The Myth of the Medieval Towns and Villages of Italy

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The whole of the Apennine Mountain Range in Italy from the north of Tuscany to the south of Calabria is dotted with several hundred ancient walled towns and villages. From the autostrada they look to be an essential holiday excursion. Some of them are simply breathtaking, dating back to the middle ages with views that will last in the memory for a lifetime. However, these are exceptions. The majority are in slow terminal decline.

Piegaro, in southern Umbria sits about 400 mtrs above sea level and is a clear example of this decline. The glass factory that once rivalled Murano in Venice and manufactured the windows for nearby Orvieto's famous cathedral windows has long gone. It is now only a museum of average quality. Increasingly, the houses are being abandoned or offered for sale but buyers are few and the state of many of the properties suggests that they will require imagination as well as money.
With youth unemployment in Italy at an eye watering 33% (OECD, April 2017) it is easy to see why the 18-25 age group see no future in staying.

The feeling of abandon permeates through increased neglect.

Even grand buildings are left as the next generations are no longer willing or able to pay for the upkeep and builders find it easier to construct new houses without the incumbrance of Italy's archaic property laws.
The shops are closing and the only pizzeria has been abandoned, appearing like the Marie Celeste - looking as if it is ready to open but there is no-one there and no-one seems to know why it has closed
The streets have an eerie silence about them which is occasionally interrupted by a Piegarisa venturing out.
Increasingly those that are left are very old.
And as the community notice shows, they are dying.
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