Thusis

St.Moritz

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CH   FL   A

GRAUBÜNDEN

Thusis (CH)

St. Moritz (CH)

Tirano (I)

I

Settlement structures and history

- ● Cultural assets of national importance
- ● Cultural assets of regional importance
- ● Maiensässe (selection)

Core zone

Core zone with railway and
cultural landscape

Buffer zone

Buffer zone in the near area

Buffer zone in the distant area (backdrop)

Horizon line

Other contents

Other stretches of the Rhaetian Railway

2.b.4 Villages, hamlets, scattered settlements, alps and "Maiensässe" along the Albula and Bernina line

The settlement models of the various valley communities either side of the Albula and Bernina railways are quite distinct. Until the 19th century, the type of settlement was dictated by the prevalent form and mode of the agriculture of the time. The distribution pattern of buildings for homes and animals between village and alp reflects the degree to which the farms were centralised and the geographic distribution of the autonomous farming cooperatives. Like the settlement structures, the building style of the houses also differed from valley to valley. The cultural processes active from the late Middle Ages until 1800 in the various regions of the nominated property were hardly conducive to change. Local customs and habits were not superseded until the 19th century, with the surge of tourism and the rapid increase in mobility bringing the desire for new routes. The foreign, urban architectural styles of the new branch of the economy overlaid the traditional settlement pattern in many places.

A trip up to the high Alps and then down again within a few hours, as is possible on the Albula/Bernina line, not only accelerates the passage through the vegetation zones and even the seasons, it also takes the traveller through a number of different cultural landscapes with a wide variety of building styles. That is why, according to current understanding, the type and density of settlement in the countryside either side of the railway are as much part of the cultural heritage of a rail system as the modelling of the landscape by previous and more recent farming systems.

Since earliest times, the scarcity of usable arable land in the Alpine valleys has forced the people to practise vertical transhumance. As summer comes late and winter early, due to the high altitude, the land farmed – in line with the climatic conditions – was divided into several levels or steps. The lowest – village – level, which was inhabited all year round, was only viable in conjunction with the Maiensässe (small farm dwellings at the intermediate level) and the highest level – the alpine pastures –

used only in summer. The temporary area was managed according to a simple principle: either one took the animals up to the fodder or one carried the fodder down to the animals. In the first case, one speaks of a decentralised system, in the second of a centralised one. The decentralised system generated numerous buildings between village and alp, but with a village-centralised system there were no buildings scattered across the pastures. The limitations of the surfaces usable for farming also determined the work rhythm, the size of the villages and hamlets, and their distribution pattern in the valley, on the slopes and at high altitude.

Changes in settlement pattern along the Albula/Bernina line were the outcome of two periods with contradictory dynamics: the new era from 1500 to 1860 and the subsequent modern period. The cultural traditions of the older period, generated by village-centralised and rather static farming communities with locally effective regulators, are being progressively eroded and absorbed into the new reference systems, particularly on the valley floor. Formerly, business was

Thusis > Plan dating from 1876. The 'old village' ❶ that has grown organically is a complex confusion of buildings. In contrast, the 'new village' which was planned on the drawing board, looks very orderly. ❷
Amt für Raumentwicklung Graubünden

Thusis > Historical postcard with a view of the village of Thusis seen from Hohenrhätien. Thusis railway station is in the foreground, to the right.
Private Collection

Thusis > An aerial view taken in 2002.
D. Enz, Comet

only culturally effective up to some 2,000 m; however, in more recent times, the trend is literally to aim high – for the peaks. The present promotion of agriculture in conjunction with strict building regulations will soothe the battered image of settlement and landscape.

Settlement patterns in the northern section of the Albula line

The northern section of the Albula line touches three sharply differentiated settlement areas: the region around Thusis, the starting place, with its gentle topography, is relatively densely populated, while the higher altitude Landwasser valley beyond the Schin gorge and particularly the Albula valley are sparsely populated. In the Albula valley, where the mighty conifer forests reach down to the valley floor, the villages are surrounded by well-tended meadows.

Settlement structures

Domleschg and Heinzenberg

Not only do the flanks of the valley between Rothenbrunnen and Thusis have different names – the eastern slope is called Domleschg, the western slope Heinzenberg – they differ significantly in cultural-geographic respects. On the gently rising Heinzenberg, there are both valley and mountainside villages; and at the highest level there is the Walser enclave of Tschappina. The broad expanse of the Domleschg, in contrast, has valley and mountain villages at only two levels.
On both sides of the valley, the villages and hamlets are more open and surrounded by fruit trees. Farming was organised differently in the mountain and village settlements. The farmed area of all the communities in the valley is not subdivided into levels or steps and there are no

buildings of any kind on the meadows. The valley farmers had to rely on extra-territorial summering i.e. renting Maiensässe and pasturing rights in other communities to summer their livestock. In contrast, the farmers in the communities up on the slopes farmed at three levels: the village, Maiensäss and high alp. The farmers had their individual dairies and cowsheds in the Maiensässe that were occupied in spring and autumn; the high alpine pastures were used in summer, often in conjunction with the valley farmers, on a cooperative basis. The pastures around the highest villages – Feldis, Scheid, Trans and Tschappina – have a dense scattering of fodder barns and hay sheds. In contrast, the village pastures of the communities half way up between mountain and valley – Urmein, Flerden, Sarn, Portein, Tartar and Präz – have only a few isolated fodder barns.

Landwasser and Albula Valleys

The villages are more closely structured in these valley communities than in the Heinzenberg/Domleschg. There are no buildings in the countryside around the settlements, as farming is centralised in the valley. The Walser villages, high up above the Landwasser valley – Mutten in the west, Schmitten, Wiesen and Jenisberg in the east – are an exception. The village pastures are dotted with fodder, hay and storage barns. In the Landwasser and Albula valleys, traditional farming usually operates at three levels: village farm, Maiensäss and alp. The Maiensäss level was particularly well developed in the communities of Vaz/Obervaz, Bergün/Bravuogn, Filisur and Alvaneu and the system was practised particularly late; in contrast, it was only fragmentary in Brienz/Brinzauls. There is no Maiensäss level in the Alvaschein, Tiefencastel and Surava communities; the farmers

**Maiensäss Naz at Preda › Photograph
taken in 1912.**
Ch. Meisser / Staatsarchiv, Chur

Tiefencastel › Taken in 1907.
Ch. Meisser / Staatsarchiv, Chur

**Filisur › The village street is lined with
"Engadin houses"; where farm vehicles
can drive straight in to the stables and
barns.**
Ch. Meisser / Staatsarchiv, Chur

Filisur › Village street. Taken in 1912.
Ch. Meisser / Staatsarchiv, Chur

there farmed only at village level and at an – extra-territorial – alp level.

The Maiensäss farms were owned privately by the farmers and the buildings were usually grouped together. As a rule, the alps in both valleys were used on a cooperative basis; the buildings on the alp – with one dairy hut or two jointly-used milk processing buildings with living quarters and fifteen or more private sheds for livestock – were grouped in hamlets of varying sizes; even today there are still large, homogeneous groups of buildings on the alps. On the alps of the Walser enclaves in the Landwasser valley – Wiesen and Jenisberg – the farms were run individually, and the buildings were the private property of the individual farming families; on the Wiesner alp, there are a total of 36 farms arranged like hamlets. Every privately owned dairy had its own living accommodation and stable. As they were not far from the village, these alp farms assumed the Maiensäss or intermediate altitude functions.

The part of the Albula valley that is occupied all the year round is closely related to the Engadin with respect to architecture and settlement patterns. In contrast, the - two level - farming system of the area occupied for only part of the year is similar to that in central Graubünden. In the Landwasser valley, the temporary buildings are made of wood; in the Albula valley, they are mostly made of stone.

Changes in settlement patterns

Thusis and the Rhine Plain

Thusis station, the starting point of the Albula line, is at the southern end of a plain that was created in the decades following 1836, when the Rhine dams were built, from the man-made alluvial deposits on the former flood area. The village itself lies somewhat higher than the railway line. It comprises a historic nucleus and the "new village", which is slightly apart. The latter is a 19th-century rarity in the settlement building pattern: a built-to-plan settlement constructed immediately after the village was destroyed by fire in 1845 to the plans of Richard La Nicca (1794 – 1883), the canton's civil engineer. The cantonal building plan took traffic regulation and economic questions into account, as well as fire safety and sanitation. It stipulated the following:

1. A village road (to be built by the canton): 1,070 m long, virtually flat, 13.2 m wide including a space of 3 m from the houses on either side.
2. Two rows of houses, 10.5 m deep, massively built and with fireproof roofs, separated from one another by side lanes 3.6 m wide.
3. A parallel 'stable road' for the utility buildings, built in a line and separate from the houses.
4. The houses should be two or three storeys high with a classic façade facing the street.

With its clear-cut, orthogonal building pattern and the uniform design of the houses 'New Thusis' reflects the urban visions so much in vogue at the time. This is the only 'new settlement mile' (cf. 2.b.3) in the network of new roads built in Canton Graubünden between 1818 and 1942 that was built strictly according to theory. The "old village" of Thusis was not rebuilt until decades after the fire.

Eight of the twenty-one historic villages around Thusis, including the little market town of Fürstenau, are of national importance. Numerous cultural monuments – all in all, there are seven castles and six churches together with the imposing Hohenrhätien citadel above Sils and the Cazis monastery – round off the picture

Bergün/Bravuogn > View of the village with the Hotel Kurhaus. Taken in the first quarter of the 20th century.
Collection Wehrli, Eidgenössisches Archiv für Denkmalpflege, Berne

Bergün/Bravuogn > Historic plan of the village showing the railway station ❶ and the Hotel Kurhaus ❷. The living accommodation is shown in black, the stables are shaded in grey.
Denkmalpflege Graubünden, Chur

Bergün/Bravuogn > Typical "Engadin House" with painted façade (1554), photograph taken in 1907.
Ch. Meisser/ Staatsarchiv, Chur

of an incomparable complex of historic settlements at the centre of Graubünden.

Tiefencastel

The overall architectural impression in Tiefencastel is reminiscent of the Italian style, partly due to the baroque pomp of the Stephanskirche (St. Stephen's), built in the mid-17th century, partly to the rational building structure and symmetric form of the houses, both these features resulting from the complete reconstruction of the village after it was destroyed by fire in 1890. The encounter with Italianate, sacral architecture is not fortuitous: the village was the centre of the "Missione retica" for Oberhalbstein, the Counter-Reformation movement in Graubünden organised by the Capuchin monks (cf. 2.b.2).

Filisur

In the Albula valley, the layout of the villages is based on organic, agricultural structures and determined by the complex topography – there are hardly any linear or even symmetric elements to be found here. In Filisur, the connection between the nucleus of the old village and the station on the slope to the north was created by extending the old cemetery road, which was planted like an avenue with mountain sycamore and linden trees at the same time as the station was built. The compact settlement follows the valley road; on the downhill side, the road is bordered by an uninterrupted line of imposing houses with decorated façades. Filisur is recognised as one of the most attractive villages in central Graubünden.

Bergün/Bravuogn

In 1925, the village of Bergün/Bravuogn comprised some 80, in part very imposing, farmsteads, a station area with a few new shops and restaurants, the federal arsenal (1917), and the Kurhaus, opened in 1906, with its gardens and contemporary sports facilities. A stone bridge, built in 1903, leads from the old village to the mountain sycamore and birch-lined avenue of the station road. Since the Middle Ages, the historic nucleus has developed either side of a long road with short lanes branching off to the sides. Two important planning rules define the appearance of the village: the buildings stand close together flush with the edge of the road, their plastered decorated façades facing outwards; the utility buildings are built on to the houses at the back so that the edge of the village shows an uninterrupted, close-knit row of livestock sheds with stone-built corner posts and wooden walls in between.

The railway line starts the climb to the Albula pass in two open loops across the winter-safe mountainside meadow to the east of the village. It is a pleasant surprise for the passengers to discover that the view of the village and its church, together with the hamlet of Latsch above it, is repeated several times.

Maiensäss Naz

In general, all building at the Maiensäss level in the Albula valley is in the same style. On the gentle slopes of the Naz meadows, there are 18 Maiensäss farmsteads, at regular distances and all built with the same materials and facing the same direction. They are seasonal dwellings with living and farm sections of the same size. The livestock and hay barn tracts are on the sunny side; the conditions on the shady living side are ideal for processing and storing milk and cheese.

Samedan > The historic village is set on a hill, the railway installations are on the valley floor. Taken in 1933.

❶ = Reception building
❷ = Staff houses
❸ = Repair workshop
❹ = Protestant church
❺ = Catholic Sacred Heart church
❻ = St. Peter's church of the Holy Sepulchre
❼ = Chesa Planta
❽ = Hotel Bernina
Swissair
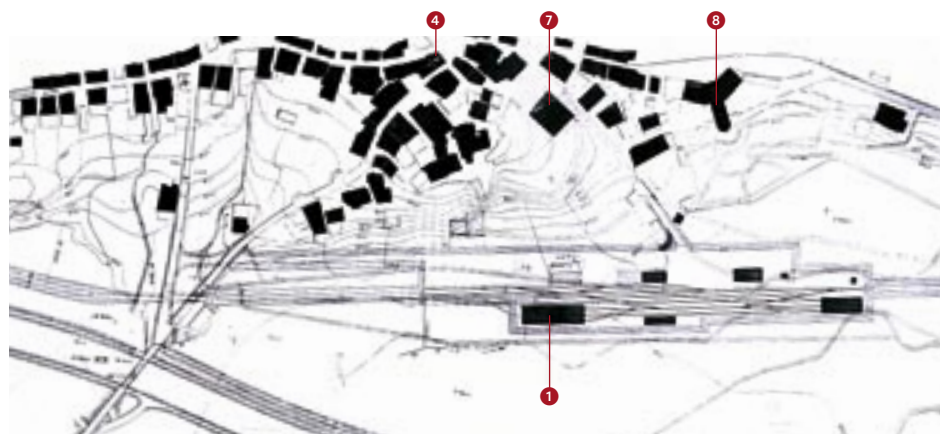
Samedan > Original plan for the construction of the railway station, dating from 1903.
Rhaetian Railway

Settlement pattern in the Upper Engadin

The rolling topography of the landscape, together with the airy larch forests, the lakes and the flat meadows where the rivers used to meander at will, provides an unmistakable stage for the historic settlement nuclei pattern of the Upper Engadin. The open, high altitude valley, virtually free of farm outbuildings, allows an unimpaired view of the formerly farming villages and also underscores the two most recent phases of building development generated by the surge of tourism. The first phase, with the castle-like hotel buildings in the old centres of the villages and the palatial residences in the midst of elaborately landscaped hotel parks near the villages, started about 1850 and was interrupted abruptly in 1914. In the meantime, the extensive residential quarter of St. Moritz, with its landscaped parks individualised by successive additions to the hotel complexes, has acquired rarity value as a new tourist settlement. From the architectural- and tourism-historic viewpoint, the once farming villages dotted with large hotel complexes are also important; these include the former village of St. Moritz as well as Pontresina, Celerina and Samedan. In the last few decades, large holiday home developments have grown up around the historic villages.

Settlement structures

The gently sloping valley floor of the Upper Engadin lies between 1,600 and 1,800 m and is therefore at about the same altitude as the alp-grazing regions elsewhere. Consequently, the alpine pastures in this part of the valley are only slightly higher than the villages. The historic farms here were organised and centralised at two levels and farmed from the villages, which, despite the high altitude, were inhabited all year round. Winter fodder was stored exclusively in the massive barns built in one unit with the houses (cf. 2.a.6). There were, and still are, more than enough pastures, but only a restricted area of meadows. The lower slopes were terraced for arable farming; these old terraces are still very impressive today (cf. 2.a.7).

The historic village nuclei were built up according to strict planning regulations on the location of the buildings and their architecture. Geometric or symmetric positioning of façades and repetition of the same forms were foreign to the local building pattern until about 1800. In view of the concentration of buildings, the prescriptions for private and collective objects are very strict. Agricultural wheeled vehicles are allowed to enter and pass through the historic farm complexes. The rows of buildings, flush with the street, face on to the curving lanes. The valley road forms the spine of the villages and, here and there, short side lanes branch off with rows of houses on both sides. The appearance of the lanes and open spaces is characterised by the decorated house façades, the edge of the village by the livestock sheds built on to the back of the living quarters. This gives the settlement nucleus a very compact and architecturally uniform appearance. The settlement landscape has few towers or defences dating from the Middle Ages; in contrast, there are many, mostly small, sacral buildings from the Middle Ages and the Baroque period, which define entire passages of the landscape or are the focus of the closely structured villages.

Changes in settlement patterns

Bever

The Albula railway makes a sharp bend round Bever and stops to the west, outside the village. Since 1955, this farming village has morphed

St. Moritz Dorf > View of the village from the south in 1934. The Grand Hotel and the Hotel Palace in the foreground.
Swissair

St. Moritz Dorf > View of the old farming village from the west, about 1850.
Denkmalpflege Graubünden, Chur

St. Moritz Bad > Construction of the Hotel Stahlbad, 1891/92.
Dokumentationsbibliothek, St. Moritz

SITUATIONSPLAN
der beiden Stationsprojecte
von
St. Moritz

St. Moritzer See.

Wasserspiegel 1712.ᵐ

Project der Rhätischen Bahn.

St. Moritz - Dorf.

St. Moritz-Bad.

St. Moritz Bad > The Neue Kurhaus built in 1864. Coloured aquatint by Johan Rudolf Dikenmann, around 1870.
Rhätisches Museum, Chur

St. Moritz > The spa district in the foreground and St. Moritz Dorf across the lake in 1900.
Denkmalpflege Graubünden, Chur

St. Moritz > Overview project plan for the location of the railway station, about 1900 (reduced in size).
Rhaetian Railway

into a tourist resort, but the authorities have taken care to preserve the old farm houses in their original form; the decorated façades, for example, have been renovated in the authentic manner.

Samedan

Samedan is the principal base of the Albula and Bernina line, with its own railway installations and residential area for the staff. The railway district is a settlement focus on the flat land below the historic village and provided the impulse to expand and upgrade the village as a regional centre with a regional hospital (1914), the Academia Engiadina secondary school, apprentice workshops (1965), and a vocational college (1980).

St. Moritz

When the Albula railway was opened, the transformation of St. Moritz into a world resort was already in progress. The development of tourism had begun only some fifty years earlier (cf. 2.b.9), not so long after the first guests had been put up in its patrician houses. The pioneer hotels – Kulm (1857), Steffani (1869–70), Palace (1892–96) and Schweizerhof (1897–98) – had developed their imposing architectural lines without losing sight of the old farming village on the meadows high above the lake. After the advent of the railway, more representative residences were built between the village and the station some distance away: for example, the Grand Hotel (1905, destroyed 1944), the Hotel La Margna (1906–07), the Neue Posthotel (1907–08) and the Hotel Carlton (1912–13). The Engadin Museum (1905–06) and the Segantini Museum (1908), both built by Nikolaus Hartmann the younger, belong to the same period (cf. 2.a.5).

The previously undeveloped flat land to the west of the lake was built over in the 19th century with luxury bathing and hotel establishments. The first was the Neue Kurhaus (1860–1864, a few storeys were added in 1905), a castle-like edifice surrounded by extensive landscaped gardens. More recent complexes were built on the same principle – Hotel Victoria (1874–81), Hotel du Lac (1875, demolished 1974) Hotel Hof (1875), Hotel Stahlbad (1891–92, destroyed by fire 1971) – so that the space between the River Inn and the forested southern slope gradually developed into a residential area with alpine gardens and delicate fountains on the lines of a Baroque palace. Various new sacral buildings tended to the spiritual needs of the guests: the Evangelical Badkirche (about 1870), the Catholic St. Charles church (1885–89) and the French-Calvinist church (1875–77). The footpath to the old hall where the guests 'took the waters' was rebuilt as a carriageway and lined with shops, giving the hotel district its dominance in the settlement pattern; a tram also ran on this road. There is only one villa worth mentioning that belongs to this period; this was built 1883 for the industrial magnate, Jacques Ambrosius von Planta, who lived in Chur.

After prolonged discussion about the location, the station for the Rhaetian Railway was built at the eastern end of the lake, directly after the River Inn runs through a gorge – away from St. Moritz-Dorf (St. Moritz-Village) and even further from St. Moritz-Bad (St. Moritz-Spa). The local council had demanded that the station be located to the west of the lake with a tunnel to underpass the village; at all events, the "connection to the lake and the picturesque bay" as well as the unimpaired "vista of the lake and the mountains" had to be preserved. Although the liberally-minded railway engineers insisted on "one station for spa and village" and the "sur-

**Pontresina > Looking towards Val Roseg.
The station of the Rhaetian Railway can be
seen mid-right. Before 1930.**
Ch. Meisser, Staatsarchiv, Chur

**Bernina-Suot > Row of farm houses. The
drawing is from before 1930.**
Denkmalpflege Graubünden, Chur

**Poschiavo (parish) > Maiensäss Pairol.
Photograph from before 1930.**
Denkmalpflege Graubünden, Chur

prising view of the lake and the broad valley on emerging from the tunnel", they were largely guided by topographic and economic factors. The definitive, peripheral location was eventually determined by the Swiss government.

Settlement pattern along the Bernina line (Swiss section)

The north ramp of the Bernina railway climbs from Samedan or St. Moritz to the Ospizio Bernina station across treeless alpine pastures and past community alp buildings. There is a steep descent to Poschiavo after the crest, with the line curving lazily from Alp Grüm to Cavaglia past numerous scattered one-herdsman alps; from there to Cadera, it crosses the Maiensass belt with its numerous scattered buildings several times. In the lowest section, shortly before Poschiavo, the mountain line repeatedly presents vistas of the closely structured villages and the 'Borgo', as the nucleus of Poschiavo is called; this was urbanised in the 19th century. The view of the landscape – populated only part of the year in the higher section, all year round in the lower section – is irresistibly dramatised by the low speed of the train and the repeated loops and traverses.

Settlement structure

The floor of the Poschiavo valley is at medium altitude, between 500 and 1,200 m, favouring the organisation of the farms at the various altitude levels: valley, Maiensäss and high alp. The entire hay harvest from the village meadows was stored in barns in the village, so there are no fodder barns on the meadows themselves. The Maiensäss belt falls into two sections between 1,100 and 1,800 m: the lower Maiensässe (monti maggesi), which are occupied in the autumn, and the upper areas (monti alti), which are used by

the farmers, each working for himself, in the spring. As a rule, the farms comprise a house with integrated stable for the livestock, a hay loft above it, and a separate, mostly domed, cellar. The older farms are built partly in stone and partly in wood, usually facing south; the more recent buildings face the same direction, but are built of stone throughout.

In summer, the farmers from Poschiavo go up to the single herdsman alps (monte alpivo). The alp level here is far more extensive than most and, in the past, provided more than enough room for the local farmers' cattle and small animals as well as other animals from Lombardy, particularly sheep but some cattle as well. According to the position, the alp farms differ considerably with respect to the size of the buildings and the length of time they are occupied (three to eight months). Normally, there are larger or smaller lofts above the stable; these are used for alp and mountain hay and partly as living quarters. Freestanding barns, without stabling, for intermediate storage of the mountain hay are the exception on the Poschiavo alp.

Changes in settlement pattern

Pontresina and Muottas Muragl

By the time the railway was built, Pontresina, originally a farming village in two separate parts, had merged into a hotel village offering travellers an impressive alpine-urban prospect, an effect accentuated by the hotel park gardens between the village and the stream. The Muottas Muragl funicular railway was built at the same time as the Bernina line; it has a notable valley station, acting as a link to the new (1906/07) mountain hotel with a panoramic terrace at an altitude of 1,453 m.

**Poschiavo > Aerial view of the Borgo
taken in 1955.**
Comet

**Poschiavo > The row of "Palazzi" on the
southern rim of the village.**
Riccardo Tognina, Romerio Zala: *Das
Puschlav* (Schweizer Heimatbücher, Bündner
Reihe, vol. 3, 53/53A), Berne 1974.

Bernina Suot

The three farmsteads at Bernina Suot, standing in a row alongside the old pass road with their living quarters and stabling tracts built together and interconnected lie at an altitude of 2,046 m; the highest settlement in Europe lived in all year round. The compact row of buildings is a rare settlement pattern in view of the high altitude and the structure, which is reminiscent of mediaeval architecture.

Poschiavo Borgo

Similar to the villages in the northern part of Graubünden and particularly in the Engadin, the historic settlement structures in Poschiavo did not welcome a novel form of transport forced on them from outside; until then, the village had always developed autonomously, from the inside. Building in Poschiavo is slightly denser than in the other villages along the Bernina line. The houses stand close together, bordering the narrow streets. The village was architecturally modernised in the decades before the railway was built and urbanisation extended on a linear axis in a row of buildings along the southern edge of the village (known as the "Palazzi" row, cf. 2.a.6).

As it reaches Poschiavo, the Bernina line follows the foot of the western slope, so the station had to be located outside the historic settlement nucleus. The free area between the old village and the station provided generous space for the subsequent extension of the settlement on either side of the road as far as the station. The latter was not planned as an extension of the Palazzi road, although the famous row of buildings at the south of the 'Borgo', an eminent ottocento urbanisation feature, had just been completed, accentuating the impact of the connection between the station and the historic centre of the village. The railway builders did not continue the orthogonal settlement pattern as classicism was no longer fashionable.

Le Prese

Fifty years before the Bernina line was built, the quiet little village by the Lake of Poschiavo had been redesigned and idyllically developed in the classicist manner; the luxurious Albergo Bagni Le Prese, a new hotel complex with mineral baths built in 1857, is particularly impressive. The laying out of the hotel park gardens was the first example of landscaping a natural environment in Graubünden. The contemporary project drawing shows a straight avenue of trees, at right angles to the valley floor, with a bridge over the mouth of the river. The avenue connects the hotel with the English-style gardens, complete with a small marina on the shore of the lake. It was not until 1884 – with the laying out of the Maloja Palace hotel grounds at the head of the Upper Engadin – that a lake shore was integrated in the landscaping of a garden in Graubünden; with this sole exception, the Upper Engadin lake shores remained intact until recent times.
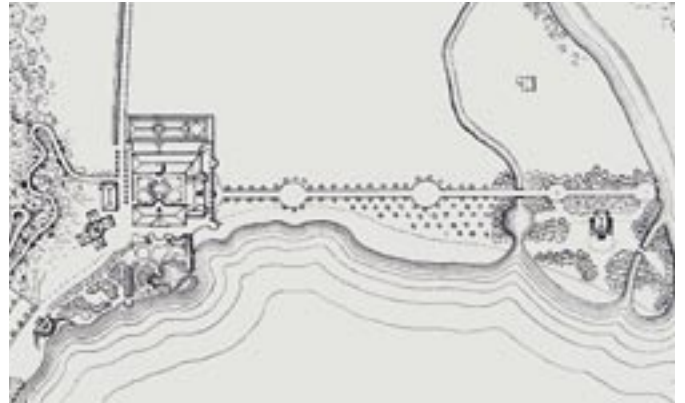
Brusio

Close to the railway line, to the north of the Brusio reverse curve viaduct, a group of nine domed buildings attracts the attention of passengers. Known in the valley as "scélé" or "crott", these are single-chamber domed cellars to keep food and wine cool; their location is explained by the currents of particularly cool, fresh air that circulate there. These artefacts, unique in Switzerland, are built of dry stone; the corbelled or beehive domes cover a single perfectly circular chamber. This stylistic rarity is found throughout the Poschiavo valley at all farming levels, from village to alp.

Le Prese > Albergo Bagni, Le Prese from the south. Steel engraving by Ludwig Rohbock and Friedrich Theodor Müller, from before 1861.
Rhätisches Museum, Chur

Le Prese > Project sketch by Giovanni Sottovia for the landscaping of the shore area, drawn in 1864.
Silva Semadeni, Robert Obrist and Diego Giovanoli: *Bauen. Construir. Costruire 1830 – 1980*, Zurich 1986.

Brusio > A "crott" or "scéle", an air cooled domed cellar below the railway embankment.
D. Giovanoli

Campocologno

In the years after 1907, Campocologno, till then a modest, single-alley hamlet close to the frontier, was overwhelmed by the technological age. The most important "hydroelectric power station in Europe" was built to the south of the village with an above-earth penstock, machine hall (since replaced) and transformer, with the Bernina line station to the north and rail tracks behind a row of houses. Soon afterwards came the school building, a Catholic church (1910–12), and the buildings, offices and living quarters of the Federal Customs and Excise authorities.

Tirano: settlement construction and history

The settlement history of Tirano can be broken down into four phases: the Middle Ages, the beginning of the 19th century, the beginning of the 20th century and today. The medieval settlement nuclei are found at outstanding sites overlooking the valley, but above all providing protection from flood waters. Examples include St. Perpetua pilgrims' hospice, the fort of Dosso and the little village of Visoli. The population increased sharply in the 19th century when settlement took place largely in the valley on the left bank of the Adda. The walled city of Tirano was already playing an import role in the region at that time. The nearby settlement of La Rascia, with the pilgrimage church of Madonna di Tirano, had been growing steadily since the 16th century.

In the early 19th century, houses were built along the right bank of the river; this was made possible by the river embankments built around 1800 under Austrian rule. These new elements and the buildings around the pilgrimage church mark the start of a surge in building activity in the 19th century. The advent of the railway – from Sondrino in 1902 and across the Bernina in 1909 –

launched a building boom that continued until the beginning of the First World War. The specific location of the two railway stations, built next to one another, speeded up the merging of the two districts of Madonna di Tirano and Tirano to the south of the link road.

In appearance, the new buildings somewhat resemble northern Alpine architecture while incorporating the influence of Art Nouveau. The new bridges across the Adda determined the principal axis of the town along the Viale Italia and the Via della Republica. So the medieval nucleus with its historic walls and gates progressively lost importance and started to fall into decay. Building activity increased considerably during the 1950s and 1960s. Trades, crafts and small industries flourished in Tirano. The rapid growth of the town could partly be attributed to the influx of villagers from Roncaiola, Baruffini, Serio and Pervio. Houses began to soar several storeys high: the first notable example is the Marelli building in the Via Italia. In only 50 years the town has spread out into the surrounding countryside. Madonna di Tirano and Tirano grew together to form a single town due to extensive developments of detached houses, but the historic nucleus of Tirano has hardly changed. The most marked expansion of the settlement was in the area between the right bank of the Adda and the railway line from Tirano to Sondrio.