

Expectations in the commons: On the dynamics
of state-citizen cooperation contracts

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Abstract

This thesis addresses the question of how citizens' expectations on state delivery matter for their willingness to cooperate with the state in delivering collective benefits. The argument made in the thesis is that citizens' positive expectations of the state may affect cooperation in both positive and negative directions. While expectations may let the state rely on forward-looking strategies to enhance cooperation, they may at the same time give rise to new citizen demands on the state. In this sense, citizens' expectations work both supporting and constraining for the *cooperation contract*, in which citizens cooperate reciprocally with the state in exchange for collective benefits. It is suggested that the dynamics of the cooperation contract is continuously updated along with citizen expectations and experiences with the contract. This implies that the contract dynamics regularly change not only in contracts that are about to stabilize or undergo larger transformations, but also in contracts that are considered stable and in well-functioning equilibria. By combining a contract perspective with a micro-level approach, the thesis sheds new empirical light on classical questions of citizen compliance, the social contract, and state-citizen dynamics more generally.

Sammanfattning på svenska

Den här avhandlingen handlar om hur medborgares förväntningar på staten påverkar deras vilja att samarbeta med staten för att tillhandahålla sådant som alla i samhället kan dra nytta av. Resultaten visar att positiva förväntningar kan få dubbla effekter. Å ena sidan kan staten bygga på dessa förväntningar genom att hänvisa till framtida åtaganden för att stärka samarbetet. Å andra sidan kan höga förväntningar också leda till ökade krav från medborgarna, vilket gör samarbetet mer krävande. Detta innebär att förväntningar både kan stärka och försvåra det samarbetskontrakt som, på informell väg, anger villkoren för när medborgare samarbetar med staten i utbyte mot samhällsnyttor.

Avhandlingen pekar på att dynamiken i samarbetskontraktet ständigt förändras i takt med att medborgarna utvecklar nya förväntningar och erfarenheter. Sådana förändringar är alltså inte begränsade till större samhällsomvandlingar, utan sker även i stabila och välfungerande kontrakt. Genom att kombinera ett kontraktsperspektiv med analyser på individnivå bidrar avhandlingen med nya insikter i klassiska frågor om medborgarsamarbete, det sociala kontraktet och relationen mellan stat och medborgare.

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Upon his resignation in 1969, Swedish Prime Minister Tage Erlander addressed the Social Democratic party congress with a reflective speech. He summarized a 23-year tenure as Prime Minister, during which Swedish society had undergone a remarkable transformation: from poverty and inequality, to becoming one of the most progressive welfare states of the postwar era. Under Erlander's leadership, citizens had benefited from improved healthcare, quality education, better housing, and rising employment. The country had experienced strong economic growth and improved working conditions (Ruin, 1986). In the eyes of many, Erlander embodied *the state* itself. His long tenure gives an idea of how citizens rewarded this delivery. The broad public acceptance of increased taxes in this period is another indication of the great willingness of citizens to repay public delivery with cooperation.

From the stage at his final congress, Erlander now reflected upon his party's accomplishments and future challenges. It is fair to assume that he was largely content. Yet, he also offered his party a more ambivalent observation. 20 minutes into his speech, he remarked: "Rising welfare creates high expectations. Such rising expectations give rise to discontent(...), and increasing demands on society. With a rising standard, citizens demand better education, more housing, developed health care, improved communications" (Erlander, 1969). His reservation points to potential trouble in paradise: what if extensive delivery raises citizen expectations to such a degree that they develop new standards for what they demand in return for their individual cooperation, such as paying taxes?

This potential tension incorporated in citizen expectations, and what it means for citizens' willingness to reward the state with their cooperation, is the focus of this thesis. In line with Erlander's broader success story, one might expect high expectations of state delivery to enhance cooperation, by increasing citizens' willingness to repay. However, Erlander's observation - typically summarized as "the discontent of rising expectations" - points at an alternative possibility: with rising expectations, citizens may perceive individual sacrifices as unreasonable, if delivery no longer meets their updated standards. In this way, expectations may constrain the mutual exchange between states and citizens, where individual sacrifices are made in return for collective benefits. The thesis follows expectations in both directions, asking how citizens' expectations of state delivery influence their willingness to cooperate with the state.

The text that follows will leave Erlander and his speech in favor of more abstract concepts. However, his mixed experiences remain behind the scenes, illustrating a potential tension in how expectations may alter the relationship between states and their citizens.

Creating prospering societies is a dynamic partnership between states and their citizens. States play a key role in providing essential services and ensuring the well-being of their citizens, including security, public services, a clean environment, high-quality education, and protection of rights. However, the effectiveness of these state efforts relies heavily on the cooperation of the citizenry. It is only when citizens willingly adhere to policies, contribute voluntarily, pay their taxes, and embrace civic responsibilities that the benefits can materialize fully (Acemoglu, 2005; Besley, 2020; Whitaker, 1980). Well-functioning state-citizen cooperation, where both states and citizens contribute their share of delivery and cooperation, is in this regard a key ingredient of what we would call a well-functioning society.

Citizen cooperation does not come automatically, however. Previous research point out that levels of cooperation are decided on basis of what is delivered to citizens in return, and in what way this is done (Marien and Hooghe, 2011; Bodea and LeBas, 2016; Feld and Frey, 2007; Scholz and Lubell, 1998; Tyler, 2006; Levi, 1988). As a result, the joint state-citizen effort of producing collective benefits may be understood as a continuous, reciprocal relationship of interactions that may evolve into either a positive or negative societal equilibrium (Acemoglu, 2005; Besley, 2020; Mcloughlin, 2015). The resulting equilibrium will depend on a number of factors: the actual delivery; how citizens perceive the delivery; other terms and conditions involved in this reciprocal exchange; and how these perceptions translates into cooperation. The fact that cooperation in turn affects delivery creates an interdependent exchange that is typically described through the illustration of "virtuous" and "vicious" circles. The virtuous circle scenario implies that the exchange of delivery and cooperation is high-functioning, and that it over time will function increasingly well due to self-reinforcing patterns. In a vicious circle, by contrast, the relationship is dysfunctional in the sense that exchange dynamics start off with negative, non-fruitful patterns of delivery and cooperation that will be continuously self-reinforcing over time (Mcloughlin, 2015). This model helps explain variation in persistent patterns of (dys)functional state-citizen relationships, and why they tend to be stable over time (Besley and Persson, 2014; Acemoglu, 2005; Almond and Verba, 1963). Positive, self-reinforcing patterns of mutual trust will enhance and strengthen functional exchange continuously over time, making them increasingly robust and protected from bad influence and temporary crises. Societies with dysfunctional exchange, on the other hand, are typically thought of as being "trapped" in bad dynamics due to reinforcing patterns in the opposite direction (Mcloughlin, 2015).

This thesis revolves around the further evolution of state-citizen interaction after

it is considered stabilized. I will refer to the state-citizen exchange for generating collective benefits as a *cooperation contract*, which intends to capture the reciprocal, interdependent characteristics of this ongoing exchange. Taking a micro-level perspective to the cooperation contract, I ask: How do citizens' expectations on state delivery affect their willingness to cooperate with the state? A central claim of the thesis is that the dynamics of the cooperation contract undergo continuous change also after it has stabilized, as citizens continue to accumulate experiences related to the contract and develop new expectations concerning state behavior. The thesis shows how the terms of the cooperation contract may be affected by such expectations.

I test two sets of claims related to this overall argument. First, I propose that citizens' positive expectations on future state delivery may make them more willing to cooperate. Translated to the full relationship between states and citizens, i.e. the contract level, this would imply that expectations make contracts run more smoothly. Positive experiences of past state delivery should help citizens overcome uncertainties about future state intentions, and provide certain guarantees that citizens' cooperation in the present likely will be re-paid also in the future. Positive future expectations should in this way work in favor of citizens' willingness to cooperate in the present, and help states maintain positive dynamics in the cooperation contract.

Second, I propose that positive expectations at the same time may make citizens less willing to cooperate. This can be the case for (at least) two reasons. First, expectations may translate into increasing demands on state delivery. What is considered a sufficient level of delivery in exchange of cooperation at one point in time will as a result not necessarily be considered a reasonable offer at a later stage. This may cause tensions in the state-citizen exchange, if states cannot meet citizen demands with delivery. Second, high expectations may translate into beliefs that the state can manage to deliver without citizen contributions. In either case, expectations should be expected to work constraining on the running of cooperation contracts.

I explore these sets of claims in three different papers, and find support for both to varying extent. I conclude that citizens' continuously acquired expectations regarding state delivery influence the terms of the cooperation contract in several important ways. First and foremost, citizens' positive expectations about future state delivery seem to translate into greater willingness to make individual sacrifices. In this way, positive expectations in the citizenry are valuable assets for the state in promoting cooperation. I find that a state can take advantage of a credible reputation and employ more forward-looking negotiation strategies to indirectly spur citizen cooperation. Citizens come to trust the state's intentions and capabilities, allowing the government to build on this trust and explicitly make commitments to future delivery as a way of increasing expectations in future state delivery. In line with the second set of claims, the findings also suggest that high expectations may create sustained demand for an increasingly higher standard of state performance. Here, expectations exert pressure on

the state to maintain delivery on continuously high(er) levels in order to be perceived as an acceptable exchange for individual cooperation. Findings also support that expectations can lead citizens to demand that the state take greater responsibility for generating collective benefits.

Lastly, findings indicate that states struggling with overall delivery may still manage to increase citizen expectations in specific policy domains by delivering successful outcomes in particular domains. This implies that even in situations where general state performance falls short, positive experiences from isolated policy sectors can raise citizen expectations for the future at least in those sectors. This suggests a possibility of several coexisting cooperation contracts in the same country setting that apply to different policy domains.

Taken together, findings in addition suggest that terms of cooperation contracts probably should be assumed to vary between countries, also where state delivery- and qualities are at fairly similar levels. The reason for this is that unique country experiences and variance in duration of a certain equilibrium should give rise to different contract terms.

I conclude that the terms of the cooperation contract should be perceived as more dynamic than suggested by previous research, adapting alongside citizens' evolving anticipations of state conduct, and that citizen expectations may both obstruct and facilitate the overall functioning of the contract. This perspective challenges a conventional notion of linear, progressive models of the cooperation contract that eventually stabilize into a certain equilibrium until possibly undergoing a larger shift, which have previously been proposed (Acemoglu, 2005; Alston et al., 2013).

In essence, effective state delivery improves the bargaining power (Levi, 1988) of both states and citizens. From the perspective of the state, this implies that a track record that has generated positive expectations can reduce certain transaction costs associated with promoting cooperation while potentially increasing others. Understanding such dynamics is essential for understanding the cooperation contract at large. With more attention to incremental, continuous updates of contracts, larger contract shifts will come less as a surprise.

Summing up, previous research on state-citizen contracts is dominated by long-term, macro-level perspectives (Acemoglu, 2005; Besley and Persson, 2014; Benabou, 2000). Citizens' cooperation and compliance, on the other hand, are typically studied as static "snapshots" at the micro level (Bodea and LeBas, 2016; Marien and Hooghe, 2011; Stauffer, Miller, and Keiser, 2023). This thesis contributes by bridging and combining these two perspectives: it introduces contract dynamics to the micro-level literature on compliance and citizen cooperation, while offering a micro perspective to the contract literature. The integration of these two perspectives gives rise to the concept of the "cooperation contract," which constitutes the core object of analysis in this thesis.

By combining the macro-level, contract perspective with a micro-level perspective, the thesis contributes to compliance literature, as well as a growing empirical literature on the social contract (Loewe, Zintl, and Houdret, 2021; Bishara, Jurkovich, and Berman, 2023). It also adds to a classical, but still limited, tradition highlighting contract dynamics in citizen compliance decisions (Levi, 1988; 1997). In addition, the thesis adds to research accentuating the role of citizen expectations for political attitudes- and behavior (Hooghe, Marien, and Oser, 2017; Miller and Listhaug, 1999; Brinkerhoff, Wetterberg, and Wibbels, 2018; James, 2009). However, the key theoretical contribution of this thesis lies in emphasizing the value of combining micro- and macro-level perspectives to understand citizens' cooperation, and the terms of cooperation contracts more generally.

In studying the cooperation contract, this thesis draws on concepts and literature on cooperation, compliance, collective action, and contract theory. Next, I will proceed by sketching a theoretical framework of these relevant parts.

Coordinating large-scale collective action is the central task of the state, and theory of collective action is “the core of the justification for the state” (Ostrom, 1998, p. 1). Consequently, it is unsurprising that numerous fields of study and subdisciplines have contributed to the development of theories surrounding the cooperation contract between states and citizens. Questions of state-citizen cooperation, the dynamics and premises of the relationship between the state and citizens, and how societies produce and sustain collective benefits speak to subfields and literatures such as political economy, political behavior, political theory, legitimacy, institutional trust, and state capacity. To shed light on the cooperation contract thus requires combining relevant parts of all these research fields.

While these perspectives may sometimes use distinct approaches to address their specific questions of interest, favor different conceptual frameworks, and may not always appear to engage in a direct dialogue with one another, they all have important insights to bring to the discussion. It is thus my ambition that these different theoretical approaches together will help create a comprehensive picture of the cooperation contract.

3.1 State-citizen dynamics in delivering collective benefits

The creation of collective benefits requires a delicate and collaborative effort between the state and its citizens (Besley, 2020). Public authorities are tasked with formulating goals, allocating resources, and implementing policies – ideally, after input and feedback from the citizenry. In turn, citizens play a crucial role by actively cooperating in pursuit of these shared objectives. This process corresponds to the idea of a cooperation contract rooted in social contract theory. In line with the idea of the social contract (Rousseau, 2005 [1762]), citizens receive collective benefits – ranging from protection and security to healthcare and clean environments – in exchange for the individual sacrifices they make as part of their cooperation in pursuit of collective goals (Besley, 2020; Whitaker, 1980).

There are varying perspectives regarding which stages within this process hold greater significance and how the relationship between state authority and citizen agency is perceived. While citizens may self-coordinate and work together to solve collective action dilemmas in small-scale community settings (Ostrom, 1990), the actions and capacity of the state play a significant role for coordination at the large-scale, societal level (Skocpol, 1985; Mansbridge, 2014; Ostrom, 1998). In contrast to their more active, participatory role in the process of policy formulation, citizens have at times been seen as relatively passive participants in the process of policy enforcement (Almond

and Verba, 1963). Citizens' cooperation may from this perspective be characterized as subordination, while the task of the state is reduced to extraction of resources or forceful implementation (Tilly, 2017; Huntington, 1968; Scott, 1999). Mann (1984, p. 189) labels the type of powers states may employ for enforcement and implementation *infrastructural power*, allowing the state to tax "without our consent or that of our neighbours or kin".

An alternative perspective on state power suggests that coercive capacities inherently incorporate an element of citizen consent (Locke, 2016 [1689]; Pitkin, 1965). Beyond relying solely on coercive capabilities, states must also strive to persuade citizens to contribute voluntarily to a certain extent, implying that compliance is semi- (or quasi-) voluntary (Levi, 1988). In this way, citizens play a role in actively supporting and cooperating with the state in its efforts to provide collective benefits (Besley, 2020; Whitaker, 1980). In line with this, Turner (2005) suggests a power model that integrates coercion and authority with persuasive elements, suggesting that this type of power leads up to control of resources, rather than the reverse. State powers that rely solely on coercion may even be seen as problematic, as pure coercive power alone may not provide the incentive needed for states to invest in collective benefits (Acemoglu, 2005).

A plausible explanation for competing models is that different ways of attaining citizen cooperation coexist: Cooperation could either be the result of high (coercive) state powers or of high levels of trust in the state (Kirchler, Hoelzl, and Wahl, 2008), or a combination of the two. Previous research suggests that a time dimension may be at play as well: It may be advantageous (and necessary) for states to initially develop capacity that allows for a more coercive approach (D'Arcy and Nistotskaya, 2017), which over the long term can help build a type of credibility for state institutions that foster voluntary citizen cooperation (Besley and Persson, 2014; Levi, Sacks, and Tyler, 2009). This would imply that different state-citizen dynamics are at play in different development stages. Acemoglu (2005) suggests that over time, a "consensually strong state" equilibrium would be the most beneficial for the production of collective benefits. This is a situation in which the state has the capacity to extract resources (such as collecting high taxes), while citizens can constrain the state politically. Under such conditions, citizens may ensure investment in collective benefits (Weigel, 2020).

3.2 Defining cooperation with the state

What does it mean to cooperate with the state? In the literature, behavior in line with state demands are typically labelled *compliance* (Levi, 1988; Feld and Frey, 2007; Kirchler, Hoelzl, and Wahl, 2008; Bargain and Aminjonov, 2020), while cooperation refers to behavior going on between individuals (Fischbacher, Gächter, and Fehr, 2001). In defining compliance comes a problem related to the large variation in voluntariness that may be associated with a certain behavior (Tabellini, 2008). Voluntariness could

vary along two different dimensions. The first dimension concerns degree of voluntariness resulting from the strength of state demands, ranging from strictly monitored regulation to more unformulated wishes and goals. Strictly monitored regulation may leave the average citizen with no reasonable choice except compliance, while more informal policy opens up for letting citizens make their own decisions. The second dimension concerns the voluntariness of citizen responses, detached from the strength of state demands. Here, we can for example fit a scenario where citizens may choose to follow very strictly monitored policies on a voluntary basis, because they find the regulation fair and have trust in state intentions (Tyler, 2006). Compliance literature has addressed the second dimension of the voluntariness problem by referring to voluntary compliance, or semi-voluntary compliance (Levi, 1988). The first dimension is more unaddressed, with the result that it is unclear what type of state demands that are needed in order for compliance (or noncompliance) to be the resulting behavior.

In this thesis, I am interested in compliance that allows for a wide range of voluntariness, including behavior resulting from more informal state demands, while excluding forced compliance resulting from repression. Allowing for more informal state demands comes with definition problems, as it requires an idea of what it takes for a behavior to be motivated on basis of collective goals. Yet this is a problem for all definitions involving voluntariness. Allowing for voluntariness always implies a risk that behavior is guided by individual, rather than collective, motives.

In the thesis, I will refer to citizen contributions to collective goals mainly as cooperation rather than compliance. The definition of cooperation used in the thesis means moving one step up in the concept hierarchy from compliance, making compliance a type of cooperation. This allows for better capture of the full range of potential voluntariness involved, and that is not entirely captured by the compliance concept. To put emphasis on these features, and acknowledge the challenges related to definition, I will adopt a definition of cooperation consisting of two parts. First, cooperation with the state is a behavior implying some extent of *individual cost that contributes to collective benefits*. Second, the type of cooperation discussed here implies some degree of citizen *voluntariness*. In the following, these two aspects are discussed in more detail.

3.2.1 Individual cost, societal benefit

The first premise of the definition of cooperation used in this thesis revolves around the combination of the collective objective of cooperation and the individual sacrifices it entails. In this basic sense, the first criteria matches the social dilemma- and collective action frameworks (Dawes, 1980; Ostrom, 1990). The cooperation in question here is not about collaboration among peers or within smaller entities (Ostrom, 1990; Tabellini, 2008; Gächter and Herrmann, 2009; Fischbacher, Gächter, and Fehr, 2001),

nor does it involve cooperation with actors from civil society, or cooperation aimed solely at fulfilling individual needs. The sole focus is on cooperation that requires individual sacrifices while simultaneously helping the state in delivering collective benefits (Ostrom, 1998; Whitaker, 1980; Besley, 2020). Such cooperation may also offer some individual benefits, be it material or related to social status and group acceptance, and does not need to be exclusively motivated by a desire to align with state goals or policies. Nevertheless, the primary benefits arising from this cooperation should be collective in nature, aligned with societal objectives and requirements, and cooperative behavior should involve a clear element of individual sacrifice in order to be considered an action taking place within the cooperation contract. As a result, an act such as leaving one's trash properly at a recycling station to avoid complaining neighbors would still qualify as cooperation, as non-cooperation would be the undesirable behavior also from a societal standpoint.

In cases of uncertainty, the degree of state intentions and individual costs can serve as a guiding benchmark: when there is a clear individual sacrifice that clearly contributes to collective benefits for society as a whole and aligns with state intentions, it is likely considered cooperation with the state according to the first criteria.

3.2.2 (At least some) voluntariness/citizen agency

As demonstrated, some classical accounts of how the state generates collective benefits leave minimal room for citizen agency. According to a Hobbesian account of the social contract, subordination is not a matter of choice (Hobbes, 2018 [1651]). But regardless of our interpretation of the initial establishment of the social contract, it is far from obvious that "subordination" best characterizes citizens' everyday interactions with the state in most contemporary contexts. While aligning with state demands or objectives may be considered a form of subordination, it is clear that pure coercion is very costly for the state. Consequently and under normal circumstances, the state cannot rely on coercion over extended periods to govern everyday citizen behavior (Levi, 1988). Furthermore, it is not intuitive to give pure subordination a label of cooperation.

The second premise for the type of citizen cooperation discussed here is thus that it leaves some room for citizen voluntariness and agency. By definition, non-cooperation should be a viable option and not associated with life- or health threatening reprimands. By consequence, the definition of cooperation discussed here will apply to specific contexts at specific points in time. While there is an opportunity for this type of citizen cooperation in most current democracies, for example, the definition will only apply to autocratic regimes that allow for some degree of citizen agency and freedom. Similarly, it is not obvious that citizen cooperation occurred back in time in contemporary democracies that were developing strong coercive powers in a pre-democratic condition. What we observed in these cases might very well have been

something that we rather would label subordination.

From the voluntariness criteria, it follows questions about the degree of voluntariness required. Should we consider law compliance cooperation? I choose to stay with Levi's account of compliance as, for the most part, semi- or quasi-voluntary (Levi, 1988). When this is the case, there is inherently some voluntariness which would make much compliance a type of cooperation. Compliance resembling mere subordination, as discussed earlier, should still not be considered cooperation according to the definition employed in the thesis.

Given presence of factors such as social norms, and strong capacity of the state to monitor rule-breakers, agency in compliance decisions may in practice be limited. This is acceptable as long as some agency is at play, and other criteria for cooperation are met. Requiring full agency would potentially exclude a significant portion of compliance in high-compliance states, where strong social norms for compliance have developed. Furthermore, distinguishing between compliance influenced by social norms and compliance that is not is challenging in practice.

At the opposite end of the voluntariness spectrum, there is cooperation that bring substantial and direct benefits to the state and society, and in many cases also conform to social norms, while being highly voluntary. These include activities like voting in elections, reporting crimes, and engaging in public affairs. While they are not typically considered as part of the scope of citizen obligations in normative discussions (Klosko, 2011), there have been suggestions that they should be (Duus-Otterström, 2021). Importantly, this is where cooperation should differ from compliance, as it is not obvious that an highly voluntary act - not resulting from any formal state dictates - should be classified as compliance. Given the evident and direct societal advantages of this type of acts, coupled with the associated costs, these activities fall within the category of cooperation as understood here. The definition also encompasses a category of behavior positioned somewhere between law compliance and civic duties, such as following recommendations and information from public authorities, agreeing to answer questions from public authorities, and joining the army (Levi, 1997).

3.3 The social contract and other contracts

Contracts are represented in a number of disciplines – as the subject of study, or as an analytical tool to examine relationships and exchange between different parts. They range from concrete and formal contracts covered in economics to more abstract and ideational conceptions within other social science disciplines (Rubin, 2012). Contracts – formal or informal – may be formed between two business parts, between collectives, or between members of a society. Due to this variety, definitions fluctuate from “bilateral coordination agreement” (Brousseau and Glachant, 2002) within economics, to something like “sets of individual beliefs regarding reciprocal obligations” within psychology (Rousseau, 1989).

Ever since the development of the first 17th century social contract theories, the social contract has been the most prominent contract type within political science and other social sciences disciplines. The social contract is a powerful model for analyzing the relationship between states and citizens that could be used empirically – as analytical tool – to describe societal, reciprocal relationships, but also normatively. This division roughly corresponds to contractarian vs. contractualist approaches to the social contract (Freeman, 1990). In the contractualist branch, the contract model “(...) offers solution to political and moral dilemmas by asking what a rational group of individuals would reasonably agree to” (Hampton, 2018, p. 478). Rawls’ (1971) theory of justice is a modern example of this application.

The contractarian approach, on the other hand, analyzes and describes the relationship between those in power and the governed, and the agreements between these parts (D’Agostino, Gaus, and Thrasher, 2024). Contemporary applications are varied in their usage, although the contractarian approach initially corresponded to rationalizing the existence of a state and state powers and the subordination of citizens (Hobbes, 2018 [1651]; Locke, 2016 [1689]; Rousseau, 2005 [1762]). Societal relationships under analysis could be horizontal, hence addressing relations between individuals or social groups at the societal level (Korn et al., 2020; Loewe, Zintl, and Houdret, 2021), and the sovereign is not necessarily limited to state power (Revkin and Ahram, 2020). As the relationship of interest here, the remainder of the discussion will however be delimited to the social contract between a state and its citizens.

Compared to the rich tradition of analyzing the social contract normatively, research on the empirical features of social contracts is more scarce. However, there are some exceptions. Loewe, Zintl, and Houdret (2021) argues that empirically, social contracts are characterized by their substance, scope, and temporal dimension. The substance is referring to the very heart and fundamentals of the contract, describing what is part of the obligations and exchange between the involved parts. Between states and citizens this is partly done formally by a constitution, but as Loewe, Zintl, and Houdret (2021) points out, the formal part of the contract only catches parts of the reciprocal expectations between states and citizens. Thus by definition, when we refer to the social contract we (almost) always mean something additional to the written constitution. The social contract in this way has social properties, building on mutual expectations that are formed socially and over time and that consequently may look very different across context. Citizen perceptions of what the state "should" be able to deliver are critical for the interpretation of contracts in this sense, and may include personal-level factors such as life satisfaction (Esaiasson, Dahlberg, and Kokkonen, 2020). As pointed out by Rubin (2012, p. 329), the social contract “(...) resides in overall norms of reciprocity, the social glue that allows societies to exist and that cuts across but exists within different social categories”.

Expectations and perceptions of the contract may differ between different social

groups and geographical areas (Bishara, Jurkovich, and Berman, 2023), leading to the conclusion that the social contract can have a different strength in different groups of the population (Soifer, 2012; Brinkerhoff, Wetterberg, and Wibbels, 2018). This variation in reach is what constitutes Loewe, Zintl, and Houdret’s (2021) “scope” dimension of the social contract. Their temporal dimension, lastly, concerns the durability of contracts, and how they may be renegotiated and developing over time as some of the conditions of the contract changes. This will be discussed more in Section 4.

Empirical approaches to the social contract has resulted in “sub-contracts” of the social contract model, describing more delimited areas of state-citizen reciprocal exchange. A well-examined “sub-contract” is the fiscal contract, concerning agreements between states and citizens regarding taxation (Levi, 1988; Timmons, 2005; Fjeldstad and Semboja, 2001; Alm and Torgler, 2006; Scheve and Stasavage, 2016; Scholz and Lubell, 1998). As with the social contract in general, the fiscal contract may be understood on an abstract level and as an analytical label for the aspect of state-citizen relationship concerning tax. In addition, it could be used more practically and empirically, as a tool to describe how state-citizen dynamics in the taxation area differ between contexts or across time. As a citizen obligation that is highly applicable and comparable cross-nationally, tax compliance, or citizen’s attitudes toward taxation, is a frequently analyzed feature of the social (fiscal) contract and typically used as measurement of rule compliance (Touchton, Wampler, and Peixoto, 2021; Nistotskaya and D’Arcy, 2023; Ali, Fjeldstad, and Sjursen, 2014).

Another contract sub-theme concerns the stability of inequality in different contexts, dealing with the question of why different countries end up in different persistent scenarios of redistribution (Benabou, 2000; Alston et al., 2013). The interplay between certain citizen demands and state provision is argued to contribute to creating stable equilibria of redistribution over time, emphasizing the contractual features characterizing this question.

3.4 The cooperation contract

The notion of a “cooperation contract” fills the conceptual gap that arises between the theoretical framework of the social contract (Loewe, Zintl, and Houdret, 2021; Besley, 2020), associated “subcontracts” (Feld and Frey, 2007; Bird and Zolt, 2015; Timmons, 2005), and the definition of citizen cooperation with the state as previously suggested. When it comes to empirical approaches to the contractual relationship between states and citizens, there is both a well-developed literature dedicated to the explanations behind citizen compliance in general (see Section 2.5), as well as a more specific literature focusing on the fiscal contract and tax compliance (Timmons, 2005; Scholz and Lubell, 1998; Feld and Frey, 2007). In practice, however, these two literatures overlap, as tax compliance besides being studied as a phenomenon

in itself also is treated as the standard proxy for general citizen compliance (Levi, 1988). In addition, there are more fragmented literatures focusing on explaining informal citizen cooperation (Korn et al., 2020; Devine et al., 2023; Nivette et al., 2021; Bargain and Aminjonov, 2020), together with some macro-level analyses of contractual relationships between state and citizens in different contexts (Loewe, Zintl, and Houdret, 2021; Alston et al., 2013).

Although it is clear that these different literatures individually make substantial contributions to questions of contractual state-citizen dynamics and conditions for citizen cooperation, it is equally clear that the literature would benefit from a common theoretical ground. Based on what we know about the voluntary elements of citizen compliance, it would, first, make sense to treat compliance and more informal types of cooperation as similar types of phenomena. The fact that previous research has shown that compliance with formal law has a voluntary element (Scholz and Lubell, 1998; Levi, 1988) means that the line between compliance and cooperation is blurred, making it motivated to analyze them under the same theoretical umbrella. We can probably expect there to be additional mechanisms involved for breaking formal rules compared to informal rules, such as deterrence and punishment (Alm, McClelland, and Schulze, 1992), which will be discussed more in the next section. Still, from what we know about rule compliance, the difference between such compliance and voluntary cooperation should not be large enough to motivate different sets of theoretical frameworks when understanding and explaining this type of citizen behavior. They should both belong to a broader category of cooperation, which is in line with the definition of cooperation used in the dissertation.

Second, there is a need to move beyond a narrow focus on the fiscal contract and tax compliance as *the* act of citizen cooperation, and broaden the focus to other types of cooperation. Tax compliance is a basic citizen obligation by enabling the state to fulfill their basic obligation of providing welfare services (Loewe, Zintl, and Houdret, 2021). In this way, state-citizen dynamics in the area of taxation is a key component of the social contract that motivates specific knowledge of the fiscal contract. At the same time, tax payment and collection of revenue is far from the only exchange going on between states and citizens in contemporary societies. There is a vast number of other formal rules that citizens are obligated to follow as fundamental part of the social contract, and that helps the state in delivering security and order (Tyler, 2006). There are also more informal citizen obligations incorporated in the social contract: to follow public recommendations; adhere to information from public authorities; and cooperate on voluntary basis. Similar to tax compliance, experiences from the Covid-19 pandemic constitute comparable, cross-country behavior that actualize contractual aspects both between citizens (Korn et al., 2020) and between states and citizens (Bargain and Aminjonov, 2020; Nivette et al., 2021), but on more informal basis. Policies tackling climate change and environmental degradation are other examples of more voluntary

obligations: while a state may have the intention and even explicit goal to steer citizen behavior towards climate-friendly habits, such actions are in the end carried out by citizens on voluntary basis. By observing a broader scope of cooperation types we both may observe whether conclusions from studies of the fiscal contract are possible to generalize to citizens' cooperation in general, and what specific features (if any) that are associated with both tax compliance and other types of cooperation.

Using the "cooperation contract" as an illustration of state-citizen reciprocal exchange is thus beneficial and clarifying in several ways. In essence, it gathers different types of citizen interactions with the state under one single label, which allows for comparisons both between types of cooperation (e.g. more or less voluntary) and across policy domains. Moreover, it highlights the contractual dimension of these interactions, which is beneficial for understanding these dynamics more in depth.

3.5 Why cooperate with the state?

3.5.1 Normative perspectives on citizen cooperation

The normative foundations for citizen compliance can be traced back to early, modern social contract theory. Moral justification for complying with the state is not a concern for Hobbes, nor Locke or Rousseau (2018 [1651]; 2016 [1689]; 2005 [1762]), who regard citizen subordination as a solution to the problem of how to keep freedom in a scaled-up society – a rational choice. As contractarian perspectives, they offer reasons for citizen subordination vis-à-vis their ruler by rationalizing this act from subordinates' point of view (D'Agostino, Gaus, and Thrasher, 2024). Their ideas regarding the nature of subordination differ, where one distinction has been described as giving up our freedom to a Leviathan (Hobbes), vs. keeping our freedom but delegating power to representatives (Locke) (Hampton, 2018). In Rousseau's (2005 [1762]) view, citizens are instead submitting to a general will, and as a result giving up freedom to society as a whole rather than to a sovereign.

Most of later modern social contract perspectives fall instead under a contractualist umbrella with the common premise that the social contract can be justified on moral grounds (Rawls, 1971; Scanlon, 2000). If citizens' consent to enter the social contract with the state was key for early contract theory (Locke, 2016 [1689]; Pitkin, 1965), a more horizontal agreement is the more important feature of moral accounts. Obedience to a state is here rightful on basis of political obligations individuals have vis-à-vis other individuals and the political entity to which they all belong (D'Agostino, Gaus, and Thrasher, 2024; Simmons, 1979). In an early case against free-riders, Hart (1955, p. 185) states that: "(w)hen a number of persons conduct any joint enterprise according to the rules and thus restrict their liberty, those who have submitted to these restrictions when required have a right to a similar submission from those who have benefitted by their submission". This is the basic, reciprocal premise of the principle of

fair play (Hart, 1955), stating that individuals should adhere to the law because not contributing by giving up one’s fair share of restricted freedom would be unfair to other citizens. By following the law, citizens contribute to provide everyone in the entity with their fair share of benefits (Hart, 1955; Simmons, 1979). A condition for political obligations to come into play is that the state apparatus is indeed producing mutually beneficial outcomes and thus builds on just institutional arrangements (Rawls, 1964; Dagger, 1977). This condition has given rise to a debate over “content-dependency” of political obligations, where some would suggest that the nature of political obligations should be decisive of the content of different laws (Klosko, 2011).

3.5.2 Empirical perspectives on citizen cooperation

Deterrence-based motives, such as the perceived risk of being detected as noncooperator and an evaluation of associated punishments, were for long central to explaining compliance decisions empirically. When cooperation is about complying with laws, perception of risk/punishment can have direct importance for the individual’s willingness to take the risk of being caught (Alm, McClelland, and Schulze, 1992). But deterrence may also have a more indirect effect, by influencing an assessment of cooperation levels among peers (Levi, Sacks, and Tyler, 2009; Herreros, 2023; Tabellini, 2008). This is important in the sense that it provides individuals with a cue of how effectful – and reasonable – their own cooperation will be (Levi, Sacks, and Tyler, 2009). If the risk of being caught and punished is perceived as very small, this may signal that general cooperation levels among peers will be low. Even if only a small risk of being caught does not necessarily make an individual more willing to take that risk, it can thus still delimit incentives for cooperation by making one’s own contribution appear unfair or ineffective under such conditions (Herreros, 2023).

Over time, the literature has evolved towards placing more emphasis on alternative explanations for cooperation. Such explanations are more in line with contractual models, emphasizing citizen cooperation as part of a reciprocal exchange with the state. Reciprocity is an important topic in the social dilemma literature, and has been identified as a critical factor for cooperation in small-scale settings (Fischbacher, Gächter, and Fehr, 2001; Ostrom and Walker, 2003; Gächter and Herrmann, 2009). It has also been demonstrated that citizens find reciprocal principles to be attractive in international cooperation, in the sense that they support sanctioning of free-riders (Tingley and Tomz, 2014). Essentially, reciprocity as factor pinpoints the conditionality of cooperative behavior, in other words, that people are willing to cooperate against their short-term private interest under condition that others also cooperate. Even with an initial intention of cooperation, few individuals are willing to be an unconditional cooperator in a group of free-riders. Lab findings suggest that in order for cooperation to remain on a high level, a certain level of peer cooperation must be reached and

maintained. If participants perceive that cooperation levels decrease, the situation will soon take an uncooperative route and contribution levels will quickly decrease (Fischbacher, Gächter, and Fehr, 2001). Reciprocal interaction in smaller entities can be facilitated by factors such as homogeneity in the group, as this increases possibilities for social sanctions and shared morality (Charnysh, Finkel, and Gehlbach, 2023; Habyarimana et al., 2007; Tabellini, 2008).

In the absence of natural moral bonds, such as in society settings, moral behavior can become less costly through proper law enforcement (Tabellini, 2008). A first function for the state is thus to serve as a guarantor and promoter of well-functioning citizen reciprocity. But citizens' cooperation with the state may also be understood as "repayments" of state-delivered services, in line with similar reciprocal principles identified at the small-scale level (Levi, Sacks, and Tyler, 2009; Feld and Frey, 2007; Hug and Spörri, 2011; Touchton, Wampler, and Peixoto, 2021; Alm, McClelland, and Schulze, 1992; Fjeldstad and Semboja, 2001; Ali, Fjeldstad, and Sjursen, 2014). Reciprocity is one potential explanation to why states with a strong and stable track record of effectively delivering welfare services, rights and freedoms also are able to generate high, stable levels of citizen cooperation (Acemoglu, 2005). The state may thus affect cooperation levels not only through monitoring and sanctioning, but also by the extent the state is being perceived as a reciprocal "cooperator" who offers reasonable repayments in exchange for cooperation.

Literature on citizen compliance provides useful guidance on satisfactory state offers, which also points at important mechanisms involved. Being provided with decent welfare services, political rights, and values such as fairness, transparency or trustworthiness embedded in public institutions are all factors that have been linked to citizen cooperation (Tyler, 2006; Marien and Hooghe, 2011; Stauffer, Miller, and Keiser, 2023; Bodea and LeBas, 2016; Ali, Fjeldstad, and Sjursen, 2014; Levi, Sacks, and Tyler, 2009). Fairness in the sense "ability-to-pay" has for example been suggested an important principle for successful taxation (Scheve and Stasavage, 2016). Fairness could also refer to procedural considerations, i.e. experiencing that decisions are made with fair procedures (Tyler, 2006; Fisk and Cherney, 2017), the experience that one is treated fairly in comparison to peers (Karim, 2020), distributional concerns (Fisk and Cherney, 2017), or that sacrifices are fairly compensated (Gaikwad, Genovese, and Tingley, 2022). Trustworthiness has been argued to be composed of two components: first, good intentions of the trusted and second, competence in the domain over which trust is given (Levi and Stoker, 2000). Good intentions include for example a perceived care about the truster and a belief that the trusted will act in the interest of the truster. In line with this, it has been suggested that a citizen perception of shared identity with the state or public representatives is important, both for generating positive perceptions of the state and for the willingness to cooperate (Karim, 2020; Hur, 2020; Stauffer, Miller, and Keiser, 2023).

From the observations regarding state delivery and cooperation, cooperation can be understood purely reciprocally, that is, as an exchange or trade with public authorities. In exchange for cherished goods or values, citizens are willing to reward the state with cooperation. An alternative model is that credible state services provided to citizens, delivered in a credible way, give rise to perceptions of attractive state characteristics, which in turn generate a willingness to cooperate on a voluntary basis. Over time, reciprocal traits stimulate institutional trust and legitimacy which further fuel citizen cooperation (Tyler, 2006; Marien and Hooghe, 2011). Deterrence could still play a role in this type of explanation model, as a demonstrated capacity to punish free-riders should make the state being perceived as effective, fair and competent (Levi, Sacks, and Tyler, 2009; Herreros, 2023). It has also been suggested that a trustworthy state may enhance trust among peers (Sønderskov and Dinesen, 2016), which would strengthen the likelihood of peer cooperation- and reciprocity over time.

Previous research is not conclusive regarding which factors and mechanisms to give most weight in explaining citizens' cooperation with the state. Some studies suggest that explanatory factors likely should be understood in combination (Ali, Fjeldstad, and Sjursen, 2014; Bodea and LeBas, 2016). The ability of a state to signal attractive values, such as fairness, has been shown to triumph service provision as a base for legitimacy under certain conditions (Fisk and Cherney, 2017). It has also been suggested that although perceived procedural fairness and policy output both are important for citizens' level of political trust, perceived fairness could balance the negative effects unsatisfactory service delivery may have on political trust (De Blok and Kumlin, 2022). In line with an idea of "authoritarian bargain", authoritarian states may be able to compensate for the absence of democratic benefits, such as political rights, by providing other types of services (Desai, Olofsgård, and Yousef, 2009). Ostrom's (2000) observation regarding different player types in collective action dilemmas may be relevant to understanding patterns of support for different - or combined - explanation models, in the sense that it is likely that different explanatory models and incentive structures apply to different individuals.

The question guiding this thesis is: How do citizens' expectations of state delivery affect their willingness to cooperate with the state? The theoretical expectation is that expectations may affect citizens' willingness to cooperate in both a positive and negative direction. By extension, a central expectation of the thesis is that citizens' expectations have a dual impact on cooperation contracts. Updated citizen expectations on the contractual exchange with the state, originating from positive experiences with the contractual exchange, should give rise to incremental changes in cooperation contracts. Such incremental changes, in turn, imply updated contract terms that both facilitate and obstruct the running of the contract. I expect that positive citizen expectations on the state's future delivery on the one hand allow the state to rely on forward-looking strategies in promoting cooperation. Such strategies should make citizens more willing to cooperate, and let the contract run more efficiently. On the other hand, I expect that increased expectations on the level or quality of state delivery may at the same time make citizens less willing to cooperate. This could be the case if citizens' demands on what needs to be delivered from the state in exchange for cooperation increase, and such demands cannot be met by states. Alternatively, a decreased willingness to cooperate could result if high expectations translate into beliefs and demands that the state will be able to operate without the cooperation from citizens. In both cases, high expectations will in this sense put constraints on the contract.

I derive this argument from combining different theoretical frameworks, in several steps. The starting point is the cooperation contract model, which stipulates collective benefits to be the outcome of a reciprocal exchange between states and citizens. As a next step, I use compliance theory to understand under what conditions such an exchange is more or less successful. Finally, I make use of different theoretical frameworks centering around how citizen expectations inform citizens' willingness to cooperate with the state. The first two steps have been accounted for in previous sections. The focus of this section is the last step, drawing on previous findings on how expectations may affect citizens' attitudes and behavior in different respects.

A first observation to be made regarding the (empirical) understanding of cooperation contracts is that there is a tension between stability and movement. On the one hand, there is an inherent idea of over-time dynamics, and acknowledgment of state-citizen relationships as something taking shape slowly over time. North (1993) points out that developing credible commitments and gaining a good state reputation requires time, and that social norms need time to adapt along with formal rules in order for institutions to be successful. While it may appear like such over-time approaches

allow for state-citizen relationships to be constantly on the move, these notions at the same time involve strong ideas of path dependency. The role of time, in this sense, is mainly to reproduce and enhance certain patterns of state-citizen dynamics. Factors such as culture, legacy, and historical track records are assumed to create a stable development against certain societal dynamics observed in the present. These dynamics, in turn, can be beneficial or non-beneficial for the state-citizen exchange (Almond and Verba, 1963; Besley and Persson, 2009; Collier, 2017; Benabou, 2000).

A commonly used illustration is the one of societies being encapsulated in either vicious or virtuous circles of state-citizen cooperation (Mcloughlin, 2015). A vicious circle implies a scenario where state-citizen reciprocity is malfunctioning, and most citizens are unwilling to cooperate with public authorities due to unsatisfactory state offers. As a result, public goods may not be delivered in the way intended, which further enhances citizens' unwillingness to cooperate. In the 'virtuous circle' scenario, opposite conditions are present: citizens cooperate as they trust public goods to be delivered, and as a result of cooperation, public authorities may continuously deliver as planned. Delivery, in turn, strengthens citizens' tendency for cooperation (Levi, 1988).

Over-time dynamics are thus acknowledged in the literature in the sense that they give rise to a stable state-citizen relationship. There is a clear time dimension present in the cyclical illustrations: the circles run over time, which should allow for new factors and experiences to be added in the state-citizen relationship. At the same time, circles are stable, follow a set path, and repeat themselves. State-citizen dynamics within the circles are assumed to be accumulative and self-reinforcing. An inherent assumption appears to be that patterns of state-citizen interaction established early on in the contractual relationship are repeated, only with greater strength (Besley and Persson, 2014).

As a result of the idea of long-term stability in cooperation contracts, most analyses of citizens' cooperation take a cross-national approach (Marien and Werner, 2019; Ali, Fjeldstad, and Sjørnsen, 2014; Marien and Hooghe, 2011; Bargain and Aminjonov, 2020), focus on larger contract shifts within single countries (Loewe, Zintl, and Houdret, 2021; Alston et al., 2013; Bird and Zolt, 2015), or take a "snap-shot" approach to a current cooperation contract by studying a single case (Fjeldstad and Semboja, 2001; Touchton, Wampler, and Peixoto, 2021; Bodea and LeBas, 2016; Bishara, Jurkovich, and Berman, 2023). From these types of studies, we have learned about what factors that are present in an (un)fruitful state-citizen exchange; which of these factors that are most important for a certain exchange to work in a comparative perspective; and under what circumstances cooperation contracts are eventually non-functional or unsatisfactory to the extent that they break apart or change altogether.

Significantly less attention has been paid to more subtle changes that are added to cooperation contracts over time. Prominent and detailed over-time analyses of contract

dynamics are found in the taxation area, where the historical development of fiscal contracts in different contexts has been traced historically (Levi, 1988; Scheve and Stasavage, 2016). Such approaches have been key in pointing out factors that make a cooperation contract more or less successful under certain institutional circumstances, and offer more detailed accounts of how the terms of the contract are updated along with changing circumstances and citizen perceptions. Not only do such approaches let us understand how different countries have ended up in different patterns of state-citizen interaction, but also show what more subtle dynamics that may lead state-citizen relationships to develop in a certain direction. Further knowledge of smaller, incremental changes in cooperation contracts would provide a more detailed understanding of the underpinnings and mechanisms behind the terms of citizens' cooperation. It can also help explain unexpected and deviant patterns in seemingly stable contracts, which may help in predicting larger contract shifts.

Especially for "positive equilibrium" contracts - characterized by well-functioning state-citizen interactions - there is a lack of knowledge of what dynamics that are added over time. In line with the idea of the virtuous circle, we can observe that beneficial state-citizen dynamics generate further good dynamics, resulting in beneficial societal outcomes. But there are reasons to expect that positive repeated interaction updates the terms of the cooperation contract in other ways than just strengthening and self-reinforcing established patterns. With a constantly running circle, in which citizens get a chance to update their perceptions of public authorities, there is a likelihood that the terms of the cooperation contract change along with those updated perceptions. What we then may be dealing with is an incrementally changing contract under the surface of a seemingly stable equilibrium.

I propose that one such factor that should be expected to constantly add to the terms, as a result of repeated state delivery, is citizen expectations. Although being a common feature of several factors associated with cooperation, the role of expectations for citizens' willingness to cooperate is both poorly theorized and empirically explored in previous research. I will address this gap by developing two sets of expectations regarding how citizen expectations may matter for cooperation. I will do this by drawing on previous research indirectly pointing at a potential dual role for expectations.

One of Levi's (1988) important contributions is the introduction of the concept of transaction costs into state-citizen dynamics. Transaction costs could be understood as the costs associated with upholding a contract and deliver transactions, and is an important feature of understanding formal contracts (Williamson, 1979; Coase, 1937; North, 1993). Essentially, Levi's (1988) point is that state credibility decreases the transaction costs of states in promoting compliance, by enabling states to rely on quasi-voluntary compliance. This is possible since credibility makes citizens more willing to cooperate. Further empirical support for this idea from the micro-level is

provided from literature studying citizen orientations towards long-term investment. It is here found that state credibility facilitates long-term decision making for states, as citizens find future commitments under such circumstances more reliable. As a result, they are more willing to agree to make sacrifices in the present. (Jacobs and Matthews, 2012; 2017; Fairbrother et al., 2021; Busemeyer and Beiser-McGrath, 2023). An inherent feature of credibility, as well as other factors connected to cooperation that are repeatedly delivered, is that it should increase citizens' expectations about future delivery. This points at a potential role for expectations in positively influencing citizens' willingness to cooperate with the state.

At the same time, if high expectations place demands on state delivery that cannot be met by the state, or if expectations make citizens believe that the state should have the capacity to continue delivering without citizens' cooperation, this may instead decrease citizen cooperation. Findings from diverse fields support the observation that expectations may alter state-citizen relationships in unexpected, more negative directions. Mcloughlin (2015) highlights several factors with potential of altering the relationship between government performance and citizen legitimacy and make it less straightforward. One of them is expectations. The basic suggestion is that in order to give rise to the credibility required in order to generate cooperation, state delivery must be in line with citizens current expectations (Mcloughlin, 2015).

This is a claim similar to the "expectancy disconfirmation model" (EDM), postulating that citizens' satisfaction with government performance is a result of government performance minus expectations (James, 2009). Support for the model is obtained from several different contexts: attitudes to the US Congress (Kimball and Patterson, 1997); citizen evaluations of state highways in Georgia (US) (Poister and Thomas, 2011); local-level England (James, 2009), and from a recent meta-analysis (Zhang et al., 2022). Experimental findings further confirms the model (Van Ryzin, 2013). There is no indication, on the other hand, that expectations on performance would also alter the relationship between satisfaction and political trust (Seyd, 2015; Kumlin, Nemčok, and Van Hootegem, 2024).

In studies of declining political trust in established democracies, however, it has been pointed out that decreased political trust should be read as a sign of growing skepticism in parts of the citizenry (Bruno, 2017; Van De Walle and Six, 2020). Citrin and Stoker (2018, p. 57) suggests that an important part of the decline can be attributed to citizen perceptions of public authorities not meeting citizen standards: "the underlying thread in every hypothesis or finding is that trust declines when governments and institutions fail to meet expected goals or follow prescribed norms". Miller and Listhaug (1999) makes a similar observation, in finding that political distrust among citizens is associated with higher expectations on government performance in a study of the US, Norway, and Sweden. In line with this, Hooghe, Marien and Oser (2017) finds an association between strong democratic ideals and low levels of

political trust in a European context. van der Meer (2017) points at within-country, longitudinal effects of macroeconomic performance on political trust, suggesting that citizens make use of prior economic performance as a point of reference when assessing economic performance.

Being an important predictor for citizen cooperation and compliance, Norris (1999) point out that decline in political trust may have implications for citizens' willingness to cooperate with the state. Although not studied explicitly, the discussion over declining trust thus indirectly suggest that expectations could also have a more negative influence on cooperation. Still, the role of expectations in explaining these more negative trends in state-citizen relationships, including the possibility that expectations may influence citizens' cooperation negatively, is both poorly theorized and empirically underexplored.

4.1 Two expectations regarding citizen expectations

Taken together, these tendencies lead me to formulate two different expectations regarding how citizens expectations should affect their willingness to cooperate with the state. While it is plausible to assume that different kinds of citizen expectations - including those rooted in personal preferences - may have an impact on citizens' willingness to cooperate, those in interest here will be expectations on state delivery that are stemming from past experiences with delivery, and the cooperation contract in general. As a result, expectations in focus here will be predictive rather than normative (Hjortskov, 2020).

First, I propose that high expectations, by helping citizens overcome uncertainties about future state delivery- and conduct, should make citizens more willing to cooperate. When citizens expect their cooperation to be repaid in terms of continuous state delivery in the future, this should increase their willingness to cooperate in the present. The state benefits from such expectations by being able to reciprocate present cooperation not only with present delivery but also with citizens' perceptions of future delivery (hypothetical or promised). For the contract level, this results in reduced transaction costs for states of maintaining the cooperation contract in positive dynamics. In this sense, high expectations may update the terms of cooperation contracts in a positive direction, making cooperation contracts run more smoothly.

Second, I expect high expectations at the same time may decrease citizens' willingness to cooperate, if expectations develop into citizen demands on continuously high(er) state delivery. If the state fails to meet these increased demands, citizens may become less willing to cooperate if the level or quality of services provided in return no longer appears reasonable. Alternatively, expectations could make citizens to put more trust in state-led solutions, making the cooperation of citizens unnecessary. For the contract level, this means that expectations potentially also could put constraints on the running of cooperation contracts.

I will test these two expectations in three papers. In the following section, I discuss what is required to approach the argument empirically, and some ways previous research has addressed different aspects of the cooperation contract.

In order to study dynamics of the cooperation contract, I need to measure and operationalize key concepts and address some empirical challenges. The cooperation contract consists of several potential variables: state offers to citizens, i.e. the terms and conditions surrounding the contract; citizens' expectations of the contract and the state; as well as contract output in form of citizens' cooperation.

Much of individuals' cooperation with the state takes place in the private sphere, meaning that data access on actual behavior is not without complications. Despite this obstacle, studies have succeeded in measuring actual cooperation (Scholz and Lubell, 1998; Ali, Fjeldstad, and Sjørnsen, 2014). In the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, technique set up to trace citizen movement and adherence to travelling restrictions became a useful data source (Cingolani, 2023). Resource use that is monitored in private homes is another opportunity, enabling usage of electricity saving and water saving as outcome (Booyesen, Visser, and Burger, 2019). A problem with this type of data, in light of the cooperation definition used in this thesis, is that cooperation may be substantially informed by economic incentives, where the possibility to charge households correctly for resource use is a key reason for monitoring households in the first place.

Another approach to individual level cooperation data in the literature is to instead focus on behavior taking place in public (Keizer, Lindenberg, and Steg, 2008). An extension of this strategy is to focus on aggregated behavior at the group level: what is not easily observed in individuals' private sphere, will show at the group level or in public statistics. This implies increased attention to contextual, rather than individual, factors as explanatory variables.

In this thesis, I approach citizens' cooperation in two different ways: via self-reported behavior (Paper 1), and via orientations towards policies involving individual sacrifices (Papers 2 and 3). Orientations, in turn, are measured in two different ways. Paper 2 builds on orientations as expressed spontaneously in social media reactions, following authentic policy announcements by local public authorities. Paper 3 employs orientations to hypothetical policies derived from survey questions in an experimental setting. Across the papers, I employ a definition of cooperation as spelled out in Section 3.2: there should be both a individual cost and a societal benefit involved, and it should leave room for some voluntariness and agency at the citizen side. I also allow for voluntariness at the state side, i.e. including cooperation that is not cooperation (compliance) with formal rules.

Self-reported cooperation has the advantage of being more easily accessed than actual behavior, but comes with risks such as desirability bias and exaggerated

reports (Kormos and Gifford, 2014). Some of these risks are also valid for attitudinal orientations towards cooperation. A further critique against orientations is that it by no means even aims to capture the actual behavior of the respondent. But measuring orientations also comes with advantages compared to self-reported behavior: by asking about one's opinion of a certain cooperation type, respondent answers should be less vulnerable to empirical and normative expectations about actual behavior in the respondent's context compared to self-reported behavior. Orientations to cooperation also add to the understanding of cooperation contracts in that they can help in targeting motives and rationalization for (non)cooperation, including individual-level factors and attitudes that are typically associated with actual cooperation. Such attitudes would normally precede actual cooperation, meaning that we with attitudes may study cooperation at a stage where a cooperation decision is formed. Orientations towards cooperation are in this way important parts of understanding the cooperation contract as a whole.

While actual cooperation has the obvious advantage of letting us observe and measure actual behavior, it typically comes with the cost of being unable to draw further conclusions about the cooperation in question. We normally can't tell from data on actual behavior only whether an individual avoids to pay taxes intentionally and strategically, as an expression of discontent or protest, or simply by mistake or due to lack of information. For these reasons, combining findings from data on actual and self-reported cooperation with data on cooperation attitudes is ideal for a more complete understanding of citizens' cooperation.

When it comes to measuring expectations, I approach them in different ways. Expectations is a broad and multifaceted concept that may take different shapes, which motivates multiple measurements. In Paper 1, I let individuals' levels of institutional trust serve as proxy for expectations. Institutional quality is used as an alternative, context-level operationalization in the paper, and other country level factors are accounted for via the multi-level analysis. In Papers 2 and 3, I select country cases on basis of assumptions of state credibility and previous delivery, which already is assumed to form the basis of different levels of expectations. In this sense, expectations are built-in parts of the design. In addition to this, Paper 3 approaches citizen expectations through a question capturing respondents' expectations on public authorities' future actions, asking of how likely citizens find it that public authorities will solve a problem in question (water provision) in the future. By the exploratory analysis in Paper 2, I identify different types of high expectations: high demands on effectiveness, on the conduct of public officials, and on public information provision.

Much in line with a general pattern of studies of citizens' cooperation, I make use of both cross-country comparisons and more focused analyses limited to single (or multiple) country contexts. As will be discussed more, cases are chosen carefully, and on basis of theoretical assumptions about the contextual contract terms.

I employ a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods. Paper 1 is a cross-country study with observational data, making use of multilevel regression analysis. Paper 2 employs qualitative text analysis, focusing on a single country case (Sweden), and Paper 3 is a comparative survey experiment conducted in two different country contexts (Sweden and South Africa). By ensuring variety in how the research question is approached, I both expand the scope of sub-questions that can be explored within the thesis, and enable a more nuanced test of my argument.

Qualitative analysis is not the most common approach for studying state-citizen relationships, although I think Paper 2 well illustrates the potential and usefulness of qualitative approaches in this area of research. This includes understanding citizens' motives for (non)cooperation more in-depth in different contexts, but should also be useful for studying important underpinning concepts of cooperation such as legitimacy and trustworthiness.

5.1 Case selection

In the thesis, I study two different types of cooperation centered around natural resources: water saving efforts (Papers 2 and 3) and recycling (Paper 1). By focusing on natural resources, the thesis expands previous research studying citizens' cooperation in compliance literature, where taxation is the dominating cooperation type (Ali, Fjeldstad, and Sjørusen, 2014; Fjeldstad and Semboja, 2001; Nistotskaya and D'Arcy, 2023; Touchton, Wampler, and Peixoto, 2021; Bodea and LeBas, 2016). Paying taxes to a state is a key cooperative act conducted by citizens, and is central to the cooperation contract in that revenue collection is a prerequisite for the production and maintaining of most collective benefits at the societal level. Paying taxes is literally an individual cost contributing to the collective good. A large focus on taxes, or from a state perspective, revenue collection (Levi, 1988) is for these reasons motivated. At the same time, paying taxes is a high-cost behavior in many contexts that is not always easy rationalized or well-institutionalized. In many developing countries, formal taxation is not the main channel for the provision of collective benefits. Instead, contributing to more informal and local institutions may be the more important type of cooperation for fulfilling the needs of a community (Lust and Rakner, 2018). Comparing findings on tax behavior across country contexts, especially comparisons between developed and developing countries, risks therefore ending up in uncertain conclusions. A further risk, applicable also to comparisons of industrialized democracies, is significant institutional variation in for example political- and economic systems that may account for the willingness among citizens to pay taxes (Steinmo and Tolbert, 1998).

When it comes to natural resources, we see examples of cooperation that are fairly comparable across contexts: to save water, not pollute nature, and take care of one's disposals is cooperation that should look fairly similar across contexts and time.

Natural resources are central to the multidisciplinary frameworks of collective action and social dilemmas, perhaps most famously analyzed in the seminal work of Ostrom (1990). As a result, natural resources as a case has been used extensively to analyze institutional prerequisites for cooperation at the group-level (Poteete and Ostrom, 2004; Agrawal and Chhatre, 2006; Dietz, Ostrom, and Stern, 2003), as well as for explaining individuals' cooperation and the rationales behind such behavior (Jagers, Berlin, and Jentoft, 2012; Sundström, 2012). However, in the broader political science literature, taxation is still the most predominating case used for analyzing individual compliance. Cooperation over natural resources is a theoretically appealing case of cooperation, where clear individual costs are necessary for clear societal benefits. Together with the fact that it travels well across contexts and time, I argue that it is a useful case to use in the study of citizen cooperation.

With reference to theoretical similarities between the cases of tax paying and sustainment of natural resources at the individual level - both cooperation types are essentially about citizens making individual sacrifices in line with societal goals - there are clear advantages of connecting them and gather them under a common theoretical framework. Paying taxes and using or sustaining resources are not necessarily always motivated on similar grounds, but should probably have more things in common than what separates them. In order to disentangle these factors, and learn to what extent we can generalize findings from individual studies of taxation or other cooperation behaviors, we need more studies that explore cooperation beyond taxation. This also applies to other types of cooperation and sacrifices that are explored to a more limited extent, and cooperation that is well-represented in other literatures but that goes under similar theoretical laws. This includes voluntary conscription (Levi, 1997), acceptance of democratic decisions and willingness to commit to democratic principles (Esaiasson, Arnesen, and Werner, 2023; Schmitter and Karl, 1991), support for long-term policy making (Jacobs, 2016; Busemeyer, 2023; Busemeyer and Beiser-McGrath, 2023), and law compliance more broadly (Tyler, 2006). By comparing different types of cooperation with the state within similar theoretical frameworks, we may evaluate to what extent these different cooperation types overlap, on what parameters they should be considered distinct types of cooperation, and how they can inform each other theoretically.

In sum, I argue that sustainment of natural resources is an advantageous case for studying citizen cooperation that should increase the possibility for generalization to other cases, country contexts, and across time. At the same time, I stay open for the possibility that this case is not theoretically all-encompassing, and carries case-specific features that constrain generalization. For this reason, I again want to stress the importance and benefits of expanding the cooperation contract framework for further tests in additional policy areas. This should both give an indication of generalization of the framework, and allow for identifying case-specific features.

When it comes to country cases, I much align with previous research on compliance by combining a comparative approach with more focused country studies: Paper 1 compares countries in a European context; Paper 2 focus solely on the Swedish context as high-cooperation context; and Paper 3 compares Sweden and South Africa based on an assumption of different contract terms and history of state delivery in the area of drinking water provision. The inclusion of Sweden in two different papers is motivated on basis of two different criteria. First, Sweden has experienced local water shortages during recent years. This opened up both for studying local water policies as a real-world case in Paper 2, and contributed to increasing external validity of the experiment carried out in Paper 3. Second, Sweden represents a context characterized by a stable, "high-equilibrium" cooperation contract which has been a critical requirement for the empirical strategies in Papers 2 and 3. For the inclusion of South Africa as one of two cases in Paper 3 goes the opposite: besides the fact that South Africa has experienced severe water shortage in recent years, the choice was informed by the more "low-equilibrium" characteristics of the South African cooperation contract. In the next section, I will discuss the different papers included in the thesis more in depth. A summary of the contributions of the papers in relation to the theoretical expectations is provided in Table 1.

6.1 Paper 1: Recycling as a large-scale collective action dilemma: A cross-country study on trust and reported recycling behavior

Paper 1, co-authored with Niklas Harring and Sverker C. Jagers, studies the relationship between trust and citizen cooperation at different levels of trust and in a comparative perspective. It starts off in theories of the importance of trust for individuals' willingness to cooperate in line with collective goals (Scholz and Lubell, 1998; Marien and Hooghe, 2011), in this way taking a well-established micro-level approach to citizen expectations. By studying the case of recycling behavior, the paper brings cooperation- and compliance theory to a less explored policy area. Our main hypothesis is to find a positive relationship between trust and recycling behavior. In this sense, Paper 1 addresses the first expectation of the thesis, suggesting expectations to have a positive impact on cooperation. We expect both generalized and institutional trust to help individuals overcome uncertainties regarding peer behavior, which should lower perceived individual costs associated with recycling behavior.

We use data from the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) 2010 (Environment III), and the analyses build on multilevel, cross-sectional analyses. A self-reported measurement of recycling behavior is used as outcome variable. As independent variables, we use two different measurements of institutional trust (trust in politicians and trust in government), and an index consisting of two measurements of generalized trust. We also use institutional quality as an alternative independent variable, measured with Quality of Government (QoG) data.

First, we map the general relationship between the different independent variables (institutional trust, generalized trust, and institutional quality) and recycling behavior. We find that under control for relevant variables, all independent variables are positively associated with reported recycling behavior. Next, we ask whether the relationship between institutional trust and cooperation should be considered positive and linear also at the highest levels of institutional trust, or whether the relationship eventually declines. Doing this, we contribute with a novel theoretical angle on the well-theorized relationship between trust and cooperation. In this way, Paper 1 also addresses the second expectation of the thesis, i.e. that high expectations may also decrease the willingness to cooperate. We hypothesize that the relationship between institutional trust and recycling is curvilinear, i.e. positive but declining, but find no support for this claim in the data. We conclude that the relationship between different types of trust and reported recycling seems positive and linear, but that the curvilinear tendency should be further explored in high-trusting settings.

6.2 Paper 2: Motives for citizen noncompliance with ‘credible enforcers’: The case of Swedish water saving policies

In this paper, I ask what motives that may drive citizens’ noncooperation with the state in contexts with favorable contract terms.

We expect norms of cooperation and compliance in contexts characterized by credible state delivery, meaning that noncooperation in such contexts are both under-theorized and not easily mapped empirically. I address both these issues with a novel, exploratory bottom-up approach where I make use of Facebook reactions to real-world policies. Policies were communicated on Facebook by Swedish municipalities, and were all intended to make households save water. Using qualitative thematic analysis, I study 730 critical reactions to policies in 22 different municipalities between 2016 and 2020. As my ambition is to compare identified motives with motives from previous research, I use established compliance motives as a point of reference in the paper. In order to establish what is theoretically new in this context, I need an idea of what is already present in theory. Following the explorative ambition, however, I approach the material without any comparisons with established theory and coding is made inductively.

Paper 2 covers the second expectation of the thesis, exploring how expectations may affect cooperation negatively. More specifically, the explorative design allows me to explore the different reasons for *why* this might be the case, by looking into how citizens unpromptedly reason about expectations (and other factors) in a context where high expectations should be present. I make use of citizen motivations with the aim of mapping motives for not complying with state demands. With the chosen design, the paper does not attempt to capture cooperation per se. Instead, the paper should be considered situated in the early stages of a cooperation sequence, highlighting factors that may rationalize a noncooperation decision at a later stage.

The findings largely confirm that noncompliance motives from contexts with less favorable contract terms are valid also in the "credible enforcer" context. In addition, I identify three context-specific motives: a large focus on the (in)effectiveness of policies directed to households in relation to state-led efforts; perceived behavior and noncompliance of public authority representatives; and high demands on information. The context-specific motives indicate that new motives for not cooperating could arise as a consequence of greater expectations on state delivery, resulting in tensions in reciprocal state-citizen contracts. The paper concludes that this suggested "high-expectation effect" should be explored further, including how well identified motives translate to behavior and to other policy areas. The results also suggest that the specific cooperation terms provided by the state in different policy situations are important. State delivery- and conduct in a particular policy context seems to matter for future exchanges within that policy context, irrespective of the overall reputation

and credibility of the state.

Table 1: Summary of papers in relation to theoretical expectations

	Expectation 1	Expectation 2
	Positive expectations make citizens <i>more</i> willing to cooperate	Positive expectations make citizens <i>less</i> willing to cooperate
Paper 1	Is there a positive relationship between institutional trust and cooperation?	Is there a curvilinear relationship between institutional trust and cooperation?
Paper 2		What are the motives for noncompliance with "credible enforcers"?
Paper 3	Can credible states appeal to citizens' future expectations by making pledges about future delivery?	

6.3 Paper 3: Pledging delivery: How states may promote citizen cooperation with credible commitments

Paper 3 studies how states may leverage a credible reputation by appealing to citizens' future expectations when promoting cooperation in the present. I hypothesize that states can make use of their credibility to enhance cooperation by explicitly committing to future delivery. This should be the case since a credible commitment should have the power to raise expectations on future delivery, meaning that citizens will regard future delivery as a plausible "exchange" for present cooperation under credible conditions. In this sense, Paper 3 addresses the first expectation of the thesis, i.e. that citizen expectations may help to increase cooperation.

To test my prediction, I conduct a survey experiment ($N = 4027$) comparing a country with a credible track record of state delivery (Sweden) with a country where past state delivery has been more unstable (South Africa). The hypothesis predicts a

future commitment to be perceived as a credible state "offer" that will increase the willingness to cooperate in the Swedish sample, but not in the South African sample.

By studying the role of future expectations in citizens' cooperation decisions, the paper offers a theoretical contribution by testing the usefulness and availability of "shortcut" tools to credible states in enhancing cooperation. At the same time, it tests future expectations as mechanism in models connecting state credibility to cooperation. Positive expectations about the future are inherent but under-explored aspects of such models. Trade-offs between the present and the future has been studied in research on citizens' attitudes to long-term decision making, where it has been shown that credible institutions make citizens more positive to long-term investments (Jacobs and Matthews, 2017; Busemeyer and Beiser-McGrath, 2023; Fairbrother et al., 2021). The explanation is that credible institutional arrangements should help citizens overcome uncertainties associated with long-term commitments, which seems to be a main driver of citizens' time discounting (Jacobs and Matthews, 2012). In line with a similar rationale, state credibility should provide guarantees not only regarding current but also regarding future state delivery, potentially with the result that citizens accept states' reciprocal offers to be transferred from the present to the future. By appealing to future delivery, states would in this way be allowed to lower their costs of promoting cooperation in the present.

The experiment was conducted in the water policy context. A vignette described a scenario of local water shortage, where households need to contribute to improve the situation. In the treatment condition, public authorities commit to make investments in order to avoid problems in the future. All respondents were then asked about their opinion on five different water saving policies involving individual sacrifices. These policies were merged into an index constituting the dependent variable.

In line with the hypothesis, the future commitment increased citizens' expectations on future delivery in the Swedish sample. However, this increase did not translate into a greater willingness to cooperate among respondents. To better understand these results, I conducted exploratory analyses to assess the theoretical framework underpinning the experiment. The results from the exploratory analyses unexpectedly highlighted that citizen expectations were equally high in both samples, and that support for cooperation policies was slightly higher in the South African sample. These findings suggest that the salience of the water situation in South Africa, somewhat unexpectedly, may have heightened citizen expectations, their willingness to cooperate, as well as perceptions of state credibility. Based on an identified relationship between citizen expectations and cooperation in the sample, the exploratory also supports the basic assumption that future expectations on state delivery should be considered important for citizens' willingness to cooperate.

The focus of this dissertation is the continuous, dynamic changes of *cooperation contracts* between state and citizens, by which they interact reciprocally in delivering collective benefits under specific terms. In studying changes in the cooperation contract, the dissertation contributes to the question of under what conditions citizens are willing to cooperate and sacrifice in line with collective goals, and how and why we may see incremental shifts in such conditions over time.

In the dissertation, I ask specifically how citizens' expectations on state delivery impact their willingness to cooperate with the state. In this sense, I am interested in how expectations may update cooperation contracts. I conclude that citizen expectations, generated by continuous, acquired experiences of state delivery, may be expected to affect citizen cooperation in both positive and negative directions. I conclude that expectations cause continuous updates in contracts that affect the terms of contracts and the dynamics of the state-citizen exchange. Such updates could affect the contract to run more smoothly and make the exchange more efficient, but could also obstruct the contractual exchange. Positive expectations may spur citizens' cooperation by making them more convinced about the state's future intentions. This, in turn, make them more willing to sacrifice in line with collective goals in the present. At the same time, positive past experiences of satisfying state delivery may create expectations that translate into increasing demands on continuous and improved state delivery. Such expectations may result in tensions in the state-citizen exchange, and a more constrained contract. The findings also suggest that experiences from a certain policy domain may give rise to positive expectations in that limited policy domain, which may compensate for less positive experiences in other policy areas and state delivery at large. On the other hand, findings also indicate that generally high delivery and expectations may not be able to compensate for perceived flaws of delivery in a limited domain. In this sense, the findings of the thesis opens up for the possibility that a country context may in fact be characterized by several, parallel cooperation contracts in different policy areas rather than an overall, larger contract.

Previous research on the empirical underpinnings of contractual exchange has mainly focused on macro-level cooperation contract development up to a certain stable equilibrium (Acemoglu, 2005; Besley and Persson, 2014; Benabou, 2000), or on larger contract shifts (Alston et al., 2013; Rubin, 2012; Loewe, Zintl, and Houdret, 2021). Research on citizen cooperation and compliance, on the other hand, is mainly characterized by comparative "snap-shot" approaches, without taking contract dynamics into account (Bodea and LeBas, 2016; Marien and Hooghe, 2011; Stauffer, Miller, and Keiser, 2023). This thesis offers an integration of these two perspectives, by studying

micro-level processes of citizen cooperation through the lens of a contract approach. In doing so, the thesis adds to several branches of literature concerned with citizen cooperation- and compliance, and state-citizen dynamics.

The thesis demonstrates the existence of smaller, continuous changes at the micro-level that continuously may update contract dynamics in different directions. An implication is that we should probably view contracts as dynamic and on the move - also those contracts appearing to be characterized by a stable equilibrium of state-citizen exchange. Updated expectations have here been put forward as one aspect that may affect contract dynamics under a calm and stable surface. Although the thesis has provided some suggestions for how expectations may be important for contracts, the role of expectations should be explored more in depth and by different approaches. Another avenue for future research would be to map additional aspects that may cause incremental updates in cooperation contracts.

An additional future task would be to address some of the limitations of this dissertation. This includes studying whether and when updated contract dynamics translate into actual behavior, as well as studying the role of expectations in other country- and policy contexts. Especially the South African case in Paper 3 actualizes the question of generalization and the extent to which certain dynamics should be attributed to contextual circumstances. Moreover, the suggestion of parallel cooperation contracts actualized in Paper 3 should be studied more extensively, including interaction and spill-over effects between such contracts.

On a general level, the thesis illustrates the benefits and relevance of taking a contract approach to the production and sustainment of collective benefits, and to citizens' cooperation. Still, there are many aspects of the contract left to explore. By focusing on expectations, the thesis mainly addresses a temporal dimension of the contract (Loewe, Zintl, and Houdret, 2021): citizens form expectations by evaluating prior experiences, and those expectations help shape beliefs about what will happen in the future. Expectations thus plays a role for the trade-off between the present and the future characterizing many policy areas (Jacobs, 2016). At the same time, the temporal dimension is only a limited part of what could be considered contract dynamics. Other aspects suggested by Loewe et. al. (2021) concerns the *substance* of the contract, i.e. what should be exchanged within the contract. Paper 2 speaks to this to some extent, by suggesting that in a scenario with high expectations on state delivery, citizens may start to count on state-led solutions over citizen contributions. *Scope* is the last dimension put forward by Loewe et al. (2021), highlighting the perceived reach of the contract. This corresponds to the different strength of the contract in different parts of the population, for example based on geography (Brinkerhoff, Wetterberg, and Wibbels, 2018). However, one could here also include citizen perceptions of what the scope should be, i.e. negotiations of the boundaries of the contract. Related to this, an additional factor should be distributional concerns, which may affect how

willing citizens are to accept certain sacrifices (Gaikwad, Genovese, and Tingley, 2022). Further in-depth analyses of contract aspects, together with a more comprehensive account of what makes up contract dynamics, should be another priority for future research.

The thesis suggests, in line with previous research, that despite the wide range of factors that may influence an individual's decision to cooperate, the actions of the state should be considered a central part of that decision. An important addition by the thesis is how actions of the state may also be informed - facilitated or constrained - by certain state-citizen dynamics in the cooperation contract. This suggests that we should continue to analyze state- and citizen actions in relation to one another and see them as interdependent. Centering analyses around a contractual, relational model of states and citizens in jointly delivering collective benefits effectively shed light on new questions that may be asked in this domain of research.

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Included papers I-III

- I Harring, N., Jagers, S. C., and Nilsson, F. (2018). Recycling as a large-scale collective action dilemma: A cross-country study on trust and reported recycling behavior. *Resources, Conservation, and Recycling* 140: 85-90.
- II Nilsson, F. (2025a). Motives for citizen noncompliance with ‘credible enforcers’: The case of Swedish water saving policies. Unpublished manuscript.
- III Nilsson, F. (2025b). Pledging delivery: How states may promote citizen cooperation with credible commitments. Unpublished manuscript.