

Richard Paulick: From the Bauhaus to the Stalinallee and Back. An Enquiry into the «Evolution» of a German Architect

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planning and building in the gdr

emigration and exile

functionalist approach

mass housing construction
rationalizing housing construction

doctrine of «national tradition»
«socialist in content and national in form»
socialist realism

architectural historiography
of modernism

Richard Paulick's name triggers associations with the work of Dessau's «Hochschule für Gestaltung» and circles close to that institution, as well as with the chequered development of GDR architecture, ranging from what were known as «residential palaces» in the National Tradition style to modern urban planning blueprints for Hoyerswerda, Schwedt and Halle-Neustadt. Paulick entered the arena at an early stage with independently designed buildings, influenced planning after 1933 while in exile in Shanghai, and had a significant influence on construction and planning in the GDR during the state's first two decades.

Even in his youth, he was very much inspired by the analytical thinking of the Bauhaus Functionalists under Walter Gropius. Throughout his entire architectural career, Paulick was concerned, not continuously but persistently, with the conception of residential buildings for the masses based on prefabricated components. The economic and ideological conditions in which he was active in the various places he worked cannot, however, be regarded merely as conditions that either hindered or fostered his architecture, for they clearly influenced the objectives pursued in his designs.

In this sense, his post-1952 designs for housing typologies can be read as products of adapting to the stipulated stylistic parameters, while his later work was more informed by compliance with political and economic directives. Paulick, who had been an SED member since 1954, turned away from Modernism and towards the architectural doctrine of «National Tradition» just as noticeably as his rival Hermann Henselmann, although he continued to advocate this doctrine even after it had been replaced by the dictates of down-to-earth thrift. Paulick's biography makes particularly clear the problematic aspects of a concept of an architect's oeuvre that starts from an immanent telos and imagines the continuous «evolution» of a personal architectural concept.¹

Richard Paulick's lifework should be considered in its entirety for conducting a fair appraisal of it within the historical context. The shortcomings of research into architectural and planning history make this difficult. In this context, there is also a clear tendency to dispute that Paulick designed various early buildings and indeed to contest his involvement in drawing up plans for the new towns.² In these circumstances, insight into the architect's oeuvre as a whole leads to a more nuanced historical assessment, which has generally been lacking to date.



Fig. 1
Dessau-Törten, Steel house, 1926–27 by
Georg Muche and Richard Paulick.
Photograph: Erich Consemüller, 1927

Fig. 2
Dessau-Törten, DEWOG apartment
blocks, 1930–31, with Hans Waloschek

- [K] There are many facets of Modernism and modernity as well as many ambivalent aspects. What does that mean for our own concepts and visions?

Lessons Learnt from Hans Poelzig and from Walter Gropius' Studio

Paulick was born on 7th November 1903 in Roßlau/Elbe and grew up in an atmosphere of politically and aesthetically progressive attitudes and concepts. His father, Richard Paulick Senior, was a Social Democrat, the editor of the *Volksblatt für Anhalt und Umgebung*, and later a Dessau City Councillor, Mayor and SPD Regional Director. He always supported his oldest son, let him participate in his work as a party official working for the opposition and introduced him to Marxism. It was his father who triggered a key turning point in the young Richard's art historical interests by advising him to study architecture, i.e. something practical.³

During his studies—at the Technical Universities of Dresden and Berlin (1923–27)—Richard Paulick was much influenced by Hans Poelzig, who taught him at the TH Berlin-Charlottenburg from 1925 to July 1927. Like many of his generation, he was impressed by Poelzig's approach to teaching architecture as well as by his penchant for the monumental. Paulick would later take on responsibility for «collective» discussion of the designs, with substantial guidance from the architectural maestro.

The Bauhaus put down roots in Dessau while he was studying. Paulick got to know the Bauhaus crowd around Walter Gropius, was promptly welcome into their circles and realized the Stahlhaus as an experimental building with Georg Muehe in 1926–27 Fig. 1. After completing his studies, he was involved in many avant-garde projects developed by Gropius' studio. Drawing on his father's connections and with Gropius' support, he constructed his first buildings in his own right in Dessau between 1929 and 1931 Fig. 2. Wolfgang Thöner has succinctly summarized the dynamics of this development: «Richard Paulick learned decisive lessons and had formative experiences during his time working for Gropius' architectural studio. He is not a member of the Bauhaus in the narrower sense of the term; he never taught or studied at the Bauhaus, but was intimately connected with life at the Bauhaus from 1925 to 1928 and worked in Gropius' office as its director from 1927. He actually studied somewhere else; that is already apparent in a contradiction or rather a particularity in his mode and method of designing. He was taught by Hans Poelzig in Berlin, at the Technical University, and Poelzig was someone that you might almost say oscillated between the various camps, including Modernism, and went his own way, which is actually what Richard Paulick did too.»⁴

bauhaus school

learning processes

diversity of modernism

neues bauen [new building]

His imprimatur is already clear in the first designs he realized. In the Stahlhaus, the exterior wall panels with vertical window strips underscore the components' mass-produced nature. In Dessau, the Hahn House and Naurath House from 1929, with their rather solid appearance, are examples of *Neues Bauen*, while the 1929–30 garage building in Berlin's Kantstrasse, its tall glass strips poised between symmetry and asymmetry, bears witness to Paulick's development as an architect, even if he apparently only made Hermann Zweigenthal's design «buildable». In 1930–31 he built the DEWOG houses in Dessau with Hans Waloschek: seven blocks of flats, arranged in a comb pattern along Heidestrasse.

Exile in Shanghai—Activities as an Interior Decorator, Planner, University Professor, and Architectural Consultant to the Railway Authorities

national socialist politics
emigration and exile

After an involuntary pause due to the economic crisis, Paulick's career as an architect temporarily came to an end—in 1933 he had to flee persecution by the National Socialists. Followed by his younger brother Rudolf, he headed to Shanghai, where his friend and colleague Rudolf Hamburger had preceded him. All the circumstances of his rapid departure into exile show that Hartmut Frank's assumption—«in the overwhelming majority of cases, exile was the result of life-threatening racial or political persecution rather than being caused by architectural paternalism»⁵—does not hold true for Paulick: he fled from both.⁶

bauhaus representing modernization
bauhaus symbolizing modern life

In Shanghai, he earned his living at first as an interior decorator in the luxury residential market; together with his brother, he designed interiors with echoes of the «Bauhaus style» and Bauhaus art, and in some cases with historical details if the clients so desired Fig. 3. Alongside his business activities, he was involved in émigré cultural organizations. His political convictions became apparent in 1939, when he began to support resistance to the National Socialist regime by collecting and passing on information. This went hand in hand with increasingly independent planning work. In the early 1940s he started teaching at the American St. John's University as a Professor of Interior Design and Urban Planning. In 1945 he played a significant role in drawing up the first master plan for the Shanghai region and influenced planning for a whole series of stations as architectural consultant to the railway authorities. In his dissertation on Hamburger and Paulick in

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Shanghai, Eduard Kögel has intensively examined the work of both architects.⁷ His knowledge of local conditions enabled him to clarify many details, including correcting Paulick's exaggerated self-portrayal as an influential architect. As Kögel's investigations reveal, although Paulick did not manage to realize a new building independently during his Shanghai period, he was able to gather a wealth of experience in planning residential areas, transport infrastructure and entire urban districts.

Reconciling «Socialist Realism» with
Industrialized Construction Processes:
Paulick at the Bauakademie, Berlin,
and as Chief Architect in Hoyerswerda,
Schwedt, and Halle-Neustadt

In spring 1950 Paulick moved to the newly founded GDR, but only after some of his preferred options, in Gropius' circles in the USA or in West Germany, had failed to materialize. He must have realized what might await him because his father, who had returned from a concentration camp, had warned him about conditions in the Soviet-occupied zone. It was the prospect of working in an influential position on major social construction programmes that made up his mind. Those hopes were indeed realized at first. After a short period of familiarization at the Institut für Bauwesen [East Berlin's Institute of Construction Engineering], then still under Hans Scharoun's leadership, on 26th July 1950 Paulick presented his vision for the new state's most important building project, which he had been officially commissioned to plan: the redesign of the Berlin-Mitte district ^{Fig. 4}. The plans show a «Forum of Democracy» with modern parliament and administration buildings around a wide plaza in front of the Rotes Rathaus [«Red» Town Hall], beyond which the Stadtschloss or City Palace is visible, reconstructed without its original cupola or the Apothecary Wing. Incorporating the tower of the FIAPP (International Federation of Resistance Fighters) monument, the Forum symbolizes an «anti-fascist democratic» order that aspired to more than just national

- [K] validity. With this design, Paulick put forward a vision of a renewed, monumental Modernism. The centre's functions were conceived to serve the people during festivities and in everyday life, while at the same time «once again making it possible to be one with nature, humankind's most natural and primitive joy in life».⁸

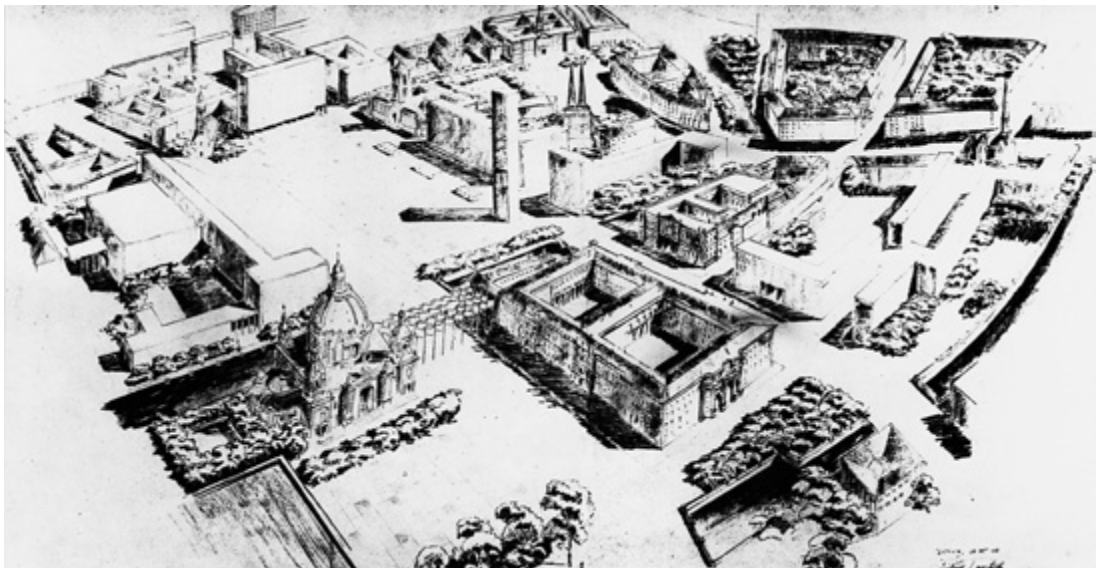


Fig. 3
Shanghai, home furnishing with murals,
1946–49

Fig. 4
Berlin, centre as «Forum of Democracy»,
with Berlin Palace, new square at the
Rotes Rathaus townhall and tower of
the «FIAPP» monument, aerial view from
the west, signed, 26th July 1950

Fig. 5
Berlin, centre as «Berlin Forum», with
central square, high-rise building, and the
reconstructed Lindenforum, mock-up
in south-west perspective, autumn 1951

Paulick's November 1950 plan for the «Wohnstadt Friedrichshain» [Friedrichshain Residential Ensemble] seems similarly remarkable. New apartment blocks, in some cases free-standing and slightly curving, are set in spatial relation to the existing building fabric, which is largely preserved, with no dogmatic obsession with right angles. Only two of these blocks were constructed and were realized in conjunction with Werner Schmidt and Dieter Zahn along Graudenzer Strasse in 1950–51. The high-rise building at Weberwiese was also originally a Paulick project, integrated into his plans for the Friedrichshain Residential Ensemble. The first, still purely modern design from January 1951 reflected international discussions on high-rise residential buildings in keeping with the times and at the same time responded to contemporary demands for «realistic» propaganda art with large-format public art on the cruciform building's north-facing side.

It was only his refusal to adapt his high-rise building entirely to the required silhouette effect derived from on the Soviet model that cost Paulick the commission at the end of July 1951: Hermann Henselmann, all of whose «proposals» had previously failed, came up with the design for the new symbolic structure and thus found his way back into the leading group of top architects.

Richard Paulick had in the meantime given in to demands to incorporate «valuable national traditions» into architecture. The Deutsche Sporthalle, constructed from March to August 1951 as the first new building on Stalinallee, hinted at the «critical working-through» of Berlin's classicist architectural heritage. Until autumn 1951 his further designs for the city centre moved closer to the Moscow-skyscraper typology ^{Fig. 5}; however, the Central Building he envisaged for that setting was always intended as an antithesis to the Lindenforum, which Paulick began in 1952 with his sumptuous reconstruction of the State Opera and completed by 1970. Winning second prize in the Stalinallee competition proved his suitability for monumental yet simultaneously «people-friendly» urban development. He coordinated the avenue's overall design and even managed to integrate Henselmann's unconventional designs into the ensemble of the «first socialist street». His monumental apartment blocks in section C combined a process of working-through historical building forms and systematic utilisation of such forms to structure space with similarly consistent experimentation with industrial assembly techniques. This contradiction between exterior design and structural «formation» can hardly be interpreted in Paulick's oeuvre as a consequence of a move away

doctrine of «national tradition»

«socialist in content and national in form»

socialist realism



Fig. 6
Hoyerswerda, mock-up, top view, 1960,
with Rudolf Hamburger and others



Fig. 7
Halle-Neustadt, 2nd Residential complex,
centre seen from the west, 1967–68,
with Hans-Joachim Gürtler. Photograph:
Gerald Große, 1969



Fig. 8
 Halle/Saale, Thälmann Square with
 elevated road, high-rise buildings
 and the «Haus des Lehrers», seen from
 the south-east, 1964–70, Felix Riehl,
 Richard Paulick and others



Fig. 9
 Merseburg, High-rise building with
 Bodenreform-Denkmal (land reform
 monument), seen from the north-east,
 1969–70 by Gerhard Berndt, Herbert
 Gebhardt, Max Kurzawa; artists Gerhard
 Lichtenfeld, Dieter Rex, Martin Wetzel.
 Photograph: Martin Wimmer



Fig. 10
 AMLO Academy for Marxist-Leninist
 Theory of Organisation, Berlin Köpenick,
 1968–69, with Erich Rank, Hermann
 Korneli, Kurt Weitsch, and Dieter Balow

- [B] What do we understand by taking a stand regarding architecture and design, and particularly of the Bauhaus and Modernism?
- [C] How can we explore the kinds of stand taken by Bauhaus and Modernist architects and designers and their consistency?

industrialized building
standardization

[B] [C] from architectural Modernism's principles of analysing function. As early as 1950 he had called in an exposé for housing construction to be industrialized.⁹ In his essay «Typus und Norm in der Wohnhausarchitektur» from autumn 1953,¹⁰ he sought to combine the postulates of «Socialist Realism» with generous functionality in the standardized buildings, and his Berlin experimental block of flats using large-panel construction methods,¹¹ the eastern section of Block C-South, built using prefabricated elements assembled on a concrete skeleton, and the planned continuation of this experiment as a «pilot series» on the Ringstraße development north of Strausberger Platz, designed in 1955, reveal ongoing efforts to industrialize residential construction.

rationalizing housing construction
standardization

Paulick's ambitions soon extended beyond his influence on the East Berlin building scene. Between 1955 and 1960, he helped shape the development and design of prefabricated housing and public buildings to a greater extent than any other GDR architect. However, his stance as an advocate of rigorous standardization, who at the same time adhered to all the positions of the «National Tradition» architectural ideology, made him unpopular in many circles. He was particularly criticized for two articles, published in autumn 1957¹² and spring 1958,¹³ in which he attacked the individualism of «free» building forms in standardized planning and insisted that existing architectural policy was fundamentally correct. Paulick even advocated retaining ornamentation and flatly refused to design according to functional elements: «Although certainly very few of our architects have read anything that Adolf Loos has written, his coffee-house philosophy with all its errors still continues to have an effect among them. The best peddlers of Loos' quarter-truths were those Bauhaus students who, after two semesters of the preliminary course and two semesters of the canteen, set out noisily to convince the world of the wisdom of *Neues Bauen* without ornamentation. Their impact is just as negative here as in the West.»¹⁴

architectural historiography
of modernism
processes of oblivion
and repression

socialist planning and building
planning and building in the gdr

Paulick's image has long been dominated by this brutal handling of people and concepts from his own past that he found unhelpful for the design problems of the time, which involved prefabricated columns, beams, slabs, and blocks. That led to any awareness of his further development as an architect largely being repressed. This evolution began in 1957 when he took on the position of Chief Architect in Hoyerswerda, the «second Socialist city». In this context he deployed newly developed structural typologies or previously frowned upon building types to structure

- [M] What are the criteria for being included in history or excluded from it, and for historical relevance? What kinds of stand do they reveal, and which blind spots and cognitive shortcomings do they generate?
- [N] How do our own cultural, social, and political beliefs and stances affect our understanding of the Bauhaus, Modernism, and modernity?

processes of oblivion and repression

space in the city centre and throughout the entire urban area ^{Fig. 6}. Old attacks on his reputation, now long faded into history, that were levelled at him by his «competitors» partly explain why this ensemble has to date merely been perceived as a testing ground. His work in Schwedt, from 1962 to 1965, is even more overshadowed, in this case by the idealized plans drawn up by Selman Selmanagić, which preceded Paulick's planning.¹⁵ A truly historical understanding of how this city developed can only emerge by analysing the concepts of both plans and systematically comparing these with the built environment. The focus in this context will be on the masterplan Richard Paulick developed in 1964 with Erich Rank and Werner Wolfram, which represents his—completely suppressed—legacy for Schwedt. Finally, the fourth «Socialist city», Halle-Neustadt, serves as an example of how mistaken Tobias Zervosen was in pronouncing that Paulick was «pushed into the background» after 1960 and «was <deported to the provinces> with the plans for Schwedt and (later) Halle-Neustadt».¹⁶ Quite the contrary—he attained the zenith of his success with his activities in the city and district of Halle ^{Fig. 7}. He succeeded here bringing together all the experience that he had gained since his training in creating building compositions that were as practical as they were monumental. In the functional «differentiation» of the Halle-Neustadt centres, the Bauhaus functional-analytical working method took on a new significance, while Paulick's design imprimatur became more striking than ever in the paired groupings of high-rises in the Neustadt district and especially on Halle's Thälmannplatz ^{Figs. 8, 9}. A late work, the Academy for Marxist-Leninist Organizational Studies (AMLO) in Berlin's Wuhlheide, revealed an architect capable of integrating structural designs and functional relationships within a building even at a ripe old age ^{Fig. 10}.¹⁷ As Chief Architect of the Bauakademie's model and experimental office, he subsequently began work on some cultural buildings, especially theatre modernization projects, before being ousted from all his posts in 1974. Richard Paulick died in Berlin on 4th March 1979.

- [M] [N] To conclude, at a time when criticism of the Bauhaus—as an instrument of self-marketing—is degenerating into slander, researching the professional development of designers associated with the Bauhaus requires renewed analytical efforts. This undertaking must be based on an examination of the buildings, the plans, the texts and on a systematic comparison of these with other contemporary documents. This is the only way that the

architectural concepts and political-economic ideologies of an era can shed light on each other and is also the only way to determine Richard Paulick's place in German architectural and planning history.

Notes

- 1 The ruptures and contradictions in Paulick's «oeuvre» are addressed, albeit with varying degrees of detail, in the book accompanying the exhibition in Roßlau and at the Bauhaus Museum in Dessau: Wolfgang Thöner and Peter Müller (eds.), *Bauhaus-Tradition und DDR-Moderne. Der Architekt Richard Paulick*, Munich/Berlin 2006.
- 2 Cf. Uta Karin Schmitt, *Vom Bauhaus zur Bauakademie. Carl Fieger, Architekt und Designer (1895–1960)*. Dissertation, University of Heidelberg, 2015, <http://archiv.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/volltextserver/18979/> (Consulted April 8, 2020).
- 3 The information about Paulick's youth and «apprenticeship years» is compiled from the following publications: Manfred Müller, *Das Leben eines Architekten. Porträt Richard Paulick*, Halle (Saale) 1975; Adalbert Behr, «Richard Paulick»; in: id. (ed.): *Große Baumeister*, Bauakademie der DDR, Schriften des Instituts für Städtebau und Architektur, Vol. 2, Berlin 1990, pp. 297–347. These sources require more precise evaluation and a critical appraisal of the facts and evaluations communicated therein.
- 4 «Vom Bauhaus zu den Wohnsilos von Hoyerswerda. Eine Ausstellung zum 100. Geburtstag des Architekten Richard Paulick in Dessau und Rosslau. Karin Fischer im Gespräch mit Jens [Wolfgang] Thöner», 05.11.2003, https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/vom-bauhaus-zu-den-wohn-silos-von-hoyerswerda.691.de.html?dram:article_id=47500 (Consulted April 8, 2020).
- 5 Hartmut Frank, «Neues Bauen in Nazideutschland?», in: *Giuseppe Terragni, 1904–1943. Moderne und Faschismus in Italien*, (eds.) Stefan Germer and Achim Preiß, Munich 1991, p. (57–72) 58.
- 6 Some information on Paulick's local activities in the Socialist Workers' Party (SAP) as well as on agitation against his architectural works is provided in: Manfred Müller, *Das Leben eines Architekten. Porträt Richard Paulick*, Halle (Saale) 1975, Chapter III, pp. 55–68. The chapter is titled «Mann mit kämpferischem Herzen» [Man with a fighting heart], as Gropius apparently called the young Paulick.
- 7 Eduard Kögel, *Zwei Poelzigsschüler in der Emigration. Rudolf Hamburger und Richard Paulick zwischen Shanghai und Ost-Berlin (1950–1955)*. Dissertation, Faculty of Architecture, Bauhaus University Weimar, 2006, http://e-pub.uni-weimar.de/opus4/frontdoor/deliver/index/docId/929/file/diss+koegel_pdfa.pdf (Consulted April 8, 2020).
- 8 Richard Paulick, «Die Architektur der Stadtzentren», in: *Sonntag*, 17.08.1950, p. 3, quoted from: Simone Hain, ««Von der Geschichte beauftragt, Zeichen zu setzen». Zum Monumentalitätsverständnis in der DDR am Beispiel der Gestaltung der Hauptstadt Berlin», in: *Moderne Architektur in Deutschland 1900 bis 2000. Macht und Monument*, (eds.) Romana Schneider and Wilfried Wang, Ostfildern-Ruit 1998, p. (188–219) 194.
- 9 See Jens Ebert, *Richard Paulick. Architekt und Städtebauer zwischen Bauhausideal und realem Sozialismus*, Bauhaus und Gegenwart, Schriften zur Moderne, Dessau 2004, pp. 18–20. One of the merits of the publication is that the importance of Paulick's analytical work is repeatedly highlighted, in addition to numerous communications drawing on a young collaborator's insights.
- 10 See Richard Paulick, «Typus und Norm in der Wohnhausarchitektur», in: *Deutsche Architektur*, Vol. 2. (1953), Issue 5, pp. 218–225.
- 11 On authorship cf. Schmitt 2015 (as Note 2).
- 12 Richard Paulick, «Einige Bemerkungen zur Architektur-Diskussion»; in: *Deutsche Architektur*, Vol. 6. (1957), Issue 9, pp. 479–481 (editorial deadline: 25th July 1957).
- 13 Richard Paulick, «Einige weitere Bemerkungen zur Architektur-Diskussion» in: *Deutsche Architektur*, Vol. 7 (1958), Issue 4, pp. 224 f. (editorial deadline: 20th February 1958).
- 14 *Ibid.*, p. 224.
- 15 On Selmanagic's urban design in the context of Bauhaus Modernism see: Simone Hain, «Sanssouci oder die Suche nach dem wahren Schwedt. Eine Bauhaus-Geschichte. Exkurs», in: *wende bauhaus | bauhaus wende. 50 Jahre industrielles Gartenreich*, (eds.) Hermann-Henselmann-Stiftung and Universität Kassel (Thomas Flierl and Harald Kegler), Vol. 3. 2019, Issue 2, pp. 14 f.
- 16 Tobias Zervosen, *Architekten in der DDR. Realität und Selbstverständnis einer Profession* (Dissertation ETH Zürich, gta, 2013), Bielefeld 2016, p. 165, note 399.
- 17 See Oliver Sukrow, *Arbeit. Wohnen. Computer. Zur Utopie der bildenden Kunst und Architektur der DDR in den 1960er Jahren*. (Dissertation, Heidelberg University, ZEGK, 2016), 2018, <https://heiup.uni-heidelberg.de/catalog/book/422> (Consulted April 8, 2020)