IUHS, Hannover, 9.-11.4.2025
Plenary session 1 "Urban planning and governance"
Chair: Rainer Fehr. Annotations framing the session:

- Welcome to this plenary session! … Thank you, panelists, for being here. Thank you, audience, for your interest. Thanks to the conference organizers for supporting this session … For starting, let me mention a recent message in the news media about Oscar Arias, the former president of Costa Rica and Nobel Peace Prize laureate. For me, this name flashed a memory of the 1st International Healthy Cities conference 1993 in San Francisco where Oscar Arias – very impressively –outlined global problems including poverty, inequity, racism, and xenophobia.

- [Slide 2] What is the bridge between that "landmark" conference, more than 30 years ago, and our current meeting? For the conference organizer Leonhard Duhl, and for all of us participants, one thing was obvious: knowledge alone is not enough. And i am sure we agree today: Urban Health is about creating healthy living conditions in cities, "for everyone". However, there are lots of obstacles, e.g., competing interests. The situation is similar to steering a boat in rough waters. In political science, such steering is called governance. For our session today, let us note several dimensions of "UH governance": goals or values; actors; strategies; and resources.

- [Slide 3] Reflecting on governance, we can identify different, overlapping governance arenas: Programs (e.g., "Health for All"), Urban and Territorial Planning, Laws and regulations. Across such specific arenas, governance typically involves the Policy action cycle: Assessment, Policy development, Implementation, Evaluation. Most of us here today will be familiar with this action cycle. We take it for granted that, in real life, the ideal form of the action cycle is often modified. But, in doing so, we may be overlooking an important governance opportunity. …

- [Slide 4] In this session, we want to explore "Good governance" for Urban Health, incl. the important arena of urban planning. This is our Agenda today: Round 1: Panelists present their brief impulse statements …; Rounds 2 and 3: Panelists respond to brief propositions & questions …; Final round: General discussion, with audience participation ...

- [Slide 5] In this first round, our panelists present their respective impulses. This means, we look at UH governance through different "lenses".

- [Slide 6] This second round is meant to deepen our understanding of "Good governance practice" for Urban Health, incl. Urban planning. Proposition: A deeper understanding of "good governance", and more effective governance practices, are key challenges for Urban Health. Questions: Which indicators can describe "Good governance practice"? Can you contribute examples of "good governance practice"?

- [Slide 7, Round 3] In this round, we focus on one specific element of the action cycle which tends to be left out quite often, i.e. evaluation. Proposition: Evaluations provide unique learning opportunities, but concerning "governance for Urban Health" they are underutilized. Questions: Can you contribute examples of such evaluations? What role for (evaluative) case studies? How should they be designed? What would it take to foster a "culture of evaluation"?