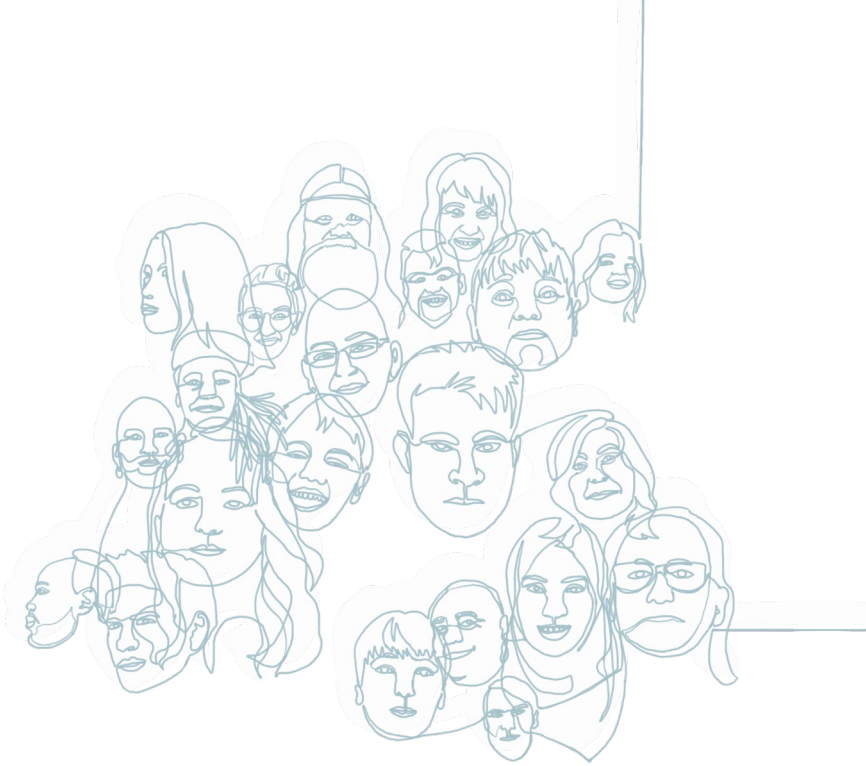
UNIVERSITÄT
LEIPZIG



POWER IN SCHOOL

THEORY OF MICHEL FOUCAULT
„SCHOOL AS DISCIPLINARY INSTITUTION"

Tom Hoffmann, Saskia Schuppener & Nico Leonhardt

INTRODUCTION

We are Tom, Saskia and Nico.

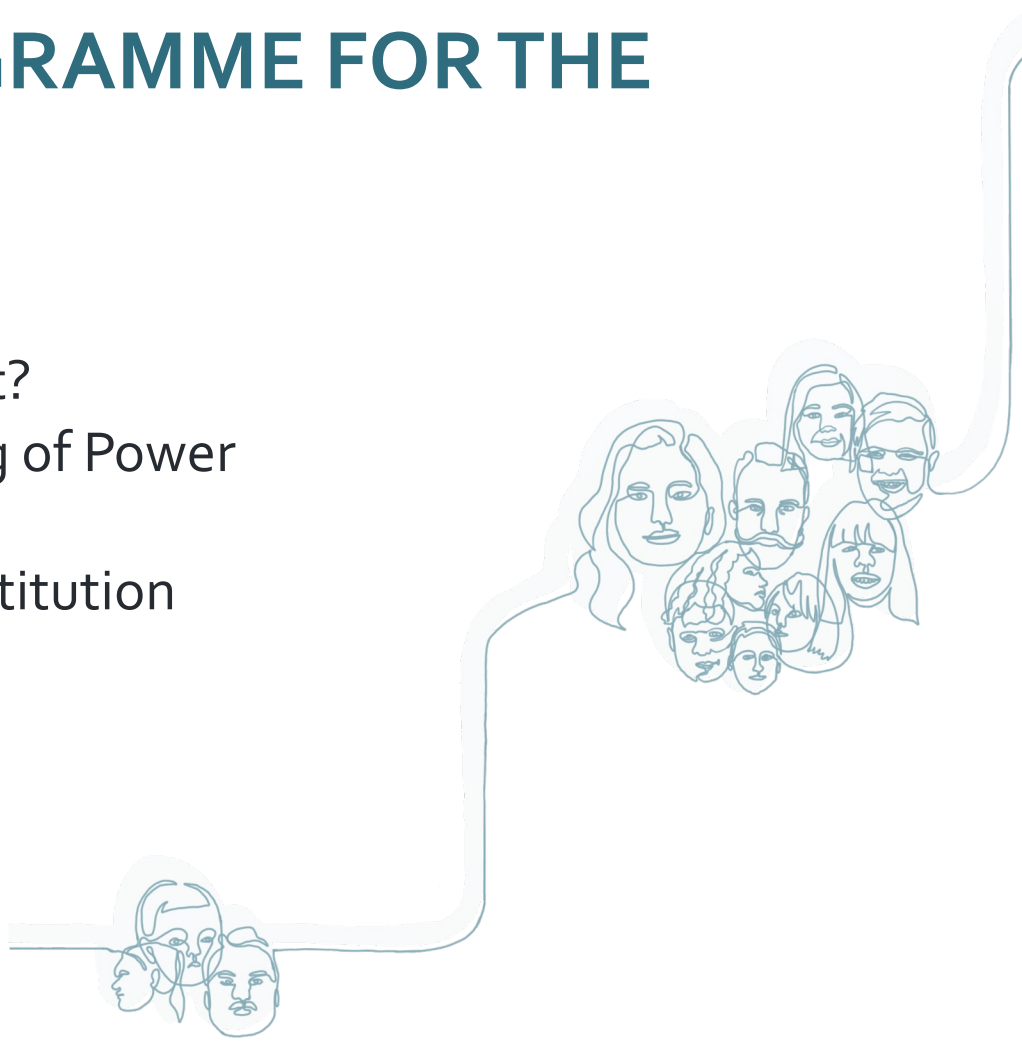
We are working at the university in Leipzig.

Leipzig is a city in the east of germany.

We all work in a special project for inclusion in universities.
The project is called QuaBIS (www.quabis.info)

THIS WAS THE PROGRAMME FOR THE WORKSHOP:

1. Introduction
2. Who was Michel Foucault?
3. Foucault‘s Understanding of Power
4. The Panopticon
5. School as Disciplinary Institution
6. *BREAK*
7. „Discipline Game“
8. Discussion
9. Outlook
10. Feedback



DIFFICULT TERMS

- **Institution:** An institution is an organization. It usually has a purpose. This purpose can be religious, educational, professional or social. An example for an institution is a school.
- **Disciplinary institution:** Disciplinary institutions are institutions which wield power over people. They can control their behavior. Examples for disciplinary institutions are schools, hospitals and military institutions.
- **Panopticon:** A panopticon is a building that allows to observe the people inside. The building is made of many rooms that form a circle. In the middle of the building is a watchtower. From the watchtower, you can see into every room of the building. Panopticons were meant to be used as prisons, allowing one watchman to observe all prisoner cells at once.

DIFFICULT TERMS

- **Total surveillance:** Total surveillance means to be constantly watched by someone else. Under total surveillance everything you do is being observed.
- **Structure:** Structures describe the relations between things or people. Power structures for example describe who has power in a relationship and how this power is expressed.
- **Hierarchy:** A ranking of members of a system. They can for example be ranked after the amount of power they hold in the system.

WHO WAS MICHEL FOUCAULT?

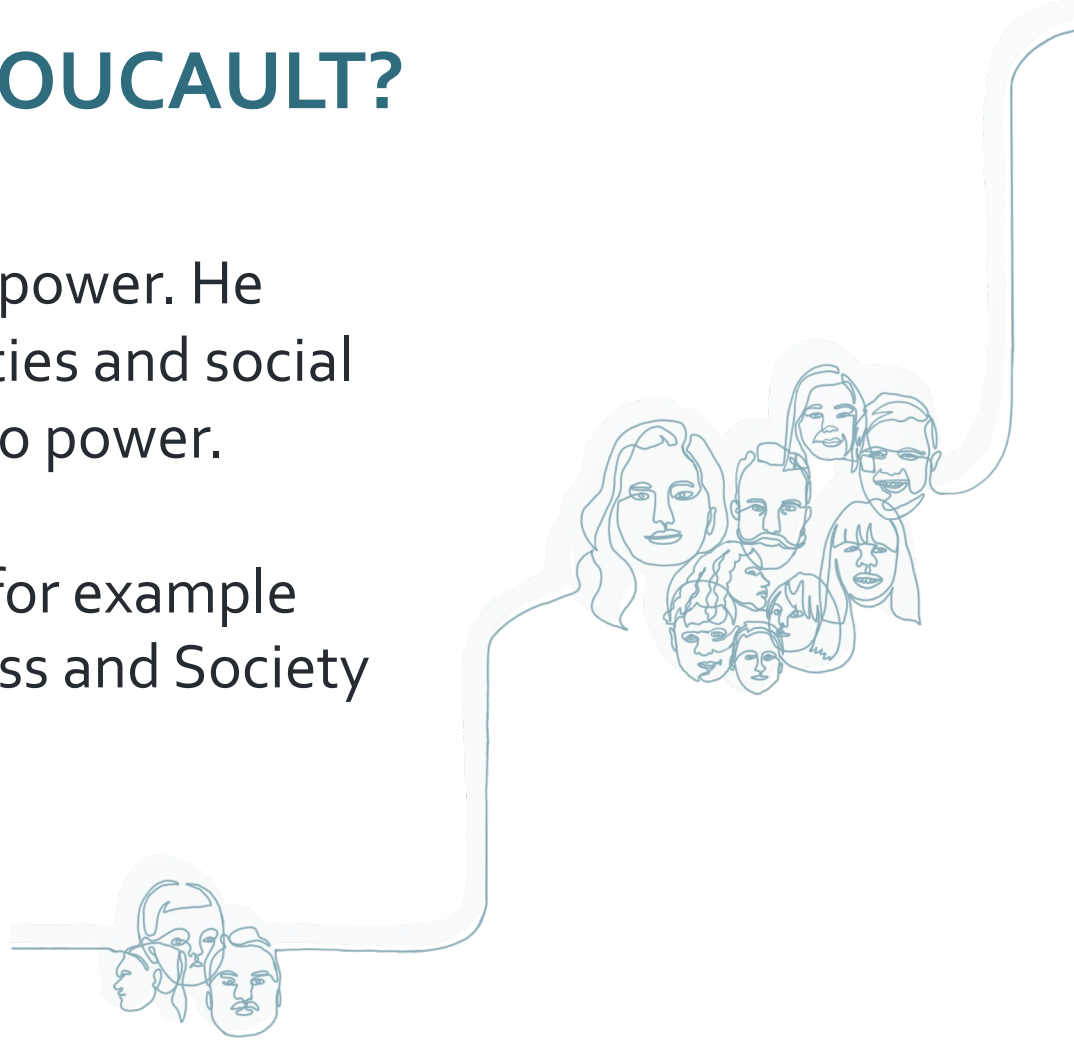
Michel Foucault was a French philosopher. He lived from 1926 to 1984. Among other things he looked into the types and effects of power. Foucault understood power as something movable. According to Focault, power is not possessed by a person or a group of people. He writes: „Power is not something that is acquired, taken away, shared, retained, or lost.”

French philosopher ✳ 15.10.1926 in Poitiers † 25.06.1984 in Paris

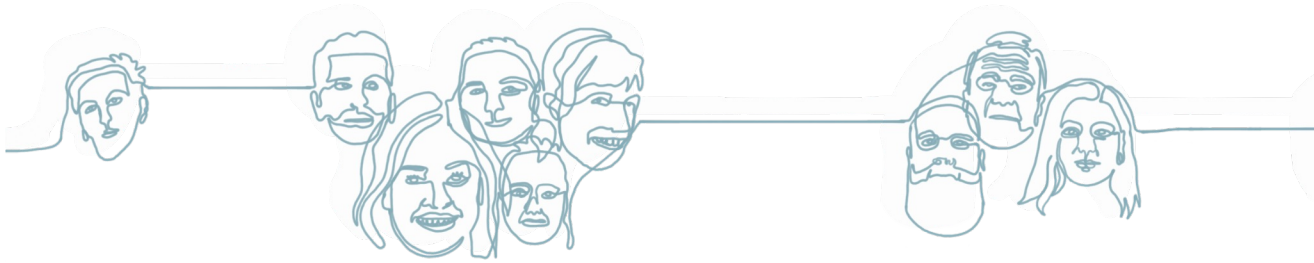
WHO WAS MICHEL FOUCAULT?

Foucault had a big interest in power. He wanted to find out how societies and social interactions work in relation to power.

Foucault wrote many books, for example Discipline and Punish, Madness and Society or Sexuality and Truth.



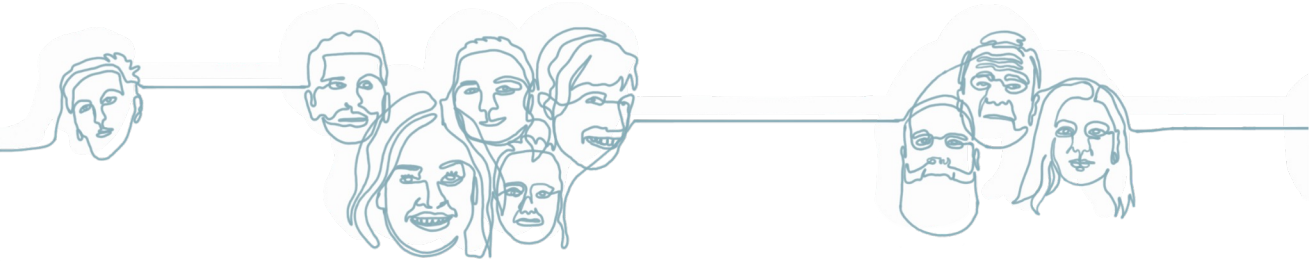
WHO WAS MICHEL FOUCAULT?



After his death, he became even more famous. He died on June 25, 1984.

Foucault still has a great influence because he studied power very closely. The things he found out cannot be disproved.

FOUCAULT‘S UNDERSTANDING OF POWER

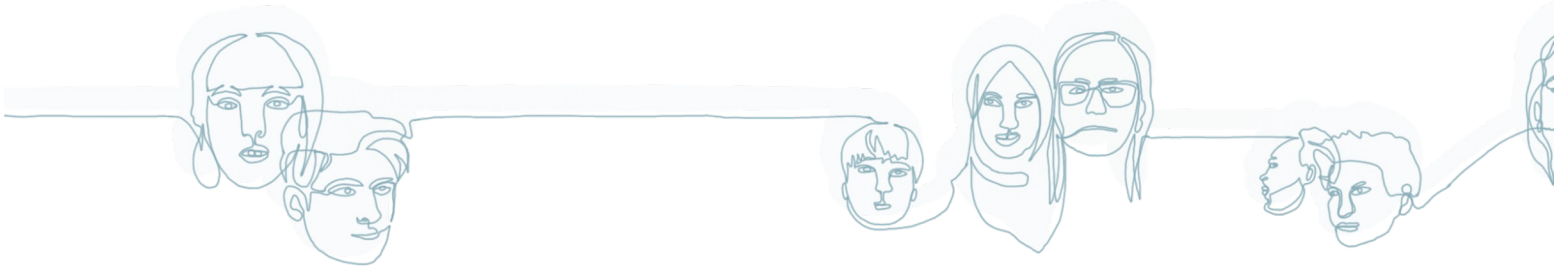


Foucault describes power like this:

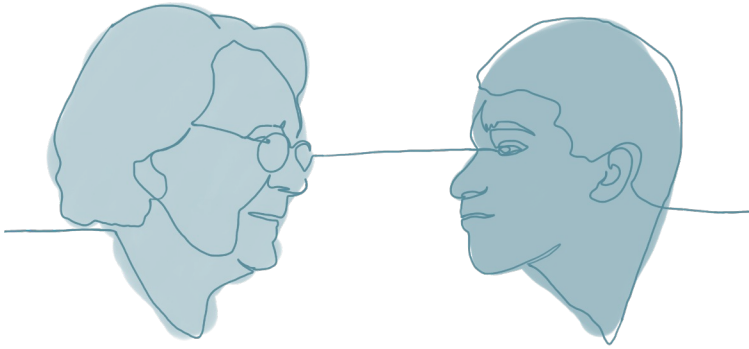
- The effects of power shouldn‘t be described negatively.
- To him, the effects of power are always productive. Power is always producing something new.
- He researched why knowledge and power are always connected and how this connection is related to society.

FOUCAULT'S UNDERSTANDING OF POWER

- He says knowledge is power and power is knowledge.
- Power can be seen as a neutral element.
- If power is under- or overestimated, it can quickly lead to violence.



THE PANOPTICON



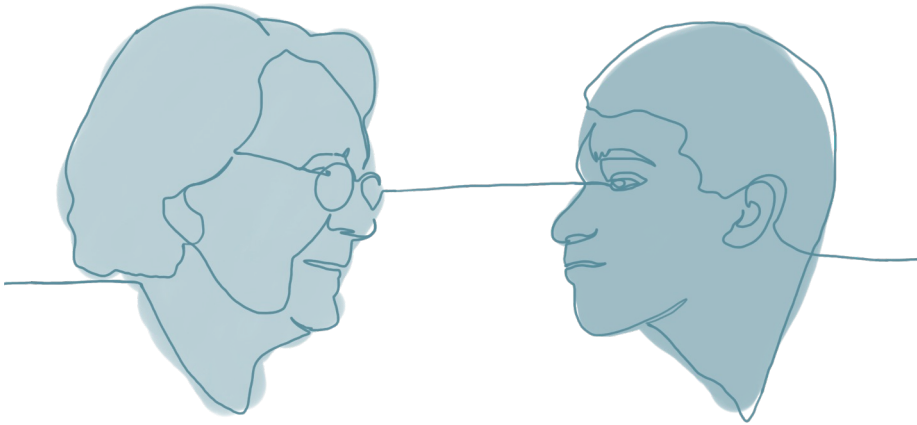
To show the relation between power and society, Foucault uses the example of the PANOPTICON.

A panopticon is a building, which enables to monitor all rooms and the people inside of them from the same position.

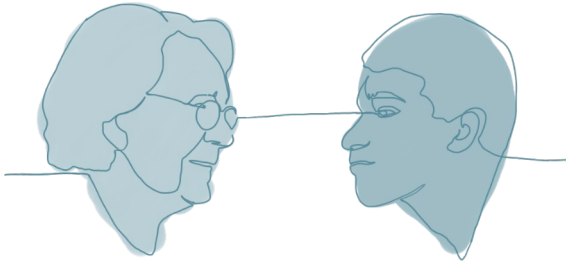
THE PANOPTICON

Circular building with a watchtower in the center

→ **„Total surveillance“** e.g. in a prison

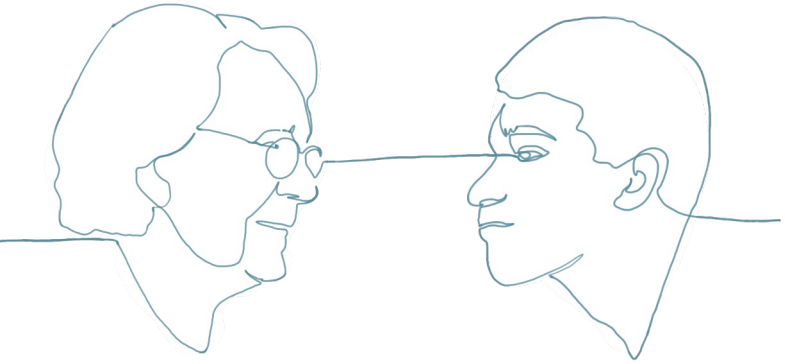


THE PANOPTICON



This creates a situation in which rule violations and undesirable behavior are suppressed.

Since the inmates cannot see the guards, they constantly feel monitored. **Alone the possibility of being watched ensures behavioral adaptation.** This adapted behavior is supposed to be internalized in the long term.



THE PANOPTICISM

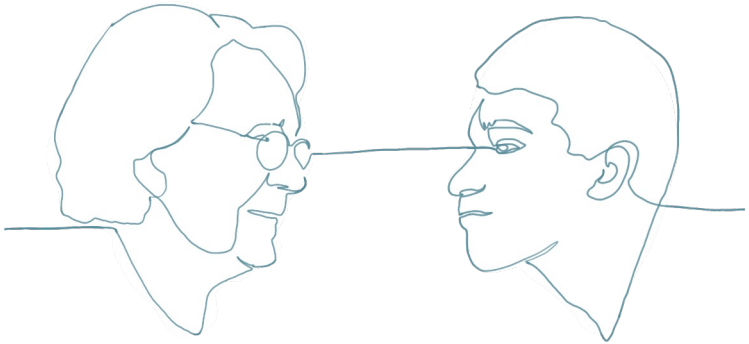
Michel Foucault took up the idea of the panopticon in his book „Discipline and Punish“ (1975).

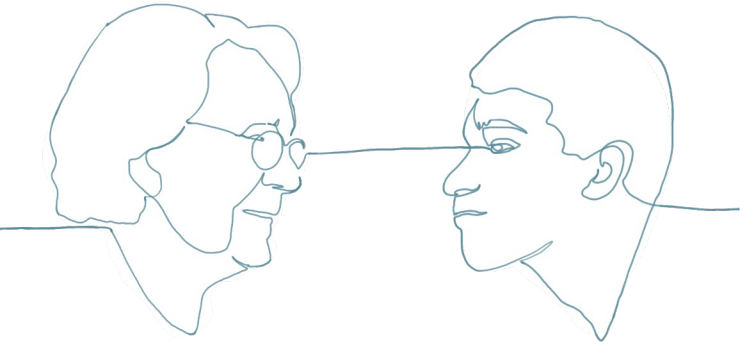
He transferred the architectural principle **to social structures**. He called this social theory **panopticism.**

THE PANOPTICISM

„Invisible exercise of power“

The panopticon shows that it is not necessary for a person to directly exercise power in order for people to submit. It is enough to create structures that make everyone feel supervised.





POST-PANOPTICISM

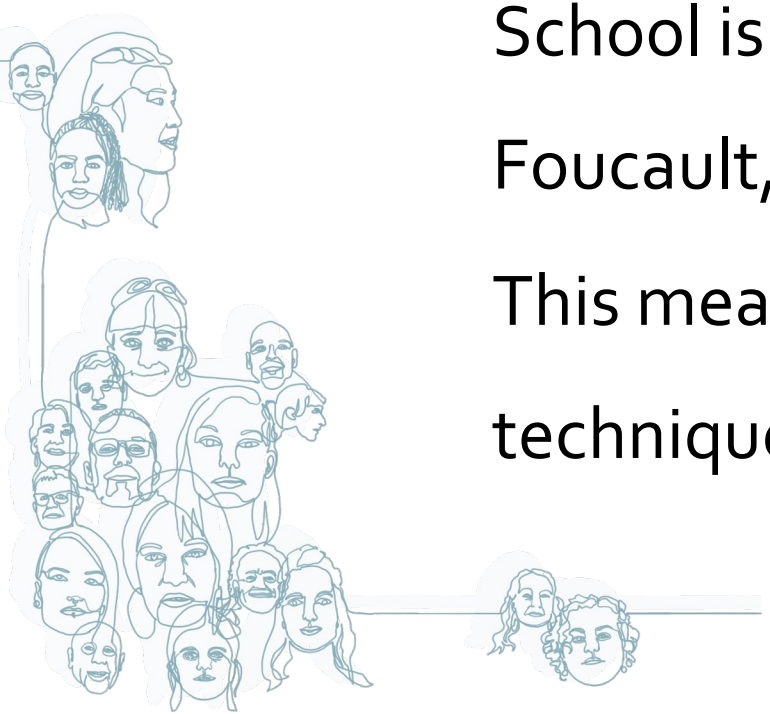
QUESTION

Which forms of „total surveillance“ exist currently in our society?

Example:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4-7jSoINyq4

SCHOOL AS DISCIPLINARY INSTITUTION



School is a place of power. According to Foucault, school is a **„disciplinary power".** This means, that at school there are techniques which „shape" the children.

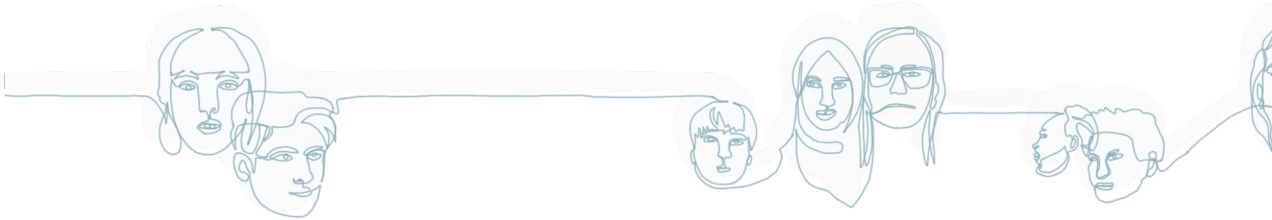
SCHOOL AS DISCIPLINARY INSTITUTION

In school, power is exercised through **„techniques of disciplining".**

„Techniques of disciplining" are actions to produce desired behavior.

These actions include: rules, control and coercion.

In school this happens through drills, repetition and exams.



WE PLAYED A „DISCIPLINE GAME“ TOGETHER

We wanted to show you, how techniques of disciplining in school are working.

WE PLAYED A „DISCIPLINE GAME“ TOGETHER

Rules

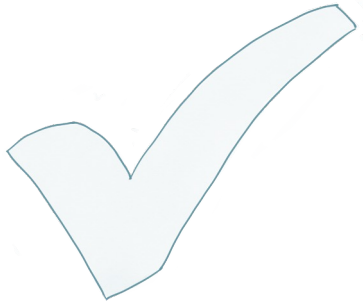
1. You can roll the dice (1-6)

2. If you roll a 4, 5 or 6, you can go to the Foucaul square.

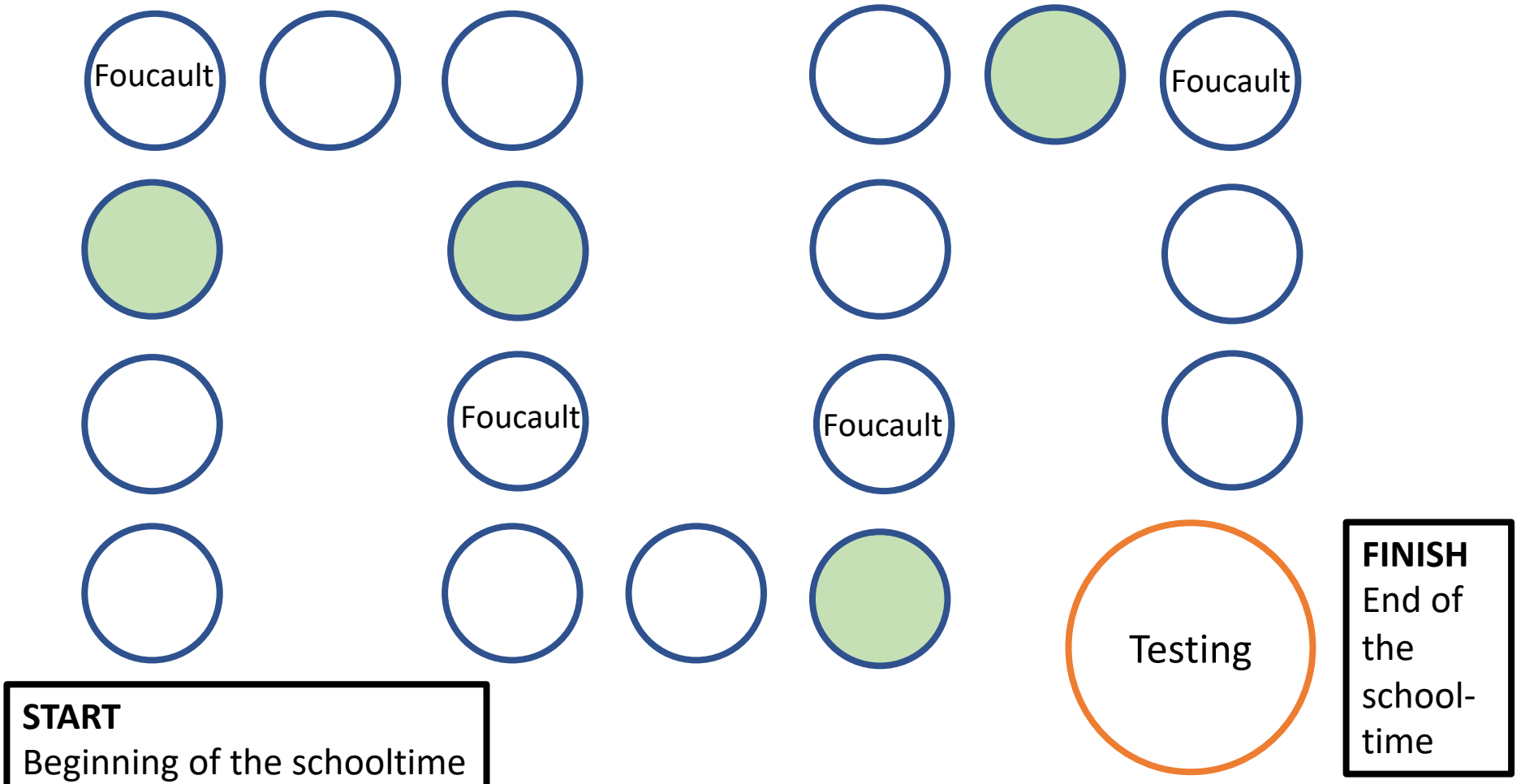
3. If you roll a 3, an event card (next slide) is drawn by the game master.

4. If you roll a 1 or 2, you have to leave the school and go to a special school.

5. After every round, one discipline technique will be explained.



TEST-field
Everyone must stop.
Everyone is allowed to roll the dice twice.
Whoever rolls more than 6 points together has passed and makes it through school!


Foucault
Foucault
Foucault
Foucault
Testing
START
Beginning of the schooltime
FINISH
End of the school-time

‚CARDS FOR SPECIAL FIELDS‘ (GREEN)

You got a good grade in a test. You can move up one space.

You get praise from your teacher because you helped a classmate.

You have done a task well. You get a stamp on the worksheet.

You get to choose something from a gift box because you have collected a lot of plus points.

‚KLAUSUR' AND ‚PARCELLATION'

1. **Place:** School is often an isolated building.
2. **Space:** There are specific seating arrangements in the classroom.

‚KLAUSUR' - EXAMPLE FROM THE GAME

You are now in school. That means you are in a segregated place during school time. Foucault calls this demarcation KLAUSUR.

Technique: It is about the distribution of people. In this technique, people are demarcated into one place from another.

Example school: A school is a demarcated space. It is not a public place. That means only certain people have access. So students in school are demarcated from other places.

‚PARCELLATION' - EXAMPLE FROM THE GAME

You will be split up in your classroom. There is a fixed seating order there. This means that all students have their own seat seat. Foucault calls this PARCELLATION.

Technique: This is also the distribution in the room. Everyone gets an individual seat. Group formations are to be avoided. In this way, the leaders always have a good overview of everyone. They know who is present and who is not.

Example school: In the past, students always sat individually at a table. This way, the teacher always had a good view of everyone. He could see what the students were doing.

CONTROL OF ACTIVITIES

1. **Schedule:** There are class schedules with fixed school hours.
2. **Compulsory activities:** Subjects and activities are fixed, e.g. the whole class has to do maths.
3. **Rules:** „sit still“, „be quiet“, etc.

CONTROL OF ACTIVITIES - EXAMPLE FROM THE GAME

You will study in your groups at fixed times and you will be given a timetable. Between the lessons there are fixed break times. Foucault calls this control of activities.

Technique: Groups should learn as uniformly as possible. For this, fixed contents and times are set. Learning has a fixed rhythm. So every action is planned.

Example school: Every school day has a planned rhythm. Often a lesson goes for 45 minutes, for example. There are certain subjects. For example, mathematics. The contents of the lessons are often predetermined. In Germany, for example, there are curricula.

CONNECTION BETWEEN UNITY AND HIERARCHY

1. **Sorting by age:** Differences in age create a hierarchy among the children.
2. **Sorting by achievement:** Groups of good and bad learners are formed by differences in school performance.

CONNECTION BETWEEN UNITY AND HIERARCHY- EXAMPLE FROM THE GAME

You will be divided into different classes according to your age. In the classes there are again different performance groups. Foucault calls this the connection between unity and hierarchy.

Technique: Groups should be unified as much as possible. This can be divided, for example, on the basis of age or performance.

Example school: In most schools, students are separated according to their age. From grade 1 until graduation. But there are also groupings based on school performance. So groups of students who can not yet do something well and those who can already do something well. In the past, there were also divisions into poor students and rich students.

TESTING

1. **Exercises:** schoolwork, assignments
2. **Control:** tests, exams
3. **Assessment:** „differentiating, correcting, punishing, eliminating interventions“ (Foucault 1977, p. 206)

TESTING - EXAMPLE FROM THE GAME

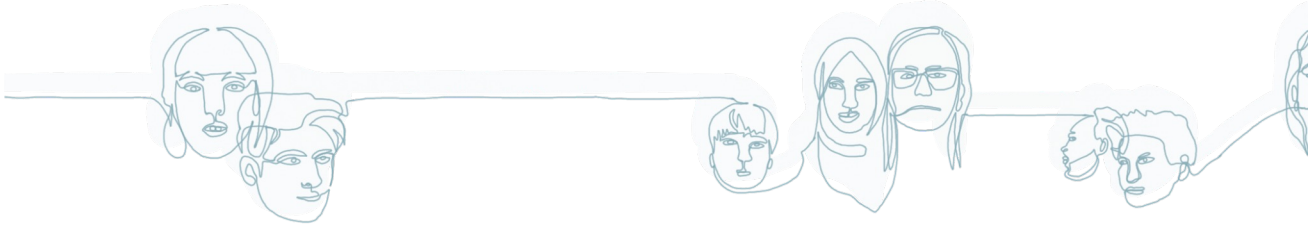
Foucault says that an examination concentrates various disciplinary techniques.
A unified group is tested on a topic to see what they are able to. And to create a hierarchy. So to divide students into those who can and those who can't.
For this, there is a fixed time in which everyone takes the same test.
Performance is controlled in this way. And at the same time, those who can't are punished.
An example are final exams or entrance exams.

SCHOOL AS DISCIPLINARY INSTITUTION

Discipline in school as a **„micro-justice"**

- of **time** (tardiness, absences, interruptions)
- of **activity** (inattention, carelessness, laziness)
- of the **body** (‚wrong' postures and gestures, uncleanliness)
- of **sexuality** (indecency, shamelessness)

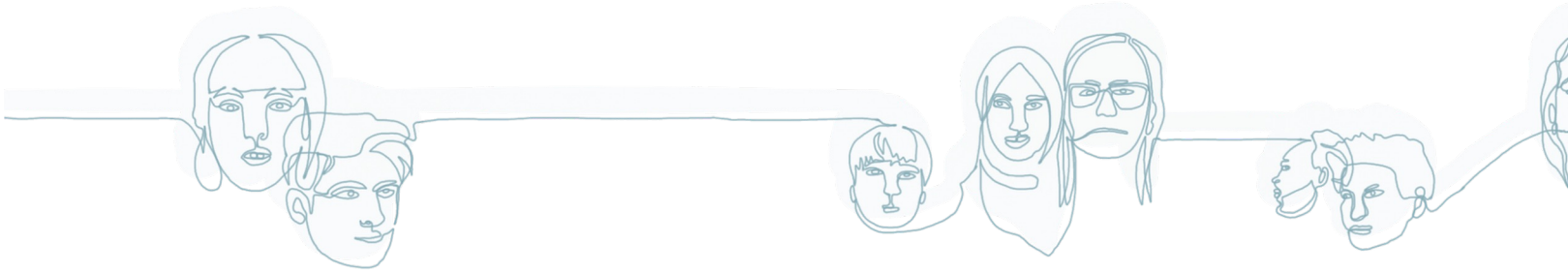
(Foucault 1977, p. 230)



SCHOOL AS DISCIPLINARY INSTITUTION

For example: Good and bad points are distributed so that children's behavior can be expressed in numbers (grades).

(Foucault 1977, p. 233)



WE DISSCUSED THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

- How did the disciplinary measures in the game feel to you?
- Which similar examples do you remember from your schooldays?

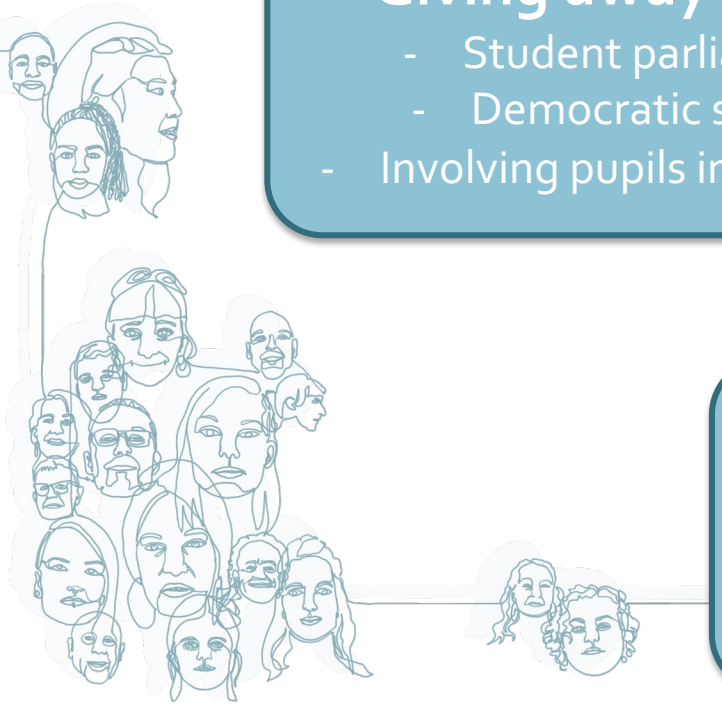
OUTLOOK: DEALING WITH POWER

Giving away power

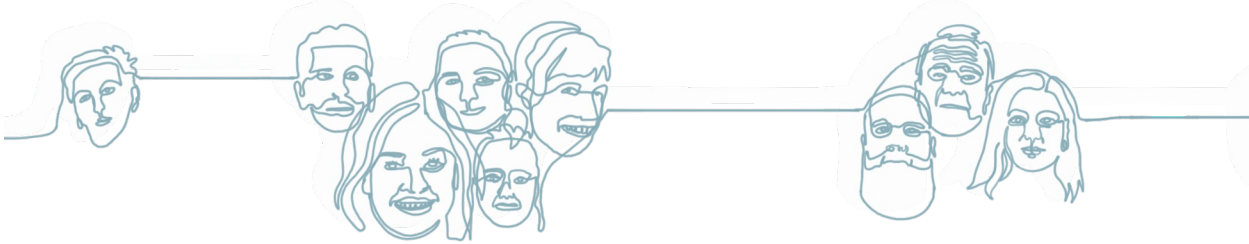
- Student parliaments
- Democratic schools
- Involving pupils in evaluation

Thinking about your own power

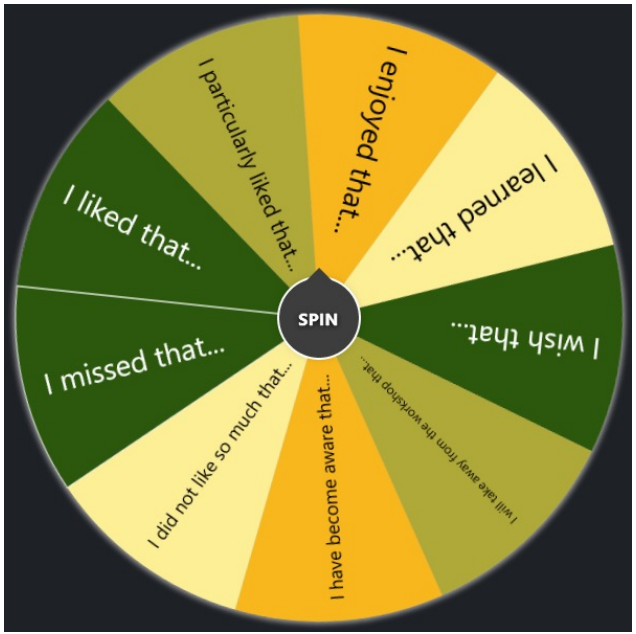
- Biography work
- children's rights culture
- inclusive and participatory school development (index for inclusion)



Arrange spaces flexibly and inclusively



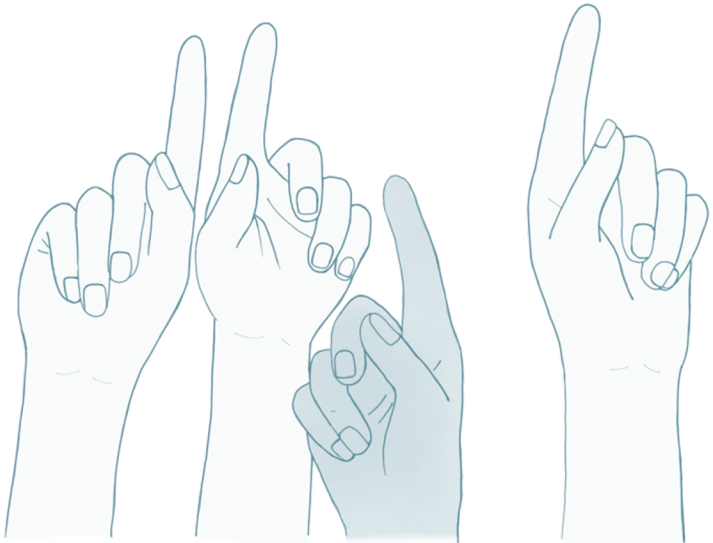
THANK YOU FOR YOUR FEEDBACK!!!



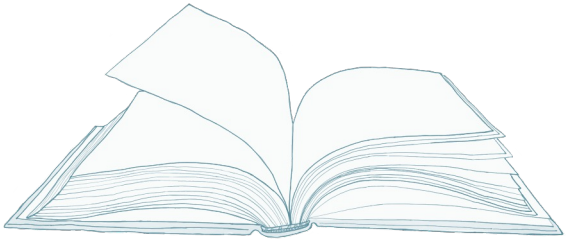
https://pickerwheel.com/pw?id=NDgyy

UNIVERSITÄT
LEIPZIG

THANKS FOR YOUR ATTENTION + COOPERATION!



Literature



Foucault, Michel (1977): Überwachen und Strafen. Die Geburt des Gefängnisses, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Kupfer, Antonia (2011): Bildungssoziologie. Theorien – Institutionen – Debatten. Wiesbaden: Springer.

© pictures: Mia Weithardt