

Environment in Public Health in Europe: A Framework for Progress

Transformative approaches for equity and resilience – Harnessing the 2030 Agenda for health & well-being
The SDGs/Health 2020 roadmap & environment and health

EHFG 5th October 2017

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What I will cover

- The Reality of Change - Shifting Foundations
- Environment and Health in Europe – A Picture in Outline
- Ecological Public Health
- Causes for Optimism: A Mutually Supportive Policy Framework

“Public health is wrapped around the reality of change”

“The actions of those seeking to improve public health and wellbeing will vary as circumstances and conditions dictate”

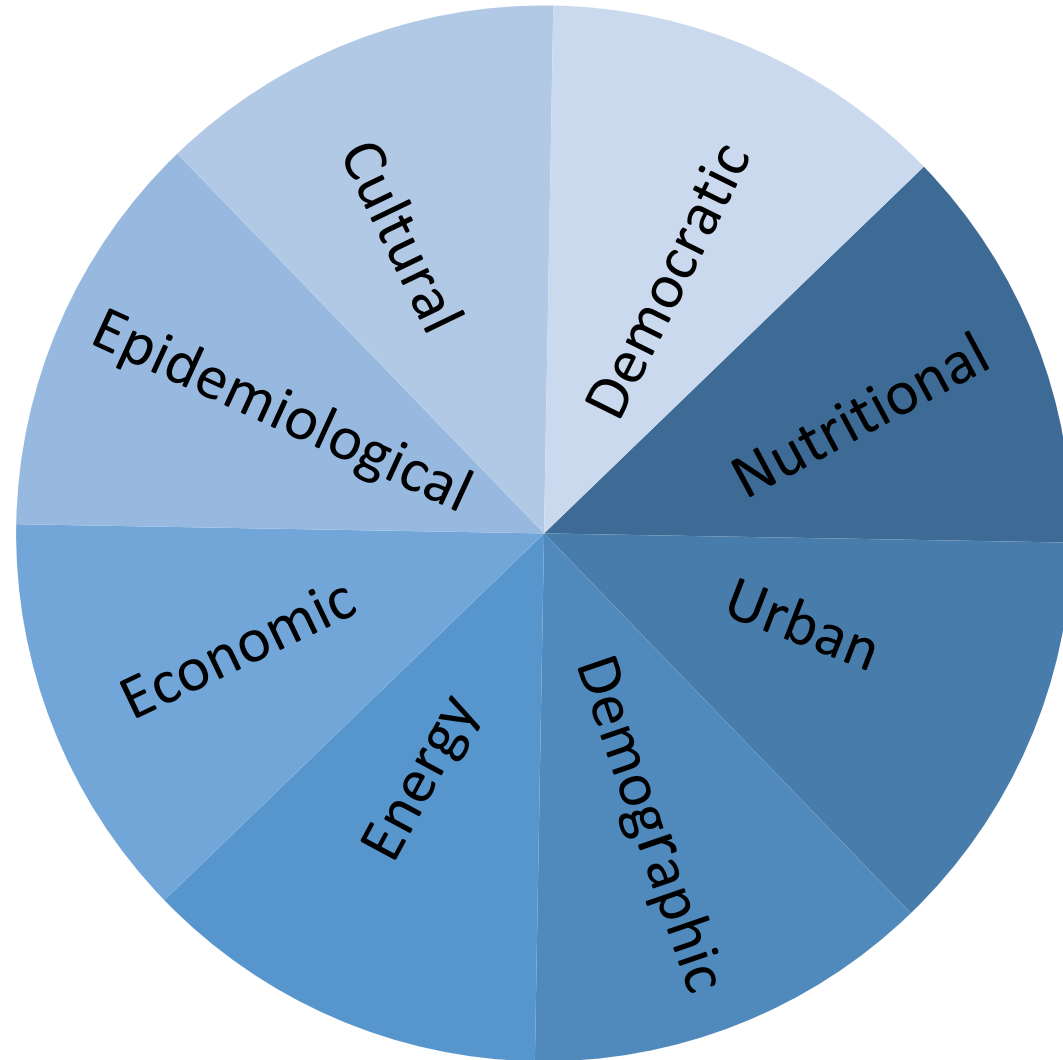
Rayner & Lang (2012)

2 distinct, but related, categories of change continually shape and reshape the foundations of public health:

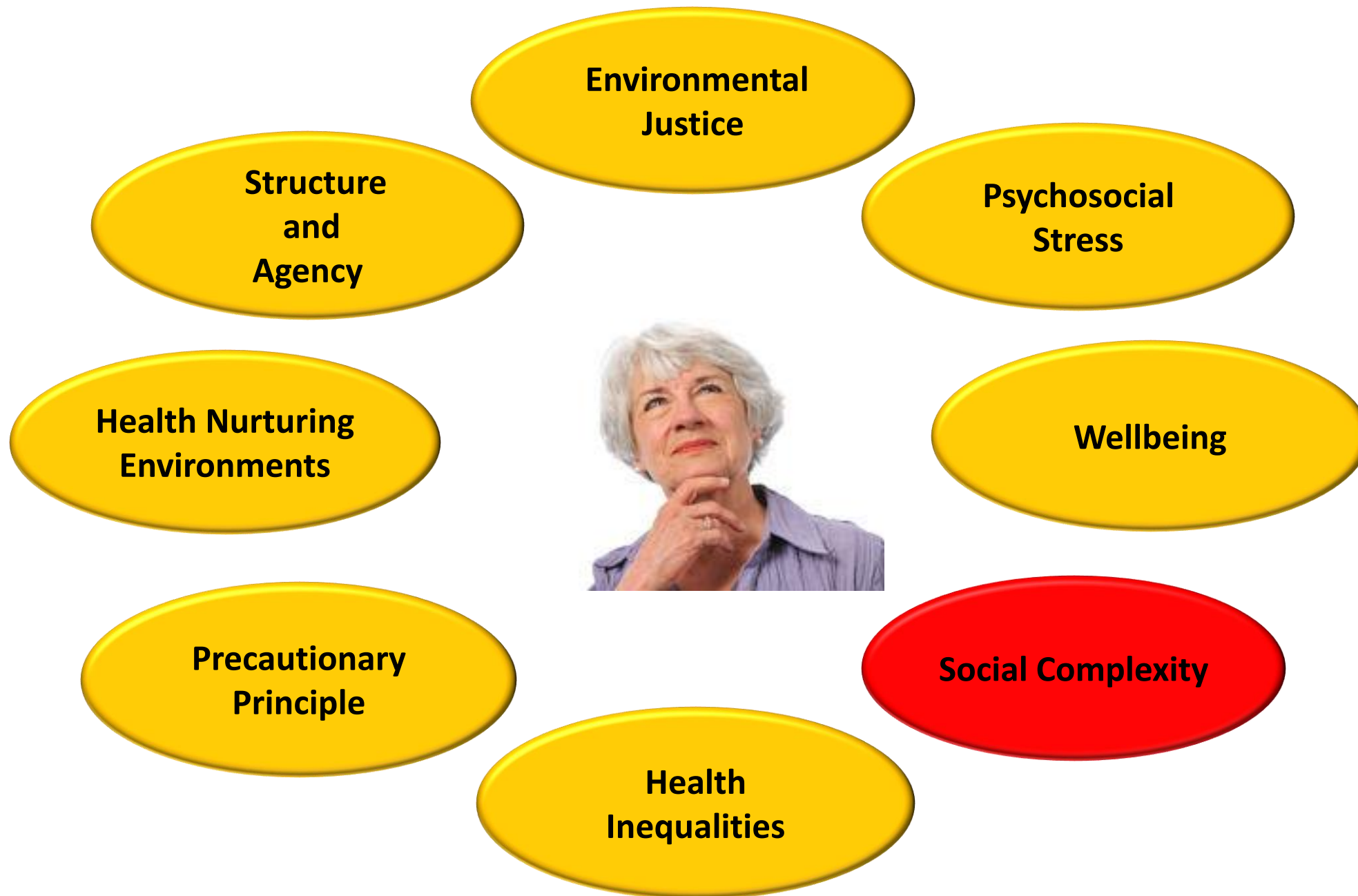
Category 1 - **Large scale, long term changes at the level of society** which act on the material, social, cultural determinants of health and wellbeing

Category 2 - **An “Evolution of Ideas”** determines our basic understanding of how health is created and destroyed

CATEGORY 1: Transitions at the level of Society



Category 2 - The Evolution of Ideas about Health and its Determinants



The European Picture in Outline

1. Unfinished Business
2. Recognised Hazards – Heightened Concerns
3. Unquantified (or unquantifiable?) Threats
4. Ecological Transition

1. Unfinished Business

(especially, but not exclusively)

- **Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)**
- **Indoor Air Quality**
- **Asbestos**

2. Recognised Hazards - Heightened Concerns

(especially, but not exclusively)

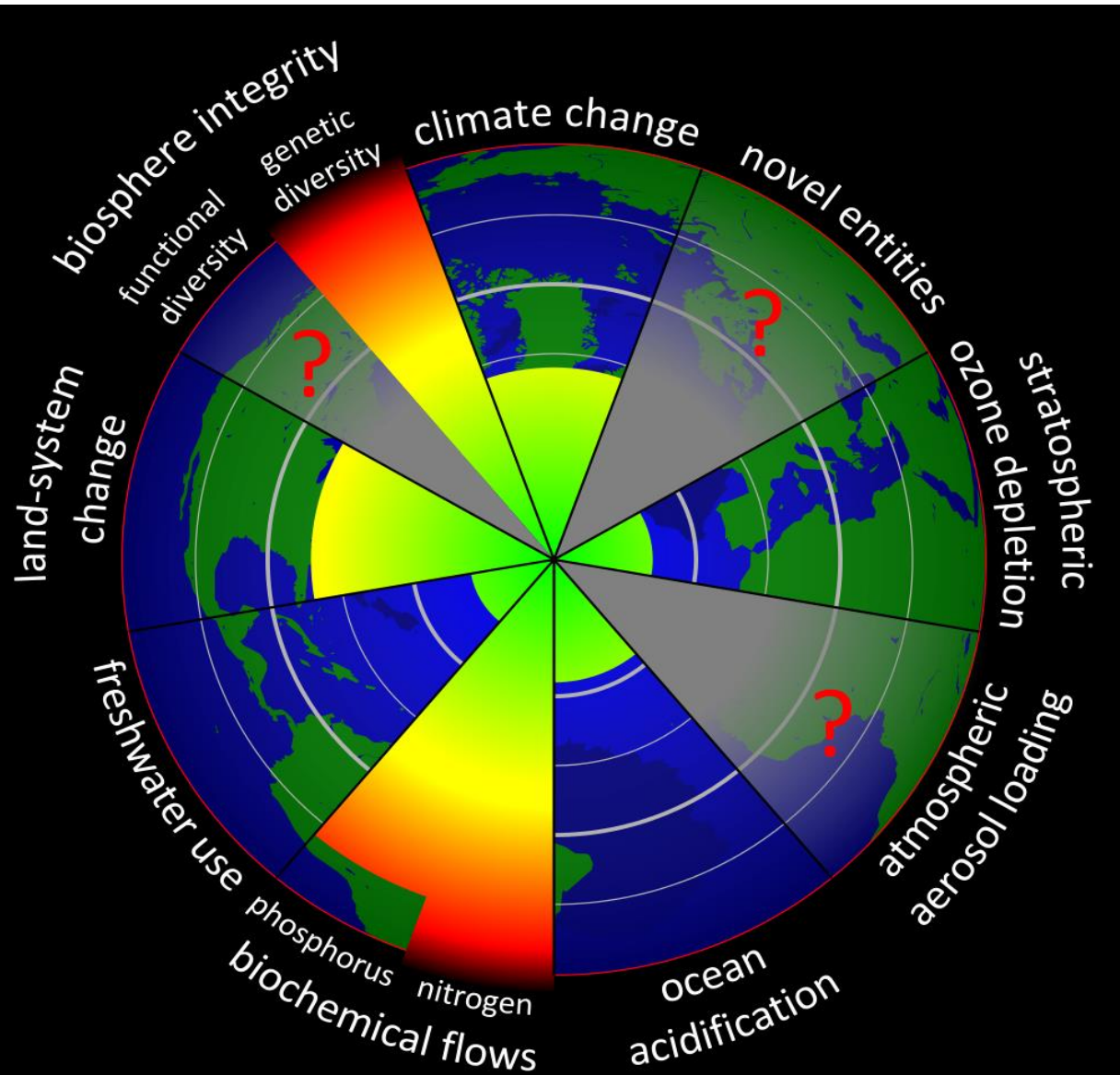
- **Waste and Contaminated Sites**
- **Air Pollution**

3. Unquantified (or Unquantifiable) Risks

especially, but not exclusively

- **Chemicals in the Environment**

4. Ecological Transition



To keep Earth hospitable
we need to live within
9 specific limits

Planetary Boundaries
An Earth Systems framework

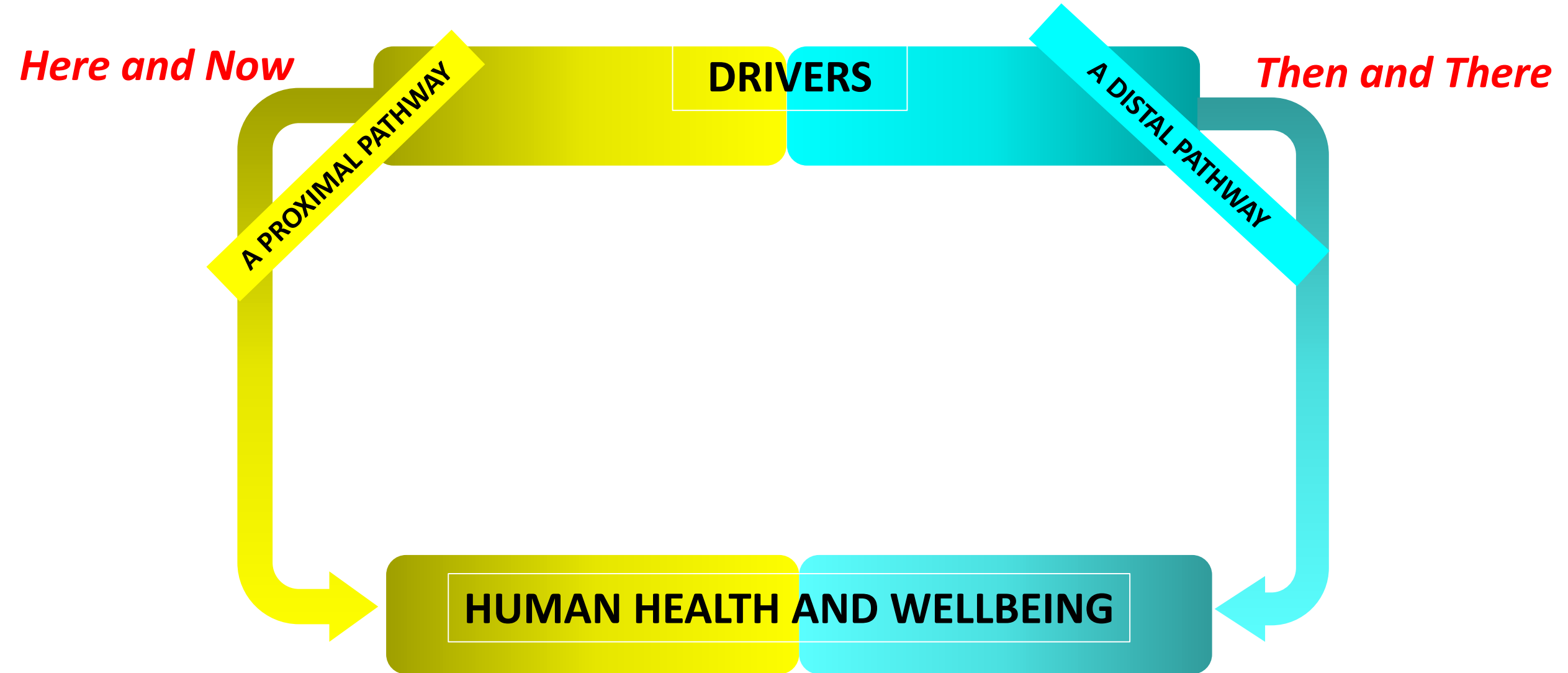
Steffen et al (2015)

Biophysical Subsystem/Process	Boundary	Where we are today
Climate Change	Atmospheric concentrations of carbon no more than 350 ppm	400 ppm and climbing
Lost biodiversity as species become extinct	Maintain 90% of biodiversity	Dropped to 84% in parts of the World e.g. Africa
Addition of phosphorous, nitrogen and other elements to the world's crops and ecosystems	Worldwide use per year of about 11 megatonnes of Phosphorous and 62 megatonnes of Nitrogen	Up to about 22 megatonnes of Phosphorous and 150 megatonnes of Nitrogen
Deforestation and other land use changes	Maintain 75% of the worlds original forests	Down to about 62%

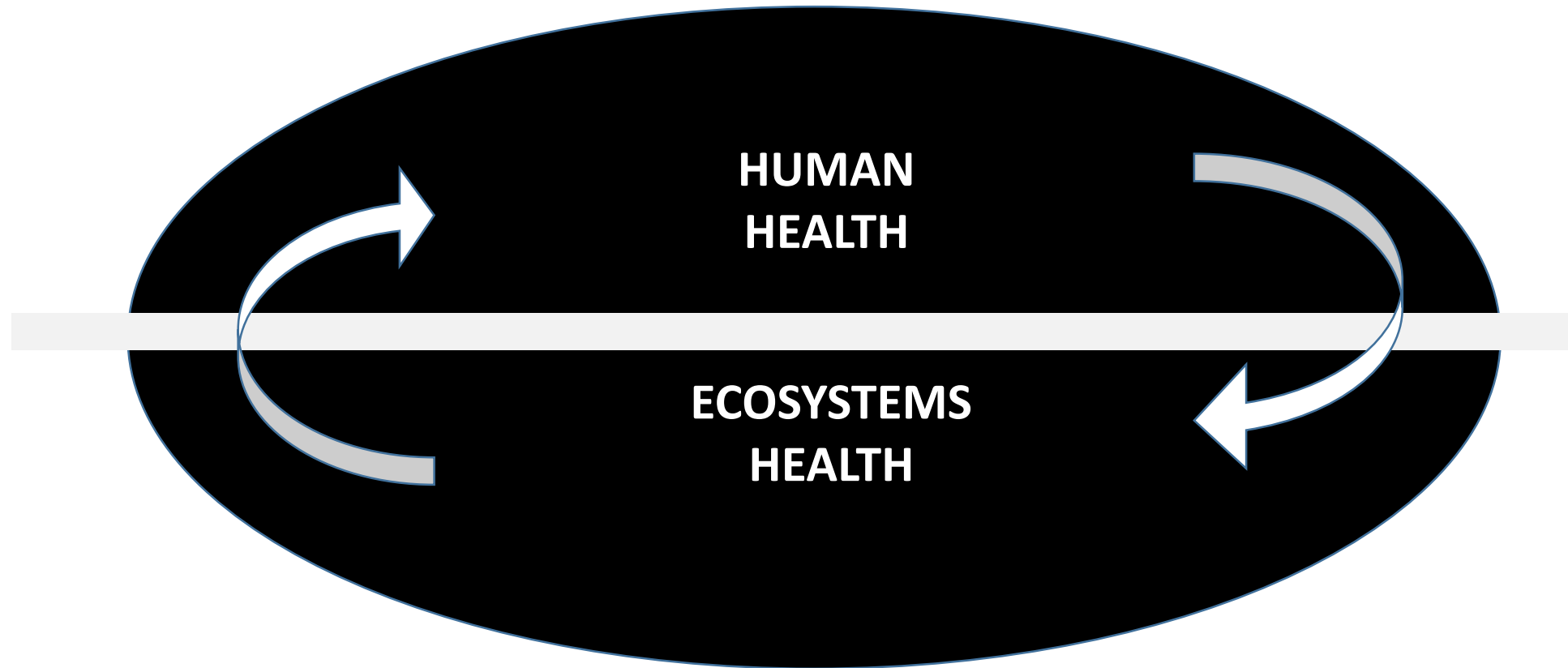
THE IMPLICATIONS ARE SIGNIFICANT

- Society can no longer hope to deliver health, wellbeing, health care (and equity in these things) without a radical rethink. Part of this must be a return to an environmental conceptualisation of the whole public health project.
- Public health must think and act on a vastly extended temporal and spatial scale.
- The only logical conceptualisation of public health going forward is an environmental conceptualisation
- Those of us concerned with the relationship between environment, health and wellbeing must embrace a **distal dimension** to their work.

2 Pathways from human-driven Environmental Change to Human Health and Wellbeing



ECOLOGICAL PUBLIC HEALTH: A SIMPLE MODEL



Rayner and Lang (2012)

<http://www.routledge.com/books/details/9781844078325/>

Some interim reflections and a question

- The EH Challenges in Europe are Formidable. In 2017, the Declaration of the 6th Ministerial Meeting of the European EH Process committed the Region and Member States, to an ambitious set of environmental health goals and one which recognises the importance of the environment for health, wellbeing and equity but also the existential necessity to live sustainably on the planet
- Previous declarations have been a spur to action within countries and across the Region yet even 20 + years on progress in some areas remains disappointing.
- As we look out from 2017, and face perhaps our greatest ever Environmental Health and societal challenge, are there reasons to be cheerful?

“There Is Nothing So Powerful As An Idea Whose Time Has Come.”

Victor Hugo (1802-1885)

.....but a Mutually Supportive Policy Framework runs it a very close second!

The International Policy Framework

- **Health 2020** (WHO European Region)
- **The New Urban Agenda** (Global)
- **Agenda 2030 and the SDGs** (Global)

Health2020

Health 2020 adopts “resilient communities and supportive environments” as one of four priority areas for action in the European Region

A prerequisite for removing much of the global disease burden would be a stronger focus on primary prevention placing a healthy environment at the centre of such an effort”

(Paraphrased from Pruss Ustun et al, 2016)

Health 2020 (continued)

- Tackling environmental risks requires intersectoral collaboration. After nearly 50 years of actively promoting this concept, whether referred to as intersectoral action, breaking down silos or the nexus approach, it remains elusive as ever.
 - Intersectoral collaboration, on the face of it, is loved by all, but funded by no-one' Obstacles, mainly vested interests, that have burdened this approach ever since it was included as part of the WHO/UNICEF Alma Ata Declaration on Primary Health Care in 1978.
 - Environmental health, quintessentially intersectoral, has suffered most from this lack of progress.
- (Paraphrased from Pruss Ustun et al, 2016)

Health 2020 is the most authoritative recognition, in policy to date, that neither chronic diseases nor growing health inequalities will ever be effectively addressed unless all sectors of government and wider society engage with the health sector to confront the challenges.

The New Urban Agenda

(adopted by the Habitat 3 Conference in October 2016)

.....it is also in our cities that the unhealthy and unsustainable nature of the way today's Europeans travel, live and consume is brought most sharply into focus meaning that cities are on the front line in 21st century battle to simultaneously deliver improved health wellbeing, greater health equity and environmental sustainability.

The New Urban Agenda recognises the critical role of cities in achieving sustainable development, reiterating the commitment to inter-linked social, economic and environmental principles, and rethinking the way we build, manage and live in cities.

Agenda 2030 and the SDGs

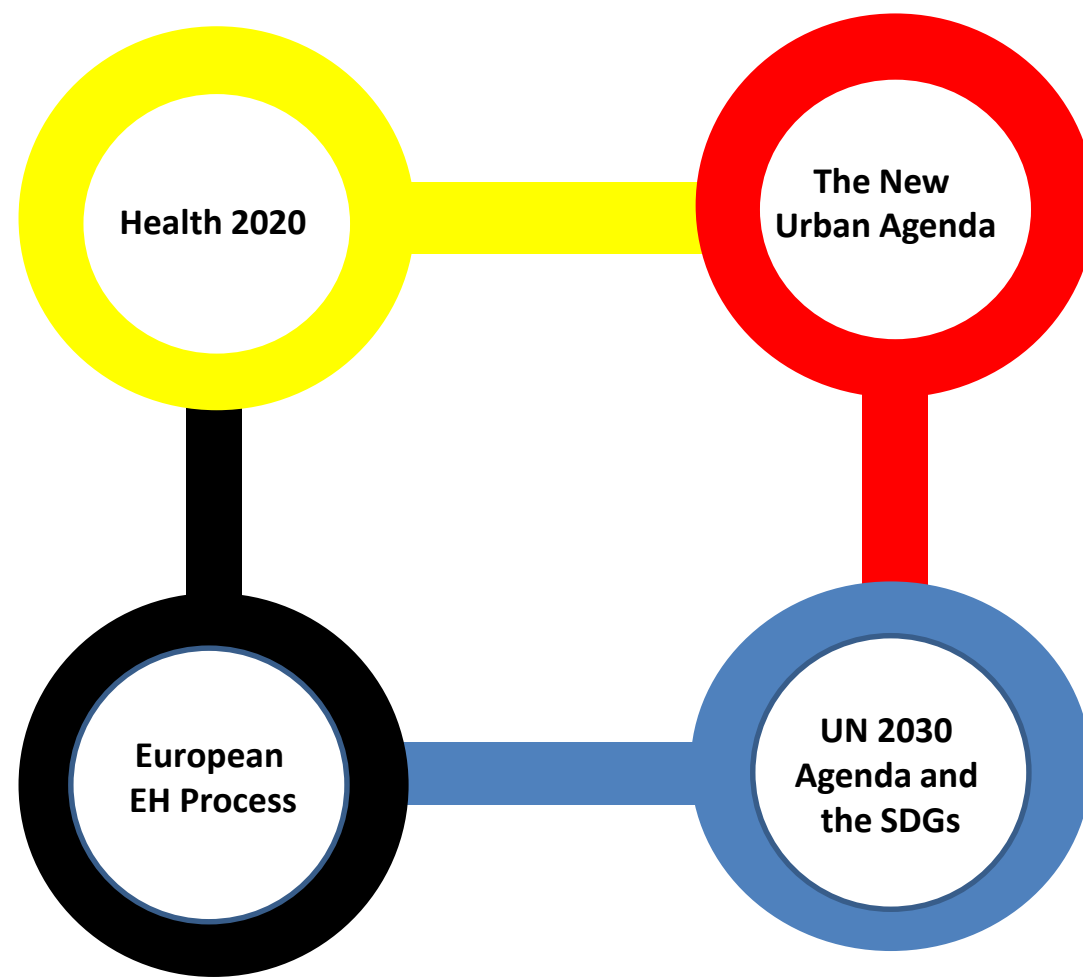
Health and well-being linked to environmental and work-related factors are outcomes, determinants and enablers of sustainable development.

Global in their reach and presented as “universal, integrated and transformative”, the Agenda with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) build on the Millennium Development Goals. The purpose is to mainstream sustainable development in the UN system as a whole and in policies across all sectors and issues.

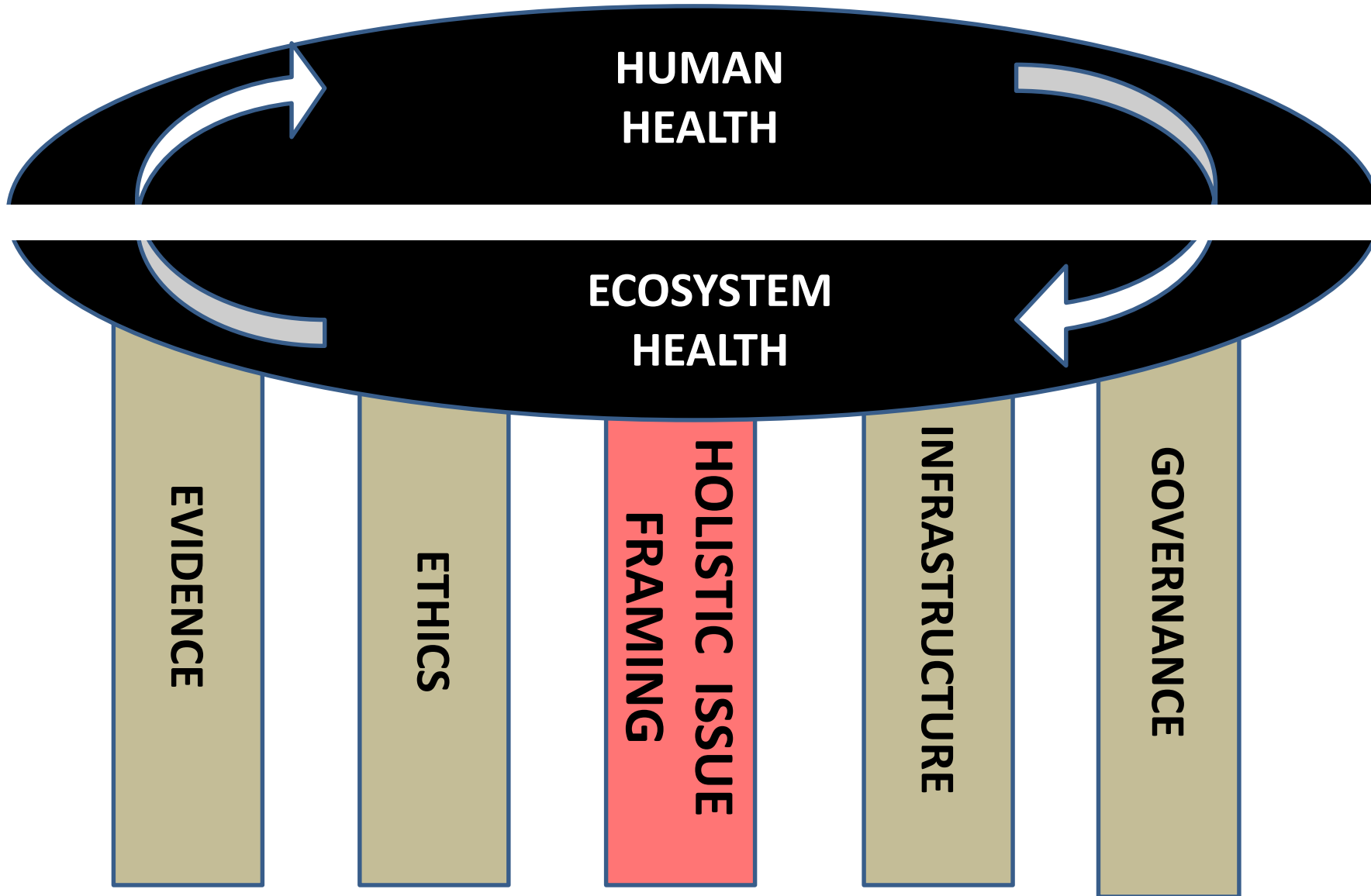
Health 2020 and the European Environmental health Process are Regional mechanisms to support the Global 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda



Action on environment has potential to deliver good health and wellbeing (SDG3) and contribute to every other SDG



A Mutually supportive Policy Framework for the Delivery of Ecological Public Health



“While the new environmental conception of health, “Ecological public health” may seem a difficult and complex task that us now the 21st century’s unavoidable task”

Rayner and Lang, 2012