

# The Necessary Diversity

Architectural Theory Notes on the Early Work of Josef Paul Kleihues

Thorsten Scheer

Josef Paul Kleihues is one of the most important architectural personalities of the second half of the twentieth century. His buildings, urban planning drafts, and his theoretical work have contributed just as much to his international renown as his activity as director of the International Building Exhibition from 1984 to 1987, the programmatic influence of which is still felt today. This book is the first of a three volume overview of his work and covers the years 1966 to 1980.

If one looks back to the beginnings of Kleihues's activity, it is startling that he completed his architecture studies at the Technical University of Berlin, in 1959, with a dissertation that took up the expressive organic phraseology of Hans Scharoun, who had just won the competition for the Berlin Philharmonic Hall. The organic functionalism of Scharoun appears to stand in great contradiction to the avowed rationalism demonstrated in Kleihues's drafts. His degree dissertation marked the only time Kleihues followed the basic architectonic attitude of his teacher, Hans Scharoun, whereas earlier designs, made during his studies with Peter Poelzig, showed a clear interest in rational forms and their careful elaboration, which in the formally reduced architecture of the later years went from a technical to an aesthetic necessity. Incidentally, Kleihues would probably vehemently deny the objection raised and respond to the astonishment by saying that one can learn from a good architect regardless of his formal training. In turn, this belief would identify an important characteristic of Kleihues's aesthetic position and a general problem of the situation of architectural history since 1960. Kleihues struck out in a direction marked by single-mindedness and curiosity, that in its variety of results and the ways they were achieved, very strongly recalls the laboratory set-up of scientific experimentation. The extraordinarily broad spectrum of possibilities which Kleihues tested architectonically, above all in the field of urban development in the nineteen-sixties and nineteen-seventies, is characterized by the prejudice free contact with historically widely divergent approaches to solutions, which he perceived as historically significant and executed as such.

This would not be self-evident for a rigorously modern outlook and can be understood as the discernible indication of unease which Kleihues felt in light of a technologically one-sided continuation of classical modernism since 1945. The tendency toward the scientific application of the architectonic drafting process, which until the nineteen-seventies broadly determined architectural discussion, was