

# **Moral Development and Youth Imprisonment**

**The Just Community Project in the  
Adelsheim Youth Prison in  
Germany**

# Moral Development and Youth Imprisonment

- **Aim** of juvenile confinement: Legal conduct
- **Method**: Education
- **Education** = intellectual and moral development

# Moral Development and Youth Imprisonment

Lawrence **Kohlberg**:

Moral judgement is developing in ascending **stages**

- **pre-conventional level,**
- **conventional level,**
- **post-conventional level**  
(stages subdivided in steps)

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## Stimulating conditions:

- Opportunity of **role-taking**
- **Social participation**
- Participation in **groups**
- **Fair institutional structures**
- Confrontation with **cognitive conflicts**

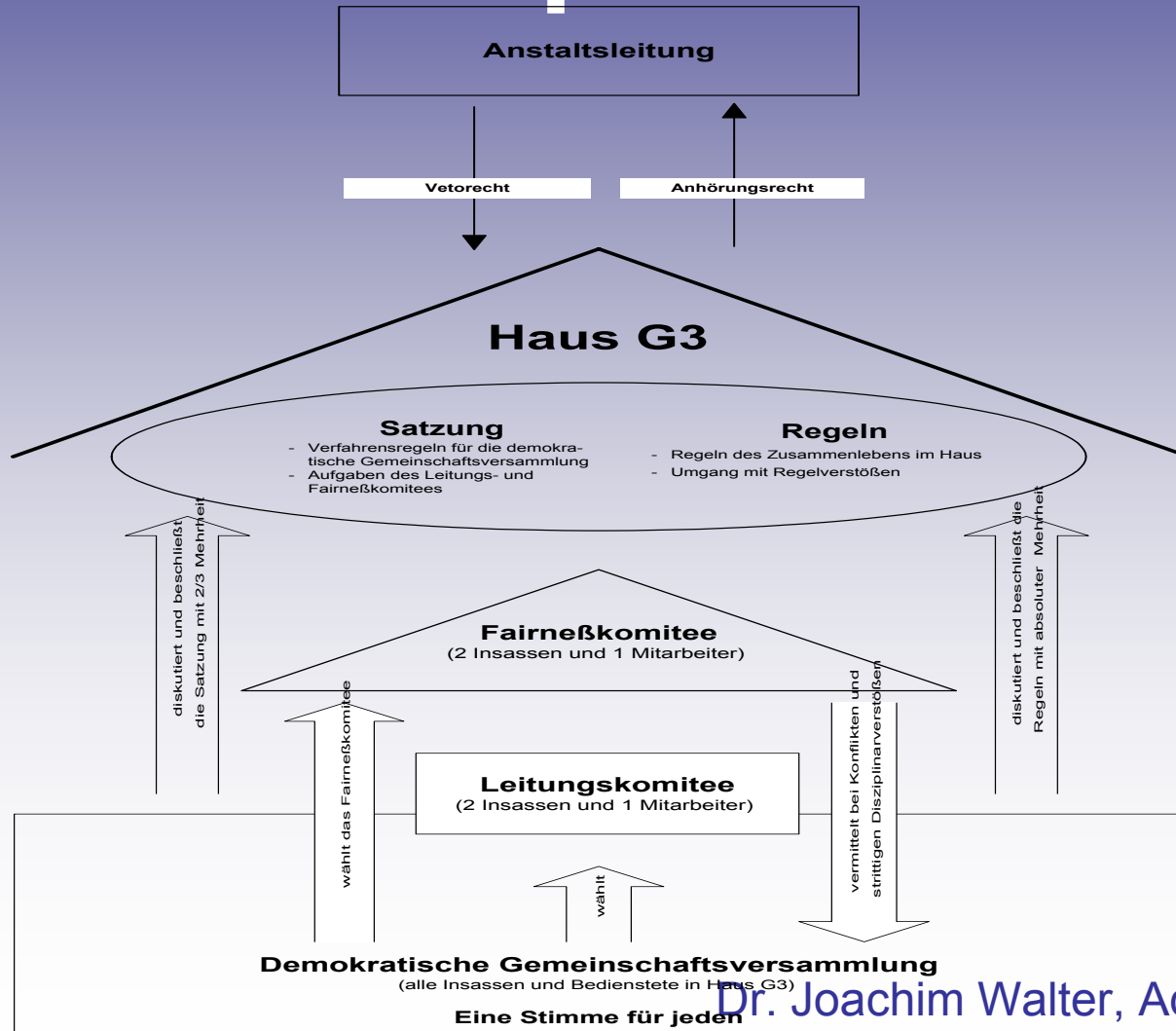
# Moral Development and Youth Imprisonment

## Objectives:

- **Common learning processes**
- Institutionalisation of principles of **participatory democracy**
- **Community welfare.**

# Moral Development and Youth Imprisonment

Die Demokratische Gemeinschaft in Haus G3  
Modellversuch in der Justizvollzugsanstalt Adelsheim



Dr. Joachim Walter, Adelsheim

# Moral Development and Youth Imprisonment

## Characteristics

- **Democratic organisation:**
- Principle "one man, one vote"
  - Rules set up by prisoners and staff
  - **binding** for everyone =**democratic, egalitarian, non-paternalistic**

# Moral Development and Youth Imprisonment

Learning justice and democracy by

- agreement on the **better argument**
- **compromise**

Improvement of the **social climate**



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## Empirical findings

### Pre-post comparison:

Level of moral judgement **increased**

### Recidivism (N=35):

Reconviction no difference (G3 77%;  
all 78%)

Reincarceration improved (G3 35%,  
all 47%)