

Architecture and site layouts of Prussian asylums in Prussian Poland in the 19th and early 20th centuries as a reflection of the development of German psychiatry and health policy

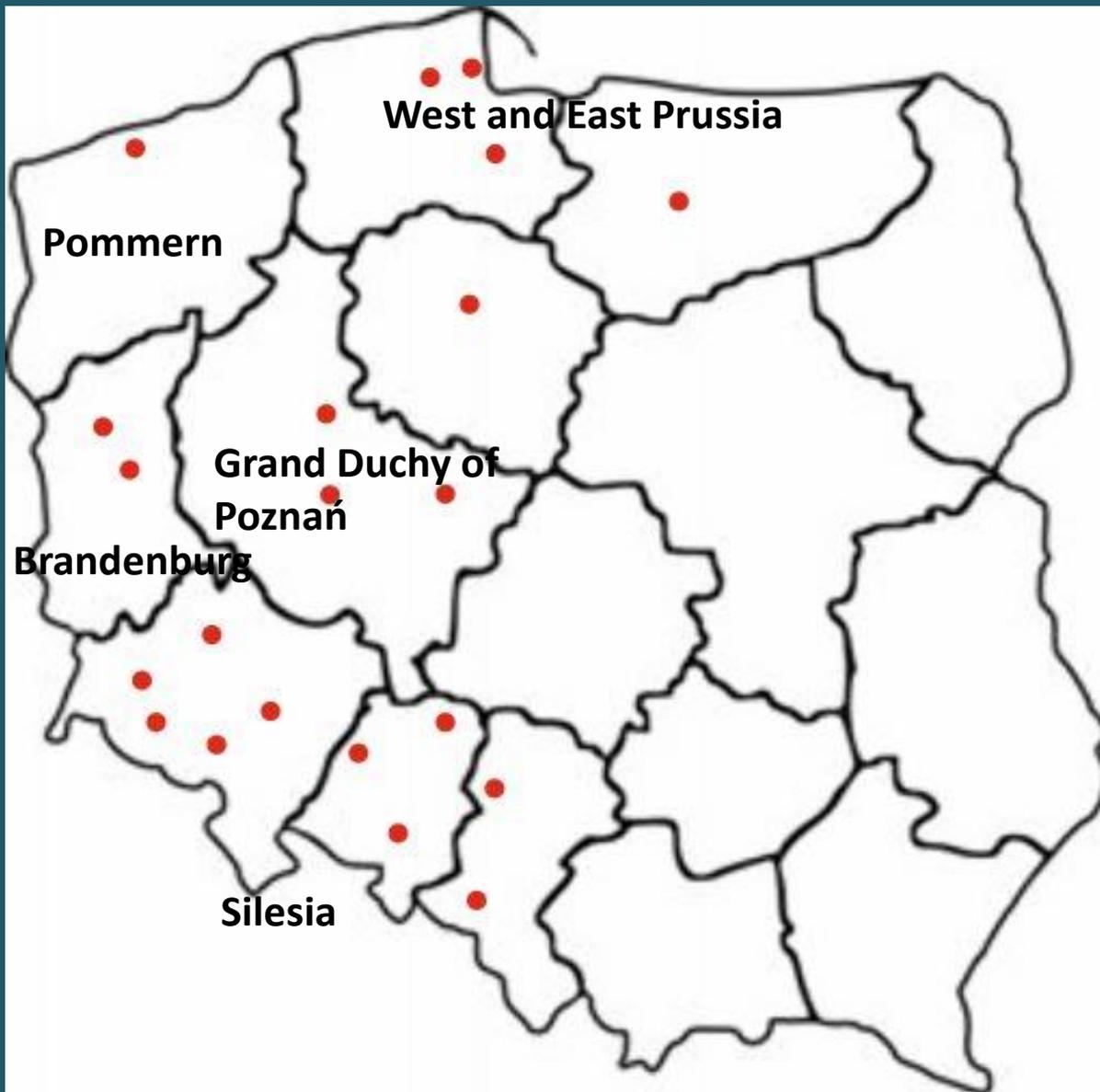
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The aim of my speech is to present a short overview of architectural solutions of Prussian institutions for the mentally and nervously ill in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

The problem will be shown on the example of the complexes created in the Polish territory, ranging from hospitals located in adapted buildings to modern facilities, which according to the views of the time were supposed to be a tool of therapy.



In the discussed period, part of the Polish territory was under Prussian rule. Provincial assemblies operated in the established provinces, taking care of the mentally ill and setting up appropriate treatment and care facilities.

Map of Poland with the names of former Prussian provinces and hospitals for the mentally ill marked in red

The oldest asylums were housed in existing buildings adapted for this purpose.

Most often they were secularised monasteries.

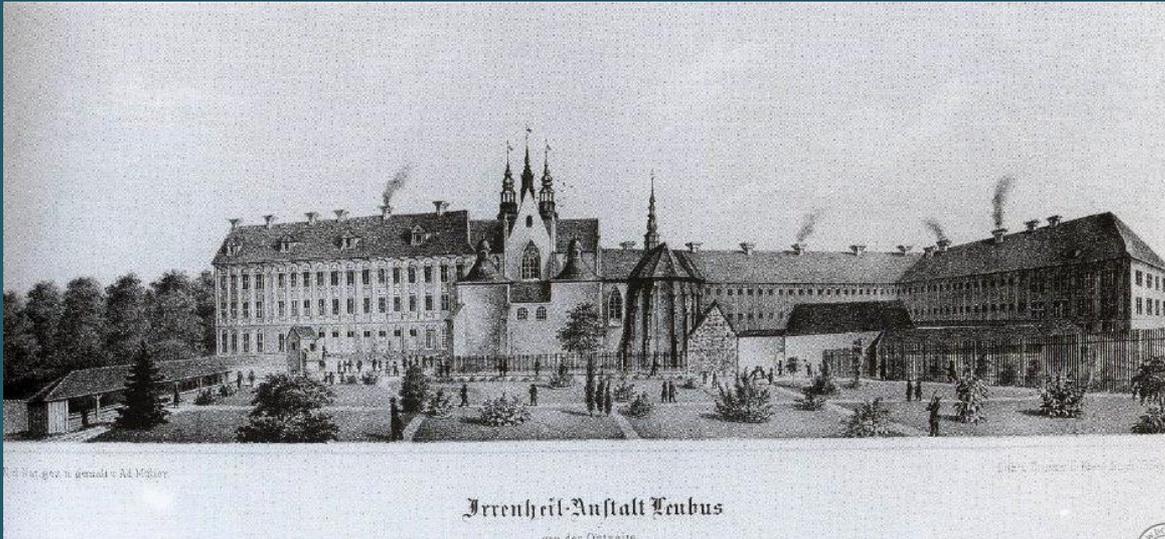
They were intended for 200–300 patients.

The earliest facilities opened in the Silesia in Lubiąż, Brzeg and Płakowice.

All of them were already in operation in the 1820s.

The hospital in Lubiąż, which was considered a model centre, was situated in one of the largest post-Cistercian monasteries in Europe.

The first hospitals

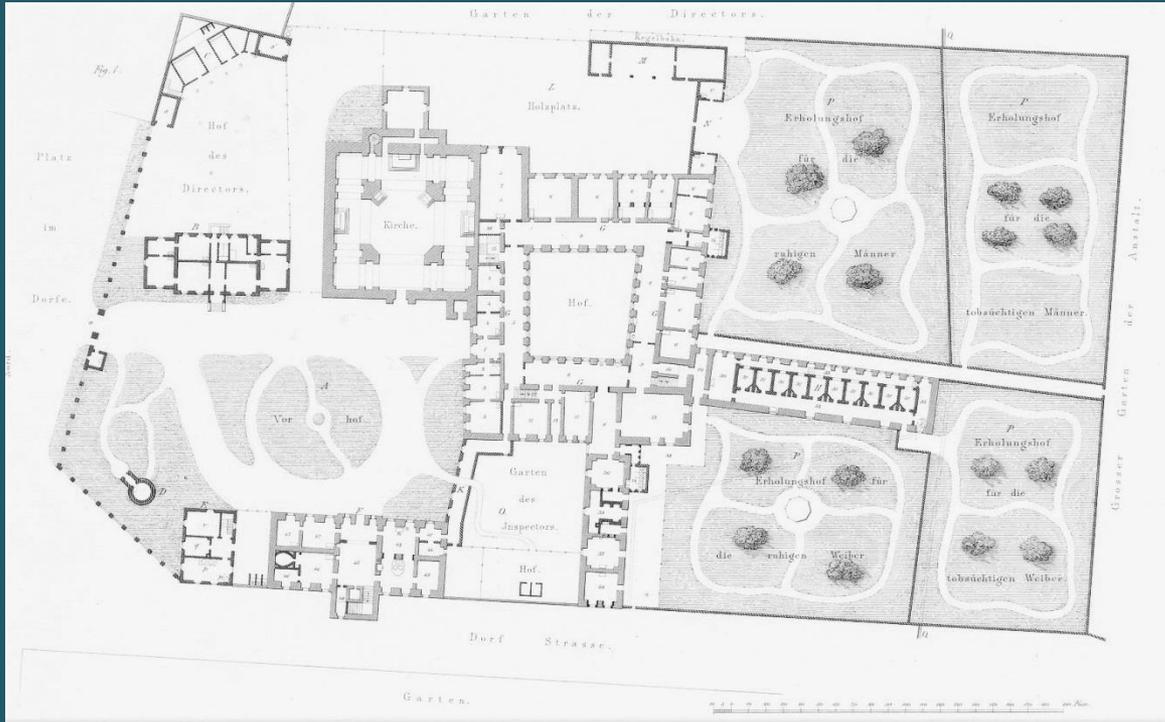


Lubiąż (Leubus), "Irrenheil-Anstalt Leubus von der Ostseite", 1870, Lithography of the Psychiatry in the former abbey of Lubiąż, unknown author, retrieved from <https://polska-org.pl/788401,foto.html>



Pałkowice, Silesia, ruins of the castle where the asylum was located
<https://polska-org.pl/3349761,foto.html>

The first hospitals



Owińska (Owinsk), former Irren-Heil-Anstalt Owinsk, 1836, side and floor plan, TU Berlin Architekturmuseum, Inv. Nr. 8110,16

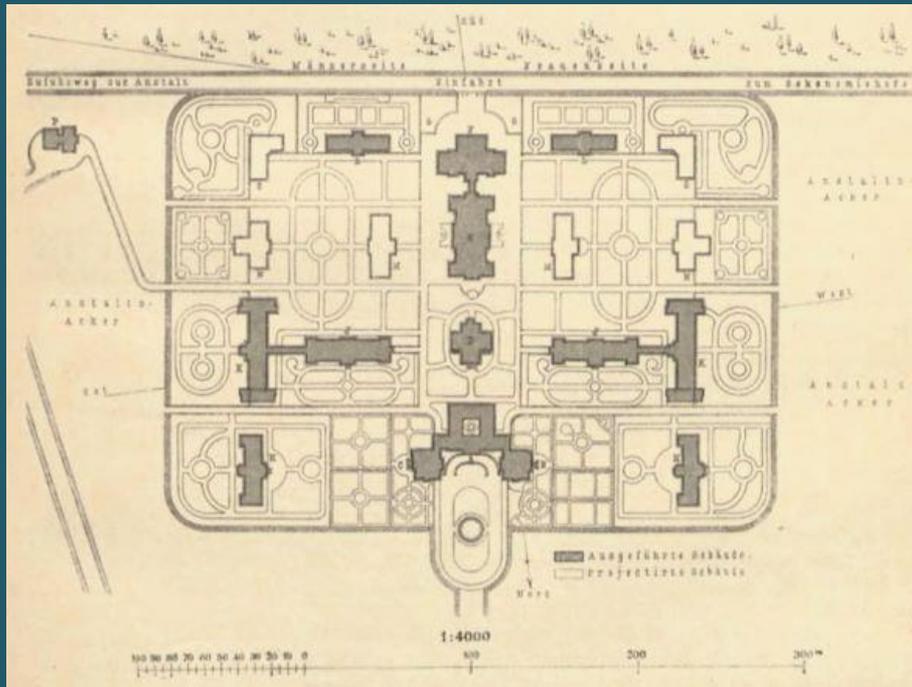
The first facility in the Grand Duchy of Poznań was also opened in the adapted Cistercian monastery in Owińska.

The hospital operated from 1838 on. In the province of West and East Prussia, a psychiatric ward operated since 1833, was situated in the former Bernardine monastery in Świecie.

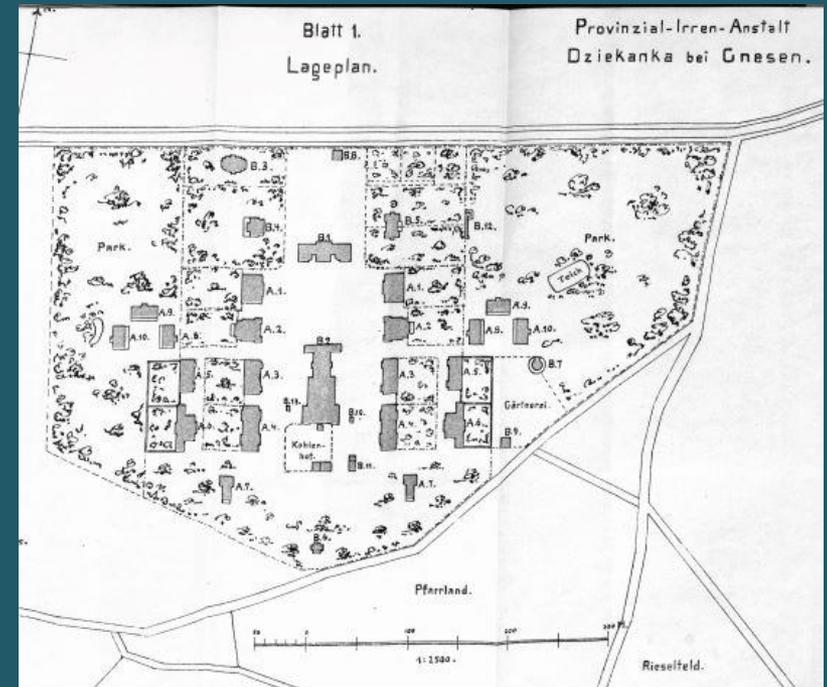
The most numerous, the most modern and therefore the most interesting from the point of view of the development of this type of architecture, were the new centres designed and built as hospital complexes, on an area not yet built up.

There, it was possible to implement all the recommendations of the psychiatrists of the time and to build a complex in which architecture was to support the treatment of patients.

Modern hospitals complexes



An example of a location plan for a group of medium-sized hospitals, former Provinzial Heilanstalt zu Lauenburg (Lębork)
Handbuch der Architektur, 1891



An example of a location plan for a group of large hospitals, former Provinzial Irrenanstalt Dziekanka (Gniezno)
Bericht über die Provinzial – Irrenanstalt Dziekanka bei Gnesen 1894-1895

These first asylums, housed in buildings erected especially for this purpose, were designed in a closed layout, on similar, clear and simple plans, were built in Świecie and in Bolesławiec.

Both hospitals were constructed on the projection of a rectangle with wards for patients on the sides. The shorter side, from the south, was occupied by the administration building.

In the courtyard there were utility buildings and other facilities for common use.

Fenced gardens were adjacent to the wards, allowing patients to take fresh air.

The entire complexes were located in large parks.

In line with modern trends, a clear division into sections for women and men and sections for the calm, slightly agitated and restless sick had been introduced here.

Modern hospital complexes

Hospital complexes erected in a closed layout

Świecie (Schwetz)

former Westpreussischen Provinzial Irren Anstalt in Schwetz,
currently psychiatric hospital in Świecie



General view of the hospital
Zeitschrift für Bauwesen, 1854



Ward for quiet patients,
fot. by author

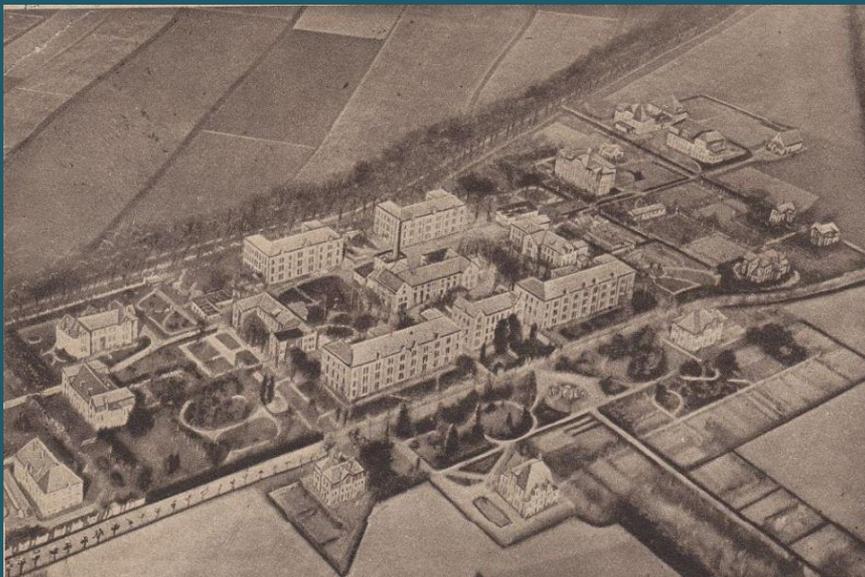
Modern hospital complexes

Hospital complexes erected in a closed layout

Bolesławiec (Bunzlau),

former Provinzial-Heil- und Pflege-Anstalt Bunzlau, 1900

currently psychiatric and general hospital



The general view of the asylum and the patient ward

<https://polska-org.pl/5341177,foto.html>

The facilities that were erected from the 1870s were planned in a system of detached buildings, situated symmetrically in relation to the central axis, according to the thesis that the harmony of the architectural arrangement should have a positive impact on patients.

According to this scheme, asylums were erected in Owińska (1875–1877 – a new hospital complex, Gorzów Wielkopolski (1888), Olsztyn - Kortowo (1886) and Lębork (1887–1889)

“General utility” buildings were placed on the axis. On both sides, there were symmetrically arranged, larger or smaller pavilions for patients.

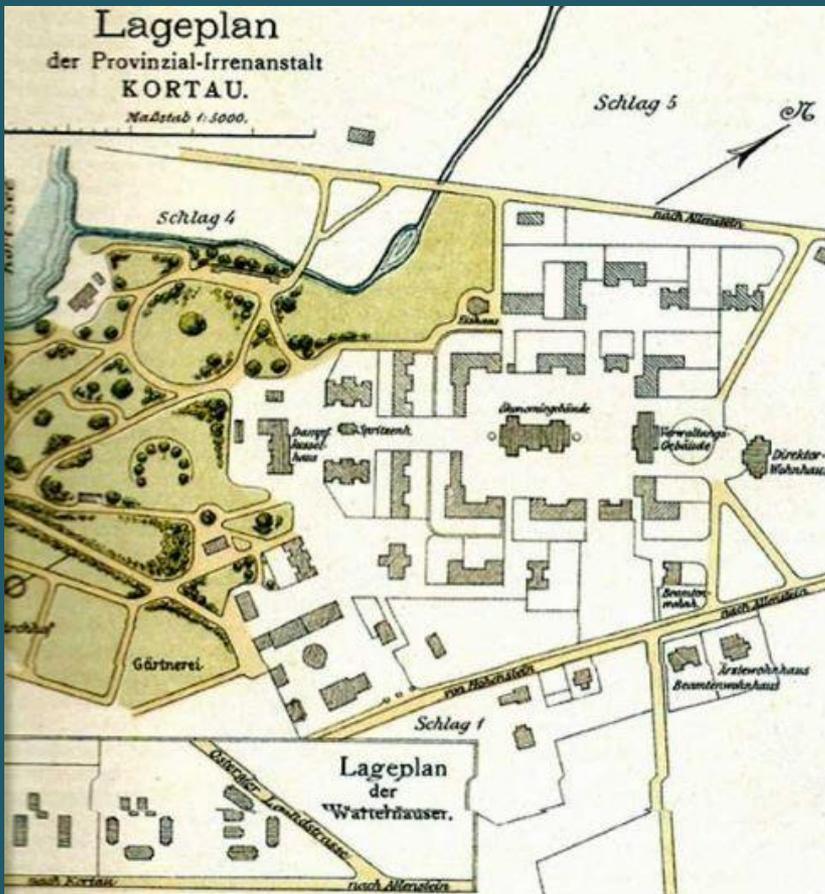
Gender segregation and division into wards for patients with different severity of the illness were still applied all the time. Usually the complexes were additionally equipped with churches or chapels and large theatre and entertainment halls.

Modern hospital complexes

Hospital complexes erected in an open layout

Olsztyn – Kortowo

Former Provinzial – Irrenanstalt Kortau,
currently University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn



The ward for patients,
fot. by author

The location plan,
Contemporary Problems of Management and
Environmental Protection, Vol. 3, 2009

The beginning of the 20th century was a time when large asylums were being built.

The new hospital in Lubiąż had room for 1,100 patients.

There were slightly larger facilities which could accommodate about 1,200 patients, erected in Międzyrzecz and Lubin.

The Międzyrzecz hospital had 19 pavilions for the sick, and the Lubin hospital had 16 pavilions.

The largest facility, in Kocborowo could accommodate about 1,300 patients in 22 small buildings.

Complexes consisting of pavilions, huge parks and gardens and large farms were constructed.

The site layout in most facilities was done along a clear axis of symmetry. Transit paths ran parallel and perpendicular to the main axis, emphasized by the greenery and separated by two streets.

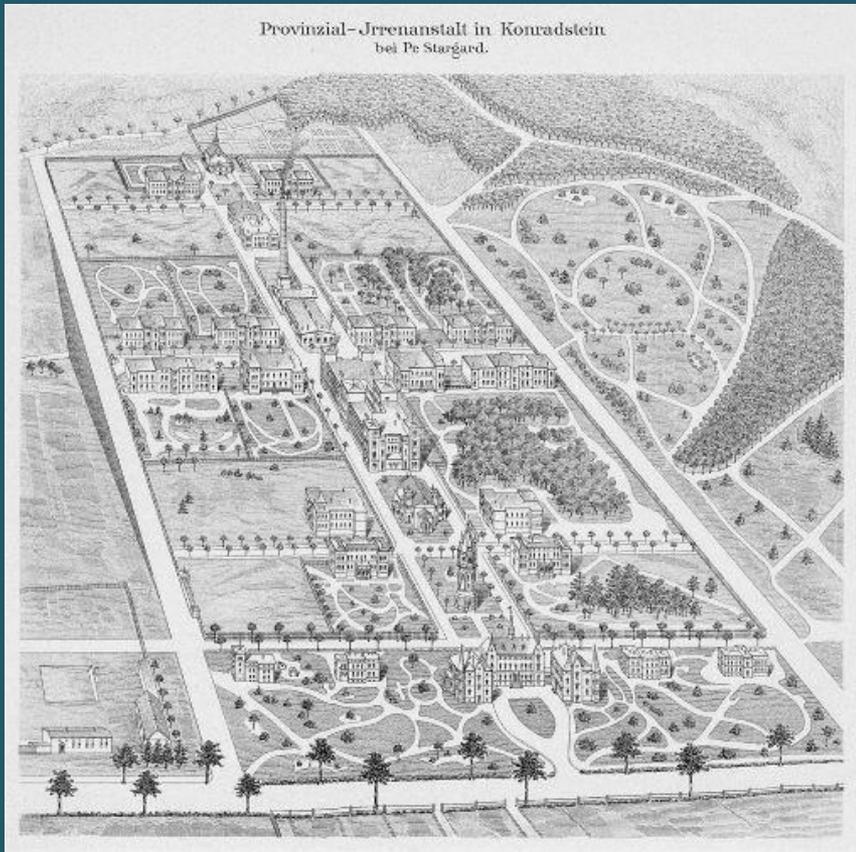
Modern hospital complexes

Hospital complexes erected in an open layout

Kocborowo, (Conradstein),

former Dritte westpreussische Provinzial – Irrenanstalt Conradstein bei Pr. Stargard,

currently psychiatric hospital in Starogard Gdański



The kitchen and laundries building,
photo by author

The general view of asylum,
Atlas zur Zeitschrift für Bauwesen, Jg. 53, 1903, bl. 11.

Modern hospital complexes

Hospital complexes erected in an open layout

Międzyrzecz - Obrzyce (Obrawalde),
former Provinzial-Irrenanstalt Obrawalde bei Meseritz,
currently psychiatric hospital



The ward for patients, photo by author

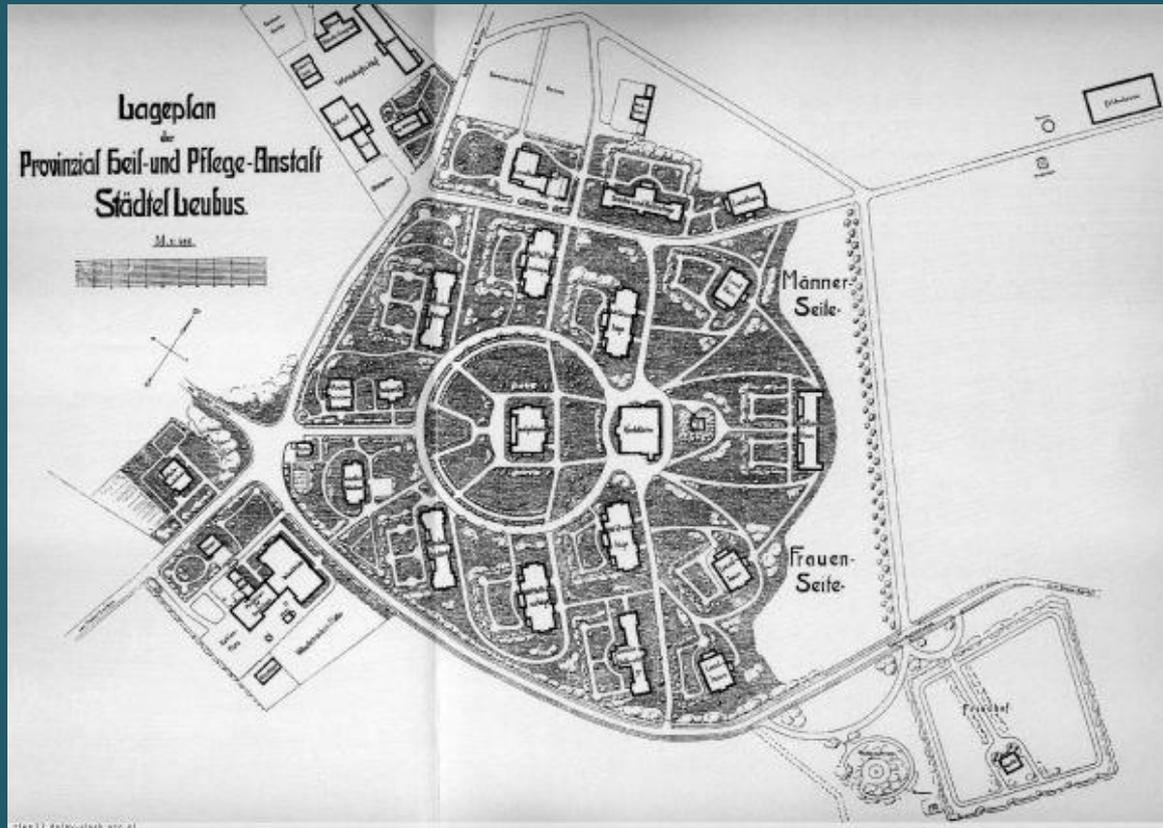
Modern hospital complexes

Hospital complexes erected in an open layout

Lubiąż, (Leubus),

former Provinzial-Heil- u. Pflegeanstalt zu Leubus i.

Schl., currently psychiatric hospital



The new facility in Lubiąż gained a particularly interesting site layout. A central plan was used here, with a social building in the centre, surrounded by greenery marked out by a circular avenue. The whole was surrounded by an irregularly marked out ring road.

The location plan of the new asylum,

Deutsche Heil- und Pflegeanstalten für Psychischkranke in Wort und Bild. 1910, vol. 1

Conclusions

Prussian complexes of hospitals for the mentally ill in Prussian Poland were built according to the high standards set for this type of building.

They reflect the trends in the rapidly developing 19th century German psychiatry.

Their design was guided by models and the plans were the result of cooperation between alienist and architects.

The complexes that have not been destroyed still perform well as psychiatric hospitals, where patients feel better than in modern facilities.

The phenomenon of this intimate architecture, surrounded by greenery, full of harmony and tranquillity, means that it still works in the 21st century, which distinguishes psychiatric hospitals in the group of health architecture.



**Thank you for
your attention**

Kocborowo (Conradstein), former Dritte westpreussische Provinzial – Irrenanstalt
Conradstein bei Pr. Stargard, entertainment house, photo by author