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## ARCHITECTURAL MODERNISATION IN PANEVĖŽYS DURING THE 1930s: EXPLORING THE WORKS OF CIVIL ENGINEER ANTANAS GARGASAS

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**Summary.** In contemporary studies of Lithuanian interwar architecture, so far the greatest attention is paid to the analysis of the architectural development and modernization processes that took place in the city of Kaunas, the temporary capital of the country at the time. The work of architectural specialists who worked there is also analysed more. However, at the same time, little is known about the development of architecture created in the smaller cities of Lithuania at that time and its modernization. Thus, this article aims to more thoroughly reveal and analyse the processes of modernization of Panevėžys city architecture that took place in the 1930s, choosing the designs of Antanas Gargasas, who worked there as a municipal engineer in 1931–1940, as the research object. This is done in the article by analysing and presenting the majority of his designed public buildings and the most significant and typical residential buildings. The article, which was written based on archival material, the press of the research period and the contemporary studies of the interwar architecture, contains an assumption that the buildings designed by Antanas Gargasas had a significant influence on the processes of modernization of the Panevėžys architecture at that time and the spread of new stylistic trends in it. The article is supplemented by the drawings and photos of the buildings designed by the engineer.

**Keywords:** Antanas Gargasas, architecture, interwar Lithuania, interwar architecture, modern architecture, Panevėžys, Panevėžys architecture.

### INTRODUCTION

In the recent studies of Lithuania's interwar architecture, the research regarding the buildings designed by individual architectural specialists is mainly limited to those who worked in the country's temporary capital at that time. For example, the works of the architects such as Vladimiras Dubeneckis<sup>1</sup>, Arnas Funkas<sup>2</sup>, Vytautas Landsbergis-Žemkalnis<sup>3</sup> and Karolis Reisonas<sup>4</sup> have been studied more thoroughly. Short biographical studies of other such specialists, who worked in the smaller Lithuanian cities during the 1920s have also been researched.<sup>5</sup> However, the works of other architectural specialists, mainly municipal engineers who designed buildings elsewhere in Lithuania during the 1930s, have been researched less.<sup>6,7</sup> Such is the case of civil engineer Antanas Gargasas and his work in Panevėžys municipality during the 1930s. Since there is no wider, and more in-depth research aimed at analysing and presenting his architectural legacy, as only several of his

buildings were analysed in a broader context.<sup>8,9</sup> Consequently, such a problem limits more thorough understanding of the interwar Lithuanian architecture in smaller cities designed by municipal engineers.

After Lithuania became an independent state in 1918, among other areas, the reconstruction of cities and towns, the management of construction and architecture in the country were concerned. In 1921, the Lithuanian Reconstruction Commissariat was established under the Ministry of Internal Affairs to take care of this goal.<sup>10</sup> To make construction matters more effective in Lithuania, the institution "appointed so-called "municipal technicians" in counties and larger cities to head the municipal construction departments.<sup>11</sup> Such departments with municipal technicians, later engineers, were established at all the counties and at the municipalities of four largest cities (Kaunas,



Fig. 1. Antanas Gargasas' passport photo, c. 1935. LCVA. f. 1264, ap. 3, b. 5377, l. 1

Šiauliai, Panevėžys and Marijampolė) of Lithuania at that time. In addition, during the 1930s, smaller cities also had municipal engineers.<sup>12</sup>

From the early-1920s, most of the public buildings built at the initiative of the municipalities were designed in these departments. These departments, headed by municipal engineers also developed urban projects, designed numerous public and residential buildings, oversaw the implementation and control of construction works, held meetings of building commissions etc. Consequently, the municipal engineers “made a significant contribution to the life of independent Lithuania”<sup>13</sup>, as they were perhaps the only highly qualified specialists in the country’s smaller cities and towns who dictated architectural trends there.

At that time, most county and city engineers had been educated in higher schools of Tsarist Russia. Thus, when they started working in independent Lithuania, their work was influenced by historicism and neoclassicism.<sup>14</sup> Meanwhile, others followed the approach of creating a Lithuanian “national style”, focusing on local vernacular tradition of architecture.<sup>15</sup> During the 1930s, the older generation of municipal civil engineers began to be replaced by the younger specialists, most of whom

were educated in Lithuania and Western and Central Europe in the 1920s and 1930s. Thus, their work was more influenced not by historical styles, but by focusing on the rationalisation and modernization of style. In the 1930s, a part of them were the protagonists of modernist-inspired architecture in various Lithuanian cities<sup>16</sup>. In the case of Panevėžys, such was civil engineer Antanas Gargasas, the head of the city municipality’s construction department from 1931 to 1940 (Fig.1).

Accordingly, the article’s main object is the works of municipal engineer Antanas Gargasas in Panevėžys city during the 1930s. Although according to the norms of the time, the work of the city engineer included a wide range of specifics, this article focuses only on the architectural projects. Thus, the article’s aim is to analyse and present the oeuvre of the engineer through his most important and typical buildings of various functions designed in Panevėžys. The impact of the buildings designed by Gargasas on the general modernization of the city’s architecture at that time, as well as the significance of stylistic influences on his work, are also explained.

#### EARLY LIFE AND APPOINTMENT TO WORK AS A CITY ENGINEER IN PANEVĖŽYS

According to the personal file stored in the Lithuanian Central State Archives, Antanas Augustinas Gargasas was born in 1907 in the village of Vieکشniai in the then Mažeikiai County. In 1926 he graduated from the Šiauliai State High School. Wanting to study civil engineering, in 1927 Gargasas enrolled in a special school of Civil Engineering, Art, and Industry (Ecole Spéciale du Génie Civil et des Arts et Manufactures annexe à l’Université de Gand) which operated at Ghent University in Belgium.<sup>17</sup> Although at that time civil engineers and civil technicians were trained in Lithuania, some Lithuanians, like Gargasas, chose to study civil engineering or architecture in Western and Central European schools, as it was thought that foreign schools could better train such specialists.<sup>18</sup>

In the summer of 1931, after completing his studies and receiving a civil engineer's diploma, Gargasas returned to work in Lithuania. Here, as a civil engineer seeking for a job, he registered at the Construction Inspection (former Reconstruction Commissariat) under the Ministry of Internal Affairs. At that time the Construction Inspection was an important institution as it supervised and approved the building designs for all the country's civil constructions. It also appointed the municipal engineers to head the municipal construction departments of the counties and cities.<sup>19</sup> While during the 1920s, many municipal engineers were educated in the Russian Empire, in the 1930s, there was a tendency to assign young specialists to these positions. For example, in 1935 almost half of the municipal engineers working in the country were educated in Western and Central Europe and Lithuania.<sup>20</sup> Consequently, in the fall of the same year, Gargasas was appointed to work as a municipal engineer in Panevėžys City Municipality's Construction Department.<sup>21</sup> Since then, the work of the engineer was limited to projects mainly in the city and in a few cases, in towns around it.

Before Antanas Gargasas started working in Panevėžys, from 1922 to 1929 Marijonas Stanevičius held the position of the city engineer there. He had completed his studies in Petrograd during the period of Tsarist Russia and was one of the representatives of the historicist style in the city, having designed dozens of buildings of such appearance there.<sup>22</sup> After he left this position, the city did not have a permanent municipal engineer. In 1929, this position was held by civil technician Juozas Ežerskis, who also worked in the Kėdainiai County Municipality.<sup>23</sup> At the end of 1929, he was replaced by a young engineer Kazys Germanas, who graduated from the University of Lithuania at the same year and held the same position in the Panevėžys County Municipality.<sup>24</sup>

In the interwar period, the population of Panevėžys grew rapidly – from 19,000 in 1923 to about 26,000 in the early 1930s.<sup>25</sup> Consequently, the construction of mainly residential buildings was actively taking place in the city, since about 100 houses were built

every year until the early 1930s.<sup>26</sup> Thus, a separate person – the municipal engineer – was needed to supervise the construction and overall architecture of the city. Since it did not have a permanent one in the period 1929–1931, the supervision of construction works, and the design of buildings were mostly carried out by local, lower-qualified civil technicians. In their work, they almost did not look for stylistic novelties and often designed buildings “without any comfort, beauty”.<sup>27</sup> Thus, slightly more modern-looking buildings in the city of that time were designed by architects from Kaunas, like the Bank of Lithuania building, designed by Mykolas Songaila in 1930<sup>28</sup> with the exterior of stripped historicism. The situation began to change when Gargasas was appointed as the city's municipal engineer. As a result, during that time the buildings in the city began to be built “according to the latest fashions”<sup>29</sup>. It was mainly due to the buildings designed by Gargasas, which gave the city's architecture a much-needed modernity. Thus, the engineer was regarded in the city as a competent and motivated specialist of architecture.<sup>30</sup>

As was typical at the time, the most important work of municipal engineers was to design buildings built by municipalities. Also, such a person had to be involved in urban planning, participate in building commissions, supervise the construction of various buildings, take care of the general aesthetics of cities etc.<sup>31</sup> Municipal engineers could also engage in private design practice, drawing up projects for various public and private buildings. The local municipalities and the Construction Inspection, which supervised the work of these specialists, took care of improving their qualifications and working conditions. From the mid-1930s, Gargasas was assisted by civil technician Juozas Ežerskis (he graduated from the Ashgabat Railway Technical School in 1909)<sup>32</sup> and by intern-draughtsman Eugenijus Perchoravičius (in the 1920s, he studied in Belgium, and in 1935–1944 at Vytautas Magnus University),<sup>33</sup> both of whom were employed by the municipality. Trips abroad were also organised for the municipal engineers to get first-hand experience with the contemporary foreign constructions. For example, Gargasas visited neighbouring Latvia

in 1935.<sup>34</sup> Additionally, he also participated in the congresses of Lithuanian municipal engineers held in Kaunas.<sup>35</sup> However, he was not engaged in the theoretical discussions regarding architecture and stylistics taking place in Lithuania at that time, and his only known article of that time was on the topic of the city plan of Panevėžys.<sup>36</sup>

#### THE MODERNITY OF PUBLIC STRUCTURES DESIGNED IN PANEVĖŽYS

During the 1930s, the city of Panevėžys needed new and modern public buildings for the various institutions, as only a few of them were built in the previous decade, while the old ones, built in the early 20th century were unsuitable, as they usually were “quite run down”.<sup>37</sup> Thus, when started working in the city, Gargasas was occasionally commissioned to design various public buildings, which are the most important buildings designed by him. From the very first projects, the engineer strived to create modern-looking buildings, which began to shape the style of the city’s architecture and influenced its modernisation.

The earliest known public building designed by him in the city is the former Jewish bank on Respublikos street built in 1932–1933 (Fig. 2). The masonry one-story building has a symmetrical façade with the central avant-corps. The overall composition is simple, with rows of wide windows and narrow

walls dividing the entire street façade, which do not contain any historical ornaments. The exterior emphasises horizontality, which is accentuated by the elongated rectangular volume, wide cornice, and low-pitched roof. While the central part is accentuated by the modern-looking rounded corners and windows, which later became a common feature in other Gargasas’ buildings. The main volume had rooms for banking operations and the reception, thus wide windows could provide good lighting. Thus, the building’s simple and minimalist exterior demonstrates the spread of new architectural aesthetics in the city of that time. Furthermore, it can also be the earliest modern-looking bank building in Lithuania at that time. Since the architecture of the country’s other bank buildings, as for the Bank of Lithuania, mainly designed by architects Mykolas Songaila and Arnas Funkas, and built in the early 1930s, was still inspired by historicism.<sup>38</sup> Thus, this building is an important early architectural achievement by Gargasas in Panevėžys.

Another type of buildings, the design of which was entrusted to the engineer, was primary schools, as even in the early 1930s one of the main problems in the city was the lack of modern “premises for primary schools”.<sup>39</sup> Consequently, from 1932 to 1940, the municipality built four new modern buildings for the primary schools, all of which were designed by Gargasas. The buildings were built on spacious plots (sometimes chosen by the engineer himself),<sup>40</sup>



Fig. 2. Former Jewish bank building designed in 1932. Photo by author, 2017



away from the noise of the city centre and main streets. The first of them, built on Nevėžio street, is wooden, and housed four classrooms. The other three, built on Ukmergės, Danutės (both had six classrooms) and Jakšto streets (had fifteen classrooms and was one of the largest in Lithuania at that time) are made of brick with plastered facades.

All four buildings were designed with modern aesthetics created by composing simple geometric

shapes with linear décor, which were characteristic of the Lithuanian modern architecture of that time.<sup>41</sup> This is accentuated by the rectangular windows and narrow horizontal bands, which divide the facades, indicate different storeys, and create the impression of ribbon windows. Modernity is also emphasised by smooth walls, richly glazed vertical stair towers (in brick buildings) and small canopies above the main entrances, while pitched roofs give a local traditional character (Fig. 3–4).



Fig. 3. 6-class primary school building on Ukmergės street designed in 1935. Photo by Jonas Žitkus. PKM 15607 F3225

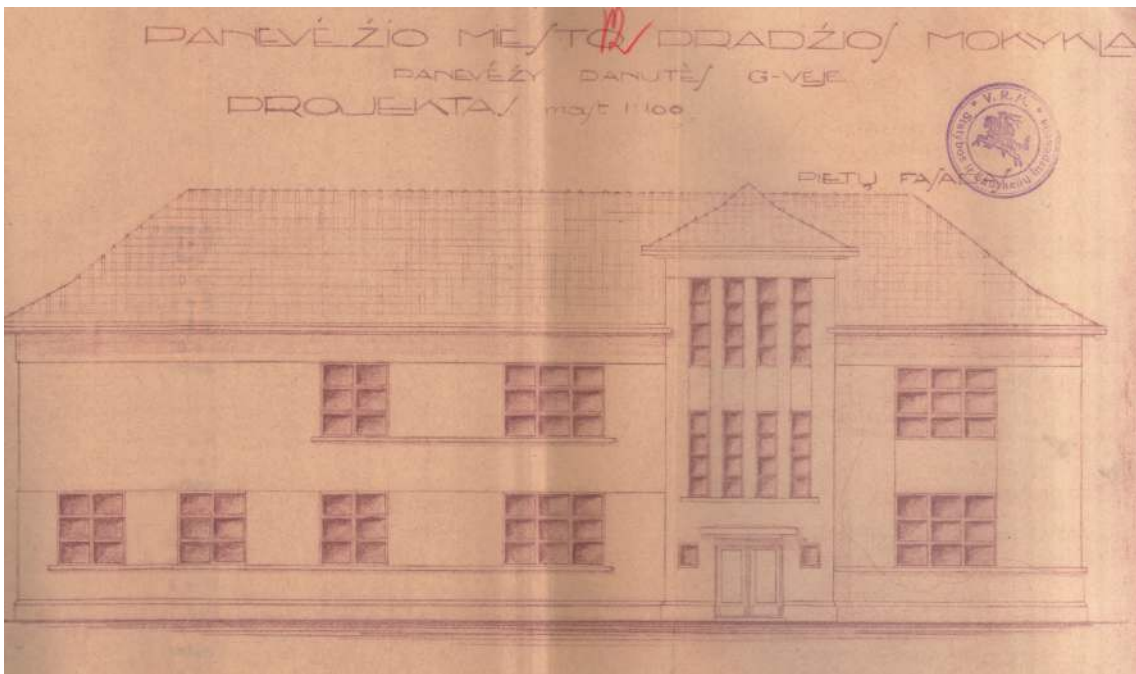


Fig. 4. Design project of 6-class primary school building on Danutės street, 1937. LCVA. f. 1264, ap. 1, b. 668, l. 12

The building on Jakšto street slightly differs from the others, as it has a curved profile with a composition of rectangular and porthole windows. Due to such features, it was thought to be “perhaps the most beautiful”<sup>42</sup> primary school building in Lithuania. Additionally, the primary school buildings in Panevėžys in a way could have influenced the analogous designs planned to be implemented elsewhere in Lithuania. In 1938, for example, the Construction Department of Ukmergė City Municipality planned to develop an analogue design of primary school building based on Gargasas’ designs.<sup>43</sup>

The buildings’ internal organisation was also modern, as the engineer put the students at the centre of the design process. Although the buildings were of different plans (L-, U- and T-shaped), inside they all had the logical and modern division of internal spaces into functional zones. It corresponded to the

functional requirements of school buildings practised both abroad<sup>44</sup> and in Lithuania<sup>45</sup> at that time, as it ensured the most rational use of the buildings’ internal spaces. The classrooms, which needed quietness, were placed in one part of the buildings, while the noisier administrative and auxiliary rooms were placed in other (Fig. 5). All these rooms inside the buildings were connected by spacious, well-lit one-sided corridors. This resulted in that the buildings’ long parts housed the classrooms, while short parts housed other rooms. In addition, the buildings had spacious classrooms oriented towards the west/east and enough natural light was allowed into them via wide glazed windows. Brick buildings also had special classrooms, canteens, and modern amenities (heating, ventilation, and water supply systems), as the aim was to make the buildings convenient and functional for the students. Thus, these buildings can be considered

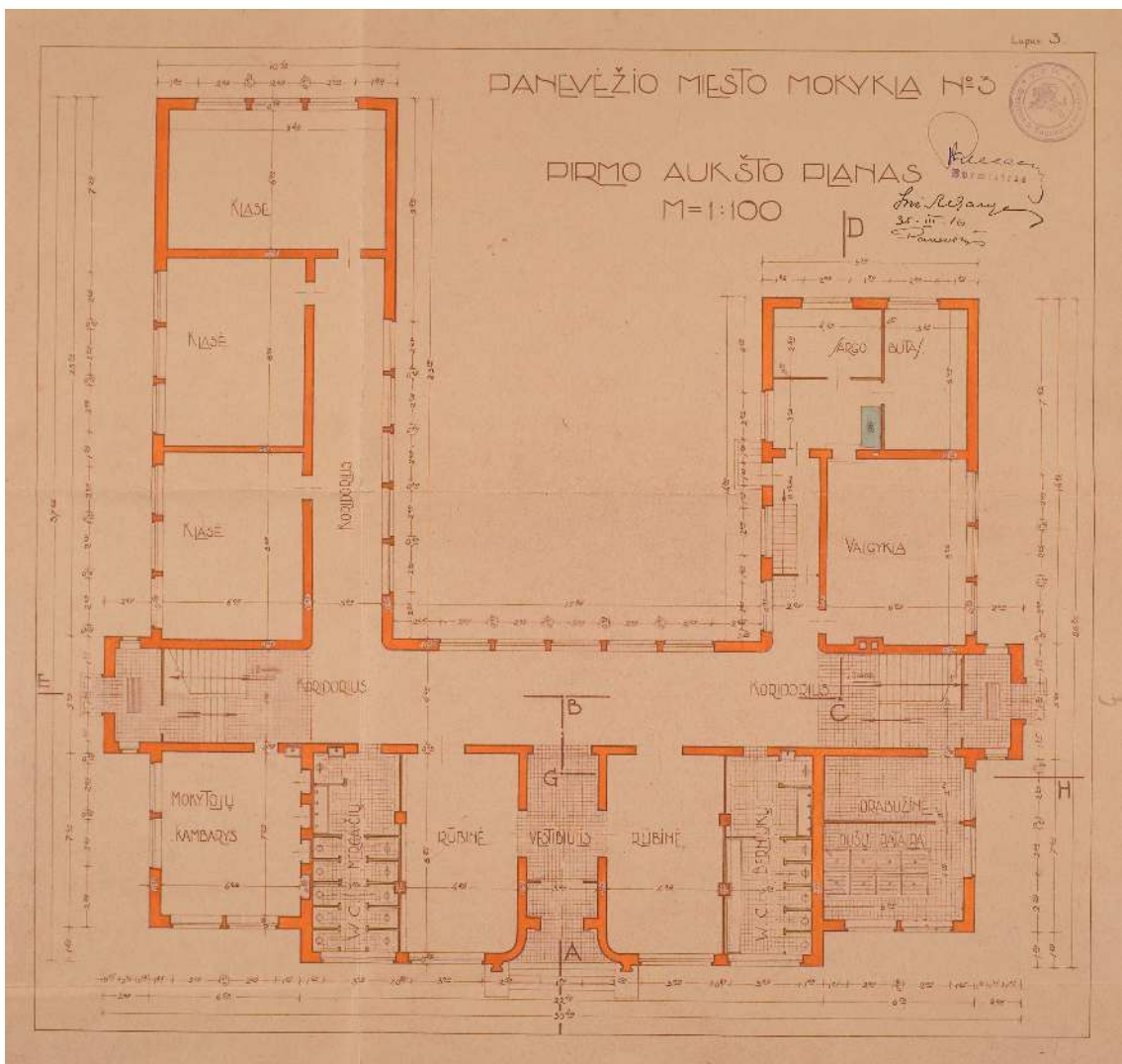


Fig. 5. 1st floor plan of 6-class primary school building on Ukmergės street, 1935. LCVA. f. 1622, ap. 4, b. 476, l. 3



quite an achievement of design and planning in the context of Panevėžys' architecture, as they demonstrate the engineer's ability to combine functional means inside with original modern looking exteriors. In the city's context, this was a novelty as its very first primary school built in the early 1920s was criticised for the bad planning of the interior spaces and their poor lighting with natural light.<sup>46</sup>

Although the fifth Gargasas' school building for the girls' craft school built in 1935–1936 on Aldonos street was designed with similar internal organisation, the outside has a more restrained and monumental appearance than the previous school buildings. It is accentuated by the wide windows and simplified pilasters which rhythmically divide the exterior's entire length. Moreover, the exterior was not plastered, and the exposed brickwork gives the building a distinctive and more conservative look. Nevertheless, such an appearance is complemented by the vertical accent – a modern-looking, richly glazed stair tower, typical to the engineer's other school buildings (Fig. 6).

During the 1930s, other institutions operating in the city also sought to build public buildings, the design of which mainly was commissioned to the

city engineer. One of such is the building for the Panevėžys District Health Insurance Fund built in 1936–1937 at the corner of Respublikos and Anykščių streets. The small two-story brick building is asymmetrical, L-shaped and has a more formal architectural expression than the previous Gargasas' buildings. The entire length of the exterior is divided by the densely ordered rows of pilaster-like strips and slim rectangular windows between them, while the corner is streamlined and accentuated by the recessed portal (Fig. 7). At that time Health Insurance Fund buildings, where the citizens, who had social insurance, could receive basic medical services, were a novelty in Lithuania. After being commissioned to design such a building in Panevėžys, Gargasas may have considered the Kaunas city's Health Insurance Fund building built in 1934 (arch. Vytautas Landsbergis-Žemkalnis, civ. eng. Antanas Novickis) as an example he wanted to follow. Thus, the appearance and external composition of both buildings is almost identical (Fig. 8). The only difference is that the building in Panevėžys is smaller, adapted to the needs of a smaller city institution. After the construction was completed, the object, although not stylistically radical, was criticised for its narrow windows, which were thought to be more characteristic of

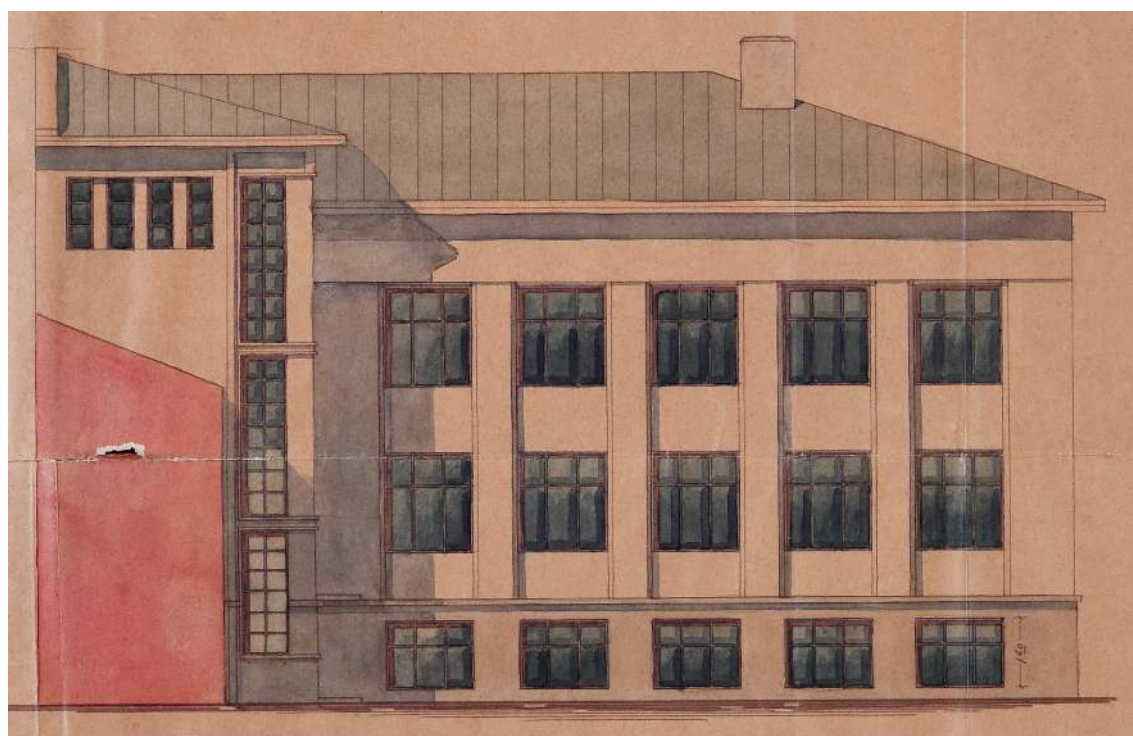


Fig. 6. Design project of the girl's craft school, 1935. LCVA. f. 1622, ap. 4, b. 467, l. 5



Fig. 7. Design project of Health Insurance Fund building, 1936. LCVA. f. 1622, ap. 4, b. 664, l. 8



Fig. 8. Health Insurance Fund building in Kaunas designed in 1933 (arch. Vytautas Landsbergis-Žemkalnis, civ. eng. Antanas Novickis). Photo by author, 2021





Fig. 9. Farmers' small credit bank building designed in 1937. Photo by Jonas Žitkus, 1938. PKM 15587 F3234

an industrial than of a public building.<sup>47</sup> Later the opinion towards the building changed and it, like the new primary schools, was considered a stylish object representing the city's modernization and enhancing the surrounding environment.<sup>48</sup>

Another administrative building – the Farmers' small credit bank, designed by him in 1937<sup>49</sup> – has been given a no less modern look. The aesthetics of the two-story L-shaped building were created by the harmony of simple-looking geometric shapes (Fig. 9). The exterior had windows of different shapes where they, due to the building's double function (administrative and commercial), brought a functional advantage to each of them. The first floor was designated as a commercial space and was divided by large display windows, which provided better indoor lighting. The second floor, locating the bank's offices, was divided by narrow vertical windows and vertical wall strips. The overall modernity of the building was complemented by a low roof and a canopy above the first floor made of glass sheets and metal.

The building's dynamic and unmistakably modern exterior suggest a strong influence from abroad

and may have been influenced by the Erich Mendelsohn's commercial buildings in Germany, about which Gargasas may have known from foreign architectural magazines available in Lithuania at that time.<sup>50</sup> Also, the building's design could have been influenced by the progressive examples of modern Lithuanian architecture of the 1930s, like "Pienocentras" administrative building in Kaunas (arch. Vytautas Landsbergis-Žemkalnis, 1931). Furthermore, the bank in Panevėžys itself could also have influenced the other designs, like the bank building built in Raseiniai in 1938 (Fig. 10).

In the late 1930s, Gargasas was commissioned to design several religious buildings in the city. One of them is a two-story brick monastery with a chapel for the Congregation of Marian Fathers, built in 1938–1939 (Fig. 11). The building's double function resulted in it having two façades. The façade of the monastery is symmetrical, V-shaped. Its exterior is simple, as it features a symmetrical disposition of vertical windows and flat walls. The central axis is accentuated by the main entrance and a small polygonal balcony above it. The asymmetrical chapel's façade is slightly different. Probably referring to the classical architecture of religious buildings, its

façade was given an arched portal and a large circular window above it, which resembles a rosette. In addition, the chapel's sides are divided by narrow vertical windows and niches, and the upper part is completed by a stepped pediment. Thus, the building has features of the old styles, which the engineer sought to abstract creating the modern yet representative and original exterior. It was also the

earliest modern-looking religious building in the city, as the others built during the 1920s were characterised by the conservative-looking exteriors.<sup>51</sup>

Moreover, in 1938 Gargasas was commissioned to design the Priests' Seminary, which was to be erected next to the neo-baroque cathedral built in the 1920s. The design work of the four-story



Fig. 10. Design project of bank building in Raseiniai, 1938 (civ. eng. Adolfas Tylis). LCVA. f. 1622, ap. 4, b. 733, l. 127



Fig. 11. Monastery and chapel for the Congregation of Marian Fathers designed in 1938. Postcard from the author's personal collection, c.1939



brick building was completed in 1939.<sup>52</sup> It was the last public building designed by Gargasas in Panevėžys. In contrast to the previous buildings, where stylistic modernity prevailed, here the engineer attempted to expand the language of his architecture by embracing the more conservative approach. Although the building could have lacked plastic décor, its conservative appearance was to be created by the composition characteristic of classical architecture. The main façade of the symmetrical E-shaped building was to be divided into three parts. A massive avant-corps with bold entrance portal which was supposed to emphasise the central axis, and two side wings were to be divided by a laconic composition of vertical windows and flat walls (Fig. 12). However, the Seminary according to the original design was not built, as its construction was halted by the Soviet occupation of Lithuania in the summer of 1940.

#### DESIGNING AND RESHAPING THE CITY'S RESIDENTIAL ARCHITECTURE

Antanas Gargasas' work in Panevėžys was not limited to the public buildings, as he also designed private residential buildings. Although here, as

elsewhere in Lithuania at that time, due to the limited finances, wooden residential construction prevailed, dozens of brick houses were also built.

In the late-1920s and early-1930s, the residential architecture of Kaunas and Lithuanian cities began to be influenced by the Western modernist trend.<sup>53</sup> However, contrary to what is characteristic of mainstream modernism of that time, when buildings had cubic, minimalist forms made of concrete, with continuous ribbon windows on facades and flat roofs,<sup>54</sup> a more moderate, non-dogmatic variant of modernism prevailed in Lithuania.<sup>55</sup> Here the modern style of that time was often adapted to the country's local conditions, since the buildings had pitched roofs and were built of wood and brick, as the traditional and most affordable building materials. The exteriors of the masonry buildings were often characterised by more plastic forms with simple geometric décor. Also, the exteriors were often plastered which gave them a more unified look.

In the case of Panevėžys, the spread of modernism in the city's residential architecture began a little later than elsewhere in Lithuania. There, even in the early 1930s, most new residential buildings were still given a conservative appearance, inspired



Fig. 12. Design project of the Priests' Seminary, 1939. LVIA. f. 1650, ap. 1, b. 110, l. 22



by historicism and other styles. Despite the good aesthetic quality, the buildings' exteriors no longer corresponded to the stylistic trends of the 1930s. "This independent city is strongly opposed to Kaunas in terms of construction. Kaunas, in a few years, ends up growing into a city of modern construction and modern style, while Panevėžys apparently dislikes those so-called "cubic boxes". Modern-style houses are almost non-existent"<sup>56</sup> – emphasised the press of that time.

However, during the 1930s, when Gargasas began working in Panevėžys, the modernist-inspired trend began to influence the city's residential architecture, when houses with "modern and elegant facades"<sup>57</sup> started to appear, which symbolised its progress. At that time, the engineer contributed the most to the modernization and aesthetic changes of the residential buildings, as he designed most of them. For example, out of more than 200 issued permits for residential construction in Panevėžys in 1933 and 1934, Gargasas designed a total of 112 houses (88 wooden and 24 brick).<sup>58, 59</sup> This was the most productive period for him in the case of residential architecture. Of all the engineer's residential buildings, the most significant can be

considered one- and two-story brick houses, where his stylistic ambitions were manifested the most and of which the two main morphologies can be distinguished.

To the first main morphology belong the buildings, to which the engineer gave a dynamic and elegant appearance. A frequent recurring motif in the architecture of most engineer's houses is the irregular, asymmetrical volume with an important compositional accent – a streamlined corner, emphasised with curved windows and balconies (Fig. 13–14). Many of such houses are L-shaped and were built on corner plots, near street intersections. The aesthetic modernity of the buildings is also characterised by the absence of décor, use of simple geometric shapes with windows which provided good natural lighting, and flat walls. All this gave the buildings a strikingly modern and contemporary character. In part of the houses, the horizontality is accentuated by the ornamental straight lines surrounding the facades between the floors, and by the wide, often profiled cornices. Such modern features may have been influenced by the contemporary Belgian architecture of the 1920s and the 1930s. For example, the works of



Fig. 13. Residential building on Stoties street designed in 1933, second floor built in 1939. Photo by author, 2021



Fig. 14. House on Nevėžio street designed in 1933. Photo by author, 2021

architect Henry Van De Velde have similar stylistic features<sup>60</sup> with which Gargasas could have been well informed during his studies. Also, during the 1930s, “the rounded shapes of facades, balconies and individual elements” also became characteristic features of the modern buildings built in Kaunas.<sup>61</sup> Additionally, residential buildings with streamlined volumes were also built in Šiauliai, like the ones designed by municipal engineer Vladas Bitė.<sup>62</sup> Thus, the dynamic and elegant exteriors of the Gargasas’ buildings gave the more contemporary-looking character to the city’s architecture.

A smaller part of brick houses designed by the engineer belong to the second morphology, characterised by a more austere appearance of the box-like rectangular/square volumes. This was probably since these buildings, unlike the previous ones, were not built on corner plots. A part of them has

a rather simple design, accentuated by brightly coloured flat walls with wide simple-looking windows and rectangular balconies. While others have been decorated with horizontal bands, relief lines, niches, and have small canopies above the entrances. As a part of houses has symmetrical facades, their central axes are accentuated by vertical window strips of the staircases (Fig. 15).

Thus, the modernity of Gargasas’ buildings gradually replaced historicism in the context of the city’s residential architecture of the 1930s. Though his architectural ambitions in residential architecture were more of an aesthetic nature, occasionally the foundations, ceilings, lintels, and stairs were made of concrete. Also, some houses had water supply and sewage systems, electrical installation,<sup>63</sup> which was still not common in the city at that time.





Fig. 15. Residential building on Stoties street designed in 1934. Photo by author, 2020



Fig. 16. House on Geležinkelio street designed in 1933. Photo by author, 2020



However, in the case of wooden houses, the engineer embraced modernity a little less. As traditional wooden residential construction prevailed in Lithuania, such buildings even in the 1930s were designed with traditional appearance. Thus, the country's architectural specialists had to effectively express stylistic pluralism, in some cases designing

modern buildings, in others traditional-looking ones.<sup>64</sup> As a result, some of his wooden houses have traditional-looking exteriors (Fig. 16). In other cases, the engineer modernised the aesthetics of wooden buildings by designing them with rectangular, occasionally plastered volumes without décor (Fig. 17).



Fig. 17. House on Basanavičiaus street designed in 1936 (demolished in 2020). Photo by author, 2020

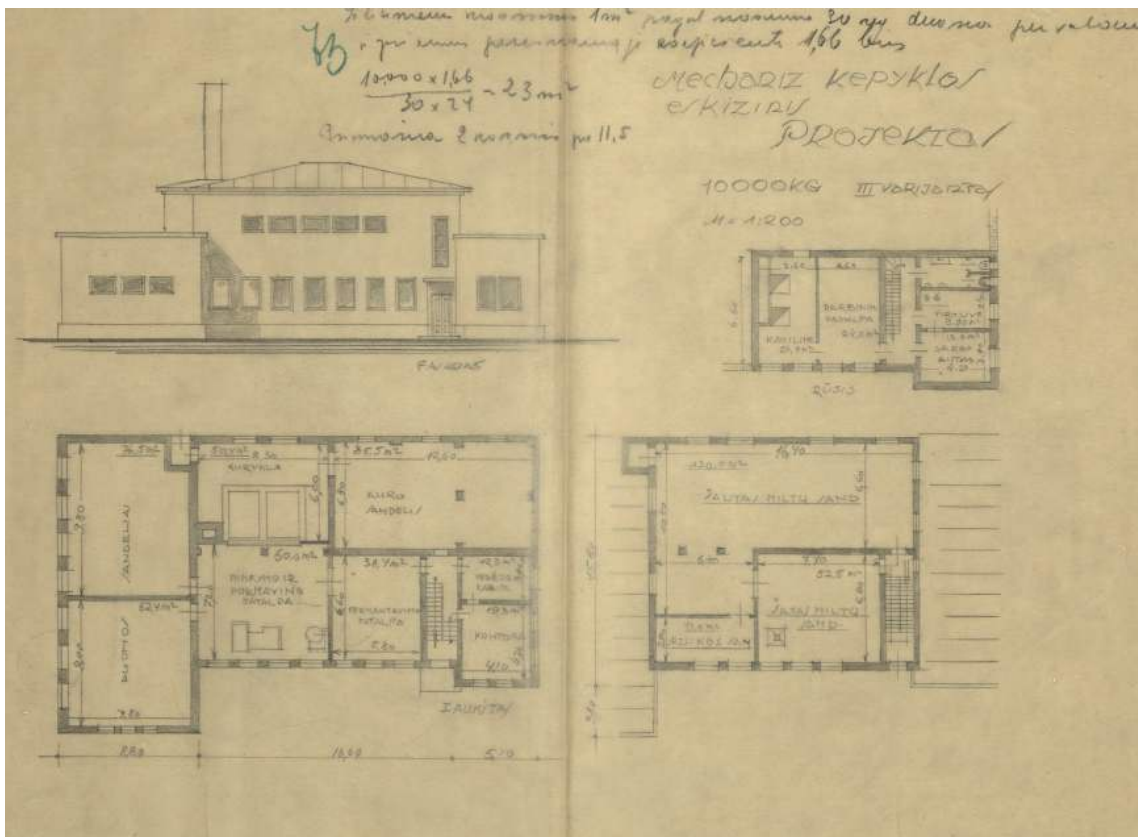


Fig. 18. Unimplemented sketch design for the mechanized bakery in Panevėžys, 1935. LCVA. f. 1264, ap. 1, b. 568, l. 115

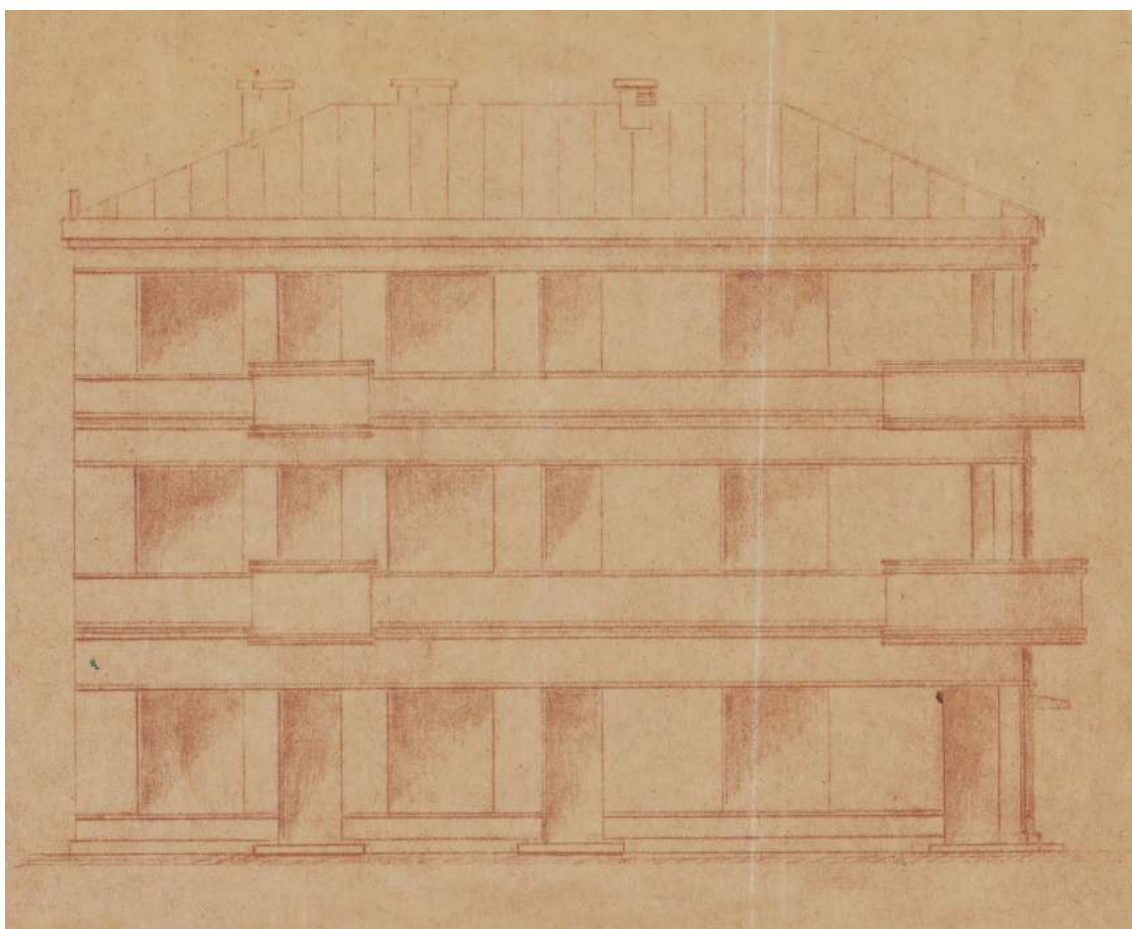


Fig. 19. Design project of an apartment building in Kupiškis, 1936. LCVA. f. 797, ap. 1, b. 679, l. 138

In the period of 1935–1939, as fewer houses were built in the city, the commissions received by Gargasas decreased. In 1939, for example, he designed only 11 private houses (4 masonry and 7 wooden).<sup>65</sup> Additionally, the engineer was working on the commissions to design several public and industrial buildings in the city and one apartment building in Kupiškis, which were given similar features characteristic of his work of the early 1930s, as he still aimed to design them with modern-looking exteriors (Fig. 18–19).

#### THE ENGINEER'S LATER WORK AND HIS LEGACY IN PANEVĖŽYS

The work of Gargasas as a municipal engineer in Panevėžys ended in the summer of 1940, when he left the city (or was transferred) and went to Kaunas. There he started working in the City Municipality's Construction Department and later in the

Executive Committee, where he held various positions.<sup>66</sup> However, it is probable that Gargasas did not design anything in Kaunas, as there were no permits issued to build buildings designed by him in 1940.<sup>67</sup>

In January of 1941, the engineer's position changed again, as he was appointed to work as a chief engineer in the State Planning Commission of the Lithuanian SSR.<sup>68</sup> There too he did not work for long, as upon the institution's liquidation due to the German occupation in June 1941, he had to seek for a new job once again. Around that time, he was appointed to work in Šiauliai City Municipality as a city engineer,<sup>69</sup> a more stable position which he held until the summer of 1944. There he probably only developed several urban projects and oversaw the sparse constructions that had been carried out there.<sup>70</sup> In the summer of 1944, when the second Soviet occupation was beginning, like many Lithuanians the engineer left the country for Germany.

In 1950, Gargasas with his family moved to the United States of America,<sup>71</sup> where he lived until his death in 1990.<sup>72</sup> However, his late life in the United States is little known and requires further studies.

To this day many Gargasas' buildings remain in Panevėžys, but not all of them have retained an original appearance. The former Farmers' small credit bank building and the school building in Danutės street lost their original appearance after being reconstructed during the Soviet period. Others, such as most of the schools, the Health Insurance Fund building, although expanded during the Soviet period with the new additions, still have an authentic appearance. In addition, some public buildings, like the former Jewish bank, primary school on Ukmergės street and Health Insurance Fund buildings are listed as heritage objects.<sup>73</sup> This contributed to the remaining architectural authenticity of the buildings and several of them are still being used for their original function, which demonstrates the architectural versatility of Gargasas' buildings. The former Priests' Seminary building is a slightly different example. In the 1950s a new project for the building was developed,<sup>74</sup> which moved away from the original idea of Gargasas', as it was given a more ornate appearance, typical of the early Soviet architecture in Lithuania. After the completion, the building housed a technical school. The situation is a little worse with the numerous residential buildings designed by Gargasas, as almost none of them are listed as heritage objects. Thus, many of them during the Soviet period and in the last decades, were demolished. Others, although still have retained their original features, are being altered by the reconstructions and renovations. This may lead to the fact that in the future the rich legacy of Gargasas in Panevėžys, especially residential architecture, could diminish and lose its architectural significance.

## CONCLUSIONS

Civil engineer Antanas Gargasas through his designed buildings was a leading figure in the renewal and modernization of Panevėžys'

architecture in the 1930s. During more than eight years in Panevėžys he was engaged in a wide-ranging architectural practice. As a result, he designed important administrative, educational, religious buildings, dozens of residential buildings. Many of which can be named as the city's most significant buildings of that time, as it reflected its modernization and growth. Gargasas oeuvre also reflects the nature of the work of Lithuanian municipal engineers at the time as they needed to be capable and versatile specialists who could design buildings of different functions and sizes.

Through his buildings the engineer introduced new ideas and aesthetics in the architecture of Panevėžys, which in some cases were inspired by modern contemporary international and local Lithuanian examples. The engineer also had his own approach in designing modernist-inspired architecture, blending modernity and functionality with aesthetic appeal and elegance. Although in the context of the 1930s Panevėžys, the buildings designed by Gargasas were modern, they were characterised by a more moderate expression and were not too radical in the Lithuanian context of that time. Thus, even though most of his public buildings and many residential, mainly brick houses, had international features of the interwar modern architecture, they were adapted to the local context. Also, some of his buildings had features of the old styles, demonstrating historical continuity, which he also sought.

Gargasas' buildings also met the functional needs of the institutions and individuals for whom they were built, as he was concerned not only with the aesthetic, but also with the modern functional aspects of architecture. Thus, his buildings also speak of Panevėžys city society's modernization in the 1930s, when various institutions and private individuals willingly commissioned him to design public and private buildings with a modern appearance. It should also be stated that the period when Gargasas was working in Panevėžys, can also be the most significant and the most productive of his career as a civil engineer in Lithuania.



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- <sup>11</sup> Petras Lelis, *Lietuvos keliu. 1910–1973 metai* (Toronto: LithoArt, 1973), 190.
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- <sup>18</sup> Lelis, *Lietuvos keliu*, 124.
- <sup>19</sup> Vilkončius, “Modernizmo sklaida,” 30.
- <sup>20</sup> Vilkončius, “Modernizmo sklaida,” 38.
- <sup>21</sup> “Antano Gargaso asmens byla,” 10.
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- <sup>24</sup> “Kazys Germanas. Tarnybos byla,” *Lithuanian Central State Archives*, f. 391, ap. 7, b. 1533, l. 5.
- <sup>25</sup> Tadas Chodakauskas, “Panevėžio miestas,” *Savivaldybė* 12 (1932), 20.
- <sup>26</sup> Evaldas Vilkončius, “Architektūros procesai XX a. trečiojo dešimtmečio Panevėžyje,” *Senvagė* 1 (2021), 64.
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- <sup>28</sup> “Liet. Banko Panevėžio skyriaus rūmams statyti projektas,” *Lithuanian Central State Archives*, f. 1622, ap. 4, b. 88, l. 8.
- <sup>29</sup> “Miesto ir šaligatvių tvarkymas,” *Įdomus mūsų momentas* (15 September 1935), 3.
- <sup>30</sup> P. B., “Laiškas iš Panevėžio,” *Vakarai* (27 August 1936), 6.
- <sup>31</sup> Antanas Novickis, “Techniškojo personalo klausimas,” *Savivaldybė* 11 (1935), 27.
- <sup>32</sup> “Ežerskio Juozo tarnybos byla,” *Lithuanian Central State Archives*, f. 930, ap. 5, b. 627, l. 2.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Lina Preišegalavičienė, *Tautinės modernybės architektas: Vladimiro Dubeneckio gyvenimas ir kūryba, 1888–1932* (Kaunas: Nacionalinis M. K. Čiurlionio dailės muziejus, 2018).

<sup>2</sup> Marija Drėmaitė, *Arno Funkcionalizmas. Architekto Arno Funko (1898–1957) gyvenimas ir kūryba* (Kaunas: Nacionalinis M. K. Čiurlionio muziejus, 2022).



- <sup>33</sup> “Eugenijaus Perchoravičiaus byla,” *Lithuanian Central State Archives*, f. 631, ap. 7, b. 11784, l. 1.
- <sup>34</sup> “Susirašinėjimas administraciniais ir organizaciniais reikalais,” *Lithuanian Central State Archives*, f. 379, ap. 1, b. 820, l. 161.
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- <sup>36</sup> Antanas Gargasas, “Panevėžio miesto plano sudarymo darbai,” *Savivaldybė 1* (1934), 31–33.
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- <sup>40</sup> “Miesto tarybos posėdžių medžiaga,” *Lithuanian Central State Archives*, f. 1264, ap. 1, b. 858, l. 52.
- <sup>41</sup> Feliksas Bielinckis, “Architektūros esmė,” *Savivaldybė 2* (1937), 63.
- <sup>42</sup> “Bus moderniška pr. mokykla,” *XX amžius* (15 June 1940), 14.
- <sup>43</sup> “U. M. S-bės Ūkio sk. Byla Nr. 29,” *Lithuanian Central State Archives*, f. 1262, ap. 2, b. 272, l. 62.
- <sup>44</sup> Herman Hertzberger, *Space and Learning* (Rotterdam: 012 Publishers, 2008), 12.
- <sup>45</sup> Nikolajus Mačiulskis, “Pastabos prie pradžios mokyklų statybos,” *Savivaldybė 7* (1933), 31.
- <sup>46</sup> “Panevėžio miesto pradžios mokyklos Nr. 1 kronika,” *Panevėžys County Gabrielė Petkevičaitė-Bitė Public Library*, f. 8, l. 13.
- <sup>47</sup> Tehn, “Nauji ligonių kasos rūmai,” *Panevėžio garsas* (2 October 1937), 3.
- <sup>48</sup> “Panevėžys auga ir nauju gyvenimu alsuoja,” *Lietuvos žinios* (29 August 1939), 10.
- <sup>49</sup> “Bankas statysis namus,” *Lietuvos žinios* (29 July 1937), 6.
- <sup>50</sup> “Architektūrinių konkursų pastatams sukurti, prarastų Lietuvoje 1934–1940 m., sąlygos ir paaiškinimai,” *Vilnius Regional State Archives*, f. 1171, ap. 1, b. 25, l. 96.
- <sup>51</sup> Vilkončius, “Architektūros procesai,” 64.
- <sup>52</sup> “Panevėžys,” *XX amžius* (30 January 1939), 8.
- <sup>53</sup> Algirdas Šalkauskis, “Keletas žodžių apie mūsų 10 metų architektūros pasiekimus,” *Savivaldybė 6* (1933), 34.
- <sup>54</sup> Adam Sharr, *Modern Architecture. A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 63.
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- <sup>58</sup> “1933 m. apskričių ir miestų statybos komisijų posėdžių protokolų nuorašų byla. II dalis,” *Lithuanian Central State Archives*, f. 377, ap. 8, b. 131, l. 188–223.
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- <sup>61</sup> Žilvinas Rinkšelis, *Art Deco fenomenas tarpukario Kauno architektūroje* (magistro darbas, Vytauto Didžiojo universitetas, 2018), 62.
- <sup>62</sup> “Fainbergo Monaso ir Jankelio ir Šifros Rozos gyvenamojo namo Šiauliuose nacionalizacijos byla,” *Lithuanian Central State Archives*, f. R-768, ap. 2, b. 52, l. 2.
- <sup>63</sup> “Susirašinėjimas su miesto ir apskrities viršininku, su policijos nuovados viršininku apie statybos ir remonto darbus mieste,” *Lithuanian Central State Archives*, f. 1264, ap. 1, b. 477, l. 216.
- <sup>64</sup> “Klausimai ir F. Bielinckio atsakymai apie 1918–1940 m. Kauno (ir Lietuvos) architektūrą,” *Vilnius Regional State Archives*, f. 1171, ap. 3, b. 90, l. 5.
- <sup>65</sup> “Panevėžio miesto statybos komisijos 1939 m. protokolų knyga,” *Lithuanian Central State Archives*, f. 1264, ap. 1, b. 752, l. 1–50.
- <sup>66</sup> “Kauno miesto burmistro įsakymai dėl tarnautojų atlyginimo bei paskyrimo ir atleidimo iš pareigų,” *Kaunas Regional State Archives*, f. 219, ap. 1, b. 1126, l. 7.
- <sup>67</sup> “Statybos komisijos posėdžių protokolai,” *Kaunas Regional State Archives*, f. 218, ap. 1, b. 1425, l. 1–382.
- <sup>68</sup> “Valstybinės plano komisijos naujai patvirtintų etatų sąrašai ir atlyginimo normos,” *Lithuanian Central State Archives* f. R. 164, ap. 1, b. 310, l. 22.
- <sup>69</sup> “Technikos ir susisiekimo generalinio tarėjo, Savivaldybių departamento ir medžio pramonės direkcijos aplinkraščiai,” *Lithuanian Central State Archives*, f. 1381, ap. 1, b. 1773, l. 3.
- <sup>70</sup> A. G., “Aktualieji Šiaulių miesto gyventojų reikalai,” *Tėviškė* (4 December 1942), 3.
- <sup>71</sup> “Naujausi naujakuriai,” *Dirva* (13 July 1950), 5.
- <sup>72</sup> “Įvykių kronika,” *Dirva* (11 July 1991), 12.
- <sup>73</sup> “LR Kultūros paveldo vertybių registras,” *Panevėžio miesto savivaldybė* (looked at in 25 October 2023), <https://www.panevezys.lt/lt/gyventojams/apie-panevezi/paveldas/kulturos-vertybiu-registrai/lr-nekilnojamuju-kulturos-v39c.html>
- <sup>74</sup> “Individualinės statybos leidimų registracijos žurnalas,” *Panevėžys Branch of the Šiauliai Regional County Archives*, f. 875, ap. 1, b. 5, l. 50.

## ARCHITEKTŪROS MODERNIZACIJA PANEVĖŽYJE XX A. KETVIRTAJAME DEŠIMTMETYJE: TYRINĖJANT STATYBOS INŽINIERIAUS ANTANO GARGASO KŪRYBĄ

### Santrauka

Šiuolaikiniuose Lietuvos tarpukario architektūros tyrimuose iki šiol kol kas didžiausias dėmesys skiriamas Kauno mieste, tuometinėje šalies laikinojoje sostinėje, vykusių architektūros raidos ir jos modernėjimų procesų analizei. Taip pat daugiau analizuota ten dirbusių architektūros specialistų kūryba. Vis dar mažai žinoma apie kituose to meto Lietuvos miestuose kurtos architektūros raidą ir jos modernėjimą, todėl šiuo straipsniu siekiama nuodugniau atskleisti ir išanalizuoti XX a. ketvirtajame dešimtmetyje vykusius Panevėžio miesto architektūros modernėjimo procesus, tyrimo objektu pasirinkus 1931–1940 m. miesto savivaldybės statybos inžinieriaus pareigas ėjusio Antano Gargaso kūrybą. Tai straipsnyje daroma analizuojant ir pristatant didžiąją dalį jo suprojektuotų visuomeninių pastatų ir reikšmingiausių bei tipiškesniųjų gyvenamųjų namų architektūrą. Straipsnyje, kuris parašytas remiantis archyvine medžiaga, tiriamojo laikotarpio spauda ir šiuolaikiniais tarpukario architektūros tyrimais, keliami prielaidai, kad šio statybos inžinieriaus suprojektuoti pastatai turėjo reikšmingos įtakos tuometinio Panevėžio miesto architektūros modernėjimo procesams ir naujų stilistinių tendencijų sklaidai joje. Straipsnio informatyvumą papildė inžinieriaus suprojektuotų pastatų brėžiniai ir fotografijos.

**Reikšminiai žodžiai:** architektūra, tarpukario Lietuva, tarpukario architektūra, modernizmo architektūra, Panevėžys, Antanas Gargasas, Panevėžio architektūra.

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