

Climate Democracy without Methodological Statism

Section 4: Institutional Design and Beyond:
Political-theoretical Consideration on Climate Assembly
and Climate Democracy



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Introduction (1):

Background and Previous Researches

- Growing scholarly concerns on and real practices of citizens' assemblies focusing on climate change especially.
- But, in deliberative democracy research, it has been controversial how citizens' assemblies, or mini-publics in general, should be understood.
- Among them, some scholars criticise forum-centric views of deliberative democracy (Boswell *et al.* 2023; Lafont 2019 etc.).
- Especially, scholars relying on deliberative systems perspective have engaged with such critique.

Introduction (2):

Assessments and the Question

- It is correct to criticise a narrow focus of the forum-centric view from (deliberative) systemic perspectives.
- However, their scopes are also still narrow, because they are still based on *the (state-like) government-centric view*.
- Due to this view, the seemingly expanded 'beyond-forum' perspectives and focus on (small-scale effort' (Boswell *et al.* 2023: 90) are still limited. They assume the deliberative system as a state or state-like entity; methodological statism.
- **QUESTION: How can we overcome a scholarly temptation of methodological statism when thinking about climate democracy?**

Introduction (3): Aims

- Examining and clarifying the still-remaining tendency of methodological statism in previous research based on the deliberative systems perspective.
- Reassessing (with revisions) the significance of the ‘spaces account’ (Hendriks *et al.* 2020) of the deliberative system. It has the potential to go beyond methodological statism.
- Suggesting (but tentatively) a revised conception of deliberative systems where multiple systems *including state and family* operate *parallel and concurrently*.
- For this purpose, proposing to apply Niklas Luhmann’s theory of autopoietic social systems theory.

Contents

- 1. What Is Methodological Statism?
- 2. Examining the residue of methodological statism in deliberative systems research
- 3. Reassessing the theoretical potential of the ‘space account’
- 4. Suggesting parallelly and concurrently operating multiple deliberative systems

1. What Is *Methodological Statism*?

- A scholarly tendency to assume the existence of the state or 'state-like' entity (Little and Macdonald 2013; Tamura 2019).
- Even scholars who criticise the state and search for politics outside the state are still confined within it because they also assume the existence of the state (Bartelson 2001).
- Even when democracy in society or the private sphere is paid attention to, the main concern of scholars is how it can or should be mediated or connected with the state where the final decision-making is done.

2. The Residue of Methodological Statism in Deliberative Democracy Research

A Problem of Current Research of Deliberative Systems

- The deliberative system approach was originally proposed to rethink the forum-centric view of deliberative democracy and its contribution is still important.
- However, the problem proposed in this presentation is that many scholars of deliberative systems are still confined within methodological statism.
- Then its potential to rethink the place and form of politics and democracy has still not flourished.
- Illustrating it through examining Hendriks, Ercan, and Boswell's works (Hendriks *et al.* 2020; Boswell *et al.* 2023).

On the Idea of ‘Democratic Mending’ (1)

- The aim of *Mending Democracy* by Hendriks *et al.* (2020. Cf. Boswell *et al.* 2023) is to argue the significance of focusing on ‘everyday democratic repair work occurring around the globe in settings such as kitchens, libraries, main streets, corridors, and even government agencies’ (Hendriks *et al.* 2020: 2).
- It is called democratic mending; the intentional, creative, everyday practices that seek to repair and renew connections in the fabric of democratic life (2).
- ‘Through these small-scale repair efforts, actors reimagine and reinterpret their role as a citizen, politician, or administrator in novel ways that go beyond their assumed democratic function’. (4)

On the Idea of 'Democratic Mending' (2)

- To understand such everyday mending actions properly, the concept of a deliberative system should be reexamined by focusing on 'connectivity'.
- The existing three accounts of the deliberative system is not enough because all of them rely on 'communicative miracles' and fail to understand risks surrounding systemic thinking. (pp. 27-30)
- Various everyday actions of democratic mending can be examined through the grounded approach. (pp. 30ff.)

Assessment: Remaining Residue of Methodological Statism (1)

- At a glance, Hendriks, Ercan, and Boswell successfully rethink and go beyond methodological statism because their attention is paid to various activities including everyday citizens not only in public spaces but also in ‘private’ spaces such as kitchens.
- Furthermore, they criticise the exclusive focus on citizens’ assemblies and suggest expanding the repertoire of democratic action (Boswell *et al.* 2023).

Assessment: Remaining Residue of Methodological Statism (2)

- However, they seem to be still confined within methodological statism because the system which should be mended/repared seems to be pre-supposed as a liberal democratic, 'state-like' entity.
- In other words, they do not rethink the 'system' itself. A (deliberative) system is an entity/polity which consists of some elements such as parliament, bureaucracy, party and electoral system.
- Even when focusing on citizens' activities in the private sphere, their concern is how such activities can contribute to mending the system as a liberal democratic regime.

3. Reassessing the Theoretical Potential of the 'Space Account'

A Potential of the 'Space Account' (1)

- To avoid methodological statism, I argue the significance of reassessment of the 'space account'.
- It is a type of account of the deliberative system suggested by John Dryzek (2010).
- The reason for it is that abstractly (or generally) conceptualised elements of the system in the space account can be helpful to overcome methodological statism.
- Among such elements, transmission, accountability, and empowered space especially have room for imaging alternative actors and/or institutions performing them instead of existing actors (political parties) and/or institutions (electoral representative system).

A Potential of the 'Space Account' (2)

- What is important is such characteristics of the space account make it possible to reconsider the 'system' itself.
- Due to very generalised concepts, the space account can examine, for example, even the family as a deliberative system because we can suppose alternative actors and mechanisms for the family as a deliberative system even without familiar political actors and institutions of the liberal democratic regime.
- Even without politicians and political parties, and an electoral representative system, family members are supposed to be able to deliberate and make decisions on family matters; It is a deliberative system.

Problem (1)

- However, a problem remains.
- Even after conceptualizing, for example, the family as a deliberative system, the power of methodological statism is enough strong to recover such an attempt in an ordinary framework.
- My previous suggestion of ‘nested deliberative systems’ (Tamura 2014) is an illustration. While trying to go beyond methodological statism, it still relies on a macro-micro perspective. On the one hand, the family is a deliberative system differentiated from the state. But on the other hand, it is also a sub-system of the state at the macro level. The relationship between the state and the family is still familiar. The family at the mico-level, the state at the macro-level.

Problem (2)

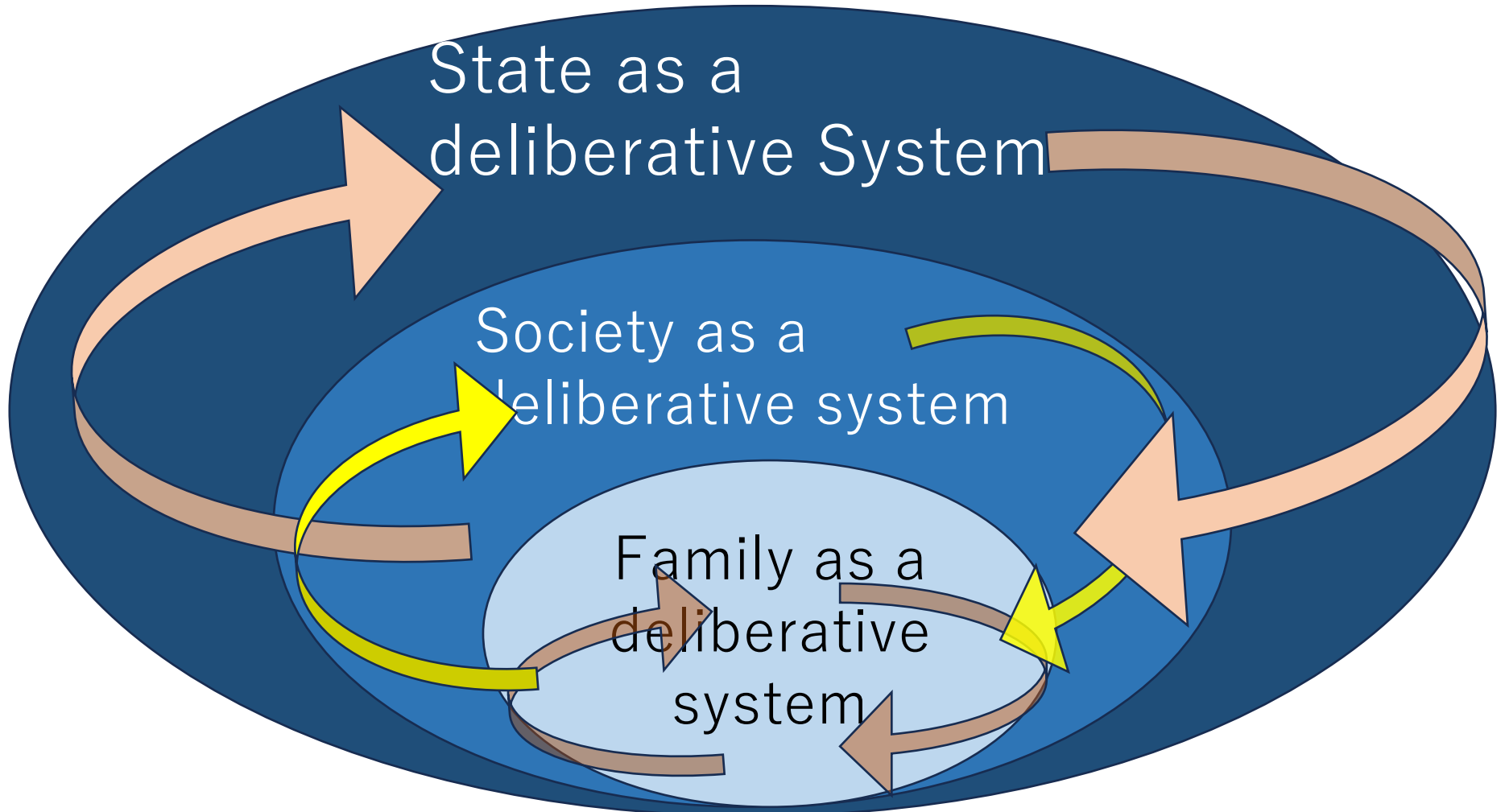
- QUESTION: How can we escape from the power of methodological statism?
- MY ANSWER: Reconsidering the concept of a (deliberative) system. Plurality or multiplicity of systems is good. But the extent of it must be radicalised.
- Thinking radically is welcome (probably). But, the issue is in which direction?

4. Suggesting Parallely and Concurrently Operating Multiple Deliberative Systems

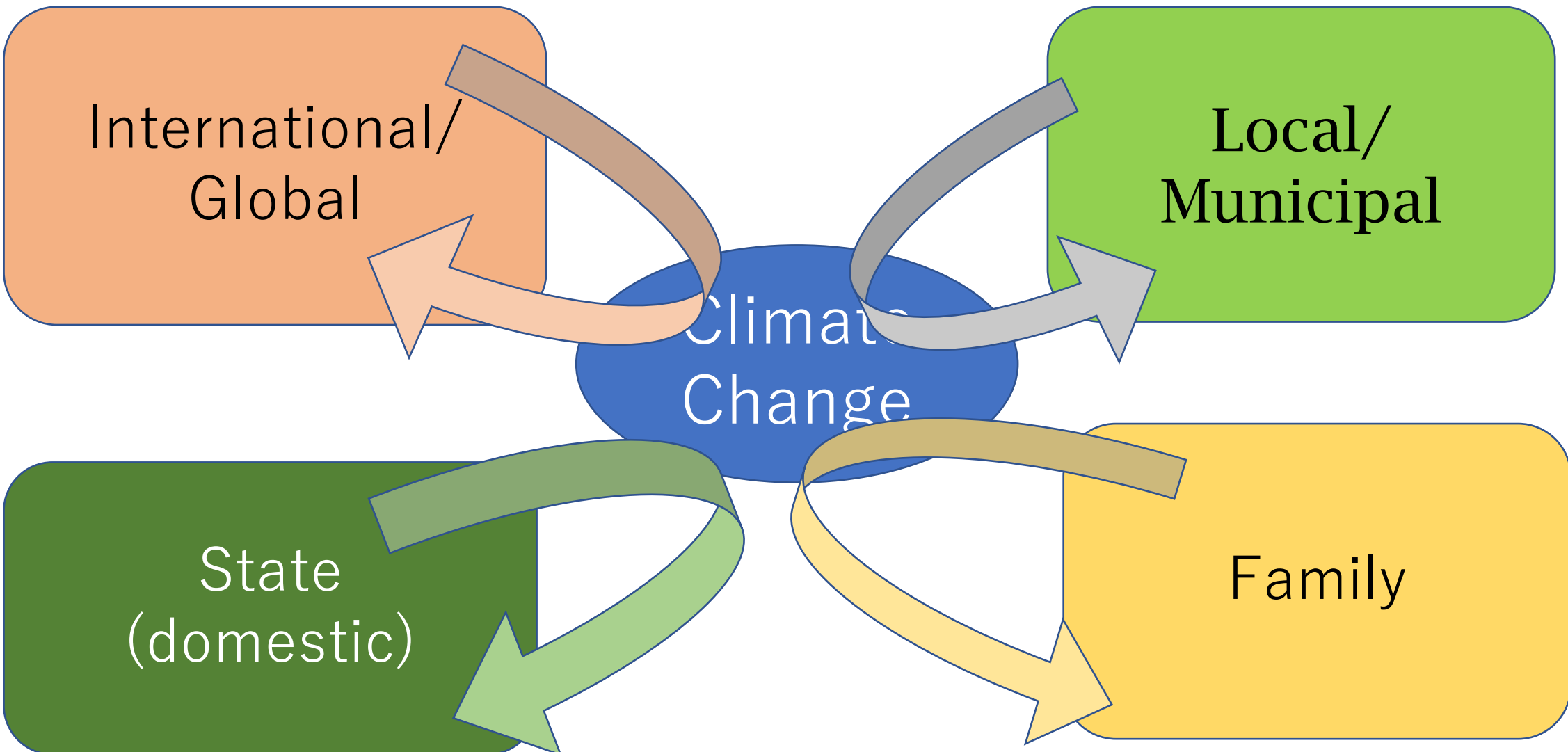
Basic Ideas

- Conceptualising deliberative systems not based on a micro-macro perspective but as multiple autonomous systems which operate parallelly and concurrently. (Tamura 2023; 2024)
- The key is to offer a clear understanding of the meanings of ‘parallel’ and ‘concurrent’.

Nested Deliberative Systems (still based on Micro-macro Perspective)



Parallel and Concurrent Deliberative Systems: Dealing SAME Issue but DIFFERENTLY



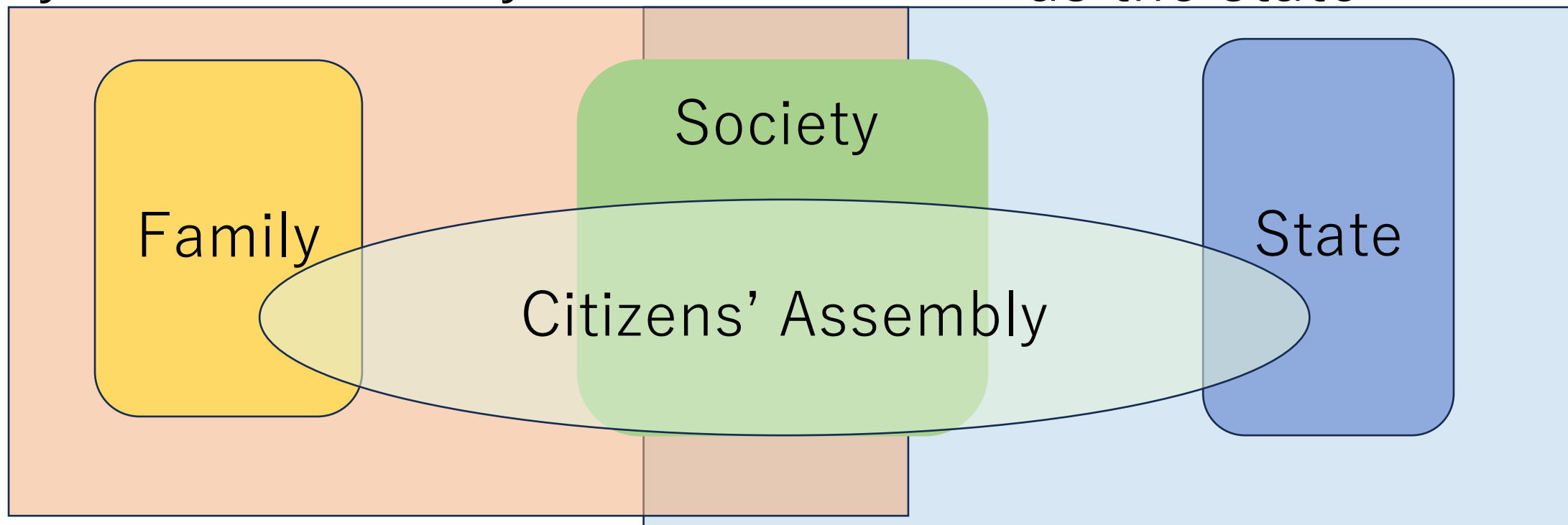
Examining Parallel and Concurrent Deliberative Systems

- The same issue (e. g. climate change) can be dealt with by different deliberative systems differently from global to familial.
- Each system deals with the issue independently or autonomously.
- Even if a national government makes a decision on climate change, it is just an event that happened at an 'environment' (Luhmann) for the family as another system. Therefore, the family makes another decision separately. It might take the result of the state's decision into account but only as one of information flowing in from outside the family.

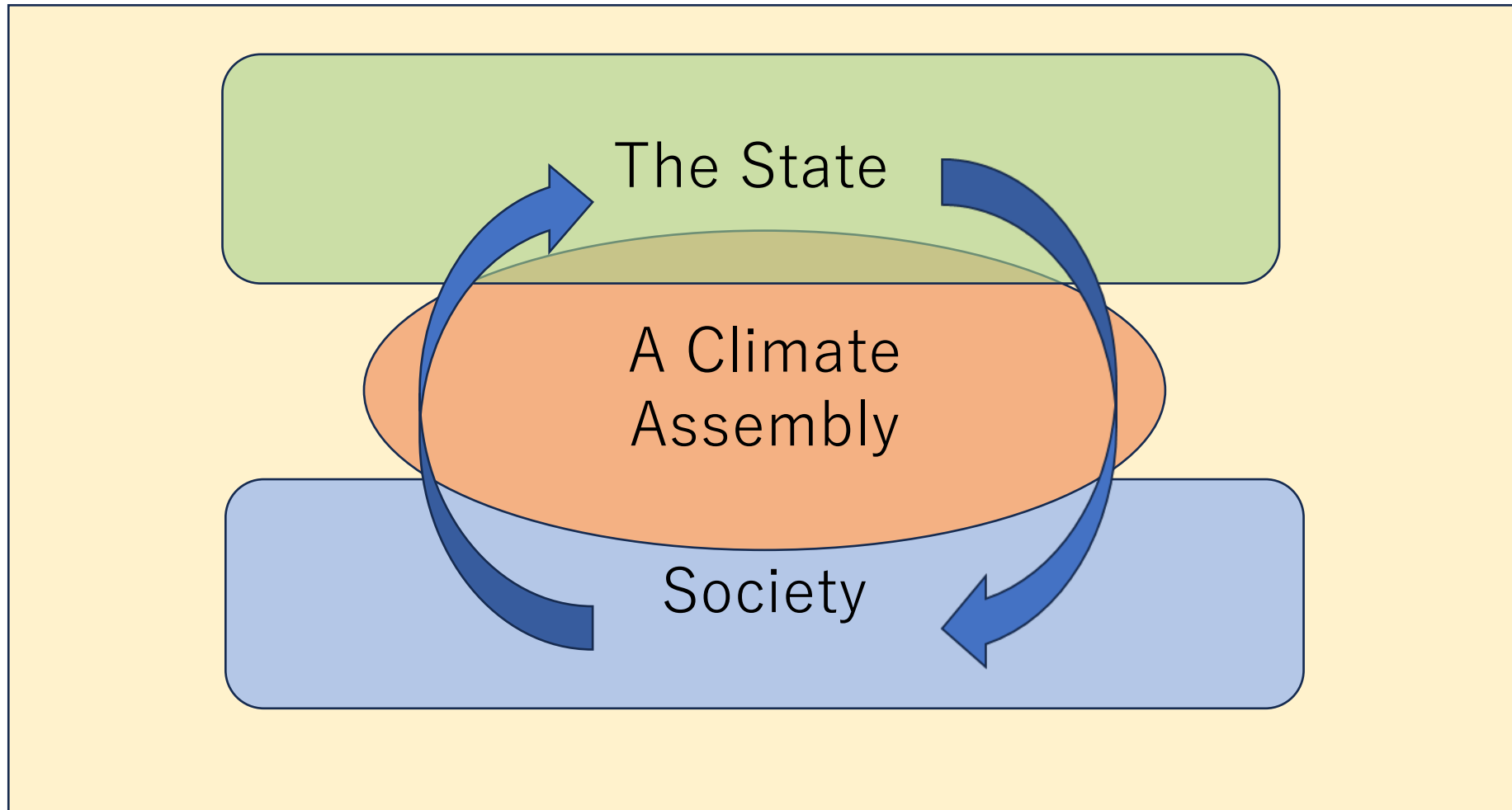
Another Image of Parallel and Concurrent Deliberative Systems with Citizens' Assembly

A deliberative system as a family

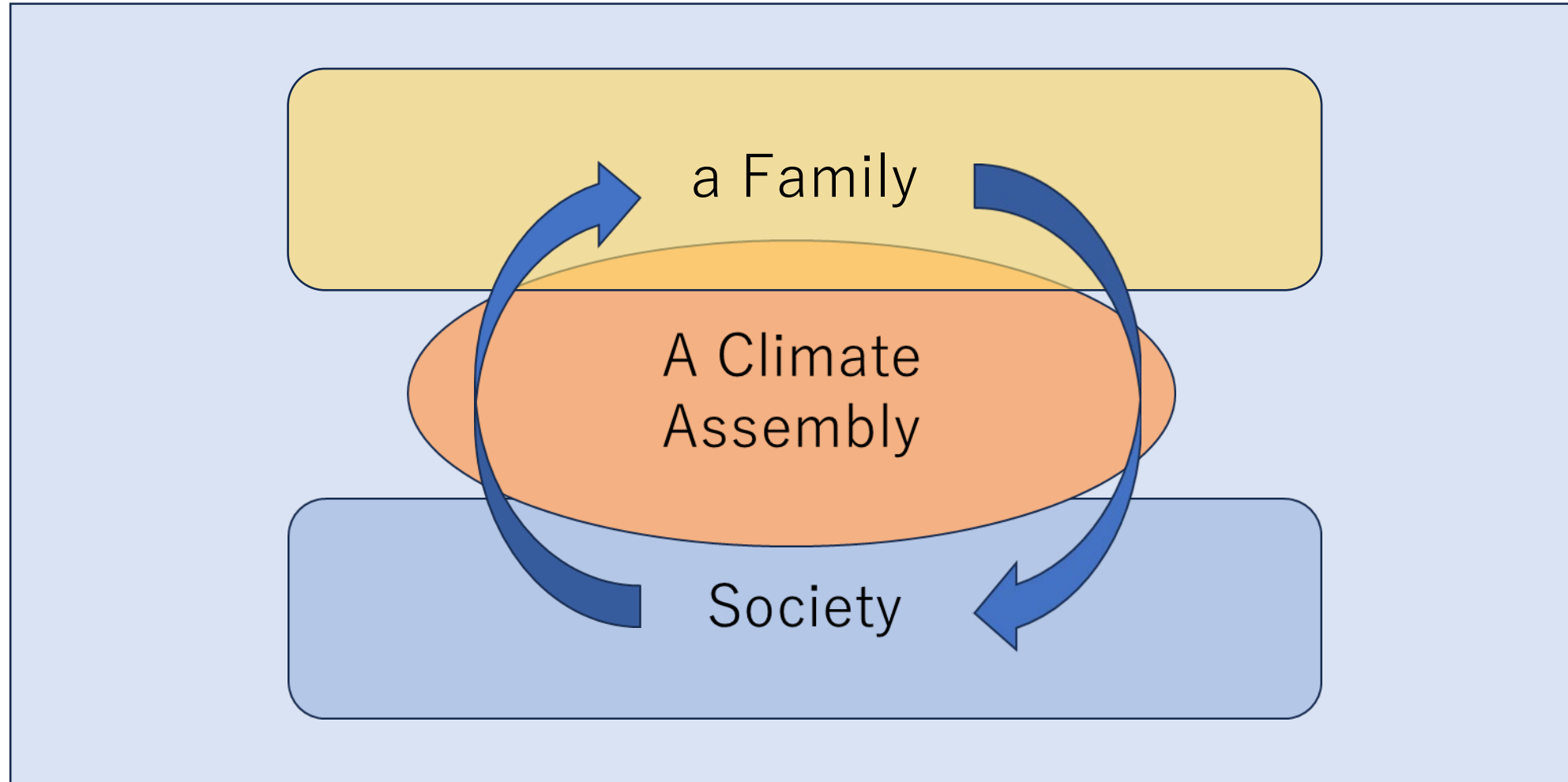
A deliberative system as the state



A Climate Assembly in a *National-level* Deliberative System



A Climate Assembly in a *Familial-level* Deliberative System



Applying Niklas Luhmann's Theory of Social Systems (1)

- A German sociologist Niklas Luhmann's autopoietic system theory is very useful in understanding the idea of parallel and concurrent deliberative systems.
- It is a theory based on the differentiation of the society but avoids functionalist thinking which is often attributed to a 'space' account of the deliberative system (Curato *et al.* 2019; Tamura 2014).

Applying Niklas Luhmann's Theory of Social Systems (2)

- For Luhmann, the introduction of the distinction between 'system' and 'environment' is crucial. Each 'system' such as economy, politics, education etc. is not a 'sub-system' which is supposed to perform 'functions' for the operation of the macro-system, but every 'system' is independent and autonomous and their relations are understood based on the system-environment perspective.
- For example, the economic system is an 'environment' for the political system. The political system deals with 'economic' matters according to its particular binary code; holding power or not, government/opposition in other words. In the same way, the economic system deals with political matters .

Applying Niklas Luhmann's Theory of Social Systems (3)

- By applying this idea, it becomes possible to examine parallelness and concurrentness of different deliberative systems which has already mentioned.
- For the state-level deliberative system, the family-level deliberative system and its decision making are 'environment' and vice versa.
- The family-level deliberative system might accept the result of the state, but it is done not as a sub-system of the state but as an autonomous system operating independently from the state, and vice versa.

Applying Niklas Luhmann's Theory of Social Systems (4)

- The application of Luhmann's theory to reexamine the state-family relationship might be a challenge. Even more so given the complexity and intractability of his theory.
- But, I think that it helps to suggest an idea of climate democracy without methodological statism.

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Thank you!

ありがとうございました。