE

Be able to put a limit on tourist rents above which they are no longer allowed.

MANUELE BONACCORSI

But you are unable to do this?

DARIO NARDELLA - MAYOR OF FLORENCE

No.

MANUELE BONACCORSI

What prevents you?

DARIO NARDELLA - MAYOR OF FLORENCE

I can do it with hotels, today, through town planning tools, I can decide how many hotels can open in the centre, but I can't do it when it comes to private property.

MANUELE BONACCORSI

Don't you think that this high number of short-term rental property will cause the historic centre to become deserted?

DARIO NARDELLA - MAYOR OF FLORENCE

So? From the effective and certified data we have, this is not the case.

MANUELE BONACCORSI OFF-SCREEN

But you can also be resident and then rent the property to tourists. We also searched for an apartment in Florence, on Airbnb, and chose the ad by a pleasant couple: Lorenzo from Florence and Christine, an American. And then we made an appointment to collect the keys.

APARTMENT AGENT

Ciao.

MANUELE BONACCORSI

Manuele. Nice to meet you.

APARTMENT AGENT

You're welcome.

MANUELE BONACCORSI

Ah, but this is not your home.

APARTMENT AGENT

We are an agency.

MANUELE BONACCORSI

Ah, OK. So there is no Lorenzo, no Christine.

APARTMENT AGENT

Lorenzo and Christine are colleagues who handle the Airbnb page. We have 350 apartments.

MANUELE BONACCORSI

In other words, you are mediators?

APARTMENT AGENT

Sure.

MANUELE BONACCORSI

And the houses are owned by as many different people or is there someone ...

APARTMENT AGENT

Sure. The Russians, the Chinese are beginning to arrive.

MANUELE BONACCORSI

Ah, Russians and Chinese?

APARTMENT AGENT

British. Even the owner of this flat is not Italian.

MANUELE BONACCORSI

So, they are effectively investments?

APARTMENT AGENT

Yes, in the end a flat in Florence, if you have a few bob to invest, will ensure you a pension in the future. By now, people prefer to rent them for days or weeks because they make more money.

MANUELE BONACCORSI

My companion might arrive on Saturday.

APARTMENT AGENT

If you don't tell me, I won't charge you the tourist tax. Just as long as it's not someone on the run from the police!

MANUELE BONACCORSI OFF-SCREEN

The owner of the property is a foreign citizen but the person who handles it and gives us the keys works for large agency that manages over three hundred apartments. And they close an eye on anti-terrorism rules, so there is no reception to check people coming and going. As for Lorenzo and Christine, we will never meet them. However, we did find out that the agency hosting us is owned by a Florentine nobleman, who not only rents out his own properties but also those of other owners.

Yet Airbnb is keen to appear like this: a peer to peer service, the chance to really meet who lives in the place where we travel, sharing experiences, without the intermediation of mass tourism agencies.

AIRBNB ADVERTISEMENT

I love sharing my home with other people. I also share my car and I think we must also share the responsibility for sustainable hospitality.

ALESSANDRO MASSIMO NUCARA - DIRECTOR FEDERALBERGHI (HOTEL ASSOCIATION)

There is no *sharing economy*, there is no sharing. In 70% of cases, entire apartments are rented. Nor is it true that it is essentially a form of additional income for people in difficulty. Once more, 70% of cases are multi-host: there are subjects who simultaneously run 500, 300, 200 apartments.

MANUELE BONACCORSI OFF-SCREEN

Analysing Airbnb data, we were able to find out who the main Italian hosts are. First place goes to Guido, with 1,095 apartments. We went looking for him. And to meet him, we ended up in a castle.

GUIDO POSARELLI - ENTREPRENEUR - POSARELLI VILLAS

Good morning, nice to meet you. Here we are at Montegufoni Castle; this the family portion.

MANUELE BONACCORSI

Spectacular.

GUIDO POSARELLI - ENTREPRENEUR - POSARELLI VILLAS

This is the Seventeenth Century Renaissance entrance.

MANUELE BONACCORSI

Do you own all this?

GUIDO POSARELLI - ENTREPRENEUR - POSARELLI VILLAS

It's all owned by the family, yes.

MANUELE BONACCORSI

So you are rather like the king of the castle...

GUIDO POSARELLI - ENTREPRENEUR - POSARELLI VILLAS

A little bit, I suppose you could say that.

MANUELE BONACCORSI

Are you officially resident here? How many apartments are there?

GUIDO POSARELLI - ENTREPRENEUR - POSARELLI VILLAS

There are 25 apartments in the castle. Let's go into the largest apartment in the castle. Mind the stairs.

MANUELE BONACCORSI

Is this a single apartment?

GUIDO POSARELLI - ENTREPRENEUR - POSARELLI VILLAS

It is a single apartment This is the lounge in the apartment.

MANUELE BONACCORSI

How much do you rent this for?

GUIDO POSARELLI - ENTREPRENEUR - POSARELLI VILLAS

This has a top price of about three thousand euros a week.

MANUELE BONACCORSI

You are the King of Airbnb hosts.

GUIDO POSARELLI - ENTREPRENEUR - POSARELLI VILLAS

Yes, let's say yes.

MANUELE BONACCORSI

How come you work with Airbnb?

GUIDO POSARELLI - ENTREPRENEUR - POSARELLI VILLAS

They contacted us in 2016 and told us they chose us because we had the right features for working with them.

MANUELE BONACCORSI

There. The name of your company doesn't appear on Airbnb.

GUIDO POSARELLI - ENTREPRENEUR - POSARELLI VILLAS

No, it's there.

MANUELE BONACCORSI

Your account is Guido: "Hi, I'm Guido". It's as if Airbnb did not want to highlight that it makes arrangements with companies.

GUIDO POSARELLI - ENTREPRENEUR - POSARELLI VILLAS

I think it is a bit like that, yes, the more complex part of the task.

MANUELE BONACCORSI

They disguise it a bit.

GUIDO POSARELLI - ENTREPRENEUR - POSARELLI VILLAS

Yes, true, something like that. We never really understood why. I think it's a business choice, yes, a marketing approach.

MANUELE BONACCORSI

What percentage does Airbnb take?

GUIDO POSARELLI - ENTREPRENEUR - POSARELLI VILLAS

They take 12.5% from the client.

MANUELE BONACCORSI

And from you?

GUIDO POSARELLI - ENTREPRENEUR - POSARELLI VILLAS

They take 5% from us.

MANUELE BONACCORSI

So, on your turnover?

GUIDO POSARELLI - ENTREPRENEUR - POSARELLI VILLAS

We have come to around 500,000, 600,000 euros.

MANUELE BONACCORSI

Ah, it's understandable why they contacted you.

MANUELE BONACCORSI OFF-SCREEN

It in the cellars of the ancient castle that Guido Posarelli's agency prepares the small ads. The system is automated and with a few clicks you can publish on all the main online portals. Ten or so people are enough to handle a thousand ads. Second place in the superhost ranking goes to Bettina, with 713 apartments. Here she is. Actually, here HE is. His name is Vincenzo Cella, and he is the director of Halldis, an entrepreneurial giant in the apartments for rent field.

MANUELE BONACCORSI

Is there a "real" Bettina?

VINCENZO CELLA - DIRECTOR HALLDIS

Yes, the real Bettina is an employee whose face appears in the ad.

MANUELE BONACCORSI

Why is your host name not Halldis Italia?

VINCENZO CELLA - DIRECTOR HALLDIS

At the outset, it wasn't possible.

MANUELE BONACCORSI

Ah, it was forbidden then?

VINCENZO CELLA - DIRECTOR HALLDIS

It's the way that means we can be on Airbnb right now.

MANUELE BONACCORSI

Who are the owners?

VINCENZO CELLA - DIRECTOR HALLDIS

The not just one owner but "n" partners who financed the company.

MANUELE BONACCORSI

The main one is Leonardo Ferragamo.

VINCENZO CELLA - DIRECTOR HALLDIS

Leonardo Ferragamo. Who is the main partner.

MANUELE BONACCORSI

A well-known entrepreneur in the luxury field

VINCENZO CELLA - DIRECTOR HALLDIS

A well-known entrepreneur in the luxury field

MANUELE BONACCORSI

So I think I'm going to Bettina but I actually go to Ferragamo?

VINCENZO CELLA - DIRECTOR HALLDIS

You think about going to Bettina ...

MANUELE BONACCORSI

Nice surprise, or not...!

VINCENZO CELLA - DIRECTOR HALLDIS

... you don't go to Ferragamo, you go to companies, in an apartment run by a team made up of over 100 employees.

MANUELE BONACCORSI

So it's a marketing strategy?

VINCENZO CELLA - DIRECTOR HALLDIS

It is a marketing channel.

MANUELE BONACCORSI OFF-SCREEN

So, Airbnb was founded to promote exchanges from below, an economy between ordinary people. On the contrary, estimates by the University of Siena indicate that the revenues generated by the platform largely go to people who use Airbnb professionally. 20% of hosts grab 80% of revenues. And it's not small change. Airbnb's worldwide turnover is close to 3 billion dollars. Where does all this money end up?

STEFANO PICASCIA - RESEARCHER UNIVERSITY OF SIENA

Whenever I go to someone's home through Airbnb and pay that small amount, an ever-increasing portion of this small figure, which by now apparently even comes to 20%, goes to the platform, which means that it ends up in Silicon Valley.

SIGFRIDO RANUCCI IN THE STUDIO

It was launched with fascinating words: "Sharing economy", sharing, sustainability, and in part this is still the case; but big business can also be achieved thanks to mediation by real estate agencies, thereby helping to increase prices and depopulate our historic centres. Now Airbnb is a bit tight-lipped when it comes to sharing information about itself but since it comes to our house to do business, we sent our correspondent to their home. Right there, where everything started by renting out an inflatable mattress. Except that they inflated it so much that they helped upset the social balance of a piece of California.

MANUELE BONACCORSI OFF-SCREEN

This is San Francisco, California, capital of Silicon Valley. Airbnb was founded here. And this is the headquarters of what is by now the largest tourism company in the world. It was founded in 2007 by computer expert Nathan Blecharczyk, with Brian Chesky and Joe Gebbia, two penniless young men who decided to rent an inflatable mat in their living room. They now have personal assets of \$3.8 billion each. The multinational has organized a guided tour of its headquarters. Here, 600 people every day manage data for 4.8 million ads in 65,000 different cities in the world. Meetings are held in rooms that resemble the settings of the apartments they promote. This is a typical Austrian house, this is Chinese and this is a copy of an Italian villa.

AIRBNB MANAGER

We have a billion dollars in cash and generated 100 million in profits last year. It will probably be 250 this year. Our goal is to be quoted on the stock exchange and get a billion people on our platform in 2020: we want one person in seven on Planet Earth to be a member of Airbnb.

MANUELE BONACCORSI

But Airbnb in Europe virtually pays no taxes? In Italy, for example.

AIRBNB MANAGER

Airbnb pays taxes. Where we have a company, we pay the related company taxes.

MANUELE BONACCORSI OFF-SCREEN

Despite the sneakers worn by its managers, the sharing economy community has a corporate structure worthy of an oil multinational. The holding companies that manage everything are in the tax haven of Delaware, where it is impossible to find out the names of the owners. The company that manages the European market, including Italy, is based in Ireland, where the tax rate is 12.5%. Yet it in turn is controlled by a holding company in Jersey, United Kingdom.

TOMMASO FACCIO - INTERNATIONAL COMPANY TAX REFORM COMMISSION

When an Airbnb customer pays Airbnb, this is not invoiced to the Italian company providing support services but to a company in Ireland. What do other digital companies usually do? From Ireland, where the tax rate is 12.5%, they shift profits to other tax havens, usually by paying royalties.

MANUELE BONACCORSI

So, in our case, probably in Jersey.

TOMMASO FACCIO - INTERNATIONAL COMPANY TAX REFORM COMMISSION

Probably in Jersey.

MANUELE BONACCORSI

How much tax do you pay in Jersey?

TOMMASO FACCIO - INTERNATIONAL COMPANY TAX REFORM COMMISSION

Zero per cent.

MANUELE BONACCORSI None?

Zero.

TOMMASO FACCIO - INTERNATIONAL COMPANY TAX REFORM COMMISSION

Nothing.

MANUELE BONACCORSI OFF-SCREEN

This is the paradox of the sharing economy. It generates large amounts of wealth - but only for a few, because the resources are not redistributed. San Francisco today is one of the richest cities in the world, but this is what you can see in the streets.

RICHARD HAESLEY - DIRECTOR CONRAD HOUSE

The city has between seven and ten thousand *homeless people*- one of the highest figures in the United States. My organization has shelters providing hospitality to 700 of them.

MANUELE BONACCORSI

How is it possible that such a rich city can have so many homeless people?

RICHARD HAESLEY - DIRECTOR CONRAD HOUSE

In recent years, many companies have established their headquarters here: Uber is just round the corner, Twitter down that road, Dolby has its labs here. Many executives live in San Francisco and have built luxury homes. But, here, not everyone enjoys the wealth generated. If you don't pay the rent, you end up on the street.

STEVEN HILL - WRITER NEW AMERICA FOUNDATION

Many people in the last five years have come to work for internet companies, earning very high salaries. San Francisco today has one of the highest concentrations of wealth and poverty in the world. The gap is incredible. The richest 1% earns 44 times what the remaining 99% of the population earns.

TOMMI AVICOLLI MECCA - HOUSING RIGHTS COMMITTEE SAN FRANCISCO

San Francisco is experiencing a full-scale real estate crisis. We have never had so many evictions. A one-bedroom apartment costs \$3,800 a month, five thousand for two beds, here, look at this announcement, six thousand a month. This is for sale at \$2.6 million. It's impossible to handle these prices unless you earn a mountain of money.

This is Mission, the heart of the Latin community, a working class neighbourhood. Now, hi-tech workers are coming to live here and in the last ten years eight thousand people have left the neighbourhood because of evictions. Over there, where you can see that red sign, they are building 350 luxury apartments.

And this is also one of the neighbourhoods where there is the highest number of rentals on Airbnb. Hundreds of apartments have been taken off the market. This has a direct effect on prices and evictions, some owners have evicted tenants in order to rent on Airbnb.

MANUELE BONACCORSI OFF-SCREEN

To tackle this problem, San Francisco City Council - precisely where Airbnb plays at home - has decided to tighten up on short-term rentals.

SUNNY ANGULO - SAN FRANCISCO CITY COUNCIL

Airbnb was encouraging the transfer of inhabitants. Entire buildings were taken off the usual rental market and the phenomenon had to be regulated. Airbnb put up strong opposition and hired dozens of lobbyists in San Francisco, spent eight million dollars to campaign against regulations and even sued the City Council. But in the end, our regulations were passed.

Today, if you want to rent in San Francisco through Airbnb, you have to prove that you are resident and you can upload one online advert. A permit must also be obtained from a city council office. If you infringe the rules, your permit is revoked. But the most important thing is that Airbnb shares its data.

MANUELE BONACCORSI OFF-SCREEN

They are trying to harness Airbnb all over the world. In Barcelona, they blocked permits in city centre areas; in Berlin, a code issued by the City Council is required. While Paris took them to court to remove 84% of the ads. Palma de Mallorca has even banned renting via the web. Yet in Europe, city councils are unable to obtain from Airbnb lists of people who rent their apartments.

LAURENS IVENS - DEPUTY MAYOR AMSTERDAM

Apartments can be rented to tourists maximum 60 days a year and for four people. And from next year, we will reduce the limit to 30 days.

MANUELE BONACCORSI

What are the risks for people who infringe rules?

LAURENS IVENS - DEPUTY MAYOR AMSTERDAM

Last year we issued 12 million euros in fines and every week we close five incorrectly rented apartments. Sometimes, local council officials pretend to be tourists to find illegal apartments.

MANUELE BONACCORSI

Do you have spies?

LAURENS IVENS - DEPUTY MAYOR AMSTERDAM

Yes, we have spies. This means we can find out the irregular ads since the internet site does not indicate exactly where the apartments rented on the web are located.

MANUELE BONACCORSI

Airbnb doesn't give you this information?

LAURENS IVENS - DEPUTY MAYOR AMSTERDAM

They say it is not possible to give us more detailed information because of privacy legislation. This is why we have written to the EU commission.

MANUELE BONACCORSI

Why do you think Airbnb doesn't want to give you this information?

LAURENS IVENS - DEPUTY MAYOR AMSTERDAM

Because information is money, in this business.

SIGFRIDO RANUCCI IN THE STUDIO

Even a network of employee-spies to get their hands on data. Because that's where the real game is played. The Mayor of San Francisco has dictated his rules and now also in Paris, Berlin, Barcelona, Vienna, Madrid and Brussels administrators have written to the EU: convince Airbnb to give us this information. Only that the EU seems to be more sensitive to lobbying activities. Airbnb finances the European Holiday Home Association, which spent half a million euros in 2016 (perhaps rent from our house ended up there) on lobbying activities and in 2017 the European Parliament passed a resolution condemning those who tried to enforce rules and regulations for short-term rentals. However, Europe now has to make peace with itself. Find an agreement: on the one hand, it demands meeting budget pacts but on the other is weak with those who in some way or other favour tax avoidance. Our Manuele Bonaccorsi went to see from the inside, even to round off his income a little, how the world of short-term rentals works.

MANUELE BONACCORSI OFF-SCREEN

I tried to rent my house on Airbnb. It only takes a few minutes, some photos and no documents are needed. So, the online ad is already up. Airbnb merely advises you to consult the web page of Rome City Council and we find out that there are regulations in Latium similar to those in San Francisco: there is an obligation to register guests. So, we went to ask for information at the Rome Capital Tourist Desk.

ROME CITY COUNCIL CLERK

Send us a notification, it is not a trail, it's just a notification of accommodation for tourist use, it is entirely a self-declaration.

MANUELE BONACCORSI

What do I risk if I do not register?

ROME CITY COUNCIL CLERK

There is no obligation if you have this doubt. No checks are made, needless to say ... There are more abusive cases ...

MANUELE BONACCORSI

I imagine there will be many ...

ROME CITY COUNCIL CLERK

It is said to be twice as much ...

MANUELE BONACCORSI

Double!

MANUELE BONACCORSI OFF-SCREEN

Fantastic, there is a law but checks and sanctions are not carried out. Wonderful for people renting illegally. In Rome, according to the public database, there are only 4,200 apartments for tourists - but the Airbnb site alone lists 17,000 in the capital. And the same can be said for Florence, where the city council lists 3200 hosts, compared to 5000 listed on the site. The Veneto is another region where registration is mandatory but according to official databases in Venice about 4000 apartments are available to tourists, compared to 5,700 on Airbnb alone.

ALESSANDRO MASSIMO NUCARA - DIRECTOR FEDERALBERGHI (HOTEL ASSOCIATION)

Every year, there are around one billion stays in Italy, one billion nights slept in hospitality facilities. The official census lists 400 million so this means that 600 million are missing from the roll call. In our opinion, the vast majority of these stays are sold on the black market.

MANUELE BONACCORSI OFF-SCREEN

That a problem exists is confirmed by the Fraud Squad (Guardia di Finanza) in Venice. It has been combatting sly online adverts for years. Only one in four is in proper order. For the time being, four million euros have been recovered. And to discover tax evaders, they have created software that scans ads on the web and compares them with Inland Revenue databases.

MANUELE BONACCORSI

But does this information tell you the exact address of the property and the name of the person renting it?

GIOVANNI AVITABILE - COMMANDER FRAUD SQUAD VENICE

No.

MANUELE BONACCORSI

Yet the owner of the digital platform naturally has it?

GIOVANNI AVITABILE - COMMANDER FRAUD SQUAD VENICE

I guess so.

MANUELE BONACCORSI

If you had access to such data as investigators, you would cut the legs from under tax evasion in this area with extraordinary ease.

GIOVANNI AVITABILE - COMMANDER FRAUD SQUAD VENICE

Of course, it is very relevant information. Absolutely.

MANUELE BONACCORSI

So why is this information not given to you? Did you ask to receive it? How does it work?

GIOVANNI AVITABILE - COMMANDER FRAUD SQUAD VENICE

If the subjects who own these databases are foreign subjects, obviously they do not respond with the same alacrity as subjects responding to their own national authorities.

MANUELE BONACCORSI OFF-SCREEN

Airbnb data is safe in Ireland and needless to say it is inaccessible to Italian authorities. We simply do not exist as far as Airbnb is concerned. The guest pays the platform in Ireland, which, through a subsidiary based in England, after taking its percentage pays the rest of the money to the host.

Who often does not pay any tax, not the least because there is no obligation to register short-term contracts, as is the case for standard leases. To combat tax evasion, Parliament last June approved a government decree that would require Airbnb to pay income taxes of homeowners to the tax authorities. At a discounted rate of 21%. Airbnb filed an appeal that is currently bouncing between TAR and the Council of State.

MANUELE BONACCORSI

Nonetheless, Airbnb is not applying this law. They apparently decide whether to apply the law or not?

FRANCESCO BOCCIA - FORMER PRESIDENT OF FINANCE COMMISSION, CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES

They are wrong. In my opinion, they are committing an offence.

MANUELE BONACCORSI

Not only administrative but also criminal?

FRANCESCO BOCCIA - FORMER PRESIDENT OF FINANCE COMMISSION, CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES

I am convinced that there is enough to pursue them even on a criminal level.

MANUELE BONACCORSI OFF-SCREEN

There is a law but Airbnb ignores it. Only Italian intermediaries are observing it.

STEFANO BETTANIN - PROPERTY MANAGERS ITALIA

While we pay this tax here and there are other scoundrels who do not, as in all things two weights and two measures end up being created.

MANUELE BONACCORSI

How much did the State expect to collect?

STEFANO BETTANIN - PROPERTY MANAGERS ITALIA

One hundred and fifty million euros.

MANUELE BONACCORSI

How much will it collect?

STEFANO BETTANIN - PROPERTY MANAGERS ITALIA

But if we ... if it is a lot, it will probably come to 10 millions ... if only we pay up ...

MANUELE BONACCORSI

Great result ... ten million out of 150. Extraordinary.

STEFANO BETTANIN - PROPERTY MANAGERS ITALIA

Indeed. I'll leave you to make a comment about it.

MANUELE BONACCORSI OFF-SCREEN

The new law would also require Airbnb to provide data about host income revenues to the Italian Inland Revenue. The Californian company recently signed an agreement in Denmark in which it agrees to do this. But they do not even think about here.

AIRBNB MANAGER - SAN FRANCISCO HEADQUARTERS

Cities and States in Europe are becoming increasingly aggressive about the information they want in order to allow us operate there. And we have an uncrossable line, which is not to share data and not to share information about profits, because it's private and confidential information.

MANUELE BONACCORSI OFF-SCREEN

But why is Airbnb so reserved? Perhaps to respect the privacy of its customers? If Airbnb applied Italian law, tax authorities would know everything about the business of the multinational and would have an easy time asking it to pay not only the taxes on behalf of hosts but also tax on the commissions collected by the corporation. And it's not small change. In Italy alone in 2016, Airbnb hosts earned 621 million euros. Calculating that the platform withholds 10-18%, it can be estimated that only in commissions Airbnb earns between 60 and 110 million euros a year. Only the crumbs remain in Italy: barely 61,000 euros in tax paid in 2016. Less than 0.1%.

FRANCESCO BOCCIA - FORMER PRESIDENT OF FINANCE COMMISSION, CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES

It has also become rather embarrassing: they pay less than a car mechanic, less than a bar, less than a street vendor. If you continue to operate in Italy, through the technology platform, through your legal advisors, through law firms, and invest millions and millions and millions of euros and tell me that you do not have any permanent organisation, frankly you are telling lies.

MANUELE BONACCORSI

This is why Airbnb does not want to give this data to anyone.

FRANCESCO BOCCIA - FORMER PRESIDENT OF FINANCE COMMISSION, CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES

Of course, but it's the truth. Then there is this myth that today we invent the sharing economy as if we were all flower power children holding hands - but nobody pays anything. No. The sharing economy is a mickey-take, users pay in exactly the same way as for a bed & breakfast, which gives you an invoice or receipt and at the end of the year pays its taxes. And if you compete on a par but do not even pay taxes, it is evident that one closes and you win - but what do you win? Does the flower-power child win or does someone who maximizes profits win? The one who maximizes profits wins, consequently the people who earn on the sly in Italy and take the money to the other end of the world. And while some may find this to be a beautiful world, I'm afraid it is not so for me.

SIGFRIDO RANUCCI IN THE STUDIO

Mamma mia - didn't the former Chairman of the Parliamentary Finance Commission get angry. But who can blame him, with that so tiny-tiny turnover Airbnb achieves in the end it pays the same taxes as a baker. And our mayors? They are ... well there are those who are a bit distracted, who are powerless and those who throw open their

arms. Impotent because a national law would be required to govern short-term rents. They collect tourist taxes which, however are substantially tips from tourists who rent passed via Airbnb and then given to our municipalities. Yet to prevent and combat tax avoidance, the Italian government has introduced some rules. Only they were met by an avalanche of appeals that hit the TAR and the Council of State. In short ... but that's enough for now: Airbnb: release this data and allow us, since we are talking about our own home, to govern a phenomenon that threatens to undermine our identity.

Something that is already creaking in other fields where people, in addition to the family jewels, were also forced to sell their passion.