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Generational Understanding of Social Support, Youth Civic Engagement and Coping as Aspects of Resilience in Socialist and Post-socialist Slovenia (1980-2011)

A thesis submitted for the Degree of PhD to National University of Ireland, Galway

Tanja Kovačič

Professor Pat Dolan, Dr. Anne Byrne

Supervisors

School of Political Science and Sociology, College of Arts, Social Sciences and Celtic Studies, National University of Ireland, Galway

September 2015
Najviše mi smeta nestabilnost, nesigurnost...Naša djeca se ne realiziraju. Radjaju se djeca koja u 80% slučajeva neće realizirati svoje ideje, snove: ma šta, neće ni pokušat. I život će s tim. I oni će imat djecu. I kako će oni njima iskustvo prinijest? Nemoguće, da je sve nemoguće u stvari. Jedno frustracijo će nosit, I nezadovoljstvo sa sobom, kao osobe. I to je najveći problem u javnim prostorima. Dakle ljudi se ne mogu realizirat, ne mogu se ostvarit (Mario Knezović (Zoster), Al Jezeera Balkans, Čuvari zvuka-Letu Štuke i Zoster)

This thesis is dedicated to all my companions, friends and participants from the territories of the former Yugoslavia who have never stopped questioning the dissolution of the Yugoslav state and rejected all forms of banal nationalism.

1 I am really bothered with instability, insecurity...Our children do not realise themselves. 80% of children do not realise their ideas, their dreams. They do not even try to realise them. And they will live with this. And then they will have children too: what kind of experience are they going to pass on them? Impossible...that everything is impossible. As human beings they will be frustrated with themselves. This is the biggest problem in our public spaces. That people cannot realise themselves, they cannot form themselves. For more see: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q36Ea_2Qm94
Abstract

This thesis explores the link between protective factors and youth coping as aspects of resilience within the context of social change. The most recent evidence from resilience research shows there is a significant link between cultural contexts, risk, and individuals’ coping strategies (Gunnestad, 2006; Ungar, 2008). Little research has been carried out on the collective influence of state and political ideologies on resilience and particularly so in societies that have experienced sudden and rapid socio-political change.

Slovenia is one such example, having undergone rapid socio-political transformation since 1991. This thesis argues that young people in particular have been adversely affected by social change. Once recognised as a privileged and active societal group, young people have experienced increased levels of vulnerability under post-socialism (Ule, 2012, p. 29). Secure and supported pathways to adulthood were a feature of socialism. In contrast, under post-socialism, transitions to adulthood are prolonged and more ‘risky’ (Roberts, 2009). The ways in which these changes have influenced protective factors and the resultant consequences for youth coping has been neither explored nor explained. Through a detailed examination of the link between protective factors (social support and youth civic engagement) and youth coping in Slovenia, this thesis makes an original contribution to the field of youth coping and resilience.

Qualitative data from semi-structured interviews with three generations (socialist, transitional, and post-socialist) provides a valuable comparison of youth experiences of growing up within a context of social change. This research argues that socio-political transformation has had a significant impact on: a) the provision of social support for youth; b) both the organisation and meaning of youth civic engagement; and c) youth experiences with transitions to adulthood. Under socialism, the holistic provision of social support was connected with state-provided social welfare and
societal care. These sources of support are no longer available, and more demand is placed on sources of family support.

Diverse socio-political contexts have generated different opportunities for youth civic engagement. The data shows that forms of supported engagement under socialism have been replaced with individualised forms of participation under post-socialism. In this regard, the role of a state versus market provision of opportunities and structures for youth engagement requires special attention. Practices of holistic support and supported engagement in comparison with privatised and individualised engagement have a major impact on transitions to adulthood. Although younger (particularly post-socialist) generations have a wider range of opportunities in the spheres of education, work, and everyday life, the success of transitions to adulthood depends on individual sources and resources. Self-reliance and self-activation become recognised coping strategies when dealing with daily challenges in a post-socialist setting.

Despite different experiences with state-provided opportunities, youth stories across generations can be read within narratives of nostalgia for socialism. This nostalgia is indicative of the extent to which protective factors (e.g. youth civic engagement and social support) are ingrained in societies and cultures, pointing to the significance of the link between individual and societal resilience. In this regard, a strong message for future youth work and youth policies in Slovenia is that strong societal care and equal opportunities for all young people are required for successful transitions to adulthood.
Acknowledgments

Thinking, writing and re-writing this PhD was a highly valuable, but also a challenging process which would not be possible without help of many people. I would like to express my special gratitude to my supervisors: Professor Pat Dolan and Dr. Anne Byrne for their guidance, wisdom and support. I have learnt so much from both of you. Many thanks for not giving up on me!

I would also like to thank to all colleagues from UCFRC, NUI Galway, particularly to coordinators of the structured PhD programme Dr. John Canavan and Dr. Allyn Fives for their advice and encouragement. This process would be more isolated and lonely without colleagues with whom I shared numerous hours bouncing ideas and drinking teas/coffees. Special thanks go to Marcella Kelly, Sheila Garitty and Anne Cassidy.

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Life in Galway became my home when two very special women entered into my life. Ailbhe Ní Ghearbhuiigh and Jessica Hind-Ozan became my best friends and companions. Thank you for being around, sharing a “glasheen”, practicing for a badminton tournament (yes, Jess we miserably failed) and all beautiful moments we have shared together.
As the road to the final draft took longer than expected, I found a new shelter among colleagues and friends in Community Education Centre and Charlie Byrne’s bookshop. Helen Casey, Deirdre Hardiman and Jackie Murphy took care that my transition out of PhD was as pleasant as possible. Special thanks go to all the staff and friends in Charlie Byrne’s: Charlie, Vinny, Jean, Carmel, Michaela, David and John. I have never met more caring and thought provoking people in one place – thank you! I would like to express my biggest gratitude to: Emily O’Flaherty, your compassion and sense of humour (look, we both survived) were invaluable! This thesis would never be finished without a tremendous help of Megan Buckley who always found time to work with me on complicated linguistic issues. I will never forget Meg’s words of wisdom: “To finish up you just have to wake up, do as much as you can and go to sleep”. Thank you to both for becoming such great friends!

I would also like to thank to my little stars, my best friends at home. Ilina Hristova, I-dog, was the most entertaining flatmate and became one of my best Yugoslav friends. Ana Orel and Katja Orel are my life companions-thank you for being around and for tolerating my weird ambitions. Ana Brandt, moja najdražja Stella, I would never walked on this path if I did not meet you. Thank you for teaching me how to dream far!

There was one very special person who walked this whole journey with me. Noel Cronin, thank you for listening, reading and for being always there for me. More than this: thank you for all your care and love. You are a beautiful human being and the most amazing boyfriend!

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my parents: to my mama who taught me how to be independent and compassionate, and to my tata who always believed in me and my crazy projects. Hvala obema!
Statement of Originality

I, Tanja Kovačić, hereby certify that all the work described within this thesis is the original work of the author. Any published (or unpublished) ideas and/or techniques from work of others are fully acknowledged in accordance with standard referencing practices.
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List of Abbreviations

CoE........Council of Europe
EU.........European Union
IMF........The International Monetary Fund
ISIL.........The Islamic State of Islam and the Levant
LDS.........Liberal Democracy of Slovenia
NATO.......The North Atlantic Treaty Organization
SFRY.......Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia
U.S.........The United States of America
UNCRC.....The Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNESCO...The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UCFRC.....Unesco Child and Family Research Centre
UNICEF.....The United Nations Children's Fund
UN.........The United Nations
Map of Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia

Source: The Former Yugoslavia, Map No. 3689 Rev.12, June 2007, United Nations
Map of the Republic of Slovenia

Source: Free Large Images (no date)
Map of Karst Region, Slovenia

Source: Kraji-Slovenija (no date)

*This research focused on the Karst region (on the above map labelled as Kras).
Chapter One: Introduction - Encountering Youth Resilience

1.1 Introduction
Slovenia has undergone rapid socio-political changes since the beginning of the 1990s. The new state based on principles of liberal democracy and a free market economy was founded after socialist Yugoslavia dissolved. While the transition from socialism to capitalism has caught the attention of political scientists and economists, the impact of this change on individuals’ lives remains under researched. More significantly, the impact of these changes on young people’s coping strategies and consequences for resilience has neither been explored nor explained. This thesis explores the concept of youth resilience in relation to protective factors and coping, and analyses their link within the context of social change. Specifically, it explores experiences with youth civic engagement, social support and coping as aspects of youth resilience among three generations of youth in socialist and post-socialist Slovenia. It argues that socio-political change has had a major impact on the organisation and provision of protective mechanisms for youth in society. To examine the topic in detail, the thesis draws largely on the socio-ecological approach to resilience (Ungar, 2008; Obrist, Pfeiffer & Henley, 2010; Schoon, 2012) as a conceptual framework in which to make sense of and explain these changes.

Overall, youth resilience has received growing attention particularly in connection with “at-risk” youth. However, those studies have applied predetermined ideas of risk and vulnerability, focusing on youth growing up in poverty, dysfunctional families or mental health problems (Howard, Dryden, & Johnson, 1999). In most cases these publications have used pre-designed, quantitative models to measure risk and resilience. The opportunities and challenges deriving from wider social contexts, their influence on youth resilience building processes and young people’s voices have been largely unnoticed by those investigations (Bottrell, 2010). These studies have also overlooked the challenges that young people face when growing up in post-industrial societies. Young people experience prolonged and complex transitions to adulthood, and do not have access to the same supportive mechanisms
Further examination of youth resilience has to consider what impact have these changes had on young people’s experience with coping. It is argued here that special attention has to be given to youth coping strategies and protective mechanisms in the changing social context and to consider youth capacity to cope as an important feature in adolescence in its own right - as part and apart from resilience.

In post-socialist societies young people have experienced “double transitions” (Burrell, 2011). Transitions to adulthood in the context of social transformation have instigated wider academic interest (Wallace and Kovacheva, 1998; Ule et al., 2000; Miheljak et al., 2002; Ule, 2008, 2012; Kuhar, 2009; Roberts, 2009). These studies demonstrate that in comparison with the socialist period, pathways to adulthood in post-socialist societies of Eastern Europe are more uncertain. The socio-political reality for young people is marked by social risk (Rener, 2000; Kovacheva, 2001). These contributions provide some considerations about the perceptions of risk in a context of social change, but do not offer a detailed insight into the changing protective mechanisms available in those societies prior to and after the change. Particularly, there is a gap in knowledge on the connection between the state, protective mechanisms and youth coping in this context.

Youth resilience is a contested term. Resilience is broadly understood either as a personal trait or as a process arising out of individual-social interaction (Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000; Canavan, 2008). The concept has been promoted by states, communities and neighbourhoods as comprising of a bundle of specific skills and characteristics required for adjustment to rapid social changes. For instance, the United Kingdom government has launched “The UK Resilience Programme” with an idea “[…] to improve children’s psychological well-being by building resilience and promoting accurate thinking” (Challen et al., 2011). Resilience is also understood as self-reliance and as a source of independent action. Nevertheless, the significance of the wider social context on building youth resilience has been recognised as important (Masten, 2007; Ungar, 2008; Liebenberg & Ungar, 2009;
Masten & Wright, 2010; Pooley & Cohen, 2010). Recently, studies apply a socio-ecological approach to examine the relevance of societies, cultures and communities for risk and coping (Blackstock & Trocmé, 2005; Wright & Masten, 2005; Gunnestad, 2006; Schoon, 2012). However, there is relatively little research referring to rapid ideological change in state institutions and structures and the consequent implications for understanding protective mechanisms and coping strategies among young people. This research compares youth perceived experiences with social support and youth civic engagement and their link with coping in socialist and post socialist Slovenia.

Coping with risk successfully presents a constitutive part of youth resilience. While personal traits and characteristics associated with successful coping have been widely researched (Kirby & Fraser, 1997; Bonanno & Mancini, 2008), protective mechanisms and practices which are available in a social context have only recently attracted researchers’ attention. The latest evidence from resilience research indicates a significant connection between wider societies, cultures, risk and coping (Gunnestad, 2006; Ungar, 2008). Yet, there is a lack of understanding to what extent specific protective practices generated by states and political ideologies contribute to youth coping. This is particularly interesting to examine in societies which experienced a sudden social change: How does socio-political transformation influence the provision of protective mechanisms and youth coping? This question is investigated in this PhD project—particularly considering the relevance of youth civic engagement and social support for youth coping.

Previous research has recognised beneficial aspects of youth civic engagement as a tool which can enhance social support and resilience in youth (Dolan, 2010, 2012; McGrath et al., 2014). These studies suggest that young people who are involved in youth activities have more opportunities to access a wider network of relationships. Support provided from those relationships can serve as a protective factor in challenging times. While the connection of civic engagement to positive coping is often assumed, this study seeks to explore this connection. Most of the studies on
social support focus on the role of interpersonal relationships in young people’s lives. They mostly examine sources and types of support that young people access during challenging times. Similarly, studies on youth civic engagement investigate activities and practices in which young people are involved, but rarely provide an in-depth link between social support and coping (Bottrell, 2009; Brennan, Barnett & McGrath, 2009; Dolan, 2010; Brady et al., 2012). There is a lack of understanding about socioeconomic, political and cultural factors which generate conditions for youth civic engagement and social support in wider socio-political contexts. For example, political ideologies, social policies, state and community mechanisms, create opportunities and constraints for youth engagement and as such may have important implications for access to supportive acts. Those conditions can also change from generation to generation due to changing socio-political contexts (Sherrod, Flanagan & Youniss, 2002; Zaff, Kawashima-Ginsberg & Lin, 2010). Therefore, further research has to consider what impact such changes have on youth coping and resilience.

1.2 Research Background

This is a study about Slovenian youth. The interest in this research developed in connection with my personal experiences with socio-political state transformations. I was born in 1979 in the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) – a country that does not exist anymore. In 1991, when I was twelve years of age, Slovenia proclaimed independence whilst managing to avoid a major conflict which had a devastating impact on most of the other former Yugoslav Republics. I remember that most of my schoolmates whose families came from elsewhere moved back “home”. I never considered what impact the change had on those of us who stayed. How did we understand the socio-political change and how did the dissolution of Yugoslavia affect our experiences of growing up? Later, as a student of political science, I became familiar with the concept “transition to democracy”.

2Former Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia was constituted of six republics: Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia, and two autonomous provinces: Kosovo and Metohija and Vojvodina. Independence and secession of particular republics caused a war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, and resulted in turbulent changes in all parts of the former state.
which had become a “buzz word” for the depiction of socio-political transformation in post-socialist contexts. Social change resulted in the replacement of old practices, beliefs and rituals with new ones. Those changes did not happen overnight, but rather involved a continuity and discontinuity of established socio-political and cultural practices which have been associated with post-socialist Slovenia.

I consider myself to be a part of a so-called “transitional youth” which includes those born and primarily socialised under both socialism and post-socialism. For these youth, transitions did not refer only to socio-political changes, but also to transitions to adulthood. I questioned how my generation dealt with what Burrell (2011) has defined as “double transitions”. Has my generation engaged with these transitions in the same way as our elders or has the new socio-political context brought new challenges to young people’s lives?

There is ample evidence to suggest that young people’s role in society has changed since the 1990s and that those changes are, to a great extent, linked to the socio-political transformation (Nastran -Ule et al. 1996; Ule & Rener, 2000; Miheljak et al., 2002; Rener, 2000; Kuhar, 2009; Kuhar & Reiter, 2012; Ule, 2012). Recognised as important social actors under socialism, youth have been reduced to a marginal group in the post-socialist context (Ule, 2012). Exposed to processes of individualisation and consumerism, they face less security and predictability in life. Opportunities to access diverse sources and types of social support in the public sphere have been altered due to privatisation processes (Dragoš & Leskošek, 2003; Leskošek & Dragoš, 2004; Hlebec, Filipovič - Hrast & Kogovšek, 2010). This clearly indicates that socio-political transformation has brought radical changes in young people’s lives. However, there is a lack of research focused on young people’s personal experiences and perceptions with these changes. Most particularly, there is a gap in knowledge about generational experiences with growing up in diverse socio-political contexts. This PhD research fills this gap by gaining insight into the views of three generations of Slovenian youth. It investigates what role socio-political
change has had on the provision of protective mechanisms and the consequences for young people’s coping strategies.

I became familiar with the concept of youth resilience after enrolling in the PhD programme with UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre (UCFRC) at NUI Galway. The centre has long held an interest in youth research, with a special focus on the field of youth civic engagement, social support and resilience. Interested in risk and resilience, I started to research individual and societal resilience strategies in the context of war. Letters written by two American soldiers to their wives during the Second World War provided an insight into the involvement of state and society in coping and resilience building processes (Byrne and Kovačič, 2014). Although this was not the primary focus of this PhD dissertation, this project showed in what ways various societal layers were involved in the provision of support to men during military transitions.

Protective mechanisms which included social support, engagement in social activities and letter-writing itself, were deployed by the U.S. state at the level of family, community and army units. Coping mechanisms were fostered in all societal layers and had a significant impact on how people perceived and dealt with severe risks. For example, letter writing campaigns were organised by state and the U.S. army in an effort to keep soldiers morale high (Litoff & Smith, 1992). Those findings made me realise that protective mechanisms have a significant impact on how people perceive and deal with severe risks. They informed my future research on the consequences of the socio-political change, particularly on the loss of “taken for granted” mechanisms of social support for young people under socialism in Slovenia. The emerging question based on the war letters research was: What impact did the changing social context have on youth coping during transitions to adulthood in Slovenia?

---

3 Ideas or things which are taken for granted are usually not questioned or tested, but rather accepted as true.
1.3 Overarching Aims and Objectives of the Study

The overarching aim of this study is to focus on perceived generational experiences with youth civic engagement, social support and coping as components of youth resilience in Slovenia. It is argued that young people’s engagement with social activities enables access to social support which in turn contributes to individuals’ coping. The research broadly focuses on three generations that grew up in wider socio-political contexts of: socialism, transition to democracy and post-socialism (1980-2011). The study examines the role of socialist and post-socialist states in the promotion of youth civic engagement and social support. How these practices contribute to youth resilience processes is further explored. A socio-ecological approach is used to analyse primary accounts and interview data in Slovenia, and a range of secondary sources. Crucially this research shifts conceptual attention from the individual level to the social/societal level in researching resilience and secondly it locates resilience research in a ‘non-western’ setting.

The central research question of this PhD dissertation is:

*How does socio-political transformation influence the provision of protective mechanisms and youth coping as aspects of resilience during transitions to adulthood?*

The research objectives are:

1) To compare perceived differences in social support across three generations (socialist, transitional and post-socialist) in Slovenia;

2) To compare perceived differences in youth civic engagement across three generations of young people (socialist, transitional and post-socialist) in Slovenia;

3) To compare perceived differences in risk and coping with transitions to adulthood across three generations of young people (socialist, transitional and post-socialist) in Slovenia;

4) To compare state provision of opportunities for youth across three generations (socialist, transitional and post-socialist) in Slovenia.
This investigation uses qualitative research methods to examine youth experiences of growing up in the context of social change. Three generations of young people who grew up during socialist Yugoslavia in the 1980s, transition to democracy in the 1990s, and in the post-socialist period in 2000s were invited to recount their experiences. To explore the topic in detail, 20 participants (6 socialist, 7 transitional and 7 post-socialist youth) were interviewed. The collected empirical data offers a unique opportunity to critically examine and compare the findings to further understand the connection between social change, youth coping and resilience. The findings also benefit further research, policy and practice in connection with youth development in Slovenia and other post-socialist states.

1.4 Roadmap to the Thesis

Having briefly sketched the debate investigating the connection between protective factors and youth coping as aspects of resilience in the context of social change, Chapter Two provides a theoretical grounding for the research based on a critical examination of selected literature. First, the chapter examines the historical development of resilience research to date. Second, it introduces young people as the main actors and presents the known characteristics of youth and transitions to adulthood. The importance of protective factors for everyday coping is discussed. More specifically, youth civic engagement and social support are introduced as components of coping and resilience. Arguments for a socio-ecological approach to resilience research are considered. This approach considers what relevance cultures, societies and other societal layers have to risk, coping and resilience. The final section develops a conceptual framework for this study, combining youth civic engagement, social support, coping and socio-ecological approach to resilience.

This chapter is followed by an in-depth investigation of youth in socialist and post-socialist Slovenia in Chapter Three. International policy documents are outlined in order to examine current views and orientations towards positive youth development. A brief historical and geographical introduction of the Yugoslav and then Slovenian state is first presented. This chapter captures the impact of wider social, political and
economic developments on youth development. This includes presentation of changes connected with transitions to adulthood and opportunities for youth. An outline of youth policies and structures in Slovenia since the independence is outlined in the last section of this chapter.

Chapter Four presents the research methodology and the main investigative and analytical methods used in this study. The theoretical underpinnings of a narrative inquiry approach are illustrated as a detailed description of the research design and implementation. The development of a systematic analytical strategy to interpret the data subject to translation and back translation (from English to Slovenian to English) is outlined and the use of a narrative approach to overcome methodological and analytical challenges are particularly considered.

Chapter Five demonstrates findings from the analysis of the interview based data. The first section investigates growing up experiences of socialist youth. It examines perceptions of transitions to adulthood, social support and youth engagement. The significance of wider political systems and the role of the state frame how interviewees interpret their experiences of youth engagement, social support and everyday coping. This is compared to the accounts of transitional youth. Radical changes in the wider social context influenced young people’s experiences of social support and participation in youth activities. Young people’s perceptions of risk and everyday coping were likewise influenced. The third section contrasts these findings with the data gathered from testimonials of post-socialist youth. Evidence suggests not only patterns, but also diversity in how interviewees interpret their experiences with growing up in the post-socialist context. This investigation provides a clear picture on the role of wider ecologies on provision of protective mechanisms and their link with youth coping in socialist and post-socialist Slovenia.

Chapter Six critically examines the key findings presented in Chapter Five. It draws together the analysis of all the data and presents the main argument of this thesis
focused on the interconnections between young people’s experiences with social support, youth civic engagement and everyday coping as aspects of resilience in different socio-political contexts. Research objectives presented in Section 1.3 are discussed in this chapter to demonstrate the merits and limitations of protective mechanisms (social support and youth civic engagement), youth coping and state provision of opportunities on young people’s lives. This is particularly demonstrated in diverse opinions provided by socialist, transitional and post-socialist youth. This chapter advocates a shift in how we theorise youth coping and resilience.

Chapter Seven concludes the thesis. This chapter outlines the final comments and observations in connection to the research process and key findings. The main policy recommendations to the area of youth work in Slovenia and broader post-socialist context are outlined. Furthermore, recommendations for future research on youth in post-socialist contexts are addressed.

1.5 Conclusion
This introductory chapter presented the overarching aim of this thesis. It discussed the relevance of protective mechanisms, including youth civic engagement and social support for youth coping and resilience in the changing socio-political context in Slovenia. To explore this interrelationship further, it is important to provide an answer to the following question: What have various academic disciplines contributed to the understanding of youth coping, resilience and youth development in a social context.
Chapter Two: Literature Review on Resilience, Youth Development, Social Support, Youth Civic Engagement and Youth Coping

2.1 Introduction

This chapter explores recent and relevant international literature in relation to the topic under investigation in this PhD project. The intent of this chapter is to examine what is already known on the interrelationship between youth civic engagement, social support and coping within the context of social change. Young people’s experiences with growing up in three different socio-political contexts – socialism in the 1980s, transition to democracy in the 1990s, and post-socialism in the first decade of the twenty-first century are examined in order to investigate these relationships.

This chapter consists of five sections. The first section presents five waves of resilience research and considers their relevance for this study. The gaps in the current research and a need to research resilience in a context of social change are considered in this part. Following this, Section Two introduces young people as the main protagonists of this study. The main characteristics of youth as a specific social category that lies between childhood and adulthood are outlined. The transitory nature of youth refers to personal and social changes which young people experience when growing up. Protective mechanisms which may help young people to overcome challenges connected with these changes are discussed in Section Three. Two types of protective factors – assets and resources – are considered in connection with the development of youth coping skills. The influences of societies, cultures, and protective processes on youth coping skills are further considered. Significantly, this section discusses protective aspects of youth civic engagement and social support, and the ways in which these protective aspects foster coping. Opportunities for engagement, participation in different social spheres and access to social support are examined further in connection with youth coping and resilience. The concepts discussed above suggest that coping and resilience should be researched in a social context, as discussed in Section Four. This part considers the link between wider socio-political and cultural systems, protective mechanisms and coping. A socio-
ecological approach to resilience is introduced to research these issues in the context of social change. Finally, Section Five brings all these concepts together and proposes a model with which to research the interrelationship between youth civic engagement, social support and coping as aspects of resilience in a social context.

Importantly, this chapter outlines a connected set of concepts from individualisation of resilience to socio-ecological approaches via adolescent development and its social construction, towards transitions to adulthood which is landscaped by coping, social support and active civic engagement. This framework is presented as a loosely connected pathway through the relevant literature, rather than a definite construct, and is shown in Figure 2.1 below.

Figure 2.1: Literature review framework
2.2 Individualised Resilience as a Starting Point

Originating from the Latin word *resilire* (to recoil or leap back), resilience is originally linked to an individual ability to positively adapt to high-risk situations (Luthar, Cicchetti & Becker, 2000; Masten, 2001; Masten & Gewirtz, 2006). Gilligan (2009, p. 6) claims that individuals who are exposed to risky situations are able to adapt to high-risk situations, act successfully despite difficulties, or adjust to negative life events. The term has multiple uses, including: overcoming odds; competence under stress; or positive functioning after recovery from trauma (Masten, Best & Garmezy, 1990; Kirby & Fraser, 1997; Boyden & Mann, 2005). This conceptualisation shows that resilience is traditionally associated with human pathologies and as such it refers to the psychological condition of individuals. However, as argued by Canavan (2008) and Lee *et al.* (2010), resilience is a contested term, exposed to constant changes stemming from continuing research. This dissertation is informed by current debates focusing on the interrelationship between risks and coping in a social context.

Researchers contend that individual resilience produces a positive response to life challenges. While exposure to significant risk and overcoming risk successfully are constitutive parts of resilience (Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000; Richman & Fraser, 2001; Ungar, 2005), the features of both elements are still unclear. Risk is a challenging concept to accurately define, since it lacks universal measurements for defining a “significant” threat. To date, a system theory of resilience, or the normative approach, provides a certain consensus about prevalent risk factors in society. Taking this approach, examples of risks include trauma; neglect; psychopathology; various genetic, biological and socioeconomic factors; violence and war; poverty; and dysfunctional families (Masten, Best & Garmezy, 1990; Luthar, Cicchetti & Becker, 2000).
A measurement of individual resilience depends on the researcher’s calculation of risk and adaptation factors, while health outcomes are predetermined (Ungar, 2004; Bottrell, 2009). In her anthropological study of resilience of Tanzanian women, Obrist (2006) shows that notions of risk and stress do not only apply to sudden changes, but also to constant and predictable stressors, such as lack of food or financial means. Furthermore, perceptions of risk depend on diverse epistemological approaches, stemming from individual or broader socio-cultural definitions of significant threat. Houston and Griffiths (in Ungar 2005, p. xxv) claim that at some level, risk is socially constructed and depends on discursive processes that define “risky” situations or behaviour. A constructivist view shows that an approach based on system theory is problematic, as it inevitably makes judgments based upon the nature of demonstrable risk and the criteria to assess a good outcome (Masten, 2001). Predetermined ideas of risk and a desirable outcome pose another question: who has the authority to define what constitutes vulnerability and risk, and what consequences does this have for an understanding of resilience?

Research on resilience has developed since the 1950s, when researchers expressed an interest in human development in adverse situations (Masten, 2007; Liebenberg & Ungar, 2009; Masten & Wright, 2010; Pooley & Cohen, 2010). Masten (2007), Liebenberg and Ungar (2009) and O’Dougherty Wright, Masten and Narayan (2010) suggest that there are four waves to understand varying stages of resilience research. These stages indicate a shift in understanding resilience from an individual capacity to the influence of wider social contexts in generating risk and resilience.

The first wave of resilience research has emphasised the relevance of person-centred and variable-centred approaches to study risk and adaptation to significant threat. A person-focused approach has contributed to a better understanding of resilient and non-resilient individuals, while a variable-focused approach has examined the link between individuals’ characteristics and environments which contributed to positive
developmental outcomes in case of risk (O’Dougherty Wright, Masten and Narayan, 2010, p. 21). Resilience has been generally associated with a set of personal qualities, such as an ability to problem-solve; personal autonomy; various social skills; individual responsiveness; high self-esteem; self-efficacy; temperament; a sense of humour; and optimism (Masten & Garmezy, 1985; Benard, 1995; Richardson, 2002; Rutter, 2012). For example, Garmezy’s (in Rutter, 2012) investigation into children who grew up in families with schizophrenic mothers shows how these children thrived despite their exposure to high-risk situations. Werner and Smith (1982) consider this further in their study of disadvantaged children’s responses and the risks associated with living in poverty. Their findings demonstrate that most children developed social competency despite the fact that they were exposed to severe life conditions. This approach emphasises positive outcomes with individual traits rather than with the impact of environments on human development (Ungar, Ghazinour & Richter, 2013, p. 349).

This has led to the second wave of resilience research which has been interested in protective mechanisms and processes, and has placed more emphasis on the interaction between person and environment. In this context, the concept of resilience is considered to be relational and dynamic (Rutter, 2012; Wilson & Arvanitakis, 2013a). Luthar and Cicchetti (2000, p. 863) argue that individuals develop certain coping attributes within different life circumstances. Personal characteristics are shaped by interactions between a child and its environment, and are not inherited individually. This stage of research has led to the development of a further elaboration of the concept, which defines resilience as “a process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity” (Luthar, Cicchetti & Becker, 2000, p. 1). As Kaufmann (2013) has observed, resilience is relative, and may be displayed in some circumstances but not in the others. Turning points and healthy pathways of children’s development have been recognised as crucial. Although this wave of research still uses the language of developmental system theory, it represents a shift from an individual to ecological approach of resilience (O’Dougherty Wright, Masten and Narayan, 2010, p. 23). This approach contributes to a more complex understanding of the relationship
between a social context, risk and protective processes. For example, the role of culture and protective factors being rooted in cultures have become recognised as important. However, as argued by Masten and Wright (2010), systematic studies researching the link between cultures and protective processes are still scarce.

The third wave of resilience research engages with prevention and interventions. It develops around the idea that people who prove to be resilient rely on internal and external resources. Protective processes (e.g. parental functioning and good relationships) that promote resilient development were studied for these purposes. Randomised control trials and experiments have been used as prevalent methodologies to research resilience. These three phases have immensely contributed to contemporary understanding of resilience. However, only fourth and fifth waves of resilience research have instigated a discussion on resilience being developed in a dynamic relationship between individuals and social contexts which is particularly relevant for this PhD thesis.

This PhD dissertation is hugely informed by ideas of the fourth and fifth phases of resilience research. The fourth wave takes a more integrative approach towards resilience. This phase accumulates knowledge from previous waves and aims to “better understand the complex processes that lead to resilience” (Masten & Wright, 2010, p. 214). Researchers recognise the need for an interdisciplinary study of resilience that would incorporate the influence of other systems (for example the ecosystem, health care and political systems) on the resilience processes. This wave emphasises that resilience, as a concept, is embedded in a specific historical, cultural and contextual framework, and is constantly being defined and redefined by those who have power over social discourses of health and wellness (Ungar, 2008). Risk factors, processes and outcomes are constantly redefined according to the context in which they exist. In the same cultural setting, attitudes towards risk may also change over time. For instance, young people’s access to resources in a particular living situation may change over time, and this may expose individuals to different opportunities and challenges (Ungar & Teram, 2005). At the same time, Ungar
(2004) claims that social and cultural judgments shape discussions of “good” or “bad” outcomes in case of adversity.

Bottrell (2009, 2010) suggests an additional, fifth wave of resilience research, arguing there is a need to assert the social dimension in resilience research and shift the attention from individual to societal discourses and ideological positions. This, fifth, phase indicates a need to research resilience as a relationship between agency and structure. According to Bottrell (2009), the constructionist approach to resilience provides an opportunity for articulating personal views on life challenges and responses to such challenges. This approach refocuses resilience research from individual characteristics to context, culture and personal agency. For example, diverse factors including race, gender and social class affect how individuals understand resilience (Ungar, 2008, p. 360). A focus on the subjective experiences of participants can result in new theoretical implications for resilience research (Barton, 2005). However, resilience research has been mostly focused on quantitative, longitudinal studies. These publications focus on risk and coping factors, but do not provide a wider understanding of the impact of socio-cultural, political and ideological contexts on building resilience (Ungar & Teram, 2005). This requires a move from positivist ways of thinking and predetermined definitions of resilience to qualitative research methods (Ungar & Liebenberg, 2005). Qualitative inquiry offers a space for the expression of an individual’s views and experiences, and makes it possible to identify the various processes and social practices which nurture resilience. The focus of five waves of resilience research is illustrated below in Table 2.1 in order to link this study to theory.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Waves of Resilience</th>
<th>Focus of Resilience Research</th>
</tr>
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| **The First Wave**  | - This is the descriptive phase of resilience research, which seeks to measure resilience in different forms and situations.  
                   | - It focuses on outcomes young people have shown in cases of adversity.  
                   | - Resilience is a personal capacity of individuals. |
| **The Second Wave** | - Focuses on protective stress regulators.  
                   | - More attention is given to the interactions between individuals and environments.  
                   | - Longitudinal studies are required to research resilience. |
| **The Third Wave**  | - The use of internal and external resources by resilient people.  
                   | - Resilience has been tested directly through preventions and interventions. |
| **The Fourth Wave** | - The importance of postmodern understandings of resilience based on negotiation of different discourses which, in a specific culture and context, identify problems.  
                   | - A need for interdisciplinary research focusing on the influence of other systems (e.g. ecosystems, information |
Despite recognising the contextual influences on the development of risk and the responses to it, resilience is still mostly examined and conceptualised within a Western scientific discourse: that is, with individualism as the prevalent ideology of resilience discourse (Martineau in Ungar 2005; Barton, 2005; Boyden & Mann, 2005; Prilleltensky & Prilleltensky, 2005; Ungar, 2008, 2010; Didkowsky & Ungar, 2010). According to Marquis (2013), this view is based on ideas of normative development which derives from liberal-individualistic cultural norms and values. This concept has been heavily criticised, mostly by political scientists and experts on international development research. These researchers claim that resilience fits with a neo-liberal discourse of personal responsibility which, in turn, leads to a certain type of governance connected with dismantling of post-war institutions of the welfare state (Bottrell, 2013; Joseph, 2013; Neocleous, 2013; Evans & Reid, 2014). A neo-liberal agenda stems from ideas of moving responsibility of states onto

### Table 2.1: Five Waves of Resilience Research

individuals, families and communities, and corresponds with an interpretation of resilience in contemporary policy documents across the Anglo-Saxon states. However, this view ignores the influence of social processes and cultural practices on resilience building processes. Therefore, there is a need to explore socio-political and structural conditions in which resilience can be nurtured and promoted along the ideas of social justice (Prilleltensky & Prilleltensky, 2005). As suggested by Bottrell (2009, p. 335), resilience research requires a move from individual-level experience to wider social practices, discourses and ideological positions. These ideas are applied to this research, which examines youth perceived experiences with coping in socialist and post-socialist Slovenia.

Research shows that the individualisation process and prolonged transitions to adulthood are the main challenges facing youth today. Changes linked with transitions to adulthood may have an impact on coping and resilience. As Goldstein and Brooks (2006) argue, youth resilience must be approached by placing it within in a spectrum of speedy social changes, including a faster pace of life, technological changes, and individualistic values. At the same time, Masten et al. (2004) argue that societies and cultures create conditions and strategies to support young people during transitions to adulthood. In this context, youth resilience has to be approached in connection with agency and structure, where “social identities, policy, law and flows of capital have material and situated effects which enable or constrain people’s lives” (Bottrell, 2010, p. 9). However, what influence a rapid social change has on these “scaffolding practices” and their connection to coping and resilience of youth is under-researched. The next section examines the main characteristics of youth development and youth in order to show what role coping and resilience have during transitions to adulthood in the context of social change.

2.3 Youth Development
Youth studies first emerged in psychology in the late 19th and beginning of the 20th century. American psychologist Stanley Hall first used the term “adolescence” to
describe the unstable transition from pre-rational childhood to rational adulthood (Jones, 2009). Strongly influenced by values of Victorian England and post-Darwinian theories on evolution, Hall described this stage of life as one of “storm and stress” (France, 2007). Adolescence was considered to be a tumultuous and problematic period which is distinctive from other stages of life. Hall associated these problems with the physical and emotional changes that accompany puberty, which resulted in the belief that adolescence is a universal stage of life. By associating young people with problems and moral panic, this view had a long-lasting influence. However, the idea of “storm and stress” has been challenged by researchers who paid more attention to the cultural characteristics of adolescence. Findings from anthropological research show that adolescence is a product of the industrialised Western world, and does not necessarily apply to young people across all cultures. Some societies, it is claimed, recognise smooth transitions to adulthood facilitated by rites of passage (Mead, 1943; Evans-Pritchard, 1971). As argued by Steinberg (1993), adolescence is not an inherently stressful period, and turmoil is not a norm. Adolescence is a period of change, but there is no evidence that these changes are different from those that occur during other stages of life.

The concept of adolescence is complex. Deriving from the Latin word *adolescere* (“to grow up”), adolescence is mostly conceptualised as a transition between childhood and adulthood (Coleman & Hendry, 2004, p. 2). As argued by Jones (2009), the term is mainly used in psychology and is associated with the teenage years. Despite being connected with biological and psychological changes, theories of adolescence have also recognised the relevance of a social context for youth development.

Theories of adolescence argue that adolescence revolves around key developmental tasks which involve emotional, behavioural, biological, cognitive, psychological and social changes, and are connected with transitions to adulthood (Elliott & Feldman, 2000; Coleman & Hendry, 2004). As argued by Elliott and Feldman (2000, p.2), adolescence develops in three stages: early, middle and late. Early adolescence (age
10 to 14) involves the physical and social changes associated with puberty. Puberty refers to biological changes involved in the physical body's development from childhood to adulthood. During this period, relationships with other people assume new meaning, and young individuals become more independent (Elliott & Feldman, 2000). Middle adolescence (age 15 to 17) is a period of increasing independence, while late adolescence (age 18 to mid-20s) refers to young people who, due to prolonged education, delay their entry into adult roles. Social changes expose young people to new opportunities and experiences which are connected with education, work or leisure activities. However, Coleman and Hendry (2004) argue that the division of adolescence into stages is inaccurate, as there is no clear agreement upon which age period applies to each stage. This is especially relevant today, when the period of adolescence has been prolonged. As argued by Petersen and Leffert (1995), some features of adolescence, such as puberty, are universal, but most aspects of adolescence develop in specific cultural and historical contexts.

Developmental contextualism presents a new approach to adolescence and combines biological, psychological and social aspects of youth development. This approach claims that youth development is embedded in interactions between a person and a social context (Coleman & Hendry, 2004, p. 11). Developmental contextualism coalesces around five principles. First, young people’s development is set in a wider socio-political context. For example, Bronfenbrenner (1979) argues that wider societal layers, such as families, neighbourhoods and schools, have a major impact on youth development. Second, adolescence is just one of the stages of an individual’s life-course. This presents a changing attitude towards adolescence which is not necessarily stressful, but is more similar to other life stages. Yet, as argued by Petersen and Leffert (1995, p. 25) what happens during adolescence is crucial to further human development. Third, young people have reciprocal relationships with their families. Events, such as the loss of a parent’s job, have an impact on a young person’s life, while youth reactions to these events have a reciprocal effect on their families. Fourth, adolescence as one of the stages of human development requires a multidisciplinary approach in order to clearly understand changes that individuals experience during this period of life (Coleman & Hendry, 2004). This involves
evidence from different academic disciplines, including sociology, medicine, biology, education, and developmental psychology. Finally, young people also personally influence their own development. They are not merely passive recipients: they are active agents in their own right. These principles inform this research, which examines youth experiences with growing up in diverse socio-political contexts. Specifically, it considers the influence of socio-political transformation on youth experiences with coping.

Further research (Woodhead, 1999; Greene, 2006) shows that a psychological understanding of youth development in a social context is tightly connected with sociological considerations. For example, in order to explore the dynamics of youth as a social category, it is important to examine the differences that emerge during different developmental stages. In order to facilitate this, the broader concept of youth is divided along the lines of adolescence, post-adolescence (or post-youth) and young adulthood (Nastran-Ule, 1996). As argued by Modell and Goodman (2000, p. 93), societal expectations around adolescence should be considered in order to understand the purpose of this period as a particular life stage. Jones and Wallace (1992) argue that both adolescence and youth are always undergoing a process of definition and redefinition, and that their meaning is constructed in a specific socio-cultural context. The concept of youth is interrogated to consider the ways in which social contexts shape the lives of young people.

2.3.1 Social Construction of Youth
Cultural specifics across the globe determine a need for a sociological understanding of youth which explores the concept as both a social and personal phase of life. According to Jones (2009), youth is a term which refers to a person and a part of the life course. In comparison with childhood, youth involves a higher level of independence, but also obtains a similar identification with authority as childhood. Nastran-Ule (1996, p. 10) claims the concept of youth incorporates several interlinked dimensions: a) a life phase; b) a social group for which a certain mode of behaviour is typical; c) incomplete social status (not being adult yet); d) age cohort
or historically-structured generational unit; e) youth as a value system, including the ideas of vitality and cheerfulness. It comprises biographical particularities of individuals and their inclusion into socio-historical processes.

Youth is not a universal concept: rather, it is a socio-cultural and ideological creation of modernity which occurs as a side product of the industrialisation process (Nastran-Ule, 1996; Furlong & Cartmel, 1997; Gillis, 1999; Ule, 2002, 2008; Jones, 2009). As a social category, youth emerged in a particular time which corresponds to the appearance of the bourgeoisie and its culture. Youth is associated with industrial society, bureaucratic power and enlightenment rationality (Wallace & Kovacheva, 1998). Industrial changes triggered the development of state institutions which became the main providers of youth services (Ibid.). The social role of children and adults (especially mothers) changed in accordance with the idea that young people need extensive care and nurturing. The development of the nation state, accompanied by the centralisation of power and rationalisation of its functions, provided space for a more regulated social life and the development of the ideology of interventionism4 (Ibid., p. 52). Schools became important actors in the socialisation of young people, while universal education delayed young people’s access to work. State institutions have also been used as a vehicle for the transfer of prevailing ideologies, values, experiences and legitimacy of the political system from older to younger generations. Therefore, youth is not only a social construct: it is also an ideological one (Nastran-Ule, 1996, p. 12).

Youth is ideologically constructed by media and socio-political forces in society. The media, as well as the educational system and academic research, construct the image of youth within an historical period of time. Negotiations around the role of youth relate to socio-political and economic transformations in society. Economic

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4 Interventionism in youth is not universal, but is contextually specific. In Germany, youth has been considered as a special social category which needs protection since the late 19th century. This country has developed a complete protective legislation which, among others, regulates conditions for young workers. On the other hand, in the United Kingdom, the idea of youth interventionism has developed only in relation to young people who are experiencing a crisis of some sort (Wallace & Kovacheva, 1998).
and social dependences keep youth in a subjugated position, which can be overcome through employment or professional success.

The concept of youth corresponds to socio-political agendas of respective states and international organisations. Historically, modernity constructed more uniform categories of life stages that correspond to chronological age. The European Union (EU) and the Council of Europe (CoE) define “young people” as individuals who are between 13 and 30 years of age, while the United Nations (UN) situates “youth” between the ages of 15 and 24. It is interesting to note that the Slovenian state defines “youth” as individuals who are between 15 and 29 years of age (Republic of Slovenia: Statistical Office RS, 2014). Bourdieu (1993) in his essay “Youth is just a word” explains that the correlation between youth and age is not taken for granted, but is socially constructed. Age serves as a tool through which particular states set parameters for work and family life in a particular time. Therefore, youth as an age category is a transitory phenomenon between childhood and adulthood, when individuals are still not fully included into work and may still be financially dependent upon their families (Wallace & Kovacheva, 1998). This demonstrates how politically contested the concept is, since it is laden with the needs and ideologies of a particular society within a particular place and time.

Changes and challenges young people face at a certain historical time are important indicators of social, economic, political and cultural developments in society (Leccardi & Feixa, 2012) which can be analytically approached through transitions to adulthood. In this dissertation, young people’s lives are recounted within their experiences with transitions to adulthood. For this purpose, the next part outlines the main characteristics of transitions to adulthood in a social context.

2.3.2 Transitions to Adulthood
Youth is transitory in nature and it is positioned between a dependency stage of childhood and independence of adulthood (Catan, 2004; Biggart & Walther, 2006).
Research on transitions to adulthood usually focuses on markers of transitions, such as leaving school, entering full-time employment, getting married, and parenthood (Shanahan, 2000). These processes are connected with financial independence and acceptance of responsibility for one’s actions. However, wider social structures determine conditions in which young people experience transitions to adulthood (Ule & Zidar, 2011). Socio-political and economic changes within post-industrial societies have resulted in more complex transitions to adulthood (Biggart & Walther, 2006). The comparison of transitions to adulthood set in industrial and post-industrial society is outlined to understand those changes.

According to research (Catan, 2004; Biggart & Walther, 2006; Roberts, 2009), post-industrial societies have undergone rapid socio-economic changes within which the nature of youth has changed. Until the 1970s, industrial societies engaged young people strongly in the production process. Education and free time provided a partial independence from this process, but also constituted an essential part in the development of production-oriented social roles (Ule, 2000, p. 17). As a result, the socio-economic transformation has changed the nature of work. For example, Biggart and Walther (2006) argue that linear transitions typical for industrial societies have been replaced with “yo-yo” transitions. Young people do not experience direct transitions from one trajectory to another, such as education to work: instead, there is a recognised interference of these trajectories. Therefore, transitions to adulthood are blurred and prolonged (Côte & Bynner, 2008). Youth unemployment is one of the features of this prolonged transition which exposes individuals to a higher level of insecurity and risk (Biggart & Walther, 2006, p. 41). They face more “flexible” employment practices, but this flexibility provides a poor job security, precarious work opportunities (Furlong & Cartmel, 1997) and “prolonged periods of under-employment” (Roberts, 2009, p. 4). As a result, individuals often return to education, which is recognised as a lifelong process. Furthermore, in comparison with older generations, young people delay marriage and family formation processes. New types of families have appeared, which include more people cohabitating with family of origin; late marriages; and singlehood. These changes have also influenced everyday life practices, such as sexual relations.
and fashion and communication styles, while youth participation in traditional politics has decreased (Ule, 2002).

Youth in post-industrial societies have been exposed to individualisation processes. Beck (1992) claims that individualisation has provided young people with a biographical choice: that is, the opportunity to chart their own life paths. Leccardi (2006) states that young people have to construct their own biographies: for example, by taking chances, learning numerous skills, and applying flexible approaches towards life. At the same time, the faster pace of life forces youth to focus on short-term plans, to adjust to new and emerging situations, and to remain prepared to accept new chances and opportunities (Stauber & Walther, 2006). However, as analysed by Rudd and Evans (1998), Ule (2002), Catan (2004) and Roberts (2009), transitions to adulthood in post-industrial societies are the result of the structured individualisation process. This means that young people’s choices and decisions can be autonomous, but are still dependent on structure⁵. Furlong and Cartmel (1997) claim that freedom of choice and self-reliance is an epistemological fallacy which blurs the importance of social structures – for example, class, gender or age – in shaping individuals’ lives. Structural factors, such as families or opportunities in local communities and societies still have a prominent role in shaping transitions to adulthood (Côte & Bynner, 2008).

A structured individualisation process has exposed young people to new opportunities and risks. Furlong and Cartmel (1997) argue that the above-mentioned changes influence young people’s subjective perceptions of risk and uncertainty. At the same time, researchers argue that difficulties from childhood to adulthood should not be considered as a misfortune of individuals, but rather must be approached as reality of the whole socio-cultural milieu of a young population (Rener, 2000, p. 95). The way individuals approach and negotiate risk depends on the cultural and personal resources young people are able to negotiate (Thomson et al., 2002).

⁵The concept of bounded agency presents another aspect of the interaction between individual motivations and socio-economic structure. This idea indicates that while individual independence can be facilitated, it is restricted by the wider socio-economic and cultural factors (Catan, 2004).
Available resources in the wider community correspond to systemic risks, and their provision depends on the socio-economic and cultural specifics of a particular society. For example, Catan (2004) states that, more than ever, economic resources determine individual resources from childhood to adulthood. Research has documented how young people facing prolonged and complex transitions need more support, and that support is mostly “privatised”: it is, most often, provided by family members and friends (Wallace & Kovacheva, 1998; Catan, 2004). As argued by Biggart and Walther (2006), privatised support not only influences people’s autonomy, it also affects their possibilities for social inclusion. This means that rapid socio-economic changes and a shift from collectivism to structured individualism rapidly transformed the living experiences and life chances of young people.

Transitions to adulthood present a useful approach in researching social change in post-socialist societies. They provide information about society in general and highlight the role of institutions and culture in shaping their course (Roberts, 2009; Kuhar & Reiter, 2012). Burrell (2011) demonstrates how youth growing up in Poland in the late 1980s and early 1990s experienced a period of a “double transition”. These transitions to adulthood took place at a time of extensive transformation of society, and it can be argued that they can be applicable to all post-socialist states. People growing up during the 1990s experienced a sharp transition from socialism to post-socialism (as a disappearance of a high social security net). While their childhood experiences in the socialist period were associated with a period of economic security in which patterns of transitions were structured and supervised (Roberts, 2012), the post-socialist period witnessed the disappearance of a welfare security net (for more see: Chapter Three – Context for the Research).

In this context, a comparison of young people’s experiences with transitions to adulthood in different historical periods is a fruitful approach to research coping skills of youth in this socio-political context. This is especially applicable to the context of socio-political change, when previous social practices and institutions are dismissed and are (possibly) replaced with new ones. In this setting, resilience
research has to extend beyond “vulnerable” young people and examine how those changes impacted young people in general. The next section outlines in detail the importance of protective factors and processes in youth development. Furthermore, the concepts of social support and youth civic engagement are introduced and considered as protective mechanisms for assisting coping capacity and building youth resilience.

2.4 Coping during Youth Transitions to Adulthood

There is an overarching agreement that resilience can only be demonstrated when individuals face severe risk. Yet, in what ways protective mechanisms can enable individuals' coping and resilience remains under researched. As shown in Section 2.3, adolescence is recognised as a stressful period and all adolescents are exposed to some level of generic stress (Compas, Orosan & Grant, 1993, p. 337). There are different classifications of stress recognised in the literature. However, severity and frequency of stress is recognised as important by all of them. For example, Coleman and Hendry (2004, p. 210) recognise three categories of stressors connected with the period of adolescence: normative stresses; non-normative stresses; and daily hassles. Normative events are associated with developmental changes to which all young people are exposed. This includes physical changes and development of cognitive skills. Non-normative stresses can appear suddenly in a young person’s life and include events such as illness, divorce of parents, death of grandparents, or other family problems. These events are less predictable and are harder to control. However, other researchers, including Hauser and Bowlds (2000), argue that stress is hard to define. Some stresses are clearly manifested, while young people can perceive certain individual events as stressful also. As argued by Smith and Carlson (1997, p. 233) young people usually report about daily hassles or ordinary transitions, such as school change as being stressful too.

Frydenberg (2008) claims that despite being minor in nature, due to their on-going and persistent presence, daily hassles can be harmful for youth. Daily hassles are usually minor disturbances that appear in a young person’s daily life, such as disputes with parents or peers. For instance, transitions to adulthood are stressful as
young people have to master new tasks in a new social setting which may result in an increased number of daily hassles (Compas et al., 1986). Yet, the research conducted by Compas, Davis and Forsythe (1985) suggests that daily events are considered differently than major events. In their study young people reported that daily hassles had a more negative impact on their lives than major events, while their number increased by age of participants (Ibid., p. 687). Daily hassles as such are not associated with major risks, but can have a longer negative effect in individuals’ lives when combined with normative or non-normative stressors (Coleman & Hendry, 2004, p. 210). In this regard, the relevance of coping skills to moderate stress requires more attention.

There is ample evidence that young people employ several coping strategies to deal with stresses (Coleman & Hendry, 2004). Coping strategies are cognitive and behavioural efforts that help individuals to deal with stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). There are problem-focused (behavioural) and emotion-centred (cognitive) coping styles recognised by the research (Smith & Carlson, 1997). Problem-focused coping refers to attempts to act on a stressor while emotion-centred coping focuses on “attempts to manage one’s emotion associated with a stressor” (Compas, Orosan & Grant, 1993, p. 339). These coping styles change with age. For example, emotion-centred coping strategies increase throughout adolescence. All these show that coping is a dynamic and multidimensional concept which develops in a context and time (Frydenberg, 2008). To understand coping, the relationship between nature and nurture, a dependence on resources and the relationship between a person and the environment should be considered (Frydenberg, 1999). For instance, resource theory of coping considers what kind of resources an individual possesses to cope with stress. The resources an individual can mobilise may include beliefs and values, economic resources and the access to social support (Smith & Carlson, 1997). In this regard, coping resources are similar to protective factors.

To compare, protective factors depend on internal and external mechanisms that individuals can use when they are exposed to risk. Assets or internal protectors are
dependent on individual skills and characteristics such as a sense of self-esteem; a belief in one’s own self-efficacy; intelligence; a sense of efficacy and competence; and an ability to deal with change and adaptation (Kirby & Fraser, 1997; Bonanno & Mancini, 2008). However, there is strong research evidence that coping and resilience derive from protective factors that are external to young people. As Fergus and Zimmerman (2005, p. 399) have argued, resources such as family support, adult mentoring, or access to community organisations emphasise the influence of social environments on an individual’s health. This has led to the recognition of three sets of factors which contribute to youth coping and resilience: individual, family, and external environments (Luthar, Cicchetti & Becker, 2000; Olsson et al., 2003; Chaskin, 2008). On the family level, the research recognises the importance of family support and child-parent relationships as crucial to youth coping. External environments, such as local communities, adult mentors, and close friendships, are associated with protective factors. Therefore, protective mechanisms are recognised as available factors within the young person, in the young person’s environment and in the interaction between these factors (Gunnestad, 2006). However, the role of wider societies and cultures in the provision of protective mechanisms, and their link with coping, has been overlooked until recently.

Despite being similar in nature, coping and resilience are to an extent distinct constructs. Smith and Carlson (1997) argue that resilience refers to presence of protective processes and coping competences. However, in comparison to resilience, coping refers to an attempt to deal with a problem which is not necessarily a completed act - as coping is a process that changes over time (Frydenberg, 1999, p. 18). As argued by Glennie (2010, p. 169) coping comprises a wider set of skills and develops as a purposeful response to stress, while resilience refers to a positive adaptation to risk. As argued by Compas (1987), coping strategies depend on the context and the nature of the stressor and time. This suggests that coping may bring positive or negative results, but only successful coping can lead to resilience.
Many publications have argued that coping skills are not fixed attributes, but can be developed, for example via coping skills programmes (Frydenberg, 2004). As Gilligan (2009) proposes, youth coping and resilience can be promoted on a daily basis. He develops the idea of a secure base around which five key concepts (or the five “R”s) are situated, in order to promote coping and resilience: 1) responsiveness; 2) relationship; 3) reciprocity; 4) routine; and 5) ritual (ibid., pp. 25-26). In the first instance, young people’s concerns and preferences have to be recognised through the responsiveness of other people. Secondly, a secure base is provided through relationships that are meaningful for a young person. Additionally, routine and ritual bring a feeling of order, security and predictability in people’s lives. Daily routine and repetition of the same activities provide a feeling of control over one’s life. Gilligan’s guide can be used as a self-taught exercise to promote coping and resilience. Yet, this approach dismisses the importance of wider social contexts on coping of youth. This dissertation takes a further step by examining how wider socio-political contexts affect young people’s experiences with routine and relationships during transitions to adulthood.

The attitudes people apply when coping with life problems are formed by socio-cultural contexts, cultural norms, and also by institutions (Bottrell, 2009). “Culture” refers to everyday practices, values and beliefs that shape people’s behaviours (Ungar, Ghazinour & Richter, 2013, p. 359). Culture can perform a protective role in challenging times, as it provides access to resources and, through value systems and norms, influences individuals’ responses to risk. Gunnestad (2006) and Gunnestad, Larsen and Nguluka (2010) argue that culture is present in all aspects of protective mechanisms, including supportive networks, internal skills and existential support. Similarly, a study conducted with four young people who relocated from different cultures to Canada reveals the importance of cultural practices on resilience-building processes, including the possibility of supporting others and opportunities to use their mother tongues (Theron et al., 2011). Cultures and contexts play a key role in the learning process of coping. However, as Mutepfa et al. (2014) have recently argued, further research should explore the relevance of particular environmental assets, such as available finances and leisure for individual coping. Such factors are
examined within this research, which considers the connection (if any) between such practices and coping in the context of social change. Particularly, it considers how social support and youth civic engagement may enhance young people’s coping during transitions to adulthood in socialist and post-socialist Slovenia.

The literature focused on youth development and coping with the sudden socio-political change in Eastern Europe is scarce. Van Hoorn et al. (2000) argue that a rapid socio-economic transformation was not perceived negatively by youth. The authors conducted comparative research on the impact of socio-political transformation on young people’s lives in Poland and Hungary. Their research shows that young participants from both countries did not think that such changes had a significant impact on their personal development (Ibid., p. 254). The authors suggest that young people considered changes positively due to the supportive role their families played in their lives. On the other hand, a study conducted by Didkowsky and Ungar (2010) focuses on young people’s experiences with economic and political disruptions in post-socialist Russia. The researchers applied “a development-in-context” approach to show how resilience and development may be influenced by socioeconomic and political change. Their findings illustrate that broader socio-political changes influence availability and access to resources. The authors recognise national nostalgia (longing for past relationships and solidarity) as a possible mechanism to cope with radical social changes. Furthermore, ideological changes expressed themselves in a shift from collectivism to individualism, and influenced broader social fabric and individual identities. Such studies show that risk factors, along with processes and outcomes, must be constantly redefined according to current contexts. I argue that the role of the wider social context is essential in generating risk and protective factors.

Recently, the focus in research has shifted from "protective factors" toward protective "processes". Protective processes recognise both the benefits of protective factors in times of adversity and as promoters of individuals’ well-being on a daily basis. Protective processes consider what types of protective factors are available in a
specific social context and examine the ways in which such factors may contribute to coping (Luthar, Cicchetti & Becker, 2000). They can contribute to a greater understanding of the link between personal attributes connected with coping and their development in a social context. Yet, there is a lack of research on the link between wider political systems, protective factors and protective processes. This research proposes to examine this link by exploring the role of a state in the provision of opportunities for youth civic engagement and social support in the context of social change.

2.4.1 Protective Aspects of Social Support that Assist Coping

Individual coping and resilience are strongly dependent on the relations people have with other individuals. Interpersonal relationships have been associated with the reduction of stress and resilience (Seeman, 1996; Giansini, 2011). Sociologists, including Park, Burgess and McKenzie (in Vaux, 1988, p. 2), argue that a link exists between disruptive social ties and socio-psychological problems. Research, specifically focused on social support, recognises the positive effects of relationships on health and well-being. There is evidence that social support and social ties have a buffering effect to life adversities and are crucial for successful coping (Hauser & Bowlds, 2000; Pinkerton & Dolan, 2007; Schweitzer, Greenslade & Kagee, 2007, Betancourt & Khan, 2008). However, there is a gap in understanding which aspects of social support contribute to coping on a daily basis. An overview of social support theory is outlined in order to discuss potential values of relationships for coping of youth.

The concept of social support has been extensively researched since the 1970s, and it mostly refers to “direct acts of assistance between human beings” (Tracy & Whittaker, 1990, p. 23). Pioneering work on social support by Cassel (1976) illustrates the major importance of acts of assistance for human existence. Yet, there is a lack of universal understanding of its meaning, which has resulted in numerous definitions of social support (Williams, Barclay & Schmied, 2004). For example, Cutrona (2000, p. 106) claims that social support refers to behaviours that help
individuals who are exposed to stressful life situations to cope successfully. However, as argued by Vaux (1988), people do not access support only in times of crisis, but also on an everyday basis. Dolan and Brady (2012) demonstrate that social support, manifested through acts of giving or getting help, is a central resource in young people’s lives. Social support is demonstrated in the shape of tasks, the exchange of information and the sharing of feelings and reciprocal actions. These relationships work on a reciprocal basis, which means that support is interchangeable and develops in an ecological context (Vaux, 1988, p. 4). As such, it is linked with people that are present in young people’s lives, and demonstrates the relevance of closer and more distinct sources of support, such as friends, family members, schools and communities. Thus, the relevance of social support in times of adversity and in daily life requires more attention.

It is important to observe that social support derives from the social roles people enact in their daily lives. Social roles contribute to individuals’ social integration, and are an important source of self-esteem (Thoits, 1985). People can perform roles deriving from familial links, such as playing the role of children, parents or grandparents, or being linked with broader social roles, such as employees, volunteers or teachers. Individuals are thus placed within a network of reciprocal relationships, which equips them with feelings of security and belonging. For instance, societies that prescribe a specific social role to youth equip young people with an understanding that they can contribute to their communities; this also exposes them to a wider set of supportive networks (Dolan, 2012). Additionally, obtaining a social role can contribute to the building of higher self-esteem among individuals. It is also noted that social roles are not necessarily only positive. They can cause stress due to high expectations and duties linked with a particular role (Hlebec & Kogovšek, 2003, p. 105). Thus, the link between social roles and supportive acts must be approached contextually. In my research, the wider and more specific social roles of young Slovenes across historical contexts are examined to show how societies and families approach young people in times of transition (for more see: Chapter Three-Context for the Research).
Types of social support correspond to the nature of problems that people face. Cutrona (2000) distinguishes between instrumental and nurturant support. Instrumental support focuses on solving problems, such as giving advice, loaning resources or helping out in other practical matters, while nurturant support relates to emphatic practices, encouragement or expressing concerns. More specifically, Dolan and Brady (2012, p. 37-38) distinguish among four main types of support: a) concrete support, which is clearly visible and practical; b) emotional support, which focuses on people’s feelings and is based on intimate relationships; c) support through advice, which provides guidance; and d) esteem support. Types of support have to match the amount and the type of help needed in a particular time (Dolan, 2010). Similarly, available support is tightly linked with individual’s capacity to ask for help. For example, a young person with low self-esteem might not be able to ask for help, even though assistance might be available. Types of support are also tightly linked with the sources of support.

Formal social support has been recognised as a beneficial act of assistance in connection with youth coping. The role of state actors and professionals involved in practices of prevention and intervention has been acknowledged by previous research. Yet, potential benefits of informal sources of support for coping have been mostly overlooked. There is ample evidence that, when facing problems, young people mostly rely on informal sources of support (McGrath & Dolan, 2006; Pinkerton & Dolan, 2007; Dolan & Brady, 2012; McGrath et al., 2014; Sala-Roca et al., 2012). For example, a study based on three research projects in the United Kingdom has shown that young people use the resources they are able to access during transitions from primary to secondary and third-level education. Friends, families and local community members are recognised as the main sources of help (Holland, Reynolds & Weller, 2007). These sources of support are often depicted as “natural” sources of help (Dolan, 2010; Dolan & Brady, 2012) and create a “central helping system”, especially during the adolescent stage (Canavan & Dolan, 2000; Pinkerton & Dolan, 2007). Therefore, informal social support networks are resources
for survival; they activate a social solidarity that is based on reciprocity (Obrist, 2006, p. 52). This implies that access to various social networks in which individuals can develop relationships with other people should be considered when discussing coping. Therefore, it is important to examine how young people can access support within the environments in which they participate on a daily basis.

A social network refers to a “pool of people” (Whittaker & Garbarino, 1983; Dolan & Brady, 2012, p. 32) on which individuals rely when they are in need. It is also used as a metaphor for complex interrelationships within a social system (Obrist, 2006). The links between social support and social networks stem from the relationships people have with their significant others on a daily basis. Informal socialising of young people in a local neighbourhood is a chance to develop relationships with other community members. In this regard, young people can obtain access to social support networks when they are exposed to stress. Engagement in various social spheres, such as families, schools and communities, can serve as a mechanism which ensures access to social networks and can strengthen coping strategies (Brennan et al., 2009; Dolan, 2010; Shaw et al., 2012). Wider social networks provide people with broader access to sources of support. This is important not only to the recipients of support, but also to those who provide it (Hlebec & Kogovšek, 2003). For example, when support is available within the different contexts of a young person’s life, such as in schools and communities, families may feel less pressured when an individual needs support.

A provision of help from friends seems to be crucial. Young individuals exchange help with people who do not judge them and with whom they feel comfortable. Closeness developed through friendships also ensures a “consistent exchange of supportive acts” (Cutrona, 1996, p. 13) which makes it easier for people to accept help. Young people do favours for one another on a daily basis, and their friendships are based on reciprocity of support (Dolan & Brady, 2012, p. 44). Researchers argue that reciprocity of help results in higher levels of happiness and better life satisfaction if reciprocal exchange of support is balanced (Hlebec & Kogovšek, 2003).
Social support is situational and does not focus only on one person, but is embedded in social networks built around trust and shared norms.

Responsive adults are important sources of protection, and can act as buffers to stress for young people. Even more significantly, culturally relevant adult-youth interactions increase resilience among youth (Ungar, 2007, 2008; Theron & Engelbrecht, 2012). For example, evidence shows that young people need at least one adult to relate to in order to overcome life difficulties (Gunnestad, Larsen & Nguluka, 2010). Teachers are considered to be among the most important adult providers of help for young people (Sosa, 2012). Research shows that teachers are uniquely placed in their ability to connect to young people who experience adversities (Reyes, 2013). However, there is a lack of evidence on the role of teachers as promoters of coping and resilience (Theron & Engelbrecht, 2012). It is also noted that there is little known about contextual resilience factors which have proven impact on school engagement (Ungar & Liebenberg, 2013). There is also a gap in the literature considering the impact of socio-political transformation on changing relationships between teachers and students. This is addressed in this research, which explores what the roles of teachers are as sources of support in young people’s lives in Slovenia.

Provision of support through different sources and types explains the role of a donor in a social support system, but not the recipient’s response to it. Some researchers (Helgeson & Lopez, 2010) emphasise the role of the social environment in the provision of support. They distinguish between perceived and received support: the latter is structured by the emotional, tangible and informational help. The study on college students experiencing stressful situations shows that received support has a strong influence on people’s cognitive ability to deal with the events (Ibid., p. 323-325). However, as argued by Dolan and Brady (2012), the way in which young people perceive received support is crucial. Young people who believe that they are supported by others will access resources and utilize available support, while those who do not believe such support exists are less likely to avail of it. This aspect of
support refers to individuals’ previous experiences with received support. Wilkinson (2001, p. 75) claims that people who perceive that they are bounded in supportive relationships feel they can cope better with stressful situations.

Social support contains elements of importance for building resilience which are specifically focused on young people (Dolan, 2010; Shaw et al., 2012). First, hidden support is connected with a young person’s unawareness of receiving the support which proves to be especially effective. Since they are unaware that they have received support, young individuals do not develop feelings of indebtedness. Second, accessing help outside immediate social networks is considered important. Youth who receive help through their friends or other community members get access to support which may be otherwise unavailable if they have poor network ties with their family members (Dolan and Brady, 2012). For instance, volunteering or becoming a member of a local association can provide an opportunity to develop stronger ties with adults or peers in settings that are useful to young people when they need support. In this regard, the importance of youth engagement in activities proves to be important. Third, informal support can be reciprocated by young people and “paid back” (Dolan, 2010). In this way, individuals can both cope better and give something back. Those aspects of social support are of special relevance for youth engagement and should be considered important when researching or implementing youth civic activities. At the same time, social support derives from relationships with other people, while the nature of those relationships has to be considered when discussing its link with resilience. For example, research across cultures (Theron et al., 2011) shows that relatedness to closer or extended family members is a recognised protective factor.

The above-mentioned characteristics of social support theory have to be approached contextually. Sources, types and opportunities to access support might differ depending upon place and time. For example, social change in Slovenia during the 1990s has influenced opportunities for an individual’s social integration in public. The lack of public spaces due to privatisation has limited the possibilities for local
gatherings on a micro level (Dragoš & Leskošek, 2003; Leskošek & Dragoš, 2004; Ploštajner et al., 2004). Many vibrant local neighbourhoods lost public gathering spaces, which resulted in a decreased level of neighbours’ support. Hlebec, Filipovič-Hrast and Kogovšek (2010) claim that the transition from socialism to postsocialism has influenced sources of social support. The role of kin has strengthened, while ties with other people and social networks have decreased. Similar findings are reported from the area of youth research where studies reveal more extensive dependence on family members among younger generations brought up in the postsocialist setting (Rener, 2000). Additionally, Šadl (2005) shows that changing emotional support in the Slovenian case is a result of the wider socio-political transformation which resulted in a lower level of trust among people, and which limited sources of support for individuals when exposed to stress. This aspect shows that social support and its influence on resilience has to take into consideration the role of culture, context and other social factors when researching people’s experiences with social support (McGrath et al., 2014). However, there is a lack of research focused on the link between the wider socio-political conditions and social support (Williams, Barclay & Schmied, 2004). Some researchers argue that most research focuses on the benefits of informal sources of support, while the relevance of wider societal layers on the provision of support remains mostly unexplored (Armstrong, Birnie-Lefcovitch & Ungar, 2005). This PhD research aims to explore these characteristics beyond interpersonal supportive practices and examine the role of wider social contexts in it.

2.4.2 Youth Civic Engagement, Coping and Resilience

Youth civic engagement enables both coping and resilience in that it provides young people with respite from issues in their lives and enables them to witness others who are experiencing stress: this reminds them that they are not unique. By providing support to others, youth civic engagement enables self-efficacy in young people. For example, young people involved in youth activities may have an access to wider social networks which they can rely on when they experience life challenges.
The concept of youth civic engagement has gained extensive policy and academic attention since the 1990s, after the recognition of a lack of political participation in the Western democracies. Some researchers, including Delli Carpini (2000), provide a rather vague understanding of civic engagement which becomes an umbrella term for all sorts of activities, ranging from political participation to voluntary work. As argued by Berger (2009), the idea is thus exposed to conceptual stretching, as there is no consensus about its general definition. Nevertheless, youth civic engagement can be understood as an activity which provides a young person with an opportunity to become connected to the wider world (Winter, 2003). It is often described as “outward-looking”, or as being linked with activities that lie outside of one’s personal interest. It develops out of the interactions between a person and a context (Zaff, Kawashima-Ginsberg & Lin, 2010) and refers to the process that enables civic interactions (Dolan, 2010). Contacts between individuals and social institutions, in addition to developing new skills and knowledge, result in the development of social, political and moral views of young people.

Civic engagement embodies several elements that can be used as a strategy for youth development. As such, it is connected with political and social civic activities. Political activities are linked to the fulfilment of rights, including participation in society or advocating social justice, while the social aspect of youth civic engagement focuses on young people’s needs, such as social altruism or helping others (Dolan, 2011). For instance, the promotion of civic programmes among youth is important for the development of their personalities as they can contribute to the creation of meaning in people’s lives (Yates & Youniss, 1999, 2006). However, youth civic engagement as a potential for enablement of coping and resilience in youth has been overlooked (Dolan, 2010).

Only recently the link between youth civic action, coping and resilience has been addressed by a discourse of care⁶. As argued by Brady et al. (2012), a discourse of care

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⁶Several academic disciplines, including developmental psychology, political science, community development, sociology and social work have developed a research interest in youth civic
simultaneously addresses the needs and rights of young people in connection with youth civic engagement. This view argues that young people have the right to participate in democratic processes, while at the same time participation can enhance social support and resilience (Dolan, 2011).

However, as shown in a connection with the rise of the Islamic State, youth civic engagement can be misused for ideological and political purposes. As argued by Brannen (2014), the Islamic State (ISIL) has recruited children and young people to ideologically groom them as future supporters of the new caliphate. Surprisingly, this recently emerged structure is also attractive for young people who have grown up in the West. As reported in the media (e.g. CNN, BBC, International New York Times and Guardian) the loss of civic opportunities, social exclusion from the public sphere or just an opportunity to be a part of something bigger than oneself are some of the reasons that may drive young people to join ISIL. For instance, as reported by Mullen (2015), ISIL was particularly successful in using social media to recruit young people, particularly young girls who could be used as brides for ISIL fighters. In this regard, the intentions of different stakeholders and ideologies who intend to recruit young people in “civic activities” should be carefully approached.

Putnam (2000) argues that youth engagement in community activities contributes to the development of social capital, which provides young people with opportunities to benefit from social connections and to develop trust. For example, youth civic engagement contributes to the development of relationships that can work as protective factors in challenging times (Brennan et al., 2009; Bottrell, 2009; Brady et. al, 2011). Therefore, young people involved in civic and political activities develop capacities that cultivate resilience and help to transform their communities at the same time (Evans, 2007). Dolan (2010, p. 118) proposes that the following benefits may derive from youth engagement in activities:

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engagement. Those interests follow the research rationales of those disciplines, but also lead to a more interdisciplinary knowledge on the topic.
1) Young people can deepen existing relationships and develop new ones. By being positively engaged, young individuals can access new positive ties which can help them when they are exposed to stress.

2) Young people become involved in reciprocity of support. Through involvement in activities, they not only gain from relationships with other people, but they can also give back.

3) Involvement in youth civic activities can result in higher self-esteem and self-efficacy for a young individual.

4) Being involved in activities with other people can make a young person realise that they are not alone in having problems and needs.

Researchers claim that youth civic engagement must address issues of inequality, injustice and power in order to promote ideas of wellness and resilience for all young people (Evans & Prilleltensky, 2005). To address these issues, it is important to examine opportunities for engagement. In comparison with adults, young people’s everyday lives are set in different daily routines. Youth occupy a social position and status that is separate to adults’, and their lives are more influenced by activities which emerge within everyday contexts, including home, schools, peers and local associations (Amnå, 2012, p. 622). Schools present one of the essential forms of community, where most of the interactions between young people take place. Zaff, Kawashima-Ginsberg and Lin (2010, p. 291) claim that school is an important context for civic development by equipping young people with ideas related to civic engagement and by exposing them to active learning processes. Family is another important space in which young people act and communicate. Neighbourhoods also affect young people’s engagement in community life, while the availability of structured leisure activities influences young people’s interactions with their localities. As argued by Percy-Smith & Thomas (2010) and Dolan (2010), youth civic engagement should also consider participation in informal activities: this is often neglected by policy makers and researchers, as in the case of young carers.
Recent developments in the sphere of youth civic engagement show how the concept should be explored contextually. Youth civic engagement develops if there is a link between young people’s values and interests, and available opportunities in their living settings (Zaff, Kawashima-Ginsberg & Lin, 2010, p. 277). Personal characteristics involve motivation, behaviour, commitment and an individual’s duty to become and remain engaged. Historically, young people were considered to be passive recipients of experiences. However, as argued by James, Jenks and Prout (1998), young people are active agents in their own right, with their own needs and preferences, and they co-create their social environments. Furthermore, Amnà et al. (2009, p. 32) claim that young individuals select their daily environments for particular reasons. They choose activities with which they want to be associated. These decisions are sometimes connected with personal choice, but in many instances they also depend on the opportunities that young people have in their living environments (Higgins-D’Alessandro, 2010; Percy-Smith & Thomas, 2010; Torney-Purta & Amadeo, 2010; Torney-Purta & Barber, 2011; Amnà, 2012; Flanagan et al., 2012; Lenzi et al. 2012).

Opportunities for engagement refer to socioeconomic, political and cultural factors that are generated in society. According to Zaff, Kawashima-Ginsberg and Lin (2010), social policies and state and community mechanisms create opportunities for contextually meaningful youth civic engagement. The importance of the provision of a social structure for civic action and political conditions for youth civic engagement vary from one community to another and across cultures (Flanagan & Levine, 2010). Therefore, forms and means of civic engagement reflect the conditions of the broader social structure. For example, Western societies encourage youth engagement through volunteering in the sphere of civil society, while many cultures from the global South stimulate interdependent or communal participatory activities (Kassimir & Flanagan, 2010, p. 97). This implies that different societies use different predictors of civic engagement, ones that are not necessarily based on individualism. Also, families, schools and communities offer diverse solutions for young people’s participation in activities (Andolina et al. 2003; Amnà et al, 2009; Amnà, 2012). These dynamic structures are constantly being negotiated and changed. Researchers
argue that forms of civic engagement alter from generation to generation (Sherrod, Flanagan & Youniss, 2002). However, there is a lack of research on the link between a rapid socio-political change and opportunities for youth engagement. This research applies a generational approach in order to explore youth experiences with engagement in socialism in post-socialism.

As argued by Wuthnow (1999), Winter (2003) and Zaff, Kawashima-Ginsberg and Lin (2010), social change has a prominent impact on practices of youth civic engagement. Wuthnow (1999), for example, claims that individuals in contemporary Western societies face different social and political conditions than previous generations. Firstly, people are generally busier, and their social networks are more fluid than they were in the past (Winter, 2003). Secondly, rapid changes have influenced youth and young adulthood in Western societies (Amnå et al., 2009). Thirdly, transitions to adulthood are prolonged and entrance into adulthood is more uncertain. This longer transitory period to adulthood effects forms and patterns of contemporary youth engagement (Youniss, 2009; Flanagan & Levine, 2010). In comparison with their elders, young people are more involved in voluntary actions, but do not practice other activities to the same extent: for example, reading newspapers (Flanagan & Levine, 2010, p. 161).

Prolonged transitions to adulthood have resulted in a “structural lag” (Flanagan et al., 2012, p. 31). This means that institutions have not adapted to changes in young people’s lives but instead have left young individuals on their own when dealing with life’s uncertainties. Therefore, in order to understand how civic engagement develops over time, researchers are advised to take into consideration the specific historical and political contexts in which civic activities emerge. The interplay between an individual and wider contextual opportunities demonstrates how engagement should be approached through individuals’ experiences. Analysis of social structures demonstrates the conditions for engagement. Furthermore, structural lag may also have an impact on coping skills and resilience. A lack of opportunities
and structures for engagement may influence young people’s access to supportive practices and social spaces.

Critical analysis of the literature shows that further research must focus on how youth civic engagement corresponds to definitions and experiences of a particular society over time. There is a need for a more contextually specific research which recognises the role of youth in society, the opportunities that are available to them for meaningful participation within society, and their access to supportive networks. This dissertation examines the link between youth civic engagement, social support and coping as aspects of resilience in socialist and post-socialist contexts. As I will demonstrate, the changing social role of youth and the individualisation process may expose young people to different opportunities for engagement and have a prolific impact on their experience of risk and resilience.

So far, this chapter has presented a set of concepts relevant to the topic under investigation in this research: individual resilience, adolescence, youth development in a social context, youth transitions to adulthood, coping, social support and youth civic engagement. The next section outlines the link between a social context, coping and resilience. A socio-ecological approach to resilience is examined in order to consider what role the context of social change has on the coping abilities of young people.

2.5 Socio-Ecological Approach to Resilience – from Individual to Society

Most recent definitions extend beyond the idea of resilience being an individual trait and consider its development in dynamic processes between individuals and their living contexts (Ungar, 2008, 2011, 2013; Gilligan, 2009; Masten & Wright, 2010; Pooley & Cohen, 2010; Bottrell & Armstrong, 2012; Schoon, 2012). As Bottrell (2009, p. 336) has observed, resilience is structured by individual and local collective experiences which are formed through social structures, discourses and resource distributions. Thus, resilience is a dynamic process in which “meanings and practices [...] are always embedded in larger social, economic and political contexts”
Economic and political systems create health care conditions and shape perceptions of health. Societies facilitate access to resources and support individuals and their families when exposed to life challenges. For instance, anxiety and coping in contemporary societies are embedded in an ideology of individualism, in which mental health is considered as a personal strength rather than a social issue (Wilkinson, 2001; Bottrell, 2009, 2013). However, research that is focused on the influence of macro social systems on individual resilience is scarce (Masten & Obradovic, 2008, p. 13).

Few studies which provide a parallel between an individual's resilience and larger social systems focus on the role of religion in resilience (Crawford *et al.*, 2006); a connection between local neighbourhoods and positive outcomes for youth (Sampson in Masten and Obradovic, 2008); or the role of cultures on the meaning of risk and resilience (Wright & Masten, 2005; Liebenberg & Ungar, 2008; Theron & Liebenberg, 2014). Yet, as argued by Seccombe (2002) and Bottrell (2009, 2010), research has to examine more carefully the role of macro-systemic structures, such as economic, policy and broader governance aspects, in order to understand practices that foster resilience. For example, the way young people and their resilience are presented in public and the role youth policy has on individuals is crucial for understanding the impact of social ecologies on people’s responses when exposed to adversities. The influence of wider political and ideological aspects on the creation of people’s experiences requires further attention as well.

A socio-ecological theory of human development furthers thinking about the development of coping of youth and resilience in a social context. This theory focuses on social and physical environments as the providers of resources individuals need for personal growth (Ungar, 2012, p. 15). The ways in which individuals cope must be explored in all domains of life in which they participate. Bronfenbrenner (1979) argues that socio-ecological theory promotes the idea of an interdependent relationship between individuals and their environments. Human development develops in interaction with various interlinked structures which are
located in individuals’ living settings (Schoon, 2012). Different features of those contexts, including family, community, culture and society coexist as nested spheres, similar to a collection of Russian dolls, ranging from micro- to macro- social levels. Individuals are thus set in different systems: micro-system, meso-system, exo-system, macro-system, while chrono-system represents the time in which the ecological system is set (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1995).

A micro-system is the immediate setting in which an individual has face-to-face contacts with other people, whether at home, school, the neighbourhood, or with peer groups. It considers the practices, activities and roles in which a person is directly involved in a daily basis (Ungar, Ghazinour & Richter, 2013, p. 352). A micro-system expands beyond the immediate to a wider set of interactions and becomes more complex. The meso-system refers to interactions between two or more settings, as an “in-between” layer. It characterises a connection between different microsystems, such as links between home and school. For example, Bronfenbrenner (1979, p. 1) shows how children’s ability to read depends on the nature of relationships between school and home. Therefore, stronger and more diverse ties between micro-systems result in a more effective influence of the meso-system on human development. The next layer, the exo-system, refers to the external forces which shape an individual’s life in an indirect way. People do not directly participate in these settings, but significant decisions that affect their lives are taken within them. For example, decisions taken in a community setting, such as the use of a public space, can enforce or hinder people’s interactions: or, extending working hours at a parent’s workplace has a direct impact on the time children and parents spend together. The macro-system refers to a wider society and to the organisation of social institutions, and this layer involves ideology, culture, values, norms and beliefs. Although this system is the most invisible, it has a major impact on people’s lives. It shapes social policies and services which determine other layers, including the quality of people’s everyday lives. Finally, the chrono-system refers to the historical time in which individuals’ lives are lived. Here, Bronfenbrenner (1979) considers how historical factors influence human development. For example, a longitudinal study of Berkley Institute of Child Welfare displays the influence of
socio-cultural changes on young people’s development in different contexts. The Great Depression in the 1930s was one such example (Elder, 1974). The economic recession resulted in fewer opportunities and demolished social structures that changed young people’s abilities to navigate life transitions, such as continuation of education or marriage. Those changes also influenced young people’s relationships with their significant others, adults and friends. This is useful for my research, since it is important to consider specific elements of growing up in different historical periods and the impact of historical factors on youth development.

Considering resilience as a dynamic process between an individual and environment provides an understanding of resilience to be “ordinary and naturally occurring” (Torres & Fyke, 2013, p. 4). Masten’s (2001, 2014) work and understanding of resilience is of special importance to this view as she claims that resilience should not be researched only among vulnerable and people “at-risk”, but should be sought in spheres of everyday coexistence. Masten (2001, p. 227) argues that resilience is a common phenomenon which results from the operation of basic human adaptational systems, including parents-child relationships, regulations of emotions and behaviours and individuals’ engagement in social environment. As such, resilience is “ordinary magic” (Ibid.) which derives from rather normal than extraordinary human capabilities, relationships and resources. Resilience is not merely a capacity of individuals to do well: rather, it develops through connections people have with their environments, including families, schools and communities. Resilient youth prove to be exposed to similar psychosocial resources. They are set in healthier contexts which generate opportunities, provide a consistent support, access to resources and enhancement of assets (Masten, 2001). In this context, a belief that resilience is an “everyday capacity, expressed and expressible by all people” has developed (Wilson and Arvanitakis, 2013b, p. 1).

This is a shift in thinking about resilience being an individual capacity to considering the role a social context has on generating risk and resources to cope. This resulted in a socio-ecological approach to resilience which combines ideas of human
development in a context and resilience as ordinary magic. Ungar (2008, p. 225) claims:

In the context of exposure to significant adversity, whether psychological, environmental, or both, resilience is both the capacity of individuals to navigate their way to health-sustaining resources, including opportunities to experience feelings of well-being, and a condition of the individual’s family, community and culture to provide these health resources and experiences in a culturally meaningful way.

This definition provides a similar shift in thinking as Bronfenbrenner’s approach to human development: a shift of focus from an individual to various societal systems with which individuals interact (Ungar, Ghazinour & Richter, 2013). This is particularly relevant for this research, which examines meanings of youth resilience in socialist and post-socialist settings. The focus on a context also challenges the idea of resilience being an outcome and requires paying attention to resilience processes and to the role contexts have in facilitating resilience processes (Ungar, 2011). How people navigate and negotiate their positions in a specific social context has to be understood through reciprocal interactions between individuals and their environments. Navigation and negotiation of people’s positions within their living environments are essential for further understanding of resilience.

To “navigate” refers to an individual’s capacity to seek assistance as well as to the availability of resources and help sought in a particular context. Ungar (2010) claims that people’s capacity to recover is only partially dependent on personal skills. It is also necessary for individuals to navigate their way to resources, such as participation in a community and family life or using experiences that contribute to higher self-esteem. For instance, people have to have a capacity (personal agency) to engage with available opportunities (Gilligan, 2009, Didkowsky & Ungar, 2010). This is needed in order to accept an opportunity that might arise. For example, if an opportunity for a job arises, an individual must make a decision about it. Therefore, people respond differently to similar social circumstances, which calls attention to the relationship between agency and structure. They are not merely victims of
change, but they also (if they can) construct their own lives by making choices through interactions within present ecological systems (Obrist, 2006). This further implies an understanding about relational and interactive aspects of resilience in which the interactions between individuals and environments must be explored (Schoon, 2012).

Negotiation relates to the provision of resources in meaningful ways. The role of a wider society is to provide opportunities and resources to individuals (Obrist, Pfeiffer & Henley, 2010; Schoon, 2012). Ungar (2011) claims that opportunities can be ensured through five different sorts of capital: 1) human capital, involving the ability of an individual to work, possessing knowledge and being healthy; 2) social capital, developed through social networks of community members; 3) natural capital, composed by land, water and wildlife; 4) physical capital, represented by transport, shelter and energy; 5) financial capital, structured by savings and credits. Additionally, opportunities are also linked to structures available to people, such as housing, employment, education and health care. On many occasions, opportunities arise as mere chance. Negotiation does not depend solely on physical means, but also on the discourses of power which define successful coping. People exposed to adversity must be provided with resources that are meaningful and accessible to them (Ungar, 2008, 2010, 2011). For example, strengthening the resilience of minorities in different cultural contexts (Blackstock & Trocme, 2005; Gunnestadt, 2006) has to take into consideration cultural values, norms and practices that are relevant to them.

The socio-ecological approach to resilience considers the connection between individuals and their living environment as reciprocal processes. As a part of this reciprocal exchange, the following protective processes are developed: a) contextual; b) cultural; and c) temporal (Ungar, Ghazinour & Richter, 2013). Contextual processes are connected with the specific circumstances of an individual. This approach takes into consideration social class, gender, ethnicity and personal specifics. Cultural processes, on the other hand, consider the cultural norms, habits
and everyday practices that are deemed important for building individual resilience. For instance, immigrants that move to other countries may use their mother tongue, or avail of support from people to whom they are related, as protective mechanisms in the new culture (Theron et al., 2011). Finally, protective processes are temporal, as they develop in a specific historical period of time.

Taking Ungar’s approach to resilience, this study explores the meaning of coping and resilience in socialist and post-socialist Slovenia. The research highlights the need to examine the importance of the broader socio-political systems and their historical features for a better understanding of the meaning of coping and resilience in non-western and western society.

2.6 Tentative Conceptual Framework

The conceptual model presented in this section looks to explore the interrelationship between social support, youth civic engagement and youth coping as aspects of resilience in a context of social change. Researching coping abilities of youth within a social context gained more attention when researchers began to consider the relationship between wider society and state ideologies and resilience. At the same time, the research has acknowledged the importance of young people’s experiences and their perceptions of coping and resilience. As presented in the first section of this literature review, these views correspond with the fourth and fifth phases of resilience research. Coping and resilience of youth is particularly under-researched in societies that have undergone a rapid socio-political transformation. Yet, a critical examination of the meaning of coping for young people of different generations is largely absent. This investigation acknowledges this gap and examines the relevance of youth civic engagement, social support and coping in a social context. For this purpose, an innovative framework is conceptualised, which provides a ground for testing the main research question:
How does socio-political transformation influence the provision of protective mechanisms and youth coping as aspects of resilience during transitions to adulthood?

This section summarises the main concepts under the research, which are presented in detail throughout Chapter Two. It fuses them into the model which provides a framework for analysing the data presented in Chapter Five.

**Socio-Ecological Approach to Research on Coping and Resilience**

As examined in Section 2.2, there is a lack of research on the link between wider socio-political systems and youth coping and resilience. As argued by Prilleltensky and Prilleltensky (2005), there is a need to explore the socio-political and economic conditions in which youth coping and resilience can be nurtured. This research further examines these conditions by exploring growing up experiences of youth in three different socio-political settings: socialism in the 1980s; transition to democracy in the 1990s; and post-socialism in the 2000s. As shown in Chapter Three, Slovenian youth have experienced rapid changes during these periods of time. Opportunities and resources that young people can access in these socio-political contexts are examined to explore what meaning young people prescribe to those opportunities. The role of a state, community and families in provision of opportunities and support for young people during transitions to adulthood is particularly considered by this model. This corresponds with a socio-ecological approach to resilience, as proposed by Ungar (2008). He argues that the ways young people negotiate and navigate access to resources should be examined to understand the link between a social context and an individual’s coping and resilience. This approach argues that coping and resilience are social constructs developing in a specific place and time.

**Protective Factors**

Protective factors are crucial for youth coping and resilience. They depend on internal and external mechanisms that individuals can use when they are exposed to
risk (Craig, 2012). As this chapter has demonstrated, they develop as assets and resources while the link between the two remains under-researched. Assets refer to personal skills and characteristics that young people use to cope: for example, self-esteem, good temperament, self-efficacy, and humour. As examined in this chapter, there is strong research evidence that coping and resilience derive from protective factors that are external to young people. They are available in contexts in which young people participate, such as families and local neighborhoods. At the same time, protective processes consider what types of protective factors are available in a social context and how they may contribute to coping. This model applies the idea of protective processes to explore how socialist and post-socialist contexts generate protective factors that may enable coping in youth. For this purpose, concepts of social support and youth civic engagement are used to further examine this link.

**Social Support**

As examined in this chapter, social support is crucial for building coping and resilience in youth (Dolan, 2011; Shaw et al., 2012). Ties that young people develop with friends, families or community leaders can result in a reciprocal exchange of help. This can equip young people with a feeling of being able to receive and give back simultaneously. In this model, types and sources of social support are used to examine how young people perceive their experiences with assistance of help on a daily basis. There is a lack of research on the role of the wider social ecologies on the organisation of support (Williams, Barclay & Schmied, 2004) which might have implications on individual coping and resilience. This part provides an insight into individual experiences with practices of social support and highlights what influence wider social ecologies, particularly states, have on the provision and organisation of supportive practices for youth. As this chapter shows, young Slovenes have experienced a shift from the presence of strong state support to reliance on individual resources and privatisation of support. What implications this change has had on young people’s coping abilities, is examined in **Chapter Five-Research Findings**.
Youth Civic Engagement

The concept of youth civic engagement is in this model used to explore the link between youth participatory activities, social support and youth coping as aspects of resilience. Dolan (2012) claims youth civic action may enable access to social support and social networks, and as such, it is an important tool for building an individual’s resilience. In this model youth civic engagement considers opportunities for youth participation in socialist and post-socialist contexts. As examined in this chapter, young people’s daily routines develop in connection with activities with which they are engaged with on a daily basis, such as families, schools and local neighbourhoods. For this purpose, this model applies ideas of formal and informal activities to explore generational experiences with engagement. The role that wider society, communities and families prescribe to young people may have strong implications for individuals’ engagement. As shown in this chapter and in Chapter Three, young Slovenes have been recognised as important social actors within socialism, while in post-socialism, their role has diminished. Some researchers, including Ule (2012), argue about a “disappearance of youth” from the public sphere in Slovenia. At the same time, processes of denationalisation and privatisation may have strong implications on practices of youth civic engagement in Slovenia. This conceptual model considers what implications a changing social role of youth and processes of denationalisation and privatisation have had to youth access to social support and coping.

Coping with Youth Transitions to Adulthood

As argued in this chapter, transitions to adulthood can be stressful as young people have to master new tasks in a new social setting (Compas et al., 1986). However, the link between transitions to adulthood and a wider social change has not been established yet. In this model transitions to adulthood are used as an analytical concept to examine growing-up experiences of three generations in socialist and post-socialist Slovenia. Linear and secure pathways to adulthood under socialism have been replaced with prolonged, blurred and insecure transitions under post-socialism. As argued by Burrell (2011), post-socialist youth experienced transitions to adulthood in times of socio-political change – and these experiences can be
labeled as “double transitions”. In this model, the idea of “double transitions” is used to compare and contrast growing-up experiences in socialism and post-socialism. This model further examines the connection between “double transitions” and young people’s coping. Young people employ several coping strategies to deal with the stresses (Coleman & Hendry, 2004). As argued by Lazarus and Folkman (1984), coping strategies refer to cognitive and behavioural efforts that help individuals to deal with stress.

At the same time, the link between resources that individuals have access to and coping have been recognised as important to cope with stress. The resources that an individual can mobilise may include beliefs and values, economic resources and the access to social support (Smith & Carlson, 1997). This suggests that there may be a link between coping resources and protective factors. The concept of a secure base is introduced to explore the link between transitions to adulthood, protective factors (e.g. social support and youth civic engagement) and coping in a context of social change. As argued in Section 2.4, a secure base that young people have in their daily lives may help them to cope with daily hassles and life adversities (Gilligan, 2009). Two aspects of the 5 “R”s – routine and relationships – are incorporated into this model in order to explore this link further.
Figure 2.2: Interconnecting youth civic engagement, social support, coping and resilience in a context

2.7 Conclusion

The backdrop of this research is to explore the interrelationship between social support, youth civic engagement and youth coping as aspects of resilience in the context of social change. This chapter presented five relevant areas to such connection, starting with individualised resilience as the main concept which shaped the discussion on risk and coping to date. The concept of youth and its main characteristics as recognised by theories of adolescence and sociological understanding of youth was further presented. Youth coping in connection with transitions to adulthood was addressed in the next section. Two protective factors – social support and youth civic engagement - that young people can utilize when they are exposed to stresses were presented in detail. A socio-ecological approach to resilience was introduced to examine the link between risk, coping and resilience in a
social context. Finally, this chapter proposed a tentative conceptual framework to research the connections between youth civic engagement, social support and youth coping and resilience in a social context. The next section introduces the socio-political background of socialist and post-socialist Slovenia and examines the social role of youth and youth policies in these settings.
Chapter Three: Research Context - Youth Pathways from Socialism to Post-socialism

3.1 Introduction
This chapter provides the socio-political and cultural context for the study. It examines the effects of social change on Slovenian youths since the 1980s, emphasising young people’s experience of the transition from socialist to post-socialist Slovenia. First, it presents international legal and academic discourses on the social role of youth and youth development to date. This is preceded by an overview of youth development in socialist Yugoslavia. The social role of youth, opportunities for youth engagement, and the main characteristics of youth transitions to adulthood are examined in this context. Second, this chapter analyses the impact that social change has had on youth development and on the role of youth in Slovenian society. Specifically, this section examines the way in which this socio-political transformation has influenced the development of youth policies and the opportunities for youth-positive civic engagement in independent Slovenia.

Slovenia is a central European state which is surrounded by four countries: Italy, Austria, Hungary and Croatia. Just over 2 million people\(^7\) live in a territory of 20,273 km\(^2\). Young people constitute 17 % of the population (Republic of Slovenia: Statistical Office RS, 2014). The state is ethnically homogenous; most people declare themselves as Slovenian. Historically it was exposed to the Frankish and German Empires, the rule of the French, and the Austro-Hungarian Empire (Rizman, 2006). Political integration with Southern Slavs emerged at the end of the First World War and continued throughout the twentieth century. Various socio-political and cultural influences have impacted Slovenian national identity, based on cultural communalities and a shared Slovenian language and history.

This study focuses on the Coastal-Karst area, particularly on the administrative unit of Sežana, which includes the following municipalities: Sežana, Komen, Divača and

\(^7\)2,062,870 people lived in Slovenia in 2015 (Republic of Slovenia: Statistical Office RS, 2015).
Hrpelje-Kozina. Coastal-Karst is one of 12 statistical regions in the state (Pečar, 2008, p. 9). Officially, the region contains 4 municipalities\(^8\). 24,841 people live in an area of 660 km\(^2\) (Republika Slovenija Upravna enota Sežana, no date). Between 1955 and 1995 the territory was administratively governed only by one municipality, Sežana\(^9\), which was afterward divided into four new municipalities (Ora: Območna razvojna agencija Krasa in Brkinov, 2008). This area borders Italy and has strong economic and cultural connections with its neighbouring country. This part of Slovenia is one of the least populated, and it faces challenges connected with an ageing population, which is especially visible in the countryside (Pečar, 2008). Young people represent approximately 15% of the population which is slightly below the national average (17.5%) (Republic of Slovenia: Statistical Office RS, no date). There are six primary schools and one secondary school in the area. The municipality of Sežana established a youth centre, Podlaga, in 2001 with the intention to provide a social space for youth (MC Podlaga, no date). Below Figure 3.1 demonstrates a chronological context for Slovenian youth as presented in this chapter.

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\(^8\)The Coastal area of the region was not included in the research.
\(^9\)Sežana was one of Slovenia’s largest municipalities prior to 1995.
3.2 Perspectives on Youth Participation and Youth Development

Historically considered to be passive recipients, young people have only recently been recognised as active agents in their own right. Accordingly, youth participation has become one of the most relevant topics under discussion by researchers and policy makers. The interdisciplinary evidence has contributed to the development of new discourses regarding youth. Academics associated with the new sociology of youth claim that young people are not passive, but are active agents in their own right and can contribute to society while they are still young (Prout & James, 1997, p. 8). Several researchers, particularly within the field of children’s geographies, argue that young people actively contribute to their families and communities. Yet, social and cultural contexts also provide possibilities for young people’s participation in the public sphere (Percy-Smith & Thomas, 2010). For example, the role that youth have in society corresponds with the possibilities for their engagement in civic activities (Ammà et al., 2009). In most societies, their role is still defined according to perceptions that youth “should be seen, but not heard” (Feinstein, Giertsen & O’Kane, 2010, p. 58). This situation reflects a need for the
development of a more systematic approach in researching and stimulating youth participation, one that places young people at the centre of such research.

Another important milestone connected with youth participation is linked with the legal recognition of children’s and young people’s rights. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNICEF, no date) is the main international legally-binding mechanism which protects the civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights of children and young people around the globe (UNICEF, no date). Article 12 (UNICEF, no date) of the convention provides a legal basis for youth participation in their respective societies:

1. State parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child. The views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

2. For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly or through a representative or an appropriate body in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.

The underlined parts of the Article 12 illustrate the recognition of young people as active agents in their own right who are able to express their views regarding matters that directly affect them. The language which emerged around new legal and scientific understanding of young people presents a shift from duties and virtues to “the rights of children and youth to take part, be informed and be involved” (Amnå, 2012, p. 612). However, Percy-Smith and Thomas (2010, p. 2) argue that participation consists of more than the expression of views; it can also involve direct action.

International development organisations have acknowledged the role young people play in the positive transformation of their societies through public and political participation (Shaw et al., 2012). Organisations such as UNESCO and UNICEF have
focused on youth as agents of change. They have recognised young people as duty-bearers and rights-holders who can contribute to ideas of social transformation, peace and sustainable development (Jonsson, 2003; UNESCO Operational Strategy on Youth 2014-2021, 2014). They argue that young people should be considered as assets and partners who can positively contribute to their families, local communities and societies. This implies that young people are active contributors to society not only as future citizens, but also as citizens of today (Shaw et al., 2012, p. 6). As suggested by Jonsson (2003), youth participation is essential to young individuals’ personal growth and development. At the same time, youth initiatives can make positive contributions to social change (Seebach, 2008). However, this approach requires the creation of an holistic policy approach to youth development.

International development organisations have recognised a need for a global and holistic approach to youth development. For example, The Youth Programme within UNESCO contributes to holistic youth development by focusing on youth civic engagement; by supporting successful transitions from school to workplace; and by facilitating violence prevention programmes (The UNESCO Youth Forum, 2011). This organisation particularly supports and advocates the importance of positive engagement for youth in different sphere of social life, such as education and policy areas which affect young people’s lives (Hopma & Sergeant, 2015). Youth civic engagement may have positive effects for individuals’ personal development and can make positive changes to the communities in which youth participate (The UNESCO Youth Forum, 2011, p. 14). Young people can become drivers of positive change by developing skills and capacities which would provide them with opportunities to engage in their communities and societies (Ibid.). But these views on youth development have yet to be examined within a social context. For the purposes of this research, it is important to examine the social roles young people have played within socialist and post-socialist contexts. Additionally, this research must consider opportunities for engagement and policies supporting youth transitions to adulthood in both socio-political contexts.
3.3 Socio-Political and Economic Features of Socialist Yugoslavia

The Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) was formed after the end of the Second World War in 1945. It consisted of six republics: Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Macedonia, and two autonomous provinces: Vojvodina and Kosovo, and Metohija. Ideologically, the state was socialist. The consequences of the Second World War affected the state on a large scale, and the country, which had been lagging economically before the war, now had to cope with socio-political transformation as well (Allcock, 2000). The leadership of the League of Yugoslav Communists in the first years after the Second World War followed the path of Soviet state socialism. However, a pro-Soviet-oriented Yugoslav regime lasted only until 1948 when it was disrupted by the Cominform dispute. In this way, Yugoslavia did not only distance itself from Soviet socialism: it also had to reconsider further developments in socio-political and economic spheres. That was a beginning of the “Yugoslav road to Socialism” based on a self-management system and market socialism (Jović, 2003). The self-management system, known under the famous slogan “Factories to the workers” came into force on 27 June 1950. This system, which originally aimed to differentiate Yugoslavia from Soviet state socialism, also incorporated a return to Leninism which, in comparison with a Stalinist strong central apparatus, supported the idea of the removal or the withering-away of the state (Crampton, 2002, p. 115). The "self-management law" defined production as a "social property", which belonged under the administration of the working collectives. Market socialism was introduced in 1965. The economic reforms were focused on the reduction of the role of politics in the economy and rationalisation of foreign trade. In terms of international relations, socialist Yugoslavia was regarded as the state that lay between "the East and the West".

In order to provide a context for this dissertation, this section presents the main characteristics of life in Yugoslavia in the 1980s. During this time, Yugoslavia faced a socio-political crisis that developed around an economic crisis and around the

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10Dispute with Cominform was part of the Yugoslav disagreement with Stalin's wishes to incorporate the state under Soviet protection.
international devaluation of the state’s image. The state system was losing legitimacy, and this period was associated with the formation of civil society and social movements. The beginning of the 1980s saw Yugoslavia sink deeper into the economic, social and political crisis that had begun with rising oil prices in the 1970s (Allcock, 2000, p. 423; Gow & Carmichael, 2010, p. 62). This economic stagnation resulted in increased oil prices as well as stricter conditions for applying for international loans, which the International Monetary Fund (IMF) had prescribed for Yugoslavia. Inevitably, this situation led to social insecurity, unemployment and a general recession within the Yugoslav economy (Allcock, 2000). Private initiatives presented some additional possibilities for survival: however, these ventures also precipitated further crises within the system. Simultaneously, this period witnessed changes within the political electorate. The older generation, responsible for leading socialist Yugoslavia, had left the political scene. Tito11, a charismatic leader of the state since its foundation, died in 1980. However, as Allcock (2000, p. 421) rightly points out, this was not only a problem of the replacement of one leader, but also raised the much deeper question: How does a country reform from charismatic leadership to a state informed by a legal-rational authority?

This crisis in Yugoslavia resulted in a breakup of the state. Slovenia proclaimed independence on 25 June 1991. Yugoslav Army forces intervened, but left the territory after ten days of armed conflict. The state was internationally recognised in January 1992 (Rizman, 2006). State independence resulted in the formation of new political movements: in many cases, these groups developed from civil society movements which had previously emerged. Structures linked with socialism also dissolved. This had a major impact on young people. For example, the Socialist Youth Alliance reformed into a political party, the Liberal Democracy of Slovenia (LDS), which was one of the most influential political forces until 2004. However, unlike political organisations, youth structures were not replaced with new ones

11There are different interpretations about the dissolution of Yugoslavia, and many of them narrate the power struggles that existed between older and younger members of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. Internal fights resulted in several changes to the Yugoslav constitution: the final constitutional change in 1974 established a confederation based on the self-management system. This legal act provided each of the republics with opportunities for secession which, for instance, Slovenia used in 1991 (for more see: Allcock, 2000, Crampton, 2002, Jović, 2003).
(Ule, 2012). This so-called “transition to democracy”, or a shift from socialism to post-socialism, brought significant changes to the society, and these changes have had a significant impact upon its young people (for more see: Section 3.5). The next part outlines the main features of socialist youth in order to illustrate the link between the socialist system and its ideology towards young people.

3.3.1 Construction of Youth under Socialism

In Eastern Europe\(^\text{12}\) a development of idea of youth was accompanied by a delay in the industrialisation process and slow economic growth overall (Wallace & Kovacheva, 1998)\(^\text{13}\). Young people were considered to be a particularly important part of socialist ideology, as they represented the future of the socialist world. This ideology was built around young people’s active role in the post-Second World War reconstruction of the state. Young people were recognised as builders of the socialist future, and volunteers were mobilised into Youth Brigade movements, which focused on the reconstruction of infrastructure, including roads, factories and railways (Ibid., p. 55). Socialist societies nurtured, cared for and controlled young people with the expectation that they, in turn, would be loyal and obedient to the Communist Party. The state regulated youth activities in the public domain through communist youth organisations, such as the Pioneers. These organisations were interlinked with the educational system, which enabled the close control of young people’s public activities (Roberts, 2009).

In contrast to Western European societies, the construction of youth under socialism was fixed. Transitions to adulthood were deemed to be generally smoother (Ule & Rener, 2000). Young people were automatically placed within educational systems which qualified them for particular jobs, and, in general, they remained in these positions throughout their work lives (Roberts, 2009, p. 7). Training for a specific occupation was usually regulated by the industry available in a particular region, and

\(^{12}\)Eastern Europe refers to the countries pre-1989 which experienced socialism(s): the former Soviet bloc and former Yugoslavia.

\(^{13}\)After the Second World War, Eastern European societies experienced complete industrialisation. The majority of societies had been based on agriculture (Allcock, 2000), and underwent an extensive urbanisation process during the socialist period.
was endorsed through scholarships. Factories offered different incentives, such as housing or higher salaries. Young people gained a number of social benefits through work, including health care, vacations, childcare and housing (Roberts, 2009, p. 47). Thanks to this high level of security, young people could be certain of accommodation: for example, they might have access to a flat through work, or could receive property through inheritance. Most social benefits were already incorporated into the system, and, subsequently, were taken for granted.

In addition to a stable social safety net provided by the state, people also valued and relied upon inter-generational assistance and family support. Although similar to many western countries, those relationships were more intense. Family relations and inter-generational links were intertwined in all socialist societies, thus influencing young people's lives considerably. Firstly, family contacts were used for social mobility (Wallace & Kovacheva, 1998). This included better job positions and political careers. Secondly, intergenerational ties acted as vital sources of support and solidarity for families (Ibid.). Material help and financial support provided by parents or relatives enabled young people to continue with their education, while they offered reciprocal help through involvement in household work.

3.3.2 Youth in a Slovenian Context in the 1980s

The social position of Slovenian youths was also defined by the specifics of Yugoslav socialism. The ideological functions of youth in building socialism corresponded to the state’s historical characteristics: first, it focused on a state socialism akin to Soviet socialism. Following Tito’s dispute with Stalin, the role of Slovenian youths focused on self-management (Ule, 1988). Young people were linked with ideas of progress and radical social change. They were also seen as actors who embodied the society’s future (Ule, 2012, p. 30). As such, the socialist regime prescribed an integrative and productive role for young people. The state ideological discourse was focused on the intensive cooperation of young Yugoslavs in the post-war reconstruction of the state, progress of the revolution, and the

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14In terms of housing a lodging system was regulated by the state (Mandič, 1996).
possibility of building a better future (Nastran - Ule, 1996, p. 20). Socialism prescribed an active role for youth which was built in opposition to passive capitalist youth. In contrast, the social image of young Yugoslavs was distinctly positive. Their representation was constructed around collective values, a positive relationship to work and an active participation in the building of a post-war state. Politicians often addressed young people in their speeches and referred to their active and collective role in society. The state hosted an annual Day of Youth on May 25, which corresponded with Tito’s birthday.

Young people were considered to be a major concern by policy-makers, who designed several programmes and mechanisms to support youth transitions in independent life (Azanja et al., 2012). These policy-driven programmes involved access to free education, health care, and leisure activities. However, as argued by Azanja et al. (2012), these supportive and protective policies were paternalistic in nature. Youth policies were forged within a socialist ideology, and young people were excluded from their development and implementation: they were mere recipients of the benefits provided by these programmes. Yet, as discussed by Azanja et al. (2012), young people were encouraged to participate in their communities and within social life in general, which corresponded with the ideas of the Yugoslav system of self-management. There was a widespread infrastructure available to young people, including youth clubs, summer and winter resorts, and cultural centres. Yet, the main children’s and youth organisations, such as Pioneers and the Alliance of Socialist Youth, were ideological in nature, and young people would become members automatically once they had reached a certain age. Schools also had an important role in the promotion of youth participation, one that requires further attention.

15In the 1950s and 1960s, the Yugoslav state experienced economic development and a steady improvement of living standards, which resulted in increased opportunities for youth employment and for youth involvement in further education. Those conditions provided grounds for the identification of young individuals with the values and ideas of the new socio-political system, and resulted in the so-called social conformism of youth (Ule, 1988, p. 50).
Socialist education corresponded to the values of the newly-established socialist Yugoslavia after the Second World War. School reform abolished any characteristics of a bourgeois society and replaced them with socio-political aspects important for the legitimacy of a new socio-political order revolving around ideas of social equality and solidarity (Novak, 2009). The aim of the system was to make education accessible for all, especially young people of working-class and farming backgrounds (Gabrič, 2000). Teachers were the main pillars of support in schools. One of the main aspects of socialist education presented a development of an “all round” personality (Novak, 2009). This idea corresponded with the belief that a working man is a social being. Thus, education was an integral part of society, and involved studying and subsequently working in factories. A primary school system was introduced across the country, while secondary schools were divided into grammar schools (gymnasiums) and professional schools (Gabrič, 2000). The latter enjoyed more government support, and university studies were available for most students. One of the experiments of the socialist education system was “directed” education, which was introduced in the mid-1980s. Directed education aimed to introduce unified general education for all. However, this resulted in a decreased level of quality in grammar schools (Novak, 2009, p. 14). Although the “directed education” initiative was unsuccessful, education was one of the areas that benefited under socialism: the socialist regime established numerous public schools and provided education for all (Štrajn, 2008).

The socialist state guided the participation of young people in youth organisations, which were supervised by the Communist Party. Alliance of Pioneers was the main children’s organisation in Slovenia (Jere, 2003). Pioneers were organised on a primary-school level (age 7-15), and they focused on the organisation of school, extracurricular, and holiday-time activities – ones that were mostly linked with the commemoration and tradition of the national liberation struggle of the Second World War. As observed by Georgeoff (1964), their role was educational and patriotic. Georgeoff (Ibid., p. 106) argues that the organisation had a crucial role in promoting

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16In Štrajn’s words (2007), it reflected the cracks in the socio-political system and largely proved to be unsuccessful.
ideas of brotherhood and unity and the spirit of internationalism and humanism. Despite the ideological nature of the alliance, it is worth noting that the organisation facilitated conferences on various social issues since 1981. These conferences represented the basis for the Children’s Parliament, which has been active within independent Slovenia since 1990. It could be argued that this kind of provision of formal political voice for youth was progressive in that it occurred before many Western countries.

The Socialist Youth Alliance\(^\text{17}\) was the main youth organisation, which aimed to gather and politically activate all youth, and to politically indoctrinate them. The organisation was formed as the youth wing of the Communist Party. The Socialist Youth Alliance was organised on all societal layers – for example, within schools, universities, and business enterprises – and it existed both on municipal and republican levels. All young people between the ages of 14 and 27 were represented by this organisation (Jere, 2003).

The Socialist Youth Alliance became an important creator of Slovenian civil society in the 1980s. As argued by Vurnik (2005), the organisation tried to gain independence from the Communist Party by looking for new, more plural, political directions. In the 1980s it began to connect with new social movements, such as punk, LGBT, pacifist, ecological, and spiritual movements. Those movements represented an important factor of state opposition and brought both pluralist ideas and subcultures into the Slovenian public sphere (Nastran-Ule, 1996, p. 22). The Socialist Youth Alliance, encouraged the further politicisation of social movements by gathering their demands and addressing them to the Communist Party of Slovenia (Rizman, 2006). On several occasions, the regime was in direct conflict with these social movements, while, simultaneously, society started to absorb their ideas. This

\(^{17}\)The first youth organisation in Yugoslavia was established in 1942 as “United Anti-Fascist Youth Alliance”. This organisation was renamed “People’s Youth of Yugoslavia” in 1946, and became recognised under the name “Alliance of Yugoslav Youth” in 1963. Finally, the organisation was renamed “Alliance of Socialist Youth of Yugoslavia” in 1975. The Alliance of Socialist Youth of Slovenia represented the ideas of this organisation in Slovenia.
presented a crucial change for the organisation, which started to embrace values of political pluralism, economic liberalism, peace and tolerance, and, as such, automatically became an opposition to the established political order (Vurnik, 2005).

At the same time, social movements brought with them a new understanding of social relationships, based on the importance of personal initiative and individualism. The first major research conducted by Mirjana Ule (1988) which focused on Yugoslav youth\textsuperscript{18} demonstrates the major differences in value orientations. Slovenian youngsters expressed libertarian values related to politics, culture, and religious and ethnic difference, which made them more compatible with young people from the West. As argued by Vurnik (2005), youth were still exposed to ideological indoctrination through the educational system, to some extent. However, these generations did not believe in those ideas anymore. Slovenia has had the highest economic growth among Yugoslav republics. This is due to its geopolitical position and the subsequent influence of Western media and ideas (Bebler, 2002). Moreover, young Slovenes, in comparison with other young Yugoslavs, expressed both sceptical attitudes towards the political sphere and the desire to be engaged in informal, civil initiatives which were not associated with the established, formal political scene (Ule, 2012).

Changes connected with upbringing and transitions to adulthood also determined young people’s lives in Slovenia. Authoritarian upbringing, stemming from patriarchal societies, was replaced by more liberal approaches, while schooling led to the prolonged financial dependence of young Slovenes. Slovenian youth mostly lived in urbanised areas, which provided people with opportunities to access transportation, communication links and places to meet up (Ule, 1988, p. 65). Most young people were educated and enjoyed a middle-class standard of living.

\textsuperscript{18}Ule, in her pioneering research “Youth and Ideology” (1988), compares the differences between youth from Slovenia and the other former Yugoslav republics, and recognises the first indicators of post-industrial influences which determined the lives of young people in Slovenia in the 1990s.
Polycentric development of the republic stimulated innovation and brought about the cultural, political and economic development of Slovenian regions. Such events highlight the significant changes which were largely driven by the younger generation.

3.4 Socio-Political and Economic Changes in Independent Slovenia

The transition to democracy implies a complex set of changes displayed in a form of institutional reforms which are focused on the abolition of the socialist economic and political systems (Hlebec, Filipovič - Hrast & Kogovšek, 2010). This period is also named the “transition to post-socialism”, which is a contested process referring to the social, economic and political transformation of the socialist states into capitalist democracies. The meaning of transition has been discussed extensively by political scientists, economists and sociologists since the end of the Cold War. It is often described as “[…] a process connecting the past to the future” (Burawoy & Verdery, 1999, p. 4). Transition from one socio-political system to another refers to a social change which influenced Eastern European societies and people’s everyday lives. Structures in which individuals are placed have been gradually changed over time, and this has had an impact on their daily practices and routines (Burawoy and Verdery, 1999; Rizman, 1999).

However, this approach to transition is problematic in that it is tightly linked with views that (mostly) economists have about the future of socialist societies. Some authors claim that its use is inappropriate, as it considers the change to be linear, resulting in presupposed outcomes (Burawoy & Verdery, 1999). For the purpose of this research, the term “transition” is used to distinguish the growing-up experiences

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19 The self-management system was based on the idea of a decentralised state in which specific communities and neighbourhoooods were actively involved in decision-making processes (Allcock, 2000).
20 Transition is not a singular process, but rather a plurality of processes.
21 Velikonja (2009) claims that the prefix post- (socialism) is not accurate, since it implies that the societies to which it refers do not have their own identities, and since the term does not precisely define its meaning for those societies in a specific period of time.
22 Several Eastern European states were exposed to rapid economic transformations. This changeover replaced socialist economic structures with neoliberal structures, which had a mostly negative impact on those societies in terms of inequality and youth unemployment. This refers especially to Poland, Hungary, and the Baltic States.
of socialist and post-socialist generations and to show how the changes impacted their everyday lives. The author is aware that the term might not be the most accurate, but in this case, a sharp distinction between particular historical times is essential in order to contrast and compare data findings. For these purposes, then, it is important to divert the reader’s attention to certain characteristics of Slovenia’s transition.

3.4.1 Slovenia’s “Transition”

Since its independence, Slovenia has gone through various stages of transition. Rizman (2006, p. 76) recognises three distinctive phases: a) the introduction of political pluralism and a market economy in the beginning of 1990s; b) the consolidation of democracy and the entrance of Slovenia into the EU and NATO in 2004; and c) contemporary challenges connected with the recognition of the future development of the state. Political scientists associate socialist transitions with democratisation and the democratic consolidation processes. These complicated processes have required a replacement of socialist political institutions with new structures (Guardiancich, 2012). Democratic transition refers to a complete governmental change which involves the transition from an authoritarian to a democratic system, with new liberal democratic practices, such as a proportional parliamentary system (Bebler, 2002).23

Dragoš and Leskošek (2003, p. 21) define transition in the Slovenian context as the replacement of the socialist system with the European one. This illustrates the ideological dimensions of transition, which are directly linked with privatisation and de-nationalisation processes. Privatisation refers to the transformation and replacement of state ownership of property with private ownership, corresponding with the main principles of the market economy. The de-nationalisation process corresponded to the idea of giving back the property to its initial owners, whose property was nationalised after the Second World War (ibid.). However, both

23Democratic consolidation is achieved when democratic changes are rooted in society and are “immune to the threat of authoritarian regression in the long run” (Rizman, 2006, p. 6).
processes delegitimised the Yugoslav self-management system, which resulted in the distribution of wealth to only a few individuals.

At the same time, Slovenia’s transition has been highlighted as an example among other Eastern European states by following a gradual path to democracy and capitalism (Rizman, 2006; Guardiancich, 2012). By comparison, the Slovenian transformation, while similar to other socialist states in which transition influenced all spheres of society, took place at a slower pace. For instance, many state-owned companies have remained in state ownership, and the country has not liberalised the market as widely as other Socialist countries. However, the economic recession of 2008 exposed the more devastating sides of Slovenian transition, resulting in increasing social inequalities among its citizens. Political theorist Tonči Kuzmanić (in Horvat, 2010) paraphrases the difference between socialist and post-socialist societies: “[This] key difference between socialism and post-socialism is in replacing the concept of equality prevailing in socialism with the idea of freedom being prevalent in post-socialism.” In other words, where Yugoslav self-sufficiency focused on an equal distribution of resources, the post-socialist society encouraged freedom. However, this situation has brought about new inequalities in society, which Kirm (2011) links with neo-liberal ideology and labels as “Slovenian capitalocracy”.

Institutional reforms during the transition influenced the provision of welfare, which focused on a change from state to market economy, or a shift from guaranteed and passive to active and flexible employment (Hlebec, Filipovič - Hrast & Kogovšek, 2010). The Slovenian welfare system has appropriated the characteristics of the corporate dual model. This model is based on the idea of a social partnership, incorporating the elements of the socio-democratic welfare system and ensuring that the state or public sector provides most social services (Ibid.; Guardiancich, 2012). Some social benefits which were taken for granted under the socialist regime have been altered and adjusted to incorporate the principles of a market economy. Transition brought insecurities to the labour market and has restricted access to
housing, both of which have had a negative effect upon youth (Mandič, 1996; Ule & Rener, 2000). Furthermore, the provision of state scholarships to the young people who need them most has also declined (Dragoš & Leskošek, 2003).

To date, research into the changes to individuals’ daily lives has mostly concentrated on those changes related to social support. For example, Dragoš and Leskošek (2003) claim that lack of public spaces resulted in decreased opportunities for meeting up with people outside of family circles, which, in turn, restricted sources of support. This observation is further highlighted by the way in which social change has affected the use of emotional support. The research shows that in a post-socialist society, people rely more extensively on their intimate partners and children, whereas under the socialist system, the role of colleagues and neighbours was recognised as equally important when under stress (Šadl, 2005). Social change thus resulted in a decreased level of trust in institutions and other people, and an increased lack of solidarity among individuals. By default, post-socialist society also generated greater competition between individuals. Some authors, such as Velikonja (2009), claim that the result of transition in Slovenia can be seen in the introduction of unregulated neo-conservatism and neo-liberalism which, according to Ule (2012), have the most negative impact on young people.

### 3.5 Changing Role of Youth in Post-Socialist Slovenia

Changes within the socio-political system have visibly altered the conditions in which younger Slovenians have grown up. The social transformation of the state since 1991 resulted in several changes: 1) turbulent changes related to the formation of the new state; 2) the transition from socialism to post-socialism; and 3) a shift from an industrial era to a post-industrial one (Nastran - Ule, 1996, p. 22). The aforementioned socio-political and cultural changes radically affected the position of youth, which was previously recognised as a part of the socialist collective. After

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24 Or in Velikonja’s words (2009, p. 537): “On one hand, the transition resulted in the long anticipated pluralization of societies in all respect-social, political, economic, and cultural. On the other hand, this was inevitably accompanied by a series of negative processes and events, including the demolition of welfare state, the introduction what might be called turbo-capitalism, the rise of social injustices, repatriarchalization, retraditionalization, clericalization, and nationalist conflicts”.

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1991, youth was not considered an integral part of the wider ideological programme (Ule, 2000, 2012). Despite the fact that young people were represented by the Office of Youth on a ministerial or state level, there was a lack of institutional support from adults. For example, young people did not have guaranteed access to scholarships or accommodation. Roberts (2009) claims that with the fall of socialism, the institutions of the socialist regime were not replaced with new ones. Furthermore, socio-economic transformation brought institutional changes supplemented by a shift in values and norms towards individualisation and post-modernism (Kuhar & Reiter, 2012). For the first time, young Slovenes, in comparison with the older generations, were not affected by socialist ideas and ideologies, but looked to individual and private values instead.

The transformation of Slovenian society during the 1990s has influenced the role of youth in the public domain. Since independence, young people have been exposed to individualisation processes. There are few collective structures for mobilising young people (Furlong & Cartmel, 1997). The influence of social movements that were typical during the 1980s declined as did alternative youth subcultures (Kuhar, 2005). Young people lost supportive structures which facilitated their social inclusion. As a result, they did not identify with wider groups anymore, but rather focused on their individual interests (Roberts, 2009, 2012). Social inclusion refers to the opportunity of having access to different social networks in which individuals meet and associate with other people (Nastran - Ule, 1996). They exchange experiences, are involved in mutual help and advice, or can form different collegial, friendly, or intimate relationships.

During the socialist period, young people recognised peer groups as the most important networks of social inclusion. After independence, they turned towards the private sphere, while previous social networks lost importance. Ule (2012, p. 29) claims that youth were recognised as a privileged societal group during socialism, but that youth has become the weakest link in transitional Slovenia. One major consequence is that youth have relatively little importance in public life. This is
especially applicable to young women, who face more insecurity in the sphere of work and in their private lives since the independence of the state (Ule, 2008). For instance, the anthropologist Vesna Vuk Godina (in Vistoropski, 2013) claims young women are the biggest victims of transition. Highly-educated and ambitious women have little chance of getting a job that corresponds to their qualifications (Ule et al., 2008). At the same time, they also face major changes in their private lives connected with singlehood.

The period of transition brought further reforms into the Slovenian school system. This reform followed the trends of the Western educational system by introducing liberal values, human rights, and a vision of how to become a part of contemporary, interdependent world as part of the curriculum (Godon, Jucevičiene & Kodelja, 2004; Plut-Pregelj, 2006, p. 189). In this system, teachers are more autonomous, while the development of critical thinking is encouraged among students. Taking the western education system as its model, Slovenian schools supported values of competition, democracy and human rights (Novak, 2009). It is possible to draw some conclusions in relation to the role of school in students’ lives. Under socialism, schools focused more on the integration of students into the state system, whereas post-socialist society emphasises the active role of students in the education process and the more autonomous role of teachers in delivering knowledge.

The resulting social shift, through which young people’s attention is turned directly to family, is recognised as a process of “domestification of youth” (Ule, 2009, 2012). If young people in the 1980s struggled for more autonomy and extensively contributed to the formation of the new state, Slovenian youth today live in the individualised and private settings of home. Family and close relatives are the main sources of support in young people’s lives. Whereas in the past family merely focused on the education of young people, in post-socialism, families became even

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25The aim of my study is to focus on young people in general in order to understand their experiences with growing up across social contexts. For this reason, this study does not address gender issues specifically. The concluding chapter of this research, however, suggests that there is a need to focus on gender when researching resilience in a context.
more important emotional and supportive networks (Rener, 2000). Emotional and cultural links between children and parents are very strong and provide the most important supportive networks in young people’s lives. The quality of those contacts offers the main social capital resource for young Slovenes. The strong tradition of family and intergenerational support which was prevalent in the socialist period has, due to the lack of a social security net, become a pivotal mechanism of solidarity.

Similar to the other states of the EU, individualisation processes and consumerism shape the lives of youth in post-socialist Slovenia. Roberts (2009) claims individualisation does not relate to privatism and individualism, as people in post-industrial societies remain integrated in diverse social networks. However, those networks are personalised, and they constantly change throughout an individual’s lifespan. Individualisation processes are not homogenous, but are as ambivalent as the societies in which they appear (Ule, 2002; Roberts, 2009). Consumerism is a new form of control over young people’s lives. On the contrary, sociologists warn that people need stable jobs and social security in order to obtain self-respect and a sense of who they are (Sennett, 1998). Those processes influence young people’s lives across Europe, although the specifics of a particular socio-economic and cultural context must be considered as well.

3.5.1 Transitions to Adulthood in Post-Socialist Slovenia

The link between socio-political transformation and youth transitions to adulthood has instigated interest among researchers. Transitions to adulthood, it is argued, are blurred and cannot be distinguished according to traditional phases (Kuhar, 2009). As argued by Kuhar and Reiter (2012, p. 211), young people have experienced “frozen transitions to adulthood” referring to limited or no opportunity for gaining independence in domains of employment, housing, and parenthood.

26Transition to adulthood was traditionally recognised through the following four phases: termination of formal education; gaining full-time employment; moving away from the primary family and establishing a new household; and cohabitation or marriage and parenting.
The first indicator of frozen transitions is employment. Young people face incomplete transitions from education to employment. The level of youth enrolled in third-level education has rapidly increased since the independence of the state. The data shows that 86.9% of young people were enrolled in third-level education in 2009, in comparison with 1981, when only 19.1% of youth attended universities (Kuhar & Reiter, 2012, p. 216). Despite the fact that the rate of completion of the university programmes is much lower (54% in 1999), young graduates hardly get jobs for which they are qualified (Ibid.). The economic situation of youth has worsened, as the level of unemployed or occasionally employed individuals has increased since 2009. 17.4% of young people were unemployed in Slovenia in 2012 (Republic of Slovenia: Statistical Office RS, 2013). Most young people are employed temporarily or as students, which requires them to be more flexible (Ignjatović & Trbanc, 2009).

Whereas their parents had little choice on what job they could do they were guaranteed work. In comparison, young Slovenes are marginalised by a restricted labour market which prolongs financial dependency on their families and prevents them from holding full power in society (Ule, 2012). Generations that lived in a society in which unemployment was almost non-existent still have to develop coping strategies when dealing with those situations (Wallace & Kovacheva, 1998). Young people who have just entered the job market and have a lack of experience, knowledge, financial means and/or social networks face the biggest challenges in the sphere of work. As argued by Ignjatović and Trbanc (2009), some positive changes have been recognised in this area, including co-funded mentoring programmes and state-sponsored internships. However, unemployed youth remain socially isolated or dependent on closed networks of their families and relatives. In this context, successful transitions to adulthood depend on individual skills and capacities which determine the winners and losers within transitions (Ule & Rener, 2000, p. 180-181).

This affects other areas of transitions, such as housing. Due to lack of jobs and financial security, young people live with their parents for longer periods of time.
The data shows that in 2008, two thirds of young people aged 18-34 lived with their parents (Kuhar & Reiter, 2012, p. 218). Mandič (2007) argues that Slovenia, after Malta, has the second-largest percentage of young people living with their parents. This is connected with the collapse of the socialist housing system, privatisation processes, and a lack of accommodation schemes for young people. More than 90% of apartments and houses are privately-owned, while the supply of rental accommodation in Slovenia is low (Ule & Kuhar, 2008). However, researchers argue that living with parents is also a cultural practice in Slovenia. Young people do not necessarily disapprove of their position. It provides them with a relatively high level of freedom and comfort stemming from amicable relations with their parents (Kuhar, 2009, p. 20). The research shows that the value system between generations is more and more unified (Miheljac, 2002).

Yet, a prolonged stay at the family home influences another domain of transitions: parenthood. Slovenia has the lowest level of marriage rates in the EU, and has low fertility rates (1.26 in 2005) (Ule & Kuhar, 2008). Cohabitation is legally equalised with marriage, and the number of children born outside marriage is increasing (Kuhar & Reiter, 2012). The research shows that, despite the low national fertility rate, young people have positive attitudes towards family formation and pro-reproductive attitudes (Ule & Kuhar, 2008, p. 163). However, evidence shows that financial security and housing opportunities have a crucial influence on women’s decisions to reproduce (Ibid.). As argued by Kuhar and Reiter (2012), participation in economic and social reproduction is an essential criterion for participation in society, which in Slovenia, remains postponed and frozen.

Social changes also have intensified perceptions of social risk. The research shows that young people are more frightened about the progress of life than is really necessary, which Rener (2002, p. 83) recognises as “an existential panic of children”. Furthermore, individualisation has a strong effect on youth, who are additionally affected by structural unemployment and by the deconstruction of the social state (Rener, 2000, p. 102). As argued by Nastran - Ule (1996), in comparison with the
socialist generation, post-socialist youth experience problems as individual challenges, and do not link them with the wider social context anymore. This intensifies their perceptions of risk and threat. Social and economic conditions continue to determine young people’s lives, but people have to take individual steps to deal with life difficulties. All those changes may have a profound influence on youth coping abilities, and are explored in detail in Chapter Five.

3.6 Youth Work in Independent Slovenia
Youth policy has been reformed since the independence of Slovenia. As demonstrated in Section 3.4, youth organisations, including the Association of Pioneers and the Socialist Youth Alliance, dissolved. The newly-established state gradually replaced these organisations with new ones. Young people are involved in different types of youth organisations, including national youth organisations, youth councils, youth centres and other non-governmental organisations. There are public and non-public organisations available for youth. The Office of the Republic of Slovenia for Youth is the main governmental body which represents young people’s interests and supports youth policies in Slovenia. The Office for Youth was established in 1991 as a part of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, in order to finance youth programmes and support policies connected with youth matters. As explained on its website, the office represents youth interests to governmental and international organisations, and cooperates in the development of youth policies in Slovenia and abroad (Republic of Slovenia Ministry of Education, Science and Sport: Office of the Republic of Slovenia for Youth, no date). Evidence shows (Nacionalni program za mladino 2012-2021, no date) that the Office for Youth provides the main financial support and advice to youth organisations in the country. For example, the office co-financed the programmes of 60 youth centres in 2011. Bigger municipalities, such as Ljubljana or Maribor, have their own offices for youth, while there are no such structures available in smaller municipalities.

However, the implementation of youth policy is mostly dependent on local authorities (Murn, 2011), which may have strong implications for young people and their opportunities to access resources and youth programmes in their local
communities. At the same time, there are no public regional structures available for young people. Table 3.1 presents the main non-public institutions which are involved in youth work in Slovenia.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-Public Actors</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Number in 2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Youth Council of Slovenia</td>
<td>- This is a core, voluntary association of youth organisations which represents youth interests to the state.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- 16 youth non-governmental organisations of different political and ideological orientations are members of the National Youth Council.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Youth Organisations</td>
<td>- National youth organisations are non-governmental organisations and have a seat in the main statistical regions of Slovenia.</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Youth Councils</td>
<td>- These associations work on a municipality level. Local youth councils represent the interests of local youth organisations to local authorities, support activities of youth organisations, and inform young people about local youth policies.</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth centres</td>
<td>- Youth centres are the main gathering places for young individuals. These organisations focus on youth development by organising activities such as non-formal education, development of</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
particular skills, and various cultural activities. Youth centres can be established by various state or non-state actors. They are mostly located in bigger municipalities and urban areas.

| Non-governmental organisations | -Other non-governmental organisations, such as associations and local clubs which organise activities and programmes focused on young people. | 83 |

Table 3.1: Non-Public Institutions Involved in Youth Work in Slovenia
Applied from: Murn (2011); Zgonc (2011) and Republic of Slovenia Ministry of Education, Science and Sport: Office of the Republic of Slovenia for Youth (no date)

No holistic approach has been applied to the development of a national youth policy since 1991. Youth issues have been addressed by various segments of social policy which concern young people’s lives, such as accommodation, education, family life, and leisure time. Youth matters were only partially addressed by selected legal documents. Young people are discussed in several state documents, including the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia, the Student Community Act, the Associations Act, the Social Security Act, and the Local Self-government Act (Zgonc, 2011). As argued by Jere (2003), the state has not developed a national strategic plan in connection with youth policy. The Youth Council Act (2000) was the first document which specifically focused on a youth work sector. This act defines the responsibilities and priorities of national and local youth councils. Yet, it only partially addresses issues that concern young people.

The lack of policy response to the challenges faced by contemporary youth derives from the limited research that has focused on Slovenian youth. The state did not

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27There are 212 municipalities in Slovenia.
commission any national-scale research on youth between 2000 and 2010. The Office for Youth recognised a need for evidence-based policy and commissioned the first project “Med otroštvom in odraslostjo” (Between childhood and adulthood) in 2009. This (small-scale) research revealed a need for systematic research on youth in Slovenia. For example, the data retrieved from this study show that young people experience riskier pathways to adulthood, which require more attention from policy and research. As a result, in 2010, the Office for Youth commissioned a large-scale research initiative based on youth in Slovenia. “Mladina 2010” (Youth 2010, Lavrič et al., 2011) is a study based on a mixed-methods approach of 1257 surveys and 25 interviews with young people aged 15 and 29. This research outlines the main characteristics of youth in certain areas, such as demographic changes; education; culture and leisure; employment; housing conditions; health and wellbeing; participation and social inclusion; and volunteering (Lavrič et al., 2011).

The Act on the Public Interest in Youth Sector (Republic of Slovenia Ministry of Education, Science and Sport: Office of the Republic of Slovenia for Youth, no date) was adopted in 2010. This is the first document which systematically regulates the youth sector by addressing issues such as organisation, financial issues and activities performed in and by the youth sector. This act outlines the need for the establishment of a national body which will provide information, advice and recommendations to the Slovenian government in connection with youth matters. This act was prepared in accordance with recommendations, directives, programmes, and resolutions of the EU as well as national strategies. Table 3.2 outlines the main EU documents and messages which have informed this act.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EU and Council of Europe documents on youth work</th>
<th>Key messages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-Youth policies are a matter of particular member states, but the paper proposes four themes around which the governments were</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>White paper on Youth (2001)</strong></td>
<td>invited to develop their policies: participation; information; voluntary service; and a better understanding of youth (Devlin, 2010). These themes were all linked with the promotion of the idea of active citizenship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>European Youth Pact (2005)</strong></td>
<td>The following lines of action for Member States should focus upon three main fields: Employment, integration and social advancement; Education training and mobility; Reconciliation of working life and family life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EU Strategy for Youth (2009)</strong></td>
<td>Youth policy should consider young people’s lives holistically, and should address the following areas simultaneously: education and employment; creativity and entrepreneurship; health and sport; participation; social inclusion; volunteering; and youth and the world. The European Commission supports youth in the member states through the establishment of different Internet portals and research programmes, such as “Youth in Europe” and “European Research on Youth”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This is a ten-year strategy proposed by the European Commission for the advancement of the EU economy. Young people are recognised as important actors who can contribute to advancement of this strategy. Youth on the Move is a part of this strategy. It contains a package of policy documents on</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Europe 2020 (2010) education and employment which can contribute to sustainable development and economic growth in the EU.

-Agenda for new skills and jobs, European platform against poverty and social exclusion and Youth Opportunities Initiative are also important documents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3.2: Harmonisation of the EU legislation with Act on the Public Interest in Youth Sector; Source: Act on the Public Interest in Youth Sector (2010)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

The Act on the Public Interest in Youth Sector recognises a need for a national programme for youth that should define the priorities and objectives of the youth sector. Accordingly, a national programme for youth has been drafted for the time period 2012-2021. The National Youth Programme 2012-2021 is a core document which defines the main priorities and strategies recognised as important for the youth sector. This programme is based on the main national and EU strategies concerned with youth issues. It recognises that young people live in a more complex world and experience less secure transitions to adulthood. Therefore, young people have to obtain certain skills in order to be able to manage their lives successfully. This programme proposes that young people’s lives should be approached holistically, by addressing the areas of education, employment, accommodation, health and well-being and the role of the youth sector and young people in society. For example, it suggests that all young people should have the opportunity to work in order to obtain social and economic security, and it suggests that young people should be included in the decision-making processes regarding youth-related public policies.

3.6.1 Youth Participation in Post-Socialist Slovenia

Since the beginning of the 1990s, civic engagement in Slovenia has changed. The report on youth (Lavrič et al., 2011) shows that, in comparison with previous generations, young Slovenians have been less involved in conventional political
activities. Instead, their participation has mostly revolved around social activities, such as volunteering or educational- and career-focused activities. This research also demonstrates the ways in which young people become involved in individualised forms of participation (Ibid., p. 144). This can be linked with the idea of atomisation which Dragoš and Leskošek (2003) have recognised as a reason for the decrease of collective activism in Slovenia and the looser community links that result. In the 1990s, the presence of vibrant social movements led by youth in the 1980s was dismantled by neoliberal and neoconservative social policies (Ule, 2012). Young people mostly spend their free time attending paid activities, such as sports, language schools or cultural programmes through which the consumerist society controls individuals’ leisure time (Ule, 2000, p. 22). These policies influenced the existent state institutions of solidarity, and contributed to the development of an ethos of individualisation among young people.

Governmental and non-governmental reports, such as a national report on youth participation (2003), reveal that there have been several initiatives and programmes focused on youth participation in Slovenia. These programmes have included extracurricular activities in primary schools, activities in local youth organisations, and national programmes such as “Have your say!” (TiPovej!). At the same time, the Office of Youth financially supports numerous youth initiatives and organised activities. The Office of Youth has made some attempts in connection with youth participation by promoting ideas of inclusion of youth in decision-making processes within mechanisms, such as structural dialogue programme and the Council of Slovenia for Youth (Zupan, 2012). However, more in-depth research demonstrates that youth participation in Slovenia is particularly low in politics.

Evidence shows that young people are engaged in social activities, while youth political participation is low. As argued by Lavrič et al. (2011) and Kirbiš et al. (2010), young people ascribe a minor meaning to politics, while their participation in conventional political structures is lower than the EU average. A regional policy brief on youth participation in South-Eastern Europe (2014) indicates that young
Slovenes have negative attitudes towards political representatives and public policies. This document (ibid.) outlines the following reasons for low youth participation: lack of motivation and opportunities; absence of young people’s partnership with adults and policy makers; and lack of information on participatory activities and action. Publications such as “Mladina 2010” (Lavrič et al., 2011), indicate that young people’s trust in politics and political elites is deteriorating. For example, this study shows that only one in eight young Slovenians is satisfied with democracy in Slovenia (Ibid., p. 204). A slight majority of them believes that the socialist system, similar to what it was in the former Yugoslavia, would be a better option than democracy.

The research shows that young Slovenes are mostly engaged in social activities in their local communities. Volunteering activities are the main mechanism for social inclusion of young Slovenes (Lavrič et al., 2011). For example, the latest UNICEF (2014) research on youth participation demonstrates that young people are engaged in volunteering activities on a daily basis. This study also reveals that younger individuals aged 12 to 15 volunteer more than their older counterparts (aged 15 to 18). However, most publications show that youth mostly participate in self-actualisation and leisure time activities in the private sphere of home and families. Ferjančič (2009, p. 55) claims that economic dependence on parents, unemployment, and the lack of independent political peer groups and organisations force people to remain within a private sphere. They spend their free time in outdoor pursuits, which reflects the historical and intergenerational importance of sport activities. Other leisure activities include socialising with friends, playing video games, and watching television.

There is a lack of understanding about what youth civic engagement and the right to participate mean among young people. The data shows that most pupils and students associate youth civic engagement with social activities (Gril, Klemenčič & Autor, 2009).
2009, p. 94), but they also consider voting and cooperation in decision-making processes to be a part of youth civic engagement. Older youth have a clearer understanding of its meaning, stating that civic engagement is: “to be an active citizen”, “to express personal opinion on important public matters” and “to show an interest in public affairs” (ibid.). As shown by the recent UNICEF research (2014), only 50% of young people understand the meaning of the right to participate.

There is a lack of a systematic approach towards youth participation in Slovenia. The research (Kern, 2003) shows that youth organisations in Slovenia do not motivate young people enough to guarantee involvement and participation in their programmes. At the same time, representatives of local communities argue that young people do not show much interest in youth programmes (Murn et al., 2011). However, this view is incomplete without considering the opportunities for participation that young people have. For example, several reports show that youth organisations face a lack of finances, public spaces, social and cultural activities, human resources, support from local communities, and regulation in a sphere of youth work (Novoselc, 2010). One of the pioneers of youth work in the Karst region, Nina Ukmar, argues that local councillors have not understood that youth work requires consistent funding (Murn et al., 2011, p. 26-27). Lack of cooperation and networking between schools, youth centres and other youth organisations is recognised as a problem in the youth work sector. Research also shows that young people are underrepresented in national organisations, which mostly engage those individuals who are involved in specific activities, such as sports, scouts and students. However, there is a lack of a general engagement of youth on a national level.

3.7 Conclusion
In this chapter the socio-political and economic contexts of growing up in socialist and post-socialist Slovenia were examined by outlining the main geopolitical and administrative characteristics. The main attitudes and discourses towards youth as outlined by research and international development organisations to date were briefly presented. Then, socio-political characteristics of the former Yugoslav state and the
situation in the 1980s were specifically examined. This section also presented the socialist view of youth, and explored those aspects in connection with youth in Slovenia in the 1980s. The idea of transition was introduced in order to present changes in the Slovenian state and people’s experiences with socio-political transformation. Those changes affected individuals’ public and private lives.

The changing role of youth in Slovenia after independence was also addressed. The previous collective and active social role of youth has been individualised, which resulted in a “disappearance of youth” from the public (Ule, 2012). As a result, transitions to adulthood have become riskier and less predictable. Under socialism, the state provided mechanisms of support for young people. In post-socialism, young people were found to rely on individual resources during their transitions to adulthood. Furthermore, youth work and youth policies have been reformed in the new socio-political context. The newly-formed state has lacked a national strategy towards youth and the youth sector. The youth sector has been mostly underdeveloped and economically deprived. At the same time, the Slovenian state has gradually recognised a need for a more holistic approach to youth development and has recently put into force a new national strategy for youth. This social context is important to establish so that we can better understand – and more clearly investigate – the experiences of research participants, which are explored in detail in Chapter Five.
Chapter Four: Methodology - Narrative Research

4.1 Introduction
This chapter outlines the methodological strategy used in this dissertation. First, it presents the main rationale, the scope and objectives of this study. Second, the research design is explained and the qualitative narrative methodology is introduced. Issues connected with challenges of narrative research, reflexivity, ethical considerations and the tools for gathering the data are outlined. Issues with the translation of meanings and concepts from English to Slovenian and back to English are also addressed. Third, the implementation of the research design focusing on the recruitment of research participants, data collection, timeline and the data analysis process are examined in Section Three.

4.2 Background, Rationale and Objectives
Youth coping and resilience are growing areas of interest for practitioners and researchers. As discussed in Chapter Two, the beneficial aspects of social support and youth civic engagement as protective mechanisms that can enable youth coping and resilience have been recognised by previous research (Dolan, 2010; McGrath et al., 2014). Yet, the impact of a social context on development of this link is unexplored. This is particularly relevant in societies which experienced a sudden socio-political transformation, specifically Slovenia where the socio-political change may have a major impact on the organisation and provision of protective mechanisms.

This study explores the link between social support, youth civic engagement and youth coping as aspects of resilience in a context of social change. The socio-political transformation in the former Yugoslavia is a pertinent location to study the way in which political systems influence young people’s lives. Therefore, this study seeks to contribute to the literature on youth coping and resilience by exploring differences between generations. The young people of the three generations in Slovenia chosen for the study grew up under very different socio-political
circumstances. This brings a unique perspective to the role of coping and resilience for young people.

Young people in Slovenia have been exposed to radical socio-political changes. The active role that youth had during socialism has diminished, while transitions to adulthood have been prolonged and blurred (Ule, 2000, 2012; Rener, 2000, 2002; Kuhar & Reiter, 2012). At the same time, young people do not have access to the same opportunities and supportive mechanisms as in the past (Dragoš & Leskošek, 2003; Hlebec, Filipovič - Hrast & Kogovšek, 2010). This PhD research provides the first comprehensive account of the impact of social change on Slovenian youth from socialism (1980s), transition to post-socialism (1990s), to post-socialism (2000s).

The following research question and objectives were designed to further explore this research topic:

*How does socio-political transformation influence the provision of protective mechanisms and youth coping as aspects of resilience during transitions to adulthood?*

Objectives of this research are:

1) To compare perceived differences in social support across three generations (socialist, transitional and post-socialist) in Slovenia;

2) To compare perceived differences in youth civic engagement across three generations of young people (socialist, transitional and post-socialist) in Slovenia;

3) To compare perceived differences in risk and coping with transitions to adulthood across three generations of young people (socialist, transitional and post-socialist) in Slovenia;

4) To compare state provision of opportunities for youth across three generations (socialist, transitional and post-socialist) in Slovenia.
The next section reflects on how the study was designed in order to answer the main research question and complete the objectives of this innovative research.

### 4.3 Research Design

This section outlines the nature of the research design, challenges of narrative inquiry, and the reflexivity process. Tools for gathering data and ethical considerations are both matched to each relative objective and described. Table 4.1 outlines the research objectives and sources of data which provided answers to these objectives. The first three objectives were explored by consulting primary data gathered from interviews with three populations. The fourth objective was examined via primary and secondary data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Source of Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To compare perceived differences in social support across three generations (socialist, transitional and post-socialist) in Slovenia.</td>
<td>Interviews with three populations (socialist, transitional and post-socialist) (N=20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Part I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To compare perceived differences in youth civic engagement across three generations of young people (socialist, transitional and post-socialist) in Slovenia.</td>
<td>Interviews with three populations (socialist, transitional and post-socialist) (N=20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Part II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To compare perceived differences in risk and coping with transitions to adulthood across three generations of young people (socialist, transitional and post-socialist) in Slovenia.</td>
<td>Interviews with three populations (socialist, transitional and post-socialist) (N=20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Part III</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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4.3.1 Qualitative Narrative Research

This research applied an interpretative, qualitative approach in order to research generational experiences of growing up within a context of social change. Qualitative research looks for meaning people make about their everyday experiences and presents the emerging findings in the everyday language of the participants (Morrow, 2007). As such, it is of special importance for the exploration of unknown or less-researched phenomena as it addresses research topics in an inductive way and provides a chance to look for patterns and meanings in particular data (Johnson & Christensen, 2010). Qualitative research is not looking for a truth, but for people’s interpretations of their experiences and perceptions (Searle, 1995). Social life is understood in terms of processes and the ways events unfold in time (Bryman, 2004, p. 281). Applying this approach, then, this research did not seek a generalised, objective understanding of the influence of social change on young people’s lives. Instead, it was interested in personal stories and people’s explanations of the socio-political transformation in Slovenia.

In this study, a narrative approach is used to research youth perceived experiences with social support, youth civic engagement and coping as assets of resilience in the context of social change. Narrative inquiry helps to identify common patterns across different periods of time. In this research, the narrative focus enables us to observe and understand patterns of continuity and discontinuity in Slovenia across three generations. It provides a framework for researching the ways in which individuals speak of their lives and what meaning they prescribe to the context in which they are set. Since it is impossible to explore people’s experiences without considering the background and circumstances shaping their lives, social, cultural, linguistic and
institutional contexts become an important part of research (Clandinin, 2013). Personal stories have to be always considered in a social context (Riessman, 2008) or, as argued by Andrews (2007, p. 3): “Stories are never told in a vacuum”. At the same time, narratives are crucial to establishing individual and group identities, as people use stories about themselves to tell who they are (Riessman, 2008). As argued by Ewick and Silbey (2003), they are processes from which the relational perspective exists and has a meaning within networks of correspondents. They are always in a process of transformation as they are constructed and reconstructed by the researcher and research participants (Andrews, Squire & Tamboukou, 2008, p. 14). By understanding narratives as multiple and fluid, we can move away from truth claims and find new possible meanings to accepted truths (Wibben, 2011). Following Andrews (2007, p. 2), this research focuses on “[…] the relationship between the stories people tell about their lives and the political frameworks which form the context for those stories.” As such, narrative inquiry is applied in order “to understand more about individual and social change” (Andrews, Squire & Tamboukou, 2008, p. 2).

However, as McLeod and Thompson (2009) have argued, methodological considerations have to be considered when studying sudden changes in people’s personal and social life. This consideration also applies to this study. The socialist generation shared their perspectives from thirty years ago, while some participants of post-socialist youth were still experiencing transitions to adulthood. Therefore, juxtaposing people’s memories and present accounts presented an inevitable challenge. Memories are an individual and collective cultural phenomenon which is defined as an interaction between present and past set in a particular social setting (Erll, 2008, p. 2). They are reconstructions of past events and help us to understand what meaning we prescribe to that event now and then (McLeod and Thompson, 2009, p. 23). As such, memories are always partial, artificial and constructed. Narratives organise the narrator’s experience and make it meaningful, while memory is consulted to recall a sequence of events accurately. However, narratives are not “pure memory storage devices” (Ellis & Bochner cited in Gilbert, 2002, p. 225). People’s interpretations of reality are constructed and open to change. Recalling
individuals’ experiences is not unproblematic and is connected with the process of remembering. Acts of remembering are highly selective and politicised while questions such as “what and why we remember and forget” should be asked when doing research (McLeod & Thomson, 2009, p. 30). The way we remember is largely social and is always rooted in a social context. As such, the act of remembering is never only individual: it is also cultural and social (Keightley, 2010, p. 58).

As Plummer (2001) has demonstrated, there is no clear distinction between memories and narratives, as they both focus on the stories that people recount about their past. While the comparison of past and present accounts can be challenging, narrative inquiry can help to identify common patterns in sequences of events in different periods of time (Haydu, 1998, p. 351). However, working with narratives is not without problems.

4.3.1.1 Challenges of Narrative Research

There were several challenges recognised when working with narratives. The interaction between the researcher and participants has a strong impact on representations of past events. As suggested by Andrews (2007, p. 16), every researcher should ask herself the following question: “Who am I in relation to this story I am now reading/listening to?” The issue of the researcher’s role in the research process and her interest in hearing people’s stories needs to be addressed in order to clarify the influence of participants and the researcher on eliciting people’s stories.

The issue of temporality is crucial in the narrative inquiry. Usually, this issue refers to the chronology of the individual’s story, and, to an extent, that proved to be important in this research as individuals reflected on their growing up experiences when they were older. However, in this research, the concept of chronology was used more loosely, and referred to generational experiences of events and practices. Three generations shared their views of growing up under socialism, during the
transition to post-socialism, and in post-socialism. Narratives of socialist youth were more positive in comparison with accounts of post-socialist youth. Due to time distance, people were able to reflect on their experiences and were consequently more critical about their current lives. Similarly, post-socialist youth were more critical towards their current circumstances, which corresponded with their transitions to adulthood. The time dimension had a major impact on how people narrated their experiences with transitions to adulthood. These aspects had to be considered throughout the research process, but particularly when analysing the data. People's accounts were compared inside and across generations in order to provide an insight into generational patterns of continuity and discontinuity (for more see: Section 4.4.1).

Memories originate from past events, but they are recounted against a backdrop of current circumstances. Therefore, stories that are told can never be repeated, and the research has to consider the context in which the story was narrated. In this research, current events connected with a financial and political crisis in Slovenia impacted people’s processes of remembering. Since its independence, Slovenia was by international organisations used as an example of a successful transition from socialism to capitalism (for more see: The Context Chapter). Yet, the 2008 financial crisis has revealed inconsistencies in Slovenian post-socialism and people’s disillusionment with the newly-established socio-political order. Socio-political change was not only responsible for political pluralism and parliamentary democracy, but also for the reduction of the social welfare state and increasing inequality.

In this PhD dissertation, positive attitudes towards socialism were widely recognised. People’s opinions about the “good old times”, which featured cooperation, solidarity and strong interpersonal relationships, were recounted by people across generations. As argued by Boym (2001), “nostalgia for socialism” is a recognised pattern in post-socialist societies. In the context of the former
Yugoslavia, the term *Yugo-nostalgia*³⁰ was coined, which: “[...] on the social level...is nostalgia for former friendship and cooperation, for the welfare state and health protection [...]” (Velikonja, 2008a, p. 33). In contemporary Slovenia examples of longing for socialist past can be found in all spheres of everyday life: in popular culture (e.g. popularity of ex-Yugoslav rock music and graffiti of Yugoslav and partisan symbols), subcultures (e.g. teenagers wear t-shirts with printed images of Tito or red star with a hammer), cyber-space (e.g. web sites specifically focused on the former Yugoslav past), people’s beliefs and mentalities (opinion surveys in general show people’s positive opinions about their lives under socialism) and revival of socialist recreational rituals (e.g. “Youth Relay-Race”) (Velikonja, 2008b, p. 171). However, as with other types of memories, Yugo-nostalgic views have to be read in connection with people’s dissatisfaction with the current situation, in order to explain their “dreams about past dreams and not about past reality” (Velikonja, 2008a, p. 30).

The ways in which memories are expressed as meaningful narratives vary in relation to the audience to which tellers believe they are speaking (Andrews, 2007, p. 16). People tell stories to themselves and to others. Therefore, in the research process, it is important to identify who those others are in order to clarify their influence on the told story. As argued by Andrews (*Ibid.*), we also have to consider the presence of an imagined audience – people who may be central in tellers’ lives and for whom the story may be told. It is hard to know how participants viewed me and what role an imagined audience had in the way in which they told their stories. Most participants considered me as an “insider” with knowledge on socio-cultural practices (Plugor, 2013) and experiences with social change, geographical position and language. I was a familiar face from the street, a friend, a peer, a friend of a friend, a researcher, a daughter of a former mayor, a former student, someone who lived through the social change in question—but also someone who has left the place. All these descriptors can be attached to my presence in the research process. In addition to the role of audience, the researcher’s position in the research process must also be discussed, in

³⁰In his insightful study, Mitja Velikonja develops different subcategories on nostalgia in the context of the former Yugoslavia, including Yugonostalgia (a lament for former Yugoslavia) and Titonostalgia (nostalgia for the president Tito).
order to consider different factors influencing the process of construction and co-construction of personal narratives.

4.3.2 Reflexivity in Research
Reflexivity is used to consider the role of the researcher in the research process. It refers to the researcher’s values, biases, decisions, and their presence in the research process (Bryman, 2004). The researcher is actively involved in the creation of knowledge which is based on narration, while reflexivity helps to provide a way through the crisis of representation (Elliott, 2005, p. 154). The position of a researcher in the research, including her social class, gender, language, and ethnicity has to be considered (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 12). Pillow (2003, p. 178) claims that reflexivity refers to continuous self-awareness. Reflexivity is crucial to an assessment of trustworthiness of a narrative study (Wells, 2011, p. 119). The main question is not how to control the researcher’s bias, but rather how the researcher can use personal knowledge to enhance her understanding of the subject under research. This involves both the constant location and relocation of the researcher within the research process, as well as the requirement of being in continual dialogue with it, its participants and its methodologies (Bott, 2010, p. 160).

Self-questioning during the whole research process aids reflexivity. I continuously questioned my personal and wider social values when designing the research and during the interviews, the data analysis, and the interpretation processes. I had to continuously consider this position and provide a space for the emergence of diverse voices on the research topic. My development as a researcher through reading, writing, and discussing enabled me to question the social practices which I had taken for granted. Constant interrogation of, and re-positioning myself within, my own cultural setting equipped me with different perspectives on learned socio-cultural views.
Before commencing with the research, the process of reflexivity revolved around thinking and writing about my personal views on the social change and on resilience. As discussed in Section 4.3.4, I also involved myself in the study in order to explore my personal views on growing up in the context of social change. My personal knowledge was used to further develop an interview guide. At the same time, the interview process provided me with an opportunity to reflect on my personal views, beliefs and experiences.

Reflexivity continued during data collection process. Along with the collection of data as set out, I maintained a reflective diary in Slovenian to explore concepts and ideas that arose. Field notes recorded the first contact between the researcher and the data. Field notes are not merely used to annotate details and anomalies during fieldwork, but are already a first phase of analysis during which a researcher begins to both think and construct the first categories (Silverman, 2005, p. 158). In this research, field notes were an important tool for deeper exploration of the research topic. After each interview I wrote down the main characteristics of a conversation, including participants’ behaviour during a discussion, interviewees’ responses to the questions, and comparisons and specifics among their responses. In this sense, field notes were used as a first, basic tool of data analysis. I also depicted my personal position in the interview process, referring to my personal reactions to interview questions or participants’ responses, or to the relationship that I developed during the interview process.

The observations made in the field notes led to further development of analytical memos, which were in this case an upgrade from the field notes. Groenewald (2008) argues that memos help accumulate written ideas or records about concepts and their relationships. Indeed, memo writing proved to be very useful; it provided a space for constant comparison of participants’ accounts and allowed generation of further ideas related to the research. As a part of the data analysis process, reading and re-reading the transcripts by paying attention to different aspects of telling and my position as the researcher in reading the story was considered.
This PhD dissertation was conducted between geographical and cultural settings. Ultimately, researching “back home” was recognised as an important part of reflexivity. This is focused on in the following section.

4.3.2.1 Positionality: Researching “Back Home”

As pointed out by Plugor (2013), researchers often have a biographical connection with the research topic, which proved to be true in this case. I grew up in the Karst region. I have had personal experiences with the region’s socio-political changes, and I actively involved myself in the research in order to better explore the changes. Doing research “back home”—in a researcher’s own cultural context—is not a straightforward task and it involves several advantages and challenges. As Andrews (2006) suggests, going back home to do research does not mean a return to the known. My position as a researcher located in an Irish university, where I have been exposed to research concepts formulated in Western and English- and Irish-speaking environments, had an impact on the development of my personal views on the research topic. At the same time, I was brought up in the Slovenian culture, which also influenced my way of thinking and of experiencing things.

Voloder (2008) argues that being an “insider” in the research process may result in the establishment of stronger connections between a researcher and participants. Belonging to the same group links the researcher with the “we” group, in which it is easier to access the grounds of common knowledge. Yet, Baker (2005, p. 12) claims there is a need to “recognize and acknowledge our own embeddedness in a variety of narratives”. This predisposition was applied to a further phase of the research when a combination of my and the interviewees’ personal narratives of growing up were constantly negotiated and reconstructed as the interview process progressed. In my own research, the participants’ narratives were constructed through my own and their experiences with youth civic engagement, social support and coping. Our positions had developed independently, through embeddedness in different contexts and
narratives. All those considerations were important throughout the research process, but became even more manifest during implementation of the research design, presented in the next section.

Researching “back home” thus seems to be essentially different from researching “out there” (Mandiyanike, 2009). An assumption that can be made about a researcher who is familiar with the culture of their study participants is that it is easy for them to understand socio-cultural contexts in which people live. Yet, sharing a culture with research participants can actually hide important cultural characteristics in a study from a researcher, those which are “most effectively hidden from its own participants” (Hall, 1959, p. 53). For example, I shared with research participants the expectations that opportunities for young people should be provided by the state. I realised that these expectations and practices are not “taken for granted” when I started to compare them with Irish attitudes and expectations towards the state. As argued by Godina (2014), “taken-for-granted” perceptions and views can become the richest research material as they can show a lack of understanding of certain relationships—in this case, a changing role of the state in individuals’ lives. Despite many challenges, researching “home” from a distance provided me with an opportunity to reflect on the culture, society, and history from the outside, and to rethink certain positions and views on which I was not able to reflect when I was actually based at home. Simultaneously, I became an outsider in the new culture and at home (Alsop Kraft, 2002, paragraph 19), or: “I was simultaneously an insider, outsider, both and neither” (Sultana, 2007, p. 377).

4.3.3 Ethical Considerations
Ethical considerations were put in place to assure the legitimacy and integrity of a research project, to ensure protection for research participants and the researcher involved in the research (May, 2011). This research was approved by the Research Ethics Committee at NUI, Galway. Both information sheet and consent form were initially written in English and then translated into Slovenian (for more see: Appendix A-D). The English version of the documents was presented to the
Research Ethics Committee in order to demonstrate how the research will be handled on the field. In order to make these forms understandable to research participants, I translated them into Slovenian as well. Prior to the interviews, I sent an information sheet to all the participants and made sure that they understood the scope of the study. All participants were ensured that they could withdraw from the research anytime: if they agreed to participate, all their personal information would be anonymised and kept confidential. Some participants expressed a high level of interest in the research, while a few of them had some doubts about the validity of their contributions to the research. Yet, there were no recognised difficulties during this phase of the research; all the participants decided to stay involved in the research and to share their experiences for the research purpose.

All the participants signed a consent form which guaranteed anonymity, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw from the study at any time. As discussed by Andrews (2007), use of a written consent form may not be a universally accepted practice. This proved to be partially true in this study, too. People agreed to sign the consent form, but many of them questioned its purpose. For example, Filip said: “I don’t know why we have to operate with papers. I decided to participate, so that means that I trust you.” This type of hesitation was particularly recognised among the oldest participants, which may imply that verbal agreements based on trust would be a more acceptable practice to use.

Full anonymity was ensured by replacing participants’ names with fictional ones. I ensured that shared information was kept confidential. The research was based in a small community in which most people have known each other. For example, some participants mentioned details about other people’s lives or shared sensitive information about them. I decided not to disclose that information and fictionalised other people’s names, work details, and places of living in order to protect both participants and the people mentioned in their stories. I stored the recordings in the locked cabinet at my parents’ house, and transcriptions were kept on a password-
protected PC. The recordings will be kept for five years after the study in the locked and secure location.

Studies conducted in western academic settings usually offer information on available services to which participants can refer in case of distress. As an insider, I was aware that this approach would not be appropriate to use in a Slovenian context. This type of support has become only recently available, and people still mostly rely on informal sources of support when feeling stressed. Therefore, I decided not to include this information in the information sheet. Instead, I contacted the interviewees soon after the interview process to ensure that they felt comfortable about sharing their stories. I also offered to share transcribed interviews, but, with the exception of one participant, they did not show any interest in it. They said that stories were narrated for research purposes only.

4.3.4 The Challenges of Translation
Language related issues are rarely discussed in qualitative research (Temple & Young, 2004; Plugor, 2013; Fathi, 2013). However, as argued by Temple and Young (2004), language differences bring to the fore epistemological, political and ethical decisions. For example, issues connected with translation of concepts and meanings across languages and cultures should be particularly considered. In this research, translation was at the core of the research process, as a result of simultaneous work with two languages: Slovenian and English. There were six steps of translation involved in this research: 1) translating concepts from English to Slovenian; 2) translating interview questions from English to Slovenian; 3) conducting interviews in Slovenian; 4) transcribing interviews in Slovenian; 5) writing summaries and coding in English; 6) translating memos into English; and 7) writing-up in Slovenian and English. These aspects of translation developed throughout the research process and are discussed as a part of those research steps.
4.3.5 Designing the Interview Guide

The initial stages of this research involved the translation of English-language academic research concepts into interview questions which would elicit stories about participants’ living experiences in Slovenia. The first steps in this process involved translating concepts and meanings between English and Slovenian. Dictionaries, encyclopaedias, online sources, and academic books were used in a search for literal meanings of coping and resilience. Despite some useful descriptors, such as: trdoživost, nezlomljivost, prožnost, and vzdržljivost, the conceptual meaning of resilience remained untranslated. Similar problems arose with regard to other concepts used in this research, such as “youth civic engagement”.

Further steps of translation were based on the development of interview questions. This was informed by an interview guide on resilience, as proposed by Ungar and Liebenberg (2011) (both associated with the Resilience Research Centre, Halifax, Canada). The Resilience Research Centre, which has conducted numerous studies on resilience across cultures, had developed a manual which included nine catalyst questions to help researchers explore resilience in various cultural settings. However, directly translating these interview questions in Slovenian did not preserve their true nature, and I was concerned that participants would not be able to make sense of them. For this reason, I used the questions developed by Ungar and Liebenberg (2011) as a general guideline to ask questions about risk and coping in different cultural contexts, while my own creativity and judgment were used to develop the final interview guide.

I recognised the need for more engaging interview questions, ones that would offer an insight into interviewees’ personal experiences. In order to link personal and cultural understandings of youth civic engagement, social support and coping, I interviewed myself. Self-interview not only helped me to explore my own personal story, it also aided my realisation of my personal position within the research

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31 Persistent clinging to life
32 Unbreakable/infrangible
33 Flexibility
34 Endurance/persistence

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(Bolam, Gleeson & Murphy, 2003). I was interviewed in English by a colleague who was familiar with the research topic. My personal experiences with growing up revolved around engagement in numerous activities in primary school, which were not available in the secondary school. I was aware that this change possibly resulted from a teenage disinterest in organised activities, while at the same time I could not quite understand how my experience could have changed so radically in such a short period of time. During this process, I figured out that a narrative approach to interviewing can be beneficial.

This process had a strong impact on further development of the interview guide. I applied a narrative approach to interviewing at the beginning of the interview process by asking an open-ended, narrative-inducing question: “I would like to invite you to share your experience of growing up in the Karst”. This experience-centred approach to interviewing (Hollway & Jefferson, 2001; Squire, 2008) was used to elicit individual stories and to get an insight into participants’ personal experiences. Hearing the personal narrative of research participants provided a chance to explore the research topic further, through asking a set of semi-structured questions. As argued by May (2011, p. 134), a semi-structured interview guide is based on pre-designed interview questions, where a researcher is able to probe beyond the initial answers and can establish a more dialogical relationship with participants. Wengraf (2001, p. 75) describes the semi-structured interview process as being “dependent upon the ability of the researcher to travel a path through the interview with the participant”. Such design provides the framework for a range of questions, but does not limit the researcher to a list of questions. The researcher can open up fields of inquiry according to the focus which the interviewee places on the subject matter, rather than follow a fixed set of questions in a routine manner. Thus responses may extend well beyond the original conception of the questions and open up new areas of knowledge which are relevant to understanding the reality of the research participant. The interview guide was structured along themes, with specific topics to be covered for each theme. Topics included daily life in school, leisure time, employment opportunities, daily challenges, social support, and problem solving. It
was not definitive, but considerably flexible, and also applicable to specific interview situations (Bryman, 2004).

4.3.5.1 Pilot Interviews

The pilot interview was conducted in order to test the combination of narrative and semi-structured interview questions in the field. An acquaintance of mine agreed to participate in the interview and to provide her feedback on the interview design. The use of narrative questions worked particularly well, as it enabled the participant to focus on various aspects of her youth. Topics covered during the interview were well-accepted. However, some questions that were particularly focused on coping and resilience required further rewording. I also realised that that the interview should be conducted as a discussion, by teasing out the issues which prove to be relevant for research participants. Bourdieu (1996) found that forced questions instigate artificial answers, and thus the interview process has to be conversational and contextualised. Hence, I understood that I had to “contextualise” the questions according to the personal stories of participants.

The adapted version of the interview guide was piloted with another person of a younger age. I approached a youth worker in the local youth club and asked him for help. He referred me to a group of young people who regularly visit the place. Žan, an 18 year old boy, agreed to participate in the interview. This interview showed that topics as developed during the first pilot interview were suitable to research people’s growing up experiences across generations.

4.4 Implementation of the Research

This section outlines the main steps taken to implement the research design. It explains the process of the recruitment of research participants, the interviewing, data analysis, and the writing-up process. Limitations of this research are briefly outlined also.
4.4.1 Recruitment of Research Participants

Recruitment of participants involved engaging individuals who had grown up in the Karst region in the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s. This decision was influenced by the belief that growing up in different periods of time has subsequently exposed young people to different contexts, such as a variety of socio-political and economic systems. The concept of “generations” was applied to the differing age groups of people participating in this research. The concept of generations is contested and vague, resulting in different interpretations and definitions. A combination of Mannheim’s (1952), Ule’s (1988; 1996; 2000) and Wangler’s (2012) interpretation of generations was used for the purpose of this research.

As argued by Mannheim (1952), “generation” refers to a group of people who belong to the same historically-determined social space. Specific social and cultural conditions can facilitate “generational connection” and the development of “generational consciousness”. In the case that these conditions are met, a “generational unit” is formed (Ibid.). Therefore, generation is not merely an age, but also a social group (Ule, 2008). People from the same generation participate in actual social and mental interactions, and share the same system of experiences. Generational units develop internal solidarity and recognise their collective interests, which can result in their common action (Mannheim, 1952). A generation thus provides a framework, within which its members share common life experiences, value systems, and cultural practices.

Ule35 (1996, 2000) recognises three separate generations in Slovenia after the Second World War that correspond to Mannheim’s definition of a generation. Two of those, “socialist” and “transitional”, were applied in order to explore young people’s experiences with growing up under socialism in the 1980s and the transition to post-

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35As argued by Ule (1996, 2000), following Mannheim’s definition of generation there are three “generational units” recognised in Slovenia: 1) the post-Second World War generation, 2) a generation that grew up under socialism, and 3) a generation that experienced their childhood in socialism and their early youth in post-socialism.
socialism in the 1990s. As argued by Nastran - Ule (1996, p. 25), members of the “socialist” generation shared experiences with ideological pressure and rebellion against the socialist regime through activities organised by the student movement. This generation also experienced improved living standards, socio-economic progress, and the dissolution of Yugoslavia. In comparison, members of the “transitional” generation were born in socialism, while their transitions to adulthood coincided with a period of socio-political transformation and the establishment of the new state of Slovenia. This generation inherited a belief in the right to a constant increase in the living standard experienced by their parents, but it also experienced an increasing rate of unemployment, global ecological problems, and progress in the sphere of information technology (Ibid.). Ule (2000, p. 26) also claims that due to the absence of socially active youth cultures since the state’s independence, there are no newly recognised generations in Slovenia. Yet, in research on the intergenerational and historic construction of national identity in Poland, Wangler (2012) shows that generations are not necessarily homogenous and coherent, but can be divided into subgroups. She extends the meaning of generational consciousness to a common sharing of mental maps and locates generational units in accordance with formative historical periods or events to which young people are exposed.

Thus, generations are not necessarily associated only with an active socio-political force. They can also represent a social group which is ideologically distinct from other generations due to their exposure to diverse ideologies during the formative period of youth (Wangler, 2012, p. 59). By applying this approach, in this dissertation, young people growing up in the 2000s were recognised as members of a “post-socialist” generation. Their growing up experiences were assumed to be different from previous generations, as they were strongly shaped by ideological forces of capitalism and individualism. Accordingly, this research defines the generations as follows:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Generation</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Time of Growing Up (between the ages of 14 and 24)</th>
<th>Formative Period</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Socialist”</td>
<td>40-52</td>
<td>1980s</td>
<td>Socialism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Transitional”</td>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>1990s</td>
<td>Transition to Democracy and Capitalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Post-Socialist”</td>
<td>18-29</td>
<td>2000s</td>
<td>Post-Socialism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2: Recognised generations of the research

Purposive sampling was used as a technique to select participants. Silverman (2005, p. 129) claims that purposive sampling is based on the critical choice of parameters of participants that are to be included in the research. Therefore, participants are chosen according to their relevance for a study (Bryman, 2004). In this study, the participants’ selection criteria were based on nationality, age, gender, and geographical location. I conducted 20 interviews with people who grew up in the Slovenian Karst either in the 1980s (6), 1990s (7) and 2000s (7). Participants were of mixed gender, with a slight prevalence of female interviewees.

“Snowball sampling” was used as a method for recruiting participants. Initially, I approached several local community organisations in the main town of the region, Sežana, including a local student organisation, the youth club “Podlaga”, Higher Education Centre Sežana, and staff in the primary school Srečko Kosovel, via email or by visiting them in person. I also used social media, such as Facebook, and a personal e-mail list (for more see: Appendix F-G) in order to recruit participants. All of the organisations mentioned above expressed an interest in cooperation and were willing to publish information about the research on their websites and advertisement boards (for more see: Appendix E). Some of the participants contacted me directly by responding to the published advertisements. However, the
staff of the Higher Education Centre helped me to recruit most of the participants. The same institution also provided me with a space where I conducted most of the interviews. A few participants were unable to travel to the interview location due to spatial distance. Therefore, I travelled to other villages and towns, namely Dol pri Vogljah, Kreplje, Komen, and Ljubljana in order to meet up with interviewees who were interested in participating in the study. Interviews were conducted from September 2011 until January 2012.

4.4.2 Timeline
Table 4.3 indicates the timeline of this research. Activities performed at different stages of this research are outlined.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Preparation | • Literature review carried out on the theories and concepts around youth, resilience and coping, social support, transition to adulthood and youth civic engagement;  
• Making the first contacts with youth organisations and educational institutions. | October 2009 - August 2011 |
| Fieldwork | • Consent process: information sheets and consent forms for participants;  
• Making further contacts with student, youth and local organizations;  
• Advertising the research through emails and institutional boards provided by interested youth and educational organisations;  
• Interviews with research participants. | September 2011 - January 2012 |
4.4.3 Interview Process

Bourdieu (1996) claims that an interview is based on a social relationship which has an influence on obtained results. This study was based in a small community where people have known each other well. Thus, knowing, or at least being familiar with, most of the participants was inevitable. Several of them were my friends, schoolmates, or sidewalk acquaintances. Familiarity within some of these relationships had an impact on the interview process. Prior to the interview, I spent some time talking to them. We exchanged news and commented on the current socio-political situation. As Bourdieu argues, this type of relationship can unite the researcher with respondents and contribute to social ease (ibid., 1996, p. 21). This proved to be particularly relevant in connection with friends and peers. They considered the interview as an occasion to meet up and to exchange our views and experiences. For example, Andreja and I grew up together and we shared several experiences and events during adolescence. This determined the nature of the interview, and the way in which questions were asked and answered. For example, when she could not remember certain details or was looking for my opinion, Andreja looked at me and said: “What else? Come on, help me; what else did we do when we were younger?” Although, I tried to intervene as little as possible, I did get involved in the conversation. I realised that, in situations such as this one, it is better to stay engaged in a conversation and to respond to participants’ questions as readily as
possible, since the narrator’s storyline is constructed in the relationship with the interviewer.

Interviews lasted for approximately an hour and a half to two hours. The shortest interview lasted for 55 minutes, while the longest interview was two hours and ten minutes. The initial question: “Can you share your experience with growing up in the Karst?” provided an opportunity to incorporate my area of interest by following participants’ stories. Four areas—youth civic engagement, social support, coping with daily challenges, and youth opportunities—were discussed in the interviews (for more see: Appendix H). This approach to interviewing proved to be positive, as it provided participants with an opportunity to remember and to ask questions relevant to this research. Some participants were dubious about their capacity to remember. For example, Katja said: “I am not sure I will be able to help you as I do not remember much from that period of time.” However, open-ended, narrative questions provided space for emerging memories, which Katja recognised at the end of the interviewing process: “You said that I would remember and I really did!”

4.4.4 Data Analysis: Transcription, Translation and Emerging Themes

One of the biggest challenges of qualitative research is to make sense of massive amounts of data. Patton (2002, p. 436) claims that the final analysis derives from two primary sources: a) research questions that were structured prior to fieldwork; and b) analytic reflections and interpretations that emerged during data collection. The next phase of the data analysis process involved transcription of the conducted interviews, the writing of interview summaries in English, and the coding of interviews.

All interviews were transcribed verbatim, in Slovenian. This process ensured that the gathered data were transcribed as closely to the original as possible. Bryman (2004, p. 330) claims that transcribing interviews enables the researcher to have closer contact with the data, which leads to its more thorough examination, and which contributes to transparency within the data analysis process. Transcription and
writing up notes, therefore, familiarise the researcher with their data (May, 2011). To provide a transcription as close to the original as possible, I re-listened to interviews, or parts of them, several times in order to be able to recognise certain unnoticed details, such as missing words, longer silences, or laughter. Although the research does not centre around language analysis, knowledge of these details proved to be important in the development of my assessment of participants’ views and the construction of their experiences. The data transcription process is not only technical in nature, but also serves the purpose of permitting theorising about data, which contributes toward the output of better results of qualitative research (Silverman, 2005). However, as recognised by Ross (2010), transcription is already an interpretive act which says as much about a transcriber as the transcribed (paragraph 12). Therefore, transcription as such already provides a layer of analysis by trying to imitate the original, becoming an interpretative construct of the researcher.

When listening and re-listening to the interviews, I realised that literal translation of transcripts would be challenging, as syntax and language expressions used in Slovenian do not translate literally into English. Similar to experiences of other researchers (Baumgartner, 2012; Plugor, 2013), I was working with the original data until the completion of analysis. This decision was made in order to work as closely as possible with the original data so as not to lose the meaning participants ascribed to their experiences with growing up in the region. However, this resolution involved methodological decisions connected with transcription of the data in Slovenian and writing up summaries of the interviews in English. As argued by Fathi (2013), there is no single way of translation. This process provided an opportunity to simultaneously work with both languages and think about the translation of meaning across the two cultures. As this thesis is written in English, I decided to write summaries of the interviews in English. Summaries of interviews in English followed the structure and plot as narrated by interviewees in Slovenian. These summaries focused on the translation of people’s lives, which, as argued by Temple and Koterba (2009), can be useful for transferring meaning from one context to another. Working simultaneously with Slovenian transcripts and English summaries of interviews proved to be very useful, since it helped me to reflect on perspectives
and ideas expressed through both languages. This process allowed early recognition of emerging themes associated with young people’s growing up experiences, such as transitions to adulthood and opportunities for engagement.

However, summarising stories in another language is not unproblematic. Translation is a complex process determined by the social and historical conventions of a specific language, and has political and ideological implications (Ross, 2010). Similar to transcriptions, translations are constructed by the researcher and they include (un)intentional mistakes and (mis)interpretations which need to be recognised in the research process. A researcher/translator is thus at the centre of this process and is an active constructor of a research. Her role in the process is not neutral. Translation is “inextricably bound to the socio-cultural positioning of the researcher, a positioning, whether intended or ascribed, that will also give a meaning to the dual translator/researcher role” (Temple & Young, 2004, p. 168).

The location of a researcher and the shaping of a researcher’s viewpoint are influenced by her relationship with the audience (Temple & Young, 2004, p. 164) as well as with the participants. The aim of summarising transcriptions in English was not to search for a truth, but to construct meanings across languages and cultures. In order to include my awareness of the interview process as it developed, I summarised my memos in English also. In this way, the narrative approach to transcription and translation brought people’s stories and voices to the core of the research process. Several researchers suggest that the narrative approach to analysis provides a solution in cross-cultural and cross-language research (Temple, 2008, Temple & Koterba, 2009). At the same time, this activity provides another opportunity to achieve closeness with the data and to approach it from another angle. Reading, re-reading, and thinking in two languages simultaneously provided a chance to double-check the information deriving from the data. This more narrative aspect of analysis helped with the location of participants’ stories in a spatio-temporal context (Brännlund, Kovačič & Lounasmaa, 2013) and permitted them to be compared and contrasted within and across living contexts. I coded Slovenian
transcripts in English, which helped me to develop further categories and themes. Despite being aware of the potentials for using software in the coding process, I used coloured pens to recognise the main emerging themes. This more traditional way of coding provided a chance to deal with data in a more visual way. By doing so, I was able to exert control over the data management process and to develop emerging themes.

4.4.4.1 Thematic Analysis

Thematic narrative analysis was used to analyse and write up personal and generational stories. This approach to narrative analysis is concerned with the content—that is “what” is said—and treats the data as a story. Riessman (2008, p. 57) claims that thematic narrative analysis requires the researcher to have a theory in mind when interpreting the data. Participants’ biographies, as they are constituted in the interviews, are then compared, bearing this theory in mind. I read and re-read transcripts several times and started to map processes of continuity and discontinuity as recognised inside and across generations. As suggested by Plummer (2001), narrative research focuses on the analysis of key themes in order to help organise how a life story is told. The conceptual framework presented in Chapter two (page 73) was used to explore emerging themes in the data. The narrative approach was applied to make sense of human experience within the themes (Floersch et al., 2010).

The process of making sense of words and concepts is not a straightforward task. As recognised by Fathi (2013, p. 59), the context within which the meaning is produced and choices that the researcher needs to make about translated meaning of concepts are crucial to this process. As stated by Holloway (cited in Fathi, 2013, p. 68), data analysis should involve the context of everything we “know”. Re-creation and reconstruction of knowledge were an integral part of the data analysis process. My insider’s knowledge of the socio-political change in Slovenia helped me to construct the meaning of youth civic engagement, social support, and coping that could be understood by an English-speaking audience. Yet, the choices I made about the translation of concepts and texts across cultures were crucial. After coding and
recognition of the main themes, I started to translate excerpts of interviews used in this research (for more see: Chapter Five).

As argued by Birbili (2000), problems with translations appear when the structure and syntax of sentences in one language do not correspond with the other. “Free style” translation (Plungor, 2013) proved to be more useful in translating words and meanings than literal translation. This included adding or deleting words, where necessary, and changing the word order in particular sentences. Yet, there was a concern that the participants’ voices would be lost due to the translation of the interviews into English. After considering different options, I decided to present original excerpts from the interviews in the footnotes. This strategy seemed to be the most appropriate in this case, as it corresponded with the simultaneous use of both languages throughout the research process. This also ensured that there was space to present meanings and ideas across cultures in the research, which is mainly written in English.

As argued by Keightley (2010), there can be different strategies applied when analysing memories. For examples, themes emerging in narratives can be compared until there are recognised commonalities and differences. The constant comparison of findings within and across research contexts during the whole study resulted in the ultimate research findings. Approaching the data in various ways, including field notes, memos, transcription, translation of summaries, and thematic analysis enabled me to think about and contrast the data during the whole research process. Bazeley (2009, p. 6) claims that qualitative data requires deeper analysis which has to extend beyond the superficial identification of themes. This guidance, which involves following several approaches designed to facilitate closeness with the data, contributed toward the development of the final findings. I found especially useful a recommendation to describe – compare – relate gathered data (Bazeley, 2009), which then helped me to explore emerging themes and concepts within and across the research contexts. The data was analysed thematically to uncover subjective meanings and experiences of the participants. The approach includes “any qualitative
data reduction and sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies and meanings” (Patton, 2002, p. 453). Data was reviewed, seeking common/contradictory themes and topics, through which the stories of the participants could be understood.

The below **Table 4.4** introduces the sample of this research. The research participants are divided in three generations (socialist, transitional and post-socialist) in accordance to their age. This table also lists gender and fictionalised names of participants.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generations</th>
<th>Research Participants</th>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Gender</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Socialist Generation</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>40 – 52</td>
<td>Male</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darko</td>
<td>40 – 52</td>
<td>Male</td>
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<tr>
<td>Matej</td>
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<td>Filip</td>
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<tr>
<td>Katja</td>
<td>40 – 52</td>
<td>Female</td>
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<tr>
<td>Milojka</td>
<td>40 – 52</td>
<td>Female</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Transitional Generation</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Jaro</td>
<td>30 – 39</td>
<td>Male</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gregor</td>
<td>30 – 39</td>
<td>Male</td>
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<tr>
<td>Martin</td>
<td>30 – 39</td>
<td>Male</td>
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<td>Simona</td>
<td>30 – 39</td>
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<td>Andreja</td>
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<td>Mojca</td>
<td>30 – 39</td>
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<td>Post-socialist Generation</td>
<td>Tadeja</td>
<td>30 – 39</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nevenka</td>
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<td>Sonja</td>
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<td>Tina</td>
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<td>Polona</td>
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<td>Alenka</td>
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<td>Rene</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anej</td>
<td>18 – 29</td>
<td>Male</td>
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Table 4.4: Research participants

36 Names of participants have been changed to protect the identity of respondents.
4.4.5 Research Limitations

As with every research project, this one also has some limitations. Firstly, some stem from the chosen methodology and the developed study design. The qualitative nature of this research contributes to a better understanding of people’s experiences with coping and resilience, but the findings cannot be generalised to other settings and contexts. Some of the critique of qualitative research refers to issues of subjectivity, difficulties with duplication, problems of generalisation, and lack of transparency (Bryman, 2004, p. 284-285). In the context of this research, participants’ experiences and perceptions are not applicable outside of their personal context, which indeed was not an aim for this research. However, the findings do contribute to “theoretical reasoning” (Patton, 2002) which can inform new theoretical considerations about the researched topic. In order to explore the research topic further, it may be feasible to incorporate quantitative research methods to further test these initial findings. Due to financial and time constraints connected with the nature of cross-cultural research, it was not possible to do this during this research.

Another limitation of this research derives from the criteria for the selection of research participants. The study focuses on various age groups and their growing up experiences, but it does not include current adolescents whose experiences would contribute to further development of the research. This group of young people has come of age in a setting that is entirely detached from experiences of growing up in the former Yugoslav state. Inclusion of this age group in the study may have provided a more nuanced view of generational growing up experiences in diverse socio-political contexts. However, the scope of this study was focused on the socio-political transformation and wider experiences with the two political and economic systems and, as such, tried to highlight meanings and experiences during those periods of time.

Last but not least, another limitation derives from the nature of a qualitative inquiry, particularly focused on the research “back home”. Naturally, the researcher’s personal interest in her topic influences what she notices or observes during research.
My personal interest and political orientation influenced my judgment of what I considered important in people’s stories. I was most interested in stories which presented the impact of social change on people’s lives. Following Andrews (2007, p. 33): “[…] and the stories which we as researchers hear are heavily influenced by the norms of the community. We are socialised to think of our lives in particular ways, and (mostly) we construct the stories about our lives in relation to those expected tales.” However, as argued by Rajendran (2001, p. 1), the researcher has to constantly confront her own opinions with the data. In this study it was important to distinguish between one self being a member of the community under the research and being a researcher. This issue proved to be difficult to negotiate. This challenge was tackled by applying additional checks on the process. PhD supervisors regularly reviewed the findings and discussed the emerging ideas with the researcher. Furthermore, reflexivity process was applied to each stage of the research, as examined in detail in Section 4.3.2.

4.5 Conclusion
This chapter presented decisions taken about chosen methodologies, the methods used, and the data analysis process. Section two explained how the study was designed applying characteristics of qualitative narrative inquiry. The implementation of the research was presented next. Section three showed how the research design was carried out in the Slovenian context. The roles of transcriptions and translations in the construction of the research findings were emphasized. This was followed by an explanation of the main steps for data analysis, and how they were applied within this cross-cultural research. Finally, some limitations of the study were presented. The main findings of this research are presented in the next chapter.

5.1 Introduction

This chapter is divided into three sections and presents the findings of this research study. Specifically, the data that corresponds with the four objectives of this research is presented. Each section examines youth experiences with social support, youth civic engagement, coping during transitions to adulthood, and state-provided opportunities in: socialist Yugoslavia in the 1980s (Section 5.1); the transition from socialist Yugoslavia to post-socialist Slovenia in the 1990s (Section 5.2); and post-socialist Slovenia in the 2000s (Section 5.3). The central research question of this dissertation is:

*How does socio-political transformation influence the provision of protective mechanisms and youth coping as aspects of resilience during transitions to adulthood?*

*Table 5.1* below matches each of the research objectives with specific sections in this chapter and the main concepts under investigation in this research as outlined in the literature review (*Chapter Two*).

While this chapter focuses mostly on findings, some literature is also sourced in order to strengthen the interpretation of the results, in advance of a more detailed discussion on key findings in *Chapter Six*. It should be noted that findings are presented according to each generation under the study, starting with Generation One (socialist youth), followed by Generation Two (transitional youth) and concluding with Generation Three (post-socialist youth). In the final summary these key results are repeated, but are presented in summary form with regard to each objective.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>No.</th>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>To compare perceived differences in social support across three generations (socialist, transitional, and post-socialist) in Slovenia</th>
<th>Section 5.2.1: Testimonies about State and Societal Provision of Social Support;</th>
<th>Section 2.4.1: Protective Aspects of Social Support that Assist Coping</th>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>To compare perceived differences in youth civic engagement across three generations of young people (socialist, transitional, and post-socialist) in Slovenia</td>
<td>Section 5.2.2: Narratives of Supported Youth Engagement;</td>
<td>Section 2.4.2: Youth Civic Engagement, Coping and Resilience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>To compare perceived differences in risk and coping with transitions to adulthood across three generations of young people (socialist, transitional, and post-socialist) in Slovenia</td>
<td>Section 5.2.3: Smooth and Linear Pathways to Adulthood - in The Context of The Research Question on Coping;</td>
<td>Section 2.3.2: Transitions to Adulthood;</td>
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<td>Section 5.3.3: Youth Narratives of “Double Transitions”;</td>
<td>Section 2.4: Coping during Youth Transitions to Adulthood.</td>
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<td>Section 5.3.3.1: New Pattern of Coping in the Changing Social Context;</td>
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<td>Section 5.4.3: Experiences with Individualised Transitions to Adulthood.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>To compare state provision of opportunities for youth across three generations (socialist, transitional, and post-socialist) in Slovenia</td>
<td>Section 5.2.4: Youth Stories about the Socialist State and Nostalgia for Socialism;</td>
<td>Section 2.5: Socio-Ecological Approach to Resilience – from Individual to Society</td>
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<td>Section 5.3.4: Lack of State Provided Opportunities and Resources: Implications for Transitional Youth;</td>
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<td>Section 5.4.4: Unequal Access to Opportunities and Resources for Post-Socialist Youth.</td>
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Table 5.1: Guide to the Findings Chapter
5.2 Storied Lives of Socialist Youth in the 1980s: Youth Experiences with State Supported Transitions to Adulthood

The 1980s was an era during which a vibrant civil society, social movements, and youth subcultures flourished in Yugoslavia. It also marked the beginning of the Yugoslav crisis, which was precipitated by the death of president Tito (1980), and coupled with an economic crisis and increasing conflict between the former Yugoslav republics (Allcock, 2000; Gow & Carmichael, 2010) (for more, see the context of the study: Chapter Three). This section examines people’s experiences with social support, youth civic engagement, transitions to adulthood and state-provided opportunities in order to consider their relevance for youth coping and resilience within the context of socialism. Six people recounted their stories with growing up under Yugoslav socialism in the 1980s. Their stories centred around the improvement of living standards in Yugoslavia, and the strong connections between people and the communities in which they grew up. Values such as solidarity, cooperation, and equality were ranked as the most important. However, the narratives of this generation have to be read through their silences, too. Unspoken or briefly-mentioned views on the nature of the socialist political regime and the dissolution of the former Yugoslavia are as intriguing as their stories about “the good old socialist past”. People’s perceptions and memories play an important role in the way in which they construct their pasts. They reflect not only on “how it was”, but also on “how it should be”. As Boym (2001) and Velikonja (2008a) argue, nostalgia for socialism is a useful analytical concept which can be deployed in order to interpret the data in the socialist context. People’s experiences need to be read and interpreted as a part of their current lives in the post-socialist era.
5.2.1 Testimonies about State and Societal Provision of Social Support

Help was accessible to everyone. It wasn't only for the rich or those who could afford it; it was accessible to everyone, so people were able to go to a secondary school, to the university or elsewhere (David)\textsuperscript{3738}. David’s quote demonstrates the general opinion of socialist youth regarding social support. As argued by Wallace and Kovacheva (1998) and Roberts (2009), socialist youth experienced a high social security net and a wider level of societal care. In participants’ accounts, this resonates in examples of holistic provision of help. This indicates that practices of social support were ingrained in all layers of society, including state, communities, schools, and families. As shown in the quote above, the benefits that were available within the state welfare system, such as free education, play a crucial role in youth perception of support. This is echoed by Milojka, who claims that political ideology has a crucial role in establishing the conditions in which social support is provided.

The system provided a wide array of help: well, at least, I think so. At that time [under socialism], there was no need [to volunteer]. This is different today, as capitalism divides people into “poor” and “rich” categories—and then those who fall into “the poor” category require help. Before [under socialism], we were all equal: there was no need to offer help (Milojka)\textsuperscript{39}.

Milojka considers the role of the political regime crucial to the provision of conditions for equal access to opportunities and support. This is further examined in Section 5.1.5, which presents the role of the state and state welfare regime in generating opportunities for young people as they grow up. This section further explores how the socialist generation constructs the meaning of holistic provision of

\textsuperscript{37}In order to emphasise and show respect to the voice of participants, all quotes are presented in bold.
\textsuperscript{38}Je bla pomoc. Je blo omogoceno vsakmu, ni blo samo za bogate al pa za tiste, ki so si lahko privoščli, ampak je blo omogoceno iz zadnje vasi cloveku, da je na nek nacin lahko sel v srednjo solo, al pa na fakulteto al kukrkoli.
\textsuperscript{39}Takrat se ni blo tega, ker ni blo niti potrebe ne. To je zdej potreba kapitalizma, ku je toliko bolj revnih, toliko bogatih, da je treba pol pomagat ne ta revnim. Prej smo bli vsi isti ni blo te potrebe. Ma ja, neki je blo no, zdej to za kakšno clovekoljubno pomoc niti ne toliko, no, ni blo, se mi zdi. Je blo vse ze poskrbljeno s samim sistemom, tak imam obcutek no.
support within their daily experiences at home, in their communities, and in their schools.

Young people discuss the importance of family members—particularly parents—to their experiences of growing up. Accounts of reciprocity of help between young people and their parents demonstrate that this generation considers family support to be taken for granted, and is an essential part of individuals’ lives. In comparison with younger generations, socialist youth discuss family support within their everyday experiences, major life problems, and when they are in the process of gaining independence from their parents. Examples of practical and material help, such as financial support or individuals’ engagement in family tasks, are highlighted by most of these young people. Methods of parenting or upbringing, as well as the way in which parents supported youth independence, were often mentioned in this context. However, in comparison with younger generations, few of their stories illustrate examples of emotional support. As Matej points out, below, relationships between young people and parents were more distinctive, based on an authoritative type of upbringing.

There was a bigger difference between adults and children, or adults and teenagers. Nowadays, these relationships are blurred, and parents consider their children to be equals: then, children feel that they are equal, too. Well, these relationships are more equal: but at that time, the difference [between parents and children] was greater. Of course, when you are younger, you can’t wait to grow up and finally get some rights—for example, the right to wander around [on your own] (Matej)⁴⁰.

In this context, the family is perceived as one of the sources of help which, in conjunction with teachers, community members and peers, constitute youth experiences with holistic social support. The interviewees consider the role of teachers to be both crucial and supportive. This seems to be strongly linked with the

⁴⁰Ker se je verjetno cutlo večjo razliko starejsi, a starejsi ljudje in pa otroci ne, al pa starejsi ljudje in pa mladostniki ne. Danes je to verjetno precej zabrisano, ker, ker starsi jamljejo morda dns otroke bl, bl enakopravno, kukr sebi enake in so potem otroci verjetno tudi kako bi reku, je ta rang bl izenacen. Tkrt je bl tisto bl, vecja razlika ne in seveda, ce si bil potem majhen si kumi cakal, da bos starejsi, pa si verejno kumi cakal, da bos polnoleten, da bos prsu do nekaterih recimo pravic, ce temu tku recm, recimo pravica do pohajanja ne.
wider expectations developed around the role of teachers in society at the time. They explain that teachers supported young people in various ways: by encouraging their initiatives, or by providing support in case of educational or family issues. Teachers also encouraged supportive relationships among young people. These relationships were based around the premises of solidarity, and often included homework exchange and material support. Moreover, these cooperative relationships were nurtured by school staff. For example, David explains how young people supported each other on a daily basis. According to David, supportive relationships were taken for granted, and were considered to be an essential part of self-development.

We always mutually helped each other, and I always received help. Now, it doesn't matter if it was small or big help. Otherwise, many would fail. And if you are a normal human being, if you are a humanist, your goal cannot be to see someone fail in order for you to succeed. If another person fails, you cannot succeed [...] Most of teachers and professors in primary school and gymnasium were fighters. They fought for us. They were hugely motivated to work with us in such a way that we would all succeed. This is how they were, and they didn't have the same problems as teachers today who are preoccupied with their salaries, or with calculating the hours of work they have to put in to earn those salaries. They were ready to work for free, and to do whatever they were asked to do (David).

The holistic provision of support is acknowledged within accounts of reciprocal exchange of help. As examined above, there are numerous examples of youth involvement in practices of exchange of support, particularly among their friends and peers. Peer mentoring was a particular type of youth support, one that was specific to the socialist era. As Katja acknowledges, below, peer mentoring operated not only in a school setting, but also within the community, among neighbours and family members. Students who were more successful in their schoolwork helped their friends and colleagues with homework and learning difficulties.

41Gymnasium is the equivalent of a grammar school in the Anglo-Saxon educational system.
42Vedno se je med sabo pomagalo in meni so mi vedno pomagali. Zdej d, al je bla to velika la mickna pomoc je bio vseglih. Jst tezko recem al je tu blo dosti al malo. Marsikdu, mnogi bi propadli. In aaa, ce si normalen clowk, ce si humanist, ti ne more bit cilj, da ti nekdo propade zatu, da bos ti uspel, ker ce uni propade, tudi ti ne mores uspet ne. [...] V osnovni soli in v gimnaziji je bla velika vecina uciteljev in profesorjev borcev za to, da bi nas spravlo skozi. Se pravi oni so vsi imeli izredno velik interes, al pa velik motiv, da bi z nami delali aaa tako, da bi mi bli uspesni. Oni so imeli to, oni niso imeli problemov kot dns ne, kolko je placa, pa bom napravu tocko toliko minut in sekund in to. So bli sposobni karkoli zastoj delat, kadarkoli in tako naprej.
I provided voluntary support to students who needed someone to help them with their studies. I think I chose to do this myself. I helped younger colleagues at school, or I offered support to students who went to the vocational school. I think I was giving voluntary grinds\textsuperscript{43}, that's what it was. [...] I helped as a friend. As I said, that girl or some other girl, if they faced some minor learning problems, then I was ready to help. For example, I remember that neighbours asked me to help their children with their homework. Relatives asked me about it, too: they always had some younger kids who needed help (Katja)\textsuperscript{44}.

These interviews demonstrate that teachers’ care and concern for young people and young people’s initiatives were paramount. The supportive role of teachers is explained in connection with the opportunities for engagement that were available to participants, in the form of various activities in schools and communities. The support offered by teachers, and the way in which teachers nurtured young people’s initiatives and independence, corresponds with the findings that focus on opportunities for engagement. These are presented in greater detail in the next section.

5.2.2 Narratives of Supported Youth Engagement

The social involvement of youth within the public sphere was promoted and encouraged by socialist states (Aarelaid - Tart & Bennich-Björkman, 2012). Young people associate youth civic engagement with daily opportunities for participation in social settings, including schools and local communities. Phrases such as “to get involved” and “to do things” are regularly used to depict those opportunities. Engagement in youth activities generally comprises self-organised and pre-designed youth activities, such as the organisation of various social and political events, involvement in school societies, or dancing. Young people discuss their experiences

\textsuperscript{43} Grinds refer to academic peer support which was provided for free under socialism and turned into a paid service under post-socialism.

\textsuperscript{44} Jest vem, da smo se v tisto, ma je blo tudi spet prostovoljno si se vključu in jest sm pomagala potem pri ucenju tu, ma tu smo menda si potem sami zbrali. Ce nisem pomagala pri ucenju, enim z nizjih razredov, mislim, da je bla tkt v Sezani kovinarska tudi srednja, na, tukaj na srednji. Mislim, da sm ne vem, ku ene instrukcije, ma prow prostovoljstvo, ne tu je blo. [...] Ma ne, jest bl kukr prijaatlna, ku pravm ta punca, al pa se ksnja druga, ku so ble ksnje take lazje tezave in ce ne sm jest resevala bl tiste ucnje tezave. Pomoc, bl ksnemu pomagat pri, tu sm pa dosti ne, pri tezavah v soli, pri ucenju. Taku. Recimo tu vem, da sosedi so zmeraj me pol za otroke ne, me poklicali tm, kjer pac sm zivela. Potem sorodniki ne tudi, so zmeraj imeli, zmeraj je bil ksn mlajsi, mu je blo treba pomagat. Bl to ucn.
with participation in youth activities against a backdrop of “supported engagement”\textsuperscript{45}, which equipped young people with a sense of empowerment when they found themselves in new or unfamiliar situations. For instance, Milojka points out that, in her case, engagement developed around various educational, leisure, and social activities during secondary school. She explains that these activities flourished as a result of good relationships between young people, teachers, and community leaders. According to Milojka, young people had the chance to express their ideas, and, with the support of adults, to realise them. Teachers and community leaders provided everything from a physical space to material support and advice in order to support youth engagement.

I always enjoyed it. I have that kind of personality: I am delighted if something is going on. There were enough opportunities [when growing up]—if you were the type of person who was able to find them. And there was support available, too. [...] We always showed our own initiative, always. All those events happened in the following way: Someone came into a classroom and asked if any of us were interested in getting involved in certain activities. People who raised their hands went. I always raised my hand: that's how it was. It depended a bit on who wanted to get involved. That's how it was since we were young [...] We organised our own dancing group. We were a team of 6 and we just organised ourselves. This dancing group was the result of our own initiative—although it also depended upon whether that initiative was supported. My feeling is that there were no obstacles to doing things like this. This is at least my [experience]. We said, We will have a dancing group, and there were no problems (Milojka)\textsuperscript{46}.

As Milojka explains, youth engagement developed as a result of her individual interest in becoming involved as well as the opportunities that were available to her within society and within her community. According to Milojka, she and her peers

\textsuperscript{45} “Supported engagement” refers to youth participation in social and political activities under socialism. As shown in this study, youth civic engagement was encouraged and supported by the state, communities and schools. The role of adults, such as teachers, was crucial in supporting youth participation.

\textsuperscript{46} Tako, ne vem, meni je blo fajn, mogoce ku sem tak tip, da zmeraj vsaka stvar mi je fajn, ko se dogaja, tako da mi je blo v redu, se mi zdi. Ja, zadosti moznosti, ce si tip, da si jih poisce tako no, kr. Podpora se mi zdi, da je tudi bila. [...] Ma zmeraj smo mi bili bolj samoiniciativni, ne. Ja, ja, zmeraj ja. Tudi tako, ti dogodki so bili je prsu nekdo v razred in je vprasan, kdo bi sel ke in ke. In tisti, ki je dvignil roko je sel. In jst sem zmeraj dvignila roko, ne to je bilo tako ja. Spet malo bl ne, kdo je bil kej pripravljen, ne, kje sodelovat. [...] plesno skupino smo si same izmisli ne, se nas je nabralo enih 6 in smo se kar zmenje. A, v bistvu ta plesna je bila samoiniciativna,.... Iniciativo ne mogoce. Ja, aha, ja, bilo katera inicijativa je bila pa podpra, ne. Brez problema, tako imam obcutek.Ne, vsaj kar se, vsaj iz mojih ne. Tako smo rekli, da bomo imeli plesno skupino, ni problema.
were more proactive than young people are today, and they used their own initiative to set up activities like the dancing group. However, further analysis reveals the significance of schools in generating and supporting opportunities for youth engagement. Most young people’s experiences show that the encouragement and support provided by teachers is mentioned as vital to their levels of engagement. School structures encouraged cooperative relationships between young people by providing spaces for various youth activities to take place. Prescribed social roles exposed young people to a wider set of supportive networks which, as observed by Dolan (2010, 2012), may have implications for building resilience in youth.

Another example of supported engagement is provided by Filip. His story demonstrates that keeping in touch with peers and friends from his local community was important during his transition to secondary school. He was the president of the local youth organisation, and during weekends he and his friends organised sporting activities as well as local events for the wider community. Filip explains how adults helped young people to find spaces for social gatherings, and how adults supported youth activities. He does not portray adults’ intervention as a regular occurrence: instead, he indicates that youth and adults worked together towards a common goal. Adult support is crucial to the provision of space in which youth activities can take place, and to opportunities for cooperation between adults and youth.

No, we [organised] ourselves. I was the president of youth at the time and we asked local authorities if they would provide us with the space, and they did. Then we started to gather young people, and I was the president (Filip)\(^{47}\).

Further analysis shows that \textit{supported engagement} was strongly encouraged and nurtured by the state-provided youth structures, particularly \textit{The Alliance of Socialist Youth}\(^{48}\). Some form of participation in the organisation is acknowledged by most

\(^{47}\)Ma ne, tu smo imeli sami ne. Jst sm bil tkrt, sem bil predsednik mladine in pol smo zaprosili krajevno, ce nam odobrijo prostor, so nam odobrili. In pol smo tkrt mi zaceli zbjrt to kaku bi reku mladino skupej, smo zbrali to mladino. Jst sm bil pol predsednik no, mladine.

\(^{48}\)This core youth organisation had its divisions spread around the former state to strengthen the legitimacy of Socialism among young people.
young people. The analysis shows that older and younger participants of the socialist
generation perceive the role of organisation differently. The older participants’
experiences show that the organisation encouraged young people to organise and
participate in political activities. These stories are not present to the same extent
among younger interviewees, who place less emphasis on the political side of the
Alliance of Socialist Youth.

Most participants assert that the role of organisation was not merely ideological, but
that it also performed an important role in youth development. The association was
particularly active in the organisation of diverse activities, as explained by Matej, a
young activist who was involved with the Alliance of Socialist Youth in the 1980s.

Yes, we were quite active. At the time, I don't remember exactly whether
it was youth club, youth service, or most probably, the youth
organisation, The Alliance of Socialist Youth […] There were different
activities: cultural, sports, political, and so on. That was it. What else?
Oh, yes, participation was voluntary: who ever wanted to could join
(Matej)⁴⁹.

Young people were taught about cooperation and the importance of relationships
with others within practices of supported engagement. Engagement in youth
activities exposed young people to new social spaces in which they developed
relationships with other people. Findings from this research reveal another aspect
that may have important implications for coping and resilience. In their stories,
young people often mention the significance of individual agency when it comes to
involvement in supported youth activities. These activities provided youth with a
strong sense of self-efficacy and a chance to exercise their own agency. Darko’s
story shows that active engagement resulted in the creation of new social spaces in
which young people developed resistance against state authorities. In this regard, the

⁴⁹Smo kar nekaj bli aktivni tudi na tem področju, ja. Tako, da oni so bili takrat, ne vem al je bil to
Mladinski klub, mladinski servis se ne spomnim kaj tistikrat točno bilo. Mladinska organizacija
verjetno, ZSMS. […] Imelo se je tudi tm tudi razna dela poleg teh precej tudi teh dejavnosti, raznih
kulturnih, sportnih, političnih ne. In, tu bi blo tu. Kaj se? Aja, udelezba je bla prostovoljna ne, kdoor se
je hotu.
role of the Alliance of Socialist Youth was not merely ideological; it also provided an alternative social space for the empowerment of young individuals.

In fact, we had the opportunity to do unusual things. The community allowed us to do things, as, for instance, in the youth organisation. That means that we organised dances and made an “alternative bar” where we cooked pancakes and similar things. It was not for profit, but it...it was what we wanted to do. I have to say that it was possible to get these sorts of things in the most optimal way. [...] At the time it was important to have a certain function in relation [to the state] and we were able to provoke the [socialist] system. In this way, it was also possible to achieve big things (Darko) 50.

Resistance is acknowledged in school settings, too. Schools provided youth structures which young people used to organise themselves and to facilitate cooperation. For example, David explains how a student organisation often protested against unfair grading by teachers. The youth social structures within schools helped students to use available mechanisms to maintain some autonomy and to challenge their decisions. Acting as an organised collective enabled young individuals to overcome the problems they faced within an educational setting.

There was a situation in which some people were in danger of failing the year. But we stood up for ourselves and we didn’t give up. [...] We continued in this way. A committee of seven professors was formed; they were invited to listen to our oral exams. In this way, she [the teacher] was forced [to be fair]. They came to listen to us because we reacted and asked them to come. They sat down and listened. (David) 51.

Those accounts demonstrate how supported engagement exposed individuals to diverse experiences with youth civic engagement and to diverse social spaces.

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50V bistvi smo imeli moznosti tudi delti neobicajne stvari ne, da nam je skupnost tudi tu pustila, bi reku kot Mladinska organizacija. Pomeni ne, smo imeli plese in mi smo nardili alternativni sank in delali tm omlete in take neumnosti. Stvar, ki ni prnesla ne dobicka ne, ampak je tisto kr smo teli, smo delali no. Morm rect, da ce pomislim, ce pomislim na te stvari, se mi zdi v bistvi tku, da je blo tu maksimalno dobi ne [...] tkrt je blo pa zelo pomembno, torej si jmu, si jmu na nek nacin neko drgacno funkcijo napram, si lohko provocirow in si s tem lhko dosigu tudi halo ne.

51Ker je bla tudi situacija, da ce bi nekaterim se ta test vpisala kot negativen ne bi imeli popravni. Ja, sam mi smo se postavili na zadnje noge in se nismo pustili ne [...] Akcija je sla naprej tako, da je prslo na popravni izpit razen komisije, se sedem profesorjev poslusat in je bla s tem prisiljena na popravnem izpitu. Uni so prsli nutr, so se vsele in bli tiho, ampak so prsli na naso prosnjo, zarad ns poslusat.
Further analysis focuses on the link between holistic support, supported engagement, and youth experiences with transitions to adulthood.

5.2.3 Smooth and Linear Pathways to Adulthood - in The Context of The Research Question on Coping

Within the context of socialism, Yugoslav citizens were deemed to be protected by the state. This is clearly shown in findings in relation to the period before the break-up of Yugoslavia. Most participants base their stories of growing up around transitions to adulthood. When participants are asked to recall any problems and risks they faced when growing up, it becomes clear that most of them do not associate this stage of life with any difficulties. They consider this period of life to be “problem-free”. Most of them claim that they cannot recall any difficulties that they or their friends had at the time.

Goddammit, no one went astray! Yes: really interesting. And we are still all alive, although we are already a bit older and we could easily be dead of various good or bad things. But during that time there was nothing that [risky] (Darko)52.

A closer look at the data shows how participants reflect on these transitions by setting them against the backdrop of the wider social context in which they grew up. Researchers have documented the way in which transitions to adulthood in socialism were smooth, and were centred around the process of orientating young people to predetermined educational and work destinations (Ule & Rener, 2000; Roberts, 2009). The concept of “smooth transitions” considers the role of the socialist state in supporting young people’s paths towards independence. Participants explain how transitions from one stage to another were predictable and secure. This included the certainty of employment before they finished their studies. An analysis of these individuals’ stories shows how engagement in education and work opportunities resulted in faster financial and living independence, which was influenced by the

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52Porkafiks, nobeden ni zabluzu no! Ja, zanimivo ne. Ja in se vsi zivi in tku, ki jmmo ze taka leta k bi komot umirali od raznoraznih dobrih in slabih stvari. In aa ja, ma v tistih letih, ma ni blo ves ksnega takga.
consistent support of the state system. Matej positions his personal story in this setting.

I hadn’t even finished my studies yet when I started to work. I started to work immediately after passing the exams, before my thesis was written. I wrote it when I was already employed: that was during my first year in the job. So, my personal experience was that I got a job relatively quickly, and the same applies to my peers (Matej).\textsuperscript{53}

Matej’s account provides an insight into transitional security under socialism. The state regulation of educational paths was focused on finding employment for young people, and on involving them in the production process quickly (for more see: Section 5.1.4). At some point during the interview, I ask Matej about challenges young people faced at the time. Like other participants, he does not recall any problems when growing up, but provides a direct link between smooth transitions and life challenges. He emphasises the importance of youth independence and social security as essential features of non-risky transitions.

I don’t know, I didn’t feel that there were any problems. [...] As I said, one could get a job quite quickly. The same [was applicable] to housing. I could also mention that young people got married earlier, in their twenties. [...] So, there were jobs, available flats, and education was finished: then there were no problems (Matej).\textsuperscript{54}

Masten \textit{et al.} (2004) claim that cultures in which adults who are responsible for young people scaffold their transitions to adulthood by creating conditions and strategies which can positively impact the personal development of youth. This idea is further explored by examining how the state supports youth practices such as youth civic engagement, and what implications these practices have for youth coping and resilience. As argued by Gilligan (2009), transitions to adulthood are linked to a

\textsuperscript{53}Mene je tudi v bistvu tkrt ze služba čakala, tku da nisem niti absolventskega staza koristu, ampak sem takoj koncal studij in sm takoj prsu sm delat. In sem potem diplom ogradu v prvo leto, ko sm bil potem v službi ne. Taku, da takrat kr se mene tice osebno, ma tudi ostali so dobili zelo, sorazmerno zelo hitro službo ne.

\textsuperscript{54}Ma, ne vem, jst nisem obcutu, aaa, ne, ne vidm, ne vidm, da bi bli kksi taki problemi [...]. Službo kot sem reku si lohko dokaj hitro dobil, stanovanje tudi, tudi ne. Ja se to bi morda lohko reku, ne da recimo tkrt so se mladi tudi recimo stopali v zakon morda tudi prej kot dns, ne. Se pravi, tm nekje okoli 22. leta tudi ze, pa do 25. [...] Ker, ce si bil, ce si naredu solo, ce si imel službo, imel si stanovanje in potem verjetno teh problemov niti ni blo.
change in a daily routine and to forming relationships with other people. Participants’ stories reveal that new or emerging routines associated with transitions are supported and nurtured by the state social benefits, as emphasised by Katja.

We were able to enroll to whatever school we chose, and we got a scholarship for it. And you also knew that even if you weren’t going to finish your studies, you would still be able to get a job (Katja).

Participants describe transitions to adulthood positively by associating them with exciting new experiences. For instance, David links this period of life to a move to another town in Slovenia. Despite being placed in a highly-structured school routine which included homework and which restricted students’ movements outside of the dormitory, David did not find this change disturbing. He explains that this new environment provided him with an array of opportunities which helped him to adjust to his new setting. Possibilities were available in schools, communities and local neighbourhoods and young people were encouraged to participate in social life.

Things were organised in a very broad way, and also, the society enabled them. I don't know: for example, things like walking expeditions, youth working brigades, various events, or arranging meetings between dormitories, gymnasiums and so on, were very precious. That means many things were available. For instance, we had a subscription to the theatre in Trieste. Now, all these things were entwined: we were a sociological phenomenon (David).

As David points out, these social practices shared and shaped human experiences, which means that they helped to forge relationships between young people. He recounts these experiences by referring to youth as a sociological phenomenon. He explains that socialist youth were strongly integrated into society, and that youth development was holistic and ingrained in the process of socialisation. David

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35Si se lhko vpisal na katerokoli aaa solo, dobil si stipendijo in tudi si vedu, da tudi, ce bos res tisto dostudiral in taku, da bos dobil potem tudi aaa sluzbo.
36In to je bilo tisto aa, zelo siroko se je dogajalo vse ne. In pol je se družba nam omogocla ne vem, pohode, mladinske delovne brigade, akcije, ki so ble dragocena zadeva, razne prireditve in srecanja, ne vem, od domijad, srecanj dijaskih domov, srecanj gimnazij, srecanj in tako naprej. Se pravi je bilo ena cela, en cel diapazon dogajan je bil ne. Do tega, da smo imeli abonma v Trzaskem gledaliscu, da smo hodili dol, ne, kot gimnazijci in to. Zdej, to je bilo vse en velik preplet in je bilo družbeno, smo bli, bi reku smo bli socioloski pojav.
supports this opinion with numerous examples of available social spaces in the school and community where young people had the opportunity to meet up. Teachers and other staff had crucial roles in supporting young people in their integration into the new environment, and encouraged them to participate in social activities and events. At the same time, they also supported practices such as youth mentoring and cooperation which, in David’s opinion, helped to develop solidarity among youth. He contrasts their upbringing with that of the youth of today, whom he describes as a psychological phenomenon. This opinion can be read within the changes that youth experienced due to the socio-political transformation and the processes of individualisation and commercialisation. He thinks today’s approach to youth is focused on the development of particular skills, while it neglects the relevance of social engagement and relationships with other people to young individuals.

Young people, who are social beings, are treated as a psychological phenomenon today. Everything they do is based on a specific task, exercise, or performance. There are no connections, no ties, especially in urban areas. It is only focused on specific exercises: two hours of this [exercise], one hour of another [exercise] and that's it (David)\(^5\).

The main observation connected with the personal stories of a number of interviewees from the older generation is that they associate the changes in their daily routines with the relationships they established with others in their new environments. Their experiences illustrate how adjustment to a new routine was nurtured through engagement in school and community activities, and how various types of relationships were established on interpersonal and institutional levels (more details presented in Sections 5.1.1 and 5.1.2).

Despite the fact that transitions to adulthood may not be always successful, young people did not consider them as risky. Engagement with various social activities and social spaces proves to be particularly important in these cases. For instance, Darko points out that after failing to enrol in a graphic design programme, he decided to

\(^5\)Danes se pa od socioloskega cloveka, al pa mlade, spravlja na psiholoski pojav in na individualno. Ma vse kar dela, dela tak krozek, dela tako vajo, dela tak nastop in posebej v urbanih sredinah ni, ni ene povezanosti, ni nekih niti, je vse neko dogajanje, dve uri tega, ena ura unga in tu je tu.
begin a vocational programme in metallurgy, for which he was granted a scholarship
and a job in the local factory. In his opinion, young people in his town had few goals
and little ambition.

Well, you know, we were quite simple at the time. There was a factory
called Aluminium in my hometown through which all young people went.
That was a factory which we all had experiences with. [...] I have to say
that we were not ambitious. However, no one from my generation works
in this factory anymore. We all decided to do something else afterward.
Some continued with their studies, others became successful traders and
so on (Darko)\textsuperscript{58}.

Darko’s story shows how the state regulated young people’s lives and shaped their
futures according to the available opportunities at the time. It also reveals that
although these options may not have been desirable among youth, they did enable
them to think about plans for the future. This suggests that the provision of
alternative educational and working experiences by the society helped young people
to seek other options when transitions to adulthood were not successful. Darko
explains that his participation in the Alliance of Socialist Youth and his engagement
in local activities, such as membership in a fire brigade, became important when he
failed to enrol to the educational programme.

Going to parties was the main activity. We organised dances and we
were preoccupied with that every week, every weekend, and on holidays
from October to May. We were connected so strongly that, for instance,
we also organised the state celebration of the Day of Youth on the 25th of
May all by ourselves. That means we had to organise the programme,
and we had to cooperate in order to organise it well (Darko)\textsuperscript{59}.

\textsuperscript{58}Ma, ma ves, da smo bli taki precej enostavni, smo bli. Tm na vasi smo imeli Aluminij, tu je bla ena
fabrika skuzi katero smo skorej vsi sli... In aaa tu je bla fabrika kmr je vecina, vecina koncala. [...] In
morm rect, da nismo imeli ksnih takih visokoletecih ciljev. V bistvi z moje generacije niti eden ne
dela vec tm v Aluminiji, ratalo nas je pa dosti ku pravm, od tega, da smo pole studirali, drugi so ratali
razumes, precej uspesni trgovci fantje pa taku.

\textsuperscript{59}Ja, slo se je v glavnem, recimo osnova je bla, je bla zuristica aktivnost in sicer smo organizirali
plese tudi ne, ma posledicno ku smo bli, bi reku s tem okupirani, od oktobra do prakticno maja smo
imeli vsak teden, vsak vikend ples, pa se ksnii prazniki vmes, je bilo tu. Ampak ku smo bli toliko
povezani, je bilo pole se, ne vem, organizacija proslav, itak ob 25. maju, Dnev u mladosti je bla tista, ki
smo jo sami mogli zorganizirat, tu pomeni, da celo ustimat in seveda pole se kot sodelovanje, bi reku
mladina nas je bilo, smo napravljali ksne, ksne tocke, al ksne skece, v smislu za pole tiste druge bi
reku drzavne proslave.
Darko’s opinion shows that engagement in various social spaces provides youth with opportunities to meet new people and to get involved in social activities. This thread is recognisable in the stories of the majority of participants, and, as shown above, it has strong implications for youth-perceived experiences with transitions to adulthood, risk and coping. The next section investigates the impact of wider social ecologies on the links between holistic support, supportive engagement, and smooth transitions to adulthood.

5.2.4 Youth Stories about the Socialist State and Nostalgia for Socialism

In the 1980s, young Yugoslavs represented an important social category. This derived largely from an ideological belief in youth as the “future builders of the socialist state” (Ule, 1988; Wallace & Kovacheva, 1998). Their social role was clearly defined and supported by the state (for more see: Chapter Three). Most participants describe this period as creative, and provide numerous examples of state-provided material support, including jobs and educational opportunities for youth. Most of them mention the importance of social benefits and access to work opportunities, including scholarships, internships, and summer or part-time jobs. These accounts indicate that such opportunities were rooted in the socialist system. High social integration of youth corresponded with the wider ideological agenda of the socialist states at the time (Wallace & Kovacheva, 1998; Roberts, 2009; Ule, 2012). Personal stories reveal strong integration of youth in social and working processes. For instance, Katja says that schools and factories cooperated in organising those activities.

If you were subscribed to Gymnasium then you were obliged to do two weeks of internship in the industry during the summer holidays. That was obligatory, and the state organised it particularly for future students, to familiarise them with manual work. We were a state of workers, and that was the reason for organising internships. I worked in Iskra [a factory in Sežana] and it was nice to be there for two weeks. It was an obligatory internship organised by schools; well, the school instructed us in how to apply for it (Katja).
Katja’s quote demonstrates the way in which the state regulated young people’s lives by generating opportunities for their inclusion in education and work processes. At this point, I asked Katja about the link between those processes and the prevailing values in the society at the time. Her response reflects the socialist attitude towards youth.

The most important value for parents and families was to bring us up as wholly-developed personalities. That was emphasised all the time. My parents were workers and they were saying to me and my sister all the time: “Study, so you will be able to achieve something in life.” And it really was like that; if one was good at school, she had lots of opportunities (Katja)⁶¹.

Katja’s story mirrors the active role of youth in society and the processes within which the state, communities and families socialised young people. Other interviewees also explain how the state created opportunities to familiarise youth with the working processes and how it promoted the benefits of education among young people.

Participants compare the socialist period with the post-socialist circumstances in which young people have grown up today. Many of them reflect on their socialist past by discussing ideas of political oppression and the absence of critical thinking towards the previous political regime. A shift from a collective to an individual society, the changing nature of relationships between people, and the decreasing level of equality reflect what Velikonja labelled as Yugo-nostalgia (2008a). Darko analyses his attitude towards the socialist state from a double perspective: personal and social. As a young socio-political activist he had several experiences with the secret police and with the Communist Party members who controlled youth

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⁶¹Jst mislim, da je blo tisto za starse, za cele družine, ker takrat se je tu tudi stalno povdarjalo ne, da nej bi ta vsestransko razvita osebnost in to je blo zelo povdarjeno. Prow to in, da nej se učimo in studiramo, da bo cim, so povdarjali, aaa jst doma vem, ti pravm moja starsa sta blo pac delavca, zmeraj dejte se ucit, s sestro ne, tako da boste neki dosjgle, da boste vec, v soli tudi in blo je tudi tku res, ce si bil v soli potem priden in uspesen, si imel moznost.
activities. Darko explains that, despite being in conflict with the Party, young people were able to provoke the system. The resistance to the system in his story is connected with an opportunity to act and to stimulate a response to those acts. He compares this with the situation today in which, in his opinion, no one responds to young people’s complaints and acts of resistance. Within this framework, Darko considers his attitude towards socialism as a positive one.

I have a positive view on the previous [socialist] system. It was repressive, it was I don’t know what [...] We knew that we were brainwashed: all of a sudden we were able to see that. But we are brainwashed today too, for example, with consumerism, and we are happy to enjoy it as we were at that time [in socialism]. We don’t see certain things when we are a part of a system (Darko).

In other interviews, nostalgia for socialism comes in a different form. Memories of the socialist generation instigate a direct comparison with growing up experiences in post-socialism. Participants’ stories do not reflect only the past, but also provide an insight into the current challenges young people face today. Most of the interviewees refer to a prolonged period of dependence on families, linked to a lack of jobs and inaccessible or unaffordable accommodation for young people. Katja compares conditions in socialism with the post-socialist society, claiming that young people have very limited possibilities for secure living. She explains that her generation gained independence much faster. Katja then connects those changes with changing relationships on a wider socio-political level.

Young people today are told on a daily basis that they will not get a job or accommodation, and that there is no money. They have to constantly pay attention to politics, and decide who to vote for. It is way more depressing [than in socialism]. They might not consider this in the same way, as they cannot compare [life in socialism and post-socialism]. But I think times are way more depressing for youth [...] I think like this, Tanja, that we had perspective—and it is true: we did have it. We all had jobs, a place to live, and it was possible [to do things], while now they do
not seem to have any perspective, and as it is said, things will be even worse (Katja)\textsuperscript{63}.

Katja’s observation links young people’s independence and daily lives with available resources and social welfare security. However, this view on Yugoslav socialism also has to be read in the context of the global financial crisis which hit Slovenia in 2008. Katja’s view reveals a link between youth coping and resilience and social support provided by the state. She considers those conditions to be crucial for the provision of future prosperity for young people. The role of the state in creating conditions and opportunities for individuals is further considered by other participants of this generation. For instance, Matej argues that the lack of opportunities for contemporary youth is a result of the changing relationships between individuals and the state.

Today we rush into capitalism more and more which was, in one way or another, considered rotten in the past, and it most probably really brought social differentiation. There is no cooperation among people anymore; everything is individualised. Everyone takes care of themselves. In the past, the state took care of things, while today one has to find the way oneself; [for example,] how to get a job or accommodation. Individuals are more exposed. In the past, the state, the society took care of this, while today this doesn't exist anymore. (Matej)\textsuperscript{64}.

Matej’s observation depicts how participants of the older generation in general associate the social change with the withdrawal of state-provided support and link it with the socio-economic transformation. They also imply that unequal socio-economic conditions may influence youth coping strategies when practices of cooperation have been replaced with individualism. Table 5.2 summarises the main

\textsuperscript{63}Ce pomislis te mlade, ku jim vsak povej, da ne bo dobu ne službe, ne stanovanja, da ni denarja, ku morjo stalno poslusat koga nej volijo, kako nej volijo, da imajo res dosti bl zamorjeno mla, sej morda oni ne cutijo, zatu ker itak nimajo te primerjave ne. Ampak se mi zdi, da imajo bl zamorjeno aaa mladost [...].Ma tku Tanja no, se mi zdi, da smo imeli eno tako perspektivno kar je res, kar se je tudi pokazalo, vsi imamo službe, nekje stanovanja, se je dalo, zdej pa res bwgi jim kaze, da bo bl slabo in tku ku pravjo nej bi blo se bl slabo.

\textsuperscript{64}Dns recimo vedno bolj dvrimo v en kapitalizem, ki smo vcasih rekli, da je gnil tako in drgaci ne in je morda res nas nekako razslojil, ni vec take povezanosti, vse je bl tako individualno, vsak bl zase, vsak mora bl poskrbet zase, da bi, vcasih je bl poskrbela drzava tako al drgace ne, dns pa moras se bl sam znajdt, glede službe, glede stanovanja, si dosti bl izpostavljen kot je to vcasih blo ne. Vcasih ti je ta družba, drzava ti je nudla kot sm ze prej omenu, dns pa tega ni vec ne.
findings of socialist youth which correspond with the main objectives of this research.

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<th>Research Focus</th>
<th>Main Findings</th>
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| **To explore perceived experiences of social support in respect of socialist youth** | *Young people perceive social support in a holistic way. Their narratives show that the provision of social support is embedded in the socialist system within a high social welfare net and a wider societal care available for youth.*  
  
  *The role of teachers and adults in provision of support is recognised as crucial - they encourage supportive relationships, cooperation and solidarity among youth.*  
  
  *Friends and peers are recognised as important sources of support. Young people are involved in a reciprocal exchange of help. Peer mentoring is recognised as an important type of support among youth.*  
  
  *Family support is taken for granted and is described within experiences of exchange of material help between young people and family members.* |
| **To explore perceived experiences of youth civic engagement in respect of socialist youth** | *Young people associate youth civic engagement with opportunities for engagement within settings in which they participate on a daily basis, including schools and communities.*  
  
  *Youth consider youth civic engagement to be connected with opportunities “to get involved” and “to do things”.*  
  
  *Youth civic engagement is discussed within the idea of supported engagement. Schools and communities are crucial for generating and supporting opportunities for youth civic engagement.*  
  
  *Engagement in youth activities is presented in a broad way, focusing on self-organised and pre-designed youth activities.*  
  
  *The socialist state has a prominent role in the establishment and organisation of youth civic engagement activities.* |
### To explore perceived experiences in risk and coping with transitions to adulthood in respect of socialist youth

- The Socialist Youth Alliance is a core youth organisation established by the Yugoslav state. This organisation is both ideological in nature and responsible for youth development.
- Young people report a strong sense of self-efficacy and of the possibilities for expression of their own agency due to engagement in youth activities.
- The state and society provide youth structures which enable youth to represent themselves in an organised and collective way. These structures provide youth with an opportunity to organise as a collective and, in some cases, to resist the system.

### To examine state provision of opportunities in respect of socialist youth

- Youth experience smooth, linear, state-controlled and state-supported transitions to adulthood.
- Secure and smooth transitions to adulthood result in no perception of risk among youth. There are no stories on youth coping applicable to this context.
- Teachers and community members have a crucial role in supporting youth during transitions to adulthood.
- Participants’ stories show that experiences with holistic support and supported engagement help young people to adjust to new social spaces and routines during transitions to adulthood.
- Young people’s experiences show that they adjust more easily to new routines due to engagement in activities and exposure to different social contacts in new settings.
- Alternative educational and working experiences provided by the state help young people to search for alternative options during transitions to adulthood.

- The Yugoslav state considers youth as an important social group which is portrayed within stories of active roles and of high integration of youth in society.
- The state provides several beneficial social and welfare mechanisms for youth, including internships, scholarships, jobs and accommodation.
- The state regulates young people's lives by generating opportunities for their inclusion in education and work processes.
- The socialist youth associate the social change with the deconstruction of state-provided support and connected it with the socio-economic transformation of the state.
Accounts of nostalgia for socialism and socialist values are essential to understanding the processes, practices and mentalities which constitute youth development within the socialist context.

This generation compares their growing-up experiences with post-socialist youth by saying that younger generations are exposed to a lack of social security; an insecure future; and inequality and individualisation of life. They consider the changing social context to have a direct impact on youth experiences with risk and coping.

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<td>Accounts of nostalgia for socialism and socialist values are essential to understanding the processes, practices and mentalities which constitute youth development within the socialist context.</td>
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<td>This generation compares their growing-up experiences with post-socialist youth by saying that younger generations are exposed to a lack of social security; an insecure future; and inequality and individualisation of life. They consider the changing social context to have a direct impact on youth experiences with risk and coping.</td>
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Table 5.2: Summary of findings population one (Socialist Youth)
5.3 Storied Lives of Slovenian Youth in the 1990s: Growing Up in the Context of Social Change

The collapse of the socialist system in the early 1990s was accompanied by the dissolution of the state, which led to a major conflict between the former Yugoslav republics. Slovenia gained independence in 1991, when individualism and capitalism replaced the ideological framework of brotherhood, solidarity and unity (Kuhar & Reiter, 2012; Ule, 2012). Such changes have been accompanied by other socio-political and economic transformations (for more see: Chapter 3). Seven members of the transitional generation recount their experiences with growing up in this context. For many of them, the socio-political transformation corresponded with transitions to adulthood, which Burrell (2011) labels as “double transitions”. Young people who grew up in the 1990s were geographically set in the same place as the socialist generation, but were, socio-politically, thrust into a very different setting. This section critically examines what impact the socio-political transformation had on young people’s lives by interrogating their experiences with social support, youth civic engagement, transitions to adulthood and coping, and the state provision of opportunities.

5.3.1 Youth Perceptions of Social Support in the Context of Social Change

Stories of the transitional generation indicate that the socio-political transformation brought changes in young people’s perceived experiences with available sources of support. In comparison with the socialist generation, young people do not discuss support holistically anymore, but provide examples of experiencing help in a more individualised way. For example, their stories do not include the provision of social welfare support, which was one of the main themes discussed by their socialist predecessors. This generation discusses social support within experiences that young people underwent during particular moments of their lives, and refers to sources of support in a more fragmented way. In this context, friends and peers are recognised
as the most important sources of support. As argued by Canavan and Dolan (2000) and Pinkerton and Dolan (2007), friendship is “a central helping system” for young people, particularly during the stage of adolescence. Although friends are recognised as important sources of support across generations, their role is especially prevalent in the stories of the transitional generation. Their narratives demonstrate that friendship is based on a reciprocal exchange of advice, material and emotional support. Most participants recognise friends as their daily companions, and as important sources of support when they are faced with major life challenges. For example, Mojca recounts a story of providing help to her friend Janez. Janez hurt his back in a work accident and was not able to walk afterwards. He was kept in hospital care for several months. Mojca visited him on a daily basis and spent hours talking to him. She also continued to support Janez after his release from the hospital. She helped him with daily tasks, such as shopping, and accompanied him to medical check-ups. Furthermore, Mojca claims that friendship is based on reciprocity of help: she explains that she also received help from her friends when she broke up with her boyfriend. The break-up was a difficult period in her life, as she and her boyfriend had been together for four years. The role played by her friends was crucial at the time.

My friends started to call me to ask me to go out with them. Yes, their presence was crucial. They did not allow me to stay at home; I had to join them wherever they went, even if they did not need me. It was good that they were around during that time. Closer, closer, closer [friends].[...] My [female] friends helped me at that period of time, so I was able to overcome the loss more easily (Mojca).65

Mojca’s quote indicates that the informal nature of support provided by friends is essential for young people. Other young people’s accounts contain a similar thread. Meeting up and socialising with friends was one of the prevalent themes recognised among participants of this generation, as pointed out by Andreja.

65Pol so me pa prijateljice klicale gremo sem, gremo ke in pol se je zacelo ne. Ja, so ble one ta glavne. Taku mi niso pustile bit ne doma. Vse povsod sem mogla it z njimi, tudi ce sem svetla zravn, ma z njimi sem mogla it povsod. Taku da tisto obdobje je dobro, da sem jih imela. Ozje, ozje, ozje. [...] Prow tisto obdobje so me prjatlice, so mi prjatlice pomagale, da sem nekako laoze prebrela no.
Of course, social gathering during secondary school was important. It was a way to get in contact with the people with whom you wanted to be in touch. That's for sure (Andreja).66

Further analysis demonstrates that, similar to the socialist generation, parents and teachers have an important role in nurturing relationships among youth. This role proves to be particularly important in connection with peer mentoring, which several young people recognise as an important source of support, and which is discussed by several participants of the transitional generation. Young people present several examples of helping their peers with homework, or studying subjects such as maths or English together. When I ask them how they got involved with this activity, at first they respond that this happened spontaneously. However, when examining their stories further, it becomes clear that the role of adults, such as teachers or parents, was important in supporting peer mentoring. As some young people like Gregor, explain, this type of support was provided only on a primary level, and Gregor, for example, connects these practices with the legacy of socialism. He compares this aspect of support to the provision of paid grinds, which became popular in the post-socialist framework.

If you think about peer help - I helped my schoolmates in primary school because their parents asked me if I could. Those were not paid grinds, but we were friends, and I helped them. I know that I helped Denis with mathematics (Gregor).67

In the quote above, Gregor indicates that peer mentoring promoted ideas of solidarity and support among young people. However, young people’s stories demonstrate that this type of support was available only during primary school; there are no stories that describe peer mentoring during secondary school, or during third-level education.

66Druzenje, itak ne, v srednja sula, mislm. Prit v stik z unmi, ku si bil navjzn nanje, kaj. Tu sigurno.
67Mislim, ce mislis, ce mislis ne vem, pomoc sosolcem in tu [mhm] aaa, jst vem, da ku sm bil v osnovni, sem pomagal par sosolcem ku so me starsi prosili. Ampak tu ni blo, ni da so me placali instrukcije ne, vsaj tkrt se spomnm. Ne vem, pac ku smo bli prjatli, si pomagu ksnmi. Jst vem, ku sm Denis pomagal matematiko, ne.
In comparison with their socialist predecessors, stories of the transitional generation lack references to support provided by teachers and the community during secondary school. The importance of education in young people’s lives and a decreasing support from teachers is acknowledged by most of interviewees from the transitional generation. These participants describe themselves as hard-working students, but they report a lack of incentive and recognition from schools, the community, and their peers. At the same time, many participants say that knowledge, friendship, and cooperation were the most important values when they were growing up. For instance, when I ask Tadeja about the recognition of young people’s talents, she responds that knowledge and young people’s achievements were not valued by the society at the time. Tadeja was a bright student and represented her school in many school competitions, but she thinks that those achievements were not considered important by other people.

**I know many people said that there is no point [in attending school competitions] if you cannot get a job afterwards. For instance, neighbours said that to my parents, and then my parents told me about it: “It is nice that she is able to speak English, that she is good in maths; but how will she be able to use those skills? We all know that she will not get a job”. So, knowledge was not respected at all. [...] In the end of the final year of primary school, I received some awards for the best [student] in Titanic [a local disco club], and I know that other people were bored. I remember that three of us received a golden award and a few others [received some other awards], but other young people didn’t find this important (Tadeja)**.

Tadeja’s opinion may reflect this particular stage of young people’s lives. At the same time, there is a recognisable absence of those types of stories among older participants, who discussed their growing-up experiences within narratives of societal care, which helps young people to find their own places in life.

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68Dosti vem jih je tko reklo ne, aja spet, pa kaj ti bo to koristlo, pa ce ne dobis sluzbe taku mislim, recimo sosed ti bo to koristlo, pa ce ne dobis sluzbe taku mislim, recimo sosed ti bo to koristlo, pa ce ne dobis sluzbe taku mislim, recimo sosed tam po bloku ne ne meni, mojim starsim, ne tako aaa, potem sta mi povedla ne. Sej je lepo, da zna anglesko, da zna matematiko, ma kaj ji bo to koristlo, ker ne bo dobila sluzbe. Taku, da se mi zdi no, da ta vrednota, da kar je blo znanje, ne vem, ni blo tega nekega spostovanja do tega no. [...]Tako da, pol si dobu te, pol si dobu te, priznanja in na valeti, na koncu, osmi razred, smo imeli v Titanicu in so podeljevali pac ta priznanja in najboljsi uno in vem, da tkm se je folk kr tku malo dolgoscu, ne. Vem, da smo bli eni trije, mi ki smo pac imeli par zlatih, pa po par unih, ne teh pa ne vem kaksnih se, pa ni, mislim, ni tku ne vem, neki blo pomembno no za druge.
In this context, several young people recognise the importance of family members and siblings in growing up. Young people provide examples of exchange of support with their parents and siblings on a daily basis and in connection with life challenges. Several participants mention that they experienced a lack of family support when they faced life problems. On the other hand, young people explain that their parents were important in the provision of directions and guidance when they were growing up. Andreja explains that the role of parents was crucial in setting boundaries.

I wanted to do more than I was allowed. That was it. Even though today I know that this is the right thing, I understood it differently at that time. I would do more, I would try more. I think so. I would try something else and explore some other places too. I don't know: going to more concerts or whatever. To some place to which I was not allowed to go to, or to experience something that I didn't have. Now I didn't do it, as my parents prevented me from doing that (Andreja).

Despite the fact that Andreja saw her parents’ role as a restrictive one at the time, she now thinks that clearly-set boundaries were important when growing up.

The next section considers what opportunities the transitional generation had for engagement in youth activities.

5.3.2 Stories of Structural Lag and Lack of Youth Activities

Similar to the socialist predecessors, participants of transitional generation associate the idea of youth civic engagement with opportunities for engagement. However, they do not consider opportunities to be entwined in different levels of society any longer, but discuss them instead as a part of their individual experiences. When I ask young people to elaborate their views further, they mostly focus on obstacles to participation in activities. These barriers are discussed in connection with places to live, available infrastructure, and spaces for youth activities. Opportunities are individualised, and are dependent on their families’ resources. This is clearly visible.
in Jaro’s story. In the beginning of the interview, Jaro says that there were no activities available when growing up. He explains that there were several extracurricular activities available in the primary school, but he was not able to attend many. The school was located approximately 20 kilometres away from his home and there was only one bus a day available for transporting young people. As Jaro points out, a lack of public transportation prevented young people from engaging in youth activities.

We had a big, big problem. Actually transportation was the biggest problem. To move from one place to another. We lived a bit farther away and that was already a problem. There were some [transportation] means available, e.g. mopeds or you could get a lift from someone. When there were two cars available at home it was easier. I think that this communication, or these local connections, were problematic. This is still a problem (Jaro)\(^70\).

Jaro’s story also shows that engagement in youth activities becomes dependent on family capacities and resources. He recounts how he became a member of a cycling club in the last year of primary school. Jaro’s father drove him to training sessions twice a week, which was crucial to his involvement in this activity. Dependence on family resources and capacities becomes a prevalent theme in accounts of this generation, particularly in connection with secondary school experiences, which corresponded with the time of the socio-political transformation.

The changing social context indicates that this generation had different experiences with engagement in youth activities in primary and secondary school. Participation in extracurricular activities organised by primary schools is a recurrent theme in most young people’s stories. Schools expose young people to numerous activities, including art, craft, culture and sports. As Gregor points out, primary schools were the main providers of youth activities.

\(^70\) Velik, velik problem smo imeli, aha, največji problem no, je blo v bistvu ta aa premik ne. Pridt enostavno iz tocke a do tocke b ne. Druzga, da smo bli malenkost umaknjeni, je tu ze. Sej so bli ne, razni, raznorazni mopedi, te je ze kdu kam pelow. Se pravi, ku sta bla enkrat dva avta pr hisi, se je tud tu ze dalo, so imeli starejši ksn avto. Torej jst mislim, da je blo recmo, ta komunikacija, oziroma lokalna vezanost, je bla, tu je bil en problem ku je bil sigurno, aa ku ostaja ne.
In primary school there are tons of societies to choose from. Every year there were at least about thirty activities available: caving, choir, soccer, handball, then all those sports, and theatre. Actually, theatre was not available in the primary school. But there was a whole range of societies available; for example, a journalism society (Gregor).  

In comparison with their socialist predecessors, members of the transitional generation do not mention any youth structures available outside of schools which would recruit and nurture the social integration of all young people. Specifically, they do not mention participation in the Alliance of Socialist Youth, which was one of the main themes discussed by socialist youth. As argued by Ule (2012), the dissolution of the state resulted in a structural lag. That was a period in which socialist youth organisations dismantled and were not replaced with new ones. This also corresponds with the denationalisation and privatisation processes which resulted in decreased access to public spaces (Dragoš & Leskošek, 2003). Young people discuss these changes in stories of a lack of activities. For instance, Andreja explains that there were only a few activities organised for young people. As she points out, in comparison with today, there was a lack of infrastructure in place for supporting youth activities. She explains that a youth club had not yet been built, and that there was no common public space young people could use at the time.

I don't know if I remember correctly. But I don't think there were many organised activities. I don't remember them. I don’t remember that there would be any socialising activities, such as there are for adolescents today. For example, Podlaga [a youth club] which organised concerts, different workshops, interesting lectures and similar things. I think that was not available at the time [...] Now other things [were available], but only if you had an opportunity (Andreja).
Andreja’s opinion indicates that a lack of public spaces for youth is linked with the changing nature of youth civic engagement. Other stories also show that the transitional generation associates youth civic engagement with self-actualisation activities. These activities are focused on the development of new, personal skills. Andreja’s opinion also indicates that engagement in youth activities depends on the personal resources of young people and their families. In this context, individuals’ stories demonstrate that a structural lag resulted in the emergence of commercial youth activities. Few participants share their experiences of participation in paid activities, such as language or music schools. As Martin points out, this type of activity was the only option for youth participation at the time.

Music school was the only activity that I was involved in and was linked with several events in the Karst, also during the festivities. For example, when there was a local event called Teran and Pršut [Wine and Ham] or the day of the municipality, everything was organised by the music school (Martin)\(^73\).

Martin’s view is supported by other young people’s stories. Participation in language courses and sporting activities was a part of the daily routine for several young people. They associate these activities with opportunities for trying something different or something new. These accounts indicate that this type of engagement was still rare: in fact, this was the only chance for youth participation at the time. As mentioned above, this resulted in more individualised opportunities for youth engagement which, as some young people assert, had a direct impact on youth development. For example, Jaro claims that youth engagement helps young people to recognise their personal interests and goals. He connects this with a lack of opportunities for this generation in terms of engagement.

We did not have that. The development of personality, which should happen during this period of time, during secondary school: we did not get that. Not at home and not through the activities because we did not have… [...] And then we didn't do anything meaningful. In fact, that became the practice of a bigger group of people. We didn't do anything meaningful. Well, nothing to really boast about, but we were incredibly

\(^73\)Edina aktivnost je bla glasbena sula, s katero smo se povezovali z razlicnimi dogodki, ne. Na Krasu tudi ne, tudi ob praznikih ne. Ku smo, sej ves praznik, sej ne vem, ce je bil takrat Teran in Prsut, al pa obcinski prazniki, je blo z glasbeno sulo vse organizirano, ne.
attached to Fridays and pubs. Already in secondary school; actually, during the whole of secondary school (Jaro). Jaro’s quote demonstrates that he and his friends spent their free time in a negative way due to the lack of youth activities available to them. Lack of opportunities for engagement and changing perceived experiences with social support are examined further in connection with transitions to adulthood. How do young people cope with the challenges of transition when the previous supportive networks and youth engagement activities are no longer available? This question is crucial for further examination of the connection (if any) between changing practices of social support and youth civic engagement, and their impact on youth coping skills and perceptions of risk.

5.3.3 Youth Narratives of “Double Transitions”
Young people’s stories are set in a context in which personal transitions coincide with wider socio-political change. As argued by Burrell (2011), young people are exposed to “double transitions”. Structures in which people were set on a daily basis have been exposed to gradual changes which have had a profound impact on people’s daily routines and practices (Buraway & Verdery, 1999; Rizman, 1999). As examined above, the social change impacted youth-perceived experiences with social support and youth civic engagement. Decreasing opportunities for engagement and the provision of state support may have a direct impact on young people’s experiences with risk, which is associated with transitions to adulthood. How do participants perceive their experiences with transitions to adulthood, and what strategies do they use to cope during those times?

Like their socialist predecessors, participants of the transitional generation recount their growing-up experiences within the stories of transitions to adulthood. However,
their experiences differ from those of older interviewees. Smooth and supported transitions under socialism are (in a post-socialist society) replaced with transitions of hazard (Kovacheva, 2001). As argued by Rener (2002), the socio-political transformation intensified perceptions of social risk among young people. She claims younger generations are more frightened about life progress than is really necessary. This is recognised in the stories recounted by young people, who use words such as horror, crisis and shock when describing changes connected with transitions. Their accounts demonstrate that risk is linked to a fear of change and the unknown.

A number of participants describe transitions as difficult, as they involve sudden changes connected with a move to another town and educational setting. Young people explain that in these situations they felt isolated from other people’s experiences in similar circumstances. As recounted by Tadeja, a transition to the university involved a move to the capital city, which she depicted as a life crisis. As Tadeja continues with her story, she indicates that a move to another social context was a lonely experience, during which she had to rely on her own capacities and resources to adapt to the new setting. At first she had agreed to share a flat with a friend from secondary school, but after awhile this friend decided to leave the university, and moved out of the flat without informing Tadeja. She found the situation extremely difficult, as she was placing too much trust in her flatmate, and was not able to make independent decisions without her friend’s help. She describes this change as a lonely process in which she learned to be more independent and self-reliant.

I went through a big crisis there in Ljubljana [the capital city]. At that time I thought that I was all alone, but then I found my own flat and I moved in with another girl [...] Because for approximately half of a year...she quit her studies and left me alone in that flat. That was the first year [of the university]. I experienced a proper shock at the time because I was used to doing things in a group, as friends do: going to different places together, and doing things together. In the same way the two of us went together to Ljubljana. And then she would come for a week and disappear, or come for two days and then she was gone again. Then, the way how she told—or didn’t tell—me that she was quitting: that’s another story. I know at that time it was...If I think now, it was
good that it happened, that I got a lesson and that I learned to be independent (Tadeja)\textsuperscript{75}.

When I ask Tadeja about the sources of help which enabled her to overcome challenges, she explained that she had to “rely on herself”. Tadeja explains how the loss of contacts during the transition to university exposed her to circumstances in which she was not able to find support from other people. She explained how at that moment she had had to learn self-sufficiency.

You have to take care of yourself. It is fine if other people help you, such as parents, a partner, a sister. They can stand by your side. But they won’t do things for you in your place. You can ask them for help, for advice, for support, but you have to take action (Tadeja)\textsuperscript{76}.

This above story reveals that social change impacted social practices which helped to nurture transitions to adulthood during socialism. This population’s predecessors recognise supported youth engagement and holistic provision of help as social practices that were used by society to nurture transitions to adulthood. As examined in the sections above, the transitional generation no longer discusses these experiences. In this social context, youth experiences with transitions are more individual and specific. Interviewees explain that transitions to new educational settings disturbed their previous daily schedules and habits and exposed them to new, unpredictable circumstances. Several participants found new routines rigid, and did not become involved with them easily. For instance, Andreja’s account shows how situational young people’s experiences were when transitioning to a new educational setting. She compares the transition from secondary school to university

\textsuperscript{75}V glavnem tkrt je mene tu prow, ti si ne uno zdej sm pa sama, ma jest sama, pa v sebi sm, ne tolko ksno uno, ampak ej, prow uno ves, tle sam v Ljubljani in sem imela ful krizo in tkrt in aaa pol vem, dasm si eno, pol sm si sama najdla, mislim svoje stanovanje, mislim cimo. […] Ker me je, ja, ena po pol leta v bistvu, je pustila studij in me je pustila samo v stanovanji tam. Ta prvo leto ne. In jest sem doživela ful sok tkrt ne, ker sem v bistvu, ne vem, ko si v srednji sumi si vse vajen delat v dveh, al pa treh ne, pac tku prijatelce, pa gremo skupi tja, pa gremo skupi tja, pa gremo skupi tja ne. Taku smo sle tudi dve skupi v Ljubljano in potem una po pol leta, najprej je ni bilo en teden je ni blo, pa potem je prsla, pa dva dni, pa je sla [mhm]. Dobro tu, pac, kako je ona tu povedala in ni povedala, da pac pocasi pusca, oziroma uno, pac ni, ne Vem, da takrat je blo, hvala bogu, mislim zdej, ce pomišlim je blo fajn, da me je oklotilo in se naucis samostojnosti ne. Aaa taku no, mislim.

\textsuperscript{76}Sam zase moras pokrit ne. Tku, se je v redu, ce ti drugi pomagajo, so starsi, so partner, so sestra, oni ti lahko stojijo ob strani. Oni ne bodo namesto tebe neki nardili ne. Lahko jih prosis za pomoc, za nasvet, za podporo, ma, v akcijo moras it ti ne.
with her previous experience with the transition from primary to secondary school. She found the move from secondary school to university difficult, as the university did not fulfil her expectations. In the secondary school she was surrounded by people with whom she felt comfortable, but in her new surroundings, she found it difficult to establish connections with her new colleagues. Andreja elaborates this further by showing how a cooperative environment during secondary school contributed to positive responses to transition, in comparison with a more individualised setting at university level.

In the morning you came to school and during free time, people were hanging out together. The priority was not to work or to do exercises, but to be together. Now, sometimes only getting together can result in something new. At the university it was different. We were together only until a certain time, and that was it. At that point our relationships finished. I couldn't deal with this feeling and the whole situation. I mean, there was no problem, but I didn't like it. When the bell rang at the end of the school day, all of them [her colleagues] ran home. Maybe they stopped in the library, but they didn't take time for a chat. I mean, we could discuss whatever: but that didn't happen, and I terribly missed that (Andreja)\textsuperscript{77}.

When I ask Andreja about engagement in other activities and with other people, she says that attending lectures was her only preoccupation at the time. Friends and flatmates were the most important sources of support in this case. Andreja recounts that she limited her contact with her schoolmates, while talking to her flatmates and friends helped her to overcome these difficulties. Reliance on informal sources of support thus became an important coping mechanism in Andreja’s case.

\textbf{I don't know how would it be if I weren't surrounded with people with whom I felt comfortable, who love me and accept me. I don't know how I would face these problems. I would probably have to use a different

\textsuperscript{77}Si bil, si prsu zjutro v sulo, si bil pr pouki in je blo vmes in mal tud pol in med fraj urami in levo in desno in je blo drenjenje ne. Ni blo primarno tu, da se neki odpise, oddela, od uno, ampak je blo uno, smo bli skupej, zdej ksnkrt se tudi skupi kej nardi, recimo ne, v tem smisli ne. Medtem, ku tm na faksi, mi je blo cist uno. Mi zdej, tipo mormo bit tle skp, tle smo tku, potem se konca, ne. Ta obcutek in pol tu mi, meni pac ni nekako slo ne. Ku sej ni problema, ma mi ni blo vsje. Res, tisto ku so vsi tekli, ku je pozvonilo, misim pozvonilo, je blo ta zadnjega predavanja konc, gremo domov in kvecjemu se v knjiznico po gradivo in brez, brez se pogovarjat o enh, ne vem, kr neki ne, sej se lohko ksnkrt mens kr neki ne. Tega ni blo, ne prns in tu je meni grozno manjkalo.
strategy. I would have to react differently because I wouldn't have this support or--how should I put it? –I’d barely be surviving (Andreja).78

Most of the stories demonstrate that, in the absence of youth activities and holistic provision of support, young people’s experiences with transitions to adulthood depend on individual sources and resources.

5.3.3.1 New Patterns of Coping in the Changing Social Context
Young people position their transitions in the emerging processes of individualisation. As argued by Ule (2002) and Roberts (2009), individualisation in the post-socialist context is not a homogenous process. Youth remain integrated in various social networks; however, individualisation requires them to be more self-dependent (Roberts, 2009). Reliance on “individual resourcefulness” is a recognised theme in participants’ stories. Self-help and self-activation strategies when dealing with life’s challenges emerge as new tactics which young people use when dealing with life problems. These changing patterns in the perception of support are examined further in order to consider their relevance for youth coping and resilience.

In his interview, Martin describes his personal experience with self-activation and reliance on individual resources. Martin grew up in a semi-rural area of the Karst region which did not correspond with his way of thinking. He was always interested in music, and he had wanted to become a professional musician since he was very young. After enrolling in the secondary school in Sežana, Martin began to make contacts with people who shared the same interests. He was not interested in the academic side of the school, and mostly spent his time playing music and looking for opportunities in the music business. Martin realised that he had to change his context; in other words, he needed to move away from his isolated village and seek opportunities in neighbouring Italy. He is expressive when he discusses this period.

78Ne vem pa kaku bi blo ce ne bi imela nek, ene ljudi, ku, ku, kmr bi pocutla dobro in ku me imajo radi in ku bi se pocutla sprejeto. Ne vem kaku bi se soocata s tem problemom. Verjetno bi bla prsiljena se soocat drugace ne. Ker, ce ne bi imela ozadja ne, podpore, al kukrkoli temu reces, bi bla verjetno prsiljena drgace reagirat ne. Ze iz golega obstanka.
of time: “I realised I had to face the reality in order to become more relaxed. And I was aware that there could be no reality if I stayed shut in here (in the village).” He started to make connections with other musicians in the Italian border town, and applied to the University of Trieste. He passed an entry exam at the music department, which exposed him to a more cosmopolitan, competitive environment.

Martin claims that reliance on his own sources of support was important during that time. In his story, self-reliance and self-activation are recognised as the main coping strategies when searching for new opportunities and personal achievements. At the same time, his account shows how Martin’s ideas were supported by his parents. This implies the importance of family resources to successful transitions.

I was always alone. Wherever I went, I was always alone and no one stood by my side. Of course, my parents stood by my side, but not in a sense that they encouraged me to go [to Italy], but that they didn't oppose me. They didn't say anything. In a more practical way [they helped] when I went abroad, with administration and organisation of things (Martin).

Martin’s opinion above shows how, despite his description of himself as self-reliant during his transition, his parents were actually an important source of support when he moved abroad. When I ask Martin about his adjustment to the new setting, he says that making connections with new people was essential to settling into a new routine.

I made connections with new people and I met Maja and her husband who were both musicians, and we became friends. We all focused on music, and afterward, as soon as it was possible, I went to study in Trieste because of those connections. And when I did that, I disassociated myself from Slovenia. All my contacts moved to Italy (Martin).

79In sem se zavedu, da ce se hocem sprostit, se morem soo cit z realnostjo [mhm]. In zavedu sem se, da tle ni realnosti, ce sem zaprt.
80Vedno sem bil sam. Kamorkoli sm prsu, vedno sem bil sam. Nobeden mi ni stal ob strani. Valda, starsi so mi stali ob strani, ampak ne v smislu, da so mi rekli pejdi, pejdi, ampak mi niso rekli ne, mi niso rekli, ne it. B1 prakticno, ku sm sou v tujino, pa da mi je ksa pomagu, kej zrlihat. Jst sm ful slab s ksnimi papirjmi in z organizacijo in tku ne.
81Tocno tako, da sem se povezal takoj z ljudmi... in sem spoznal aa Martino, pevko in njegena fanta ne aa, smo ratali prjati. Tkrt je ona imela se fanta, pa smo se družali, pa so bli tudi drugi vsi glasbeniki, vsi glasbeno usmerjeni. Sem sou tudi takoj studirat v Trst ne, ku sm imel prliko lih zaradi tega. In ku sm tu tnu, je bio konc. Sem odklopu prow Slovenijo prakticno ne. Vsi kontakti, vse je slo v Italijo.
Simona’s story illustrates how individual resourcefulness and self-reliance was not always an efficient strategy for coping. Simona discusses the difficulties she experienced during the transition from primary to secondary school. She was a bright, talented student, and she participated in many social activities in primary school. Dancing and taking part in a dancing society occupied most of her free time. After she completed primary school, she enrolled in a secondary school in the nearby town. Before beginning the new educational programme, she approached the principal of her old school and asked him about the possibility of staying involved in its dance-related activities, so that she could help and teach younger students. The principal refused her suggestion, and she felt that her effort was unappreciated. At the same time, her new educational setting did not expose her to any new incentive or opportunity for engagement.

When I went to secondary school, I was not interested in getting involved or doing something that would interest me. I don’t know. I followed other things. I was [interested in] wandering around. [...] I think that it was my choice to get lost among those activities already in my previous school. As I’ve said, they didn’t lead me anywhere; there was no encouragement, and then I gave up (Simona).82

This is an important example of the way in which self-reliance alone does not always prove successful. Simona explains how her personal disinterest corresponded with the wider social attitude towards youth at the time. Although she was not interested in education, she connected this attitude with the wider apathy towards young people. She left school and spent her time partying and wandering around. She describes this time as a period of “getting lost”.

I got lost. I lost myself. I don’t know: it was as if I wouldn’t dare to make an effort. I don’t know where I lost myself so badly. I don’t know (Simona).83

82 Ko sem sli srednjo sej se mi ni niti dalo, da bi se kam, da bi me kej zanimalo, da bi se kej vkljucila al kej, sej ne vem, sm imela druge stvari, ne Hodit pohajat. [...] Po moje je bila tuki ze ta moja izbira, da sem se nekako zgubila ze nekje med tistimi dejavnostmi kar so bile v Dutovljah, ko ti pravim, da enostavno nikamor ne pelje in d ani nobene spodbude in pol se mi ni dalo vc, ne.
83 Ma izgubila sem se, samo sebe sem izgubila. Ne vem, kukr da se ne bi niti upala potruditi, ne vem, ki sem se tolko res izgubila, no, ne vem.
I ask Simona about her parents’ role in this process. She responds that it was a period of time in which parents wanted to give their children more freedom, and permissive upbringing became popular. Simona believes that having too much freedom and not enough structure exacerbated her situation, as there was no one who was able to stop her from engaging in these destructive activities. Simona also connects her personal transition with the wider socio-political change. She provides a link between personal disinterest with a lack of incentive and support for youth activities in the wider community and school.

Also I think that was a reflection of the society at the time, which didn’t offer anything [to young people]. When I realised that no one cared, that no one offered me any incentive, then I became like that. I don’t know how to say it, but I became cold. I was thinking, why would I care if no one else does? As I said, it doesn’t lead anywhere, and there was no incentive and then I lost all my interest in things. But probably whatever incentive, or response, exists, it is always better than none. I think I got lost in a period when there were no responses and incentives. I don’t know: there was nothing available (Simona)\(^8\).

This excerpt illustrates the way in which the lack of state support resulted in a lower social integration of youth. Simona’s story demonstrates how personal disengagement was set in an environment which provided neither support nor incentive to its youth. Personal disengagement in this case coincided with the wider social apathy and lack of support, to which Simona responded negatively. These stories indicate that a changing social context has an important impact on youth experiences with practices of social support, youth civic engagement, and coping during transitions to adulthood. Therefore, it is important to examine the link between the changing social context and youth transitions to adulthood.

\(^8\)Ma tudi se mi zdi prav ta odraz te druzbe, da mi ni nc ponudlo, da bi se prow uni, ku si videl da nobenga nic ne briga, da nobeden ti ne ponudi nobenga izziva ne rats tudi tak. Ne vem kako bi se reklo, hladen, konec koncev, ne si mislis, kaj bi jst, ce drugih ne briga nobenega nc ne. Ko ti pravim, da enostavno nikamor ne pelje in da ni nobene spodbude in pol se mi ni dalo vc, ne. Ma verjetno vsak odziv je dobro, da je, ne. Kot ko ti jst pravim, meni se zdi, da sem se zgubila v enem obdobju, ko sploh ni blo nobenih odzivov, ne vem, kar nekaj nic, ne…
5.3.4 Lack of State Provided Opportunities and Resources: Implications for Transitional Youth

The shift from socialism to capitalism during the 1990s resulted in a change of status for youth. Young people were no longer a part of the wider ideological agenda of the capitalist state anymore (Ule, 2000, 2012). The lost link between the state and youth as a social category is recognised through the lack of data on the provision of scholarships, internships, and other supportive mechanisms, such as jobs and accommodation. In comparison with the socialist generation, accounts of younger participants reflect the nature of the post-socialist state. Previous practices of state support were replaced with mechanisms of the market economy. This is specifically applicable to stories that deal with access to resources, including jobs and lodgings. Most of the participants reveal that they have lived with their parents, or that their parents have helped them to apply for a mortgage. These accounts show how the capitalist state no longer generates support to young people. Gregor’s story offers an insight into the changing social ecologies and the access to resources for the transitional youth. His account demonstrates the link between available resources and the changing social attitudes towards youth in post-socialism. Gregor, for example, tried to buy a flat, but the bank did not approve his loan application due to the insecurity of his job situation. Despite being a qualified professor of mathematics, Gregor’s position was not permanent; his contract was renewed on an annual basis. When he was considering buying a flat, Gregor realised he would need to ask his mother to become his loan guarantor in order to get his loan approved.

I mean, you can buy a flat and you can get a loan for 15 years, but then there is the question of when you will be able to renovate it. I think you have to invest at least an additional 10,000 or 15,000 if you want to have a decent flat, in order to maintain it for approximately 10 years, and by doing that—I don't know when you'll be able to secure yourself financially by doing that [...] Also my mother helped me. I think I saved €10,000 at the time, and she maybe gave me an extra €1000, so that I had [enough to apply for a loan] (Gregor)85.

85Mišlim sej lihko si ga kupis, se zakredetiras za 15 let, pol vprašanje kdaj ga bos prenovu ne. Po moje mores vložit, vse te stvari, minimalno se 10 jurjov, 15, aa ce cs jmt neki spodobnega, da bo drzalo nekih 10 let, pol ne vem ne kdaj bos varen ne [...] se mama mi je pomagala. Ne vem, jst sm tkrt lohko imel 10.000 evrov aaa ona mi je mogoce se 1000 evrov dala zraven, tako da sem imel.
Gregor’s account demonstrates how interviewees associate the idea of security with secure housing and jobs, while the Slovenian state no longer promises those conditions to young people. High expectations in relation to the provision of opportunities and support by the state are still recognised among those interviewees. Despite having experiences with socialism only in their early childhoods, the transitional youth consider values corresponding with the socialist ethos as the most important. They consider values such as solidarity, cooperation, help for the weakest, and friendship as the most important when growing up. Several of them point out that knowledge and working hard are the main principles they follow in life. This view corresponds with the expectations the Yugoslav state had regarding youth. As pointed out by a few young people, the main promise given to the state and society when becoming members of the Pioneers was: “To study hard and to work for the ideas for which Tito fought.” Young people’s stories reflect these values and, at the same time, express disappointment with the fact that their worldviews do not correspond with the newly-emerged capitalist way of working and being: as, for example, discussed by Martin.

In this society and culture you have to strive hard if you like something and if you want to work in that area. You have to work hard to develop your expertise and a certain level [of knowledge] in order to be able to survive. Unfortunately, we have to [survive]. […] If I want to work in the area that I am interested in, I have to work 15 hours [a day]. And one day I may be able to live from it in this rotten society in which you have to survive (Martín).

Further analysis shows that young people experience precarious conditions on the job market. This highlights the lack (and instability) of jobs, which often results in bad working conditions. Job insecurity was discussed by several participants. Their stories reflect the scarcity of permanent jobs, as well as the current job market’s unregulated conditions. One of the participants, Mojca, points out that one has to have connections and good recommendations in order to get a proper, secure job. She shares her story of searching for several jobs due to unfair conditions on the job.

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86 Tudi, da ce te neki veseli in si zelis tu delat, bos mogu v tej druzbi in kulturi ful se potrudt, da bos, ful delat na temu, da bos razvil eno znanje in en dolocen nivo, da bos lohko s tem prezivu, na zalost. Ku se mormo ne […] ce cm, ce cm delat tu kr me veseli [mhm], deli tu ne. Ma deli, 15 ur na dan, ne. Ku morda ti bo uspelo se s tem pol prezivljat, v tej druzbi, pokvarjeni ne, ku se moras prezivt ne.
market. Mojca got a job in a local, private firm in which the employer promised her to employ her full-time, but it transpired that he broke all his promises and did not pay her at all for two months.

*I started to work and it was a catastrophe. He [the boss] said that he would employ me [permanently], but he was just promising this. Every day for half of a year I went to work, and he was just making empty promises. In the end he didn’t want to pay me either, and I was working for free for two months. Then I got pissed off and I didn’t go there anymore. But then he needed me and he paid me all the money (Mojca).*87

Mojca resolved the situation by quitting the job, and she was able to get a new one by chance. This shows how the changing economic and socio-political situations have influenced young people’s access to work and have impacted labour market conditions. Transitions to adulthood in this era are blurred and are characterised by prolonged periods of dependency (Kuhar, 2009). This is a recognised theme throughout these findings, which show that these individuals gain financial independence later than their older counterparts. Most participants are either highly qualified or are in the process of obtaining a third-level education. However, their stories demonstrate that the characteristics of the job market are not compatible with the increasing number of highly-educated young individuals. Those changes have to be read in comparison with the job situation during socialism, when young people discussed various job opportunities, and higher education levels made them much more likely to secure better job opportunities.

Narratives of the transitional youth show that the socio-political transformation has brought about radical changes in young people’s lives. The absence of state care has influenced access to and availability of opportunities for young people. In this context, conditions for engagement have become more individualised and dependent

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87Bla sem tudi v eni službi ku je bla katastrofa ne. Tisto je blo tudi ne, recimo, ooo zdej te bom jst zaposil ne, bos delala tu, tu in tu. Po pol leta mi je se vedno obljal iz dneva v dan kako me bo zaposil, da bom delala tu in tu. Delat sem hodila ne. Aa in potem na koncu mi ni tel niti placat in pol sem hodila dva meseca delat zastoj ne, pol sem se pa razjezila, nisem sla vec. Potem me je rabu nazaj, pa me je vse za nazaj plaku ne, mislim, sam res, tisto je blo.
on young people’s personal circumstances. The newly-emerged capitalist state no longer nurtures transitions to adulthood: individuals respond to this by perceiving transitions to adulthood as risky. Youth narratives show that individuals apply personal resourcefulness, self-reliance, and self-activation as coping strategies to deal with the risks inherent in transitions. Summaries of the main findings related to transitional youth are presented in below Table 5.3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Focus</th>
<th>Main Findings</th>
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| To explore perceived experiences of social support with respect to youth in transition | - Youth experiences with social support are linked with social change. Young people do not perceive social support holistically, but in a more fragmented and individualised way.  
  - There is a lack of stories of teachers’ and adults’ support in the context of social change.  
  - Young people discuss specific types of social support, such as peer mentoring, in connection with their growing-up experiences in socialism.  
  - Friends are recognised as a central source of support.  
  - There is a recognised thread of reliance on family support. |
| To explore perceived experiences of youth civic engagement with respect to youth in transition | - Youth associate youth civic engagement with opportunities for participation. Opportunities are not entwined in different societal layers, but are individually specific.  
  - Youth associate opportunities with obstacles for engagement, such as transportation and accommodation.  
  - Youth civic engagement is connected with experiences of a lack of youth activities, and stories of structural lag.  
  - Primary schools are important providers of youth activities, while secondary schools do not provide any activities for youth.  
  - Youth civic engagement is linked with pre-designed activities that are focused on self-actualisation and |
To explore perceived experiences with risk and coping with transitions to adulthood with respect to youth in transition

- Social change impacts practices which help to nurture youth transitions to adulthood. Youth do not report that the holistic provision of social support and supported engagement are practices which society uses to nurture youth transitions to adulthood.
- Youth are exposed to more individualised experiences of transitions to adulthood.
- Transitions to adulthood are linked with words such as horror, shock and crisis, and are connected with the fear of unknown.
- Successful transitions to adulthood depend on individual sources and resources.
- Lack of social support and youth engagement results in youth perception of transitions as risky.
- Young people report that self-reliance and self-activation are strategies which they use to cope with the challenges presented by transitions to adulthood. However, these coping strategies are not always successful.

To examine state provision of opportunities with respect to youth in transition

- There is a lack of stories regarding the presence of the state in young people’s lives.
- The changing welfare system has a direct impact on young people’s lives. Young people do not report on available scholarships and internships.
- The changing social context results in a lack of jobs and affordable accommodation for youth.
- Transitional youth associate individual security with state provision of opportunities and welfare for youth. Socialist values of hard work and cooperation are present in young people’s accounts.

Table 5.3: Summary of findings population two (transitional youth)
5.4 Storied Lives of Youth in 2000s: Narratives of “Domesticated” Youth

Members of the youngest generation (7) have grown up in a post-socialist context. Some of them were still born in the former Yugoslavia, but they had no direct experience with socialism. Their experiences with transitions to adulthood are the most recent. In fact, several interviewees were completing their studies or looking for employment for the first time during the interview process. In many ways, their stories are similar to those provided by the transitional generation. They experience prolonged and blurred transitions to adulthood, and face the uncertainties of the labour market, which has deteriorated since the beginning of the global economic crisis in 2008. As pointed out by Kuhar and Reiter (2012), post-socialist youth experience a shift in values and norms towards individualism and privacy. In recent years, these processes have been supported by neo-liberal and neo-conservative social policies (Ule, 2012) which may have further implications for youth growing-up experiences. The question posed for this part of the research is: what are the perceived experiences with social support, youth civic engagement, transitions to adulthood, and coping for this generation?

5.4.1 Youth Accounts on Increasing Role of Family Support

The absence of state support and the lack of youth structures resulted in increased reliance on informal types of support. Privatisation of support for youth is a recognised pattern in contemporary Western societies (Wallace & Kovacheva, 1998; Catan, 2004; Biggart and Walther, 2006). This is also applicable to post-socialist Slovenia. Family and close relatives constitute the most important support network (Rener, 2000). The privatisation of support corresponds with the thesis of “domestification of youth” (Ule, 2009, 2012) which argues that private spaces and families are a paramount for post-socialist young Slovenes. This is particularly recognisable in the narratives of the youngest generation.
Although all the participants mention the importance of family support in their lives, its role intensifies in the accounts of the interviewees of the younger generation. In comparison with older generations, which discussed family support mostly in connection with the provision of material help, the youngest participants report that their parents also provide them with emotional support. Several participants say that they consider their parents to be their best friends, and that they listen to them and provide them with advice on a daily basis or when facing bigger challenges. As Alenka points out, her relationship with her mother is based on care and a reciprocal exchange of emotional help.

But otherwise we have a good relationship, if I compare ours with some other daughters and their relationships with their mums. I think we have quite a good relationship, and so we share most of the things that happen (Alenka).  

Several interviewees report having strong relationships with their parents and present them as the most important sources of support. For example, Anej explains that his mother is the most important supportive pillar in his life. She provides advice on a daily basis and comforts him when he experiences bigger problems in life.

My mom is the most important [to me] and she is my main guide. She explained all the main things that are important [in life] to me, and she was able to teach me to distinguish between the important and not-so-important things: where to focus your energy, and where not to. So, she was my guide; it was her, basically (Anej).

Like the transitional generation, young people recognise friends as very important sources of support. Debating, communicating, and verbalising problems are prevalent themes in most of the stories. As Tina explains, she relied mostly on her friends when she was growing up. She provides an example of a friend whose

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88Sam drgaci se je pa vseeno, jst mislim, da se kr dobro zastopmo, ce pogledam morda ksnega družga ku ima odnose mama hci ne. Jst mislim, da imamo kar dober odnos in taku, sej vec al mnj kr je tazga, mislim se pomens in tuku.
parents got divorced. She explains that her friend was not really herself during that
time, and did not share her problems with anyone. Tina decided to wait patiently,
until one day the friend started to talk to her about her parents’ divorce. She claims
that listening and being listened to was the most valuable aspect of friendship during
adolescence.

And at the time, she told me how grateful she was to be able to verbalise
her problems and not to keep them to herself. And also today if you
listen to a person...I mean, I really like to talk, it is hard to stop me. But, if
you are able to listen to a person, this is really valuable. I don't know:
if someone listens to you, especially when you have problems. And at
that time I know she was very grateful that I listened to her...I was, I was
talking to her: she was talking and I listened (Tina)\textsuperscript{90}.

Some participants portray supportive friendships as ones that promote feelings of
understanding, belonging, and acceptance rather than critical judgement.

I don't know: for example, when I told someone what happened to me,
she didn't say: “Come on, you are stupid” or, “What are you doing?”
Although I would probably have to hear that at a certain point. But it
wasn't like that: we focused on telling each other what happened. Then it
was always based on the fact that no matter what I do, I can always
come back. There were no doubts. I was able to rely on them, or to call
them at one o'clock in the morning if I needed to (Polona)\textsuperscript{91}.

These above quotes demonstrate that friends and peers remain important sources of
support for young people. However, in comparison with the oldest participants, post-
socialist youth no longer provides examples of youth peer mentoring. Their stories
demonstrate that the social change resulted in more competitive relationships among
youth, while practices of cooperation and solidarity are less present in this context.
Youth narratives display a more ambivalent attitude towards the supportive role of teachers. The interviewees perceive teachers’ support more on a case-by-case basis, and in a more individual way. Their accounts depend on the context in which the support was needed. Some interviewees of the younger generation depict primary or secondary school teachers as negative or unsupportive. For instance, Nevenka asserts that her experience with teachers in secondary school was not a positive one. She explains that the nature of study in Gymnasium was more focused on individual work, and that teachers differentiated between good students and weaker ones.

Teachers were—not in my case, but in the case of my schoolmates—also discriminatory and aggressive, and they made differences among young people. I felt that pressure very strongly: or, I don’t know, maybe I am just a very sensitive individual (Nevenka).\textsuperscript{92}

At the same time, there is also a general absence of stories of supportive relationships between community members and youth in the post-socialist context. This is further explored within youth experiences with youth civic engagement.

\subsection*{5.4.2 Individualised Experiences with Youth Participation}
Like their predecessors, younger participants discuss growing-up experiences within the social spaces in which they participate on a daily basis. The majority describe their growing-up experiences in conjunction with the influence of their families, schools, neighbourhoods, and local communities. Daily experiences in those settings expose individuals to scheduled activities, such as going to school, completing homework, and attending formal and informal social activities, as Rene points out.

My everyday life: I woke up in the morning around 7 a.m. I walked to the bus stop and went to school in Dutovlje. Then I attended lectures, came back home, and my good grandma cooked lunch for me. Then I ate lunch, and played on a computer until my mother came home and forced me to do homework. And then it was time to go to sleep, and every day...
was the same. And when my father was at home, I went out to work with him in the vineyard, mostly during the weekends, and that's it (Rene). Similar to older generations, the post-socialist youth also discuss youth civic engagement within available opportunities for participation in youth activities. In this context, interviewees discuss the importance of schools in the organisation of activities. Primary schools are recognised as the main providers of youth activities; as in previous generations, secondary schools are no longer considered to be relevant in terms of the organisation of youth engagement activities. Comparatively, these stories demonstrate similarities with the accounts presented by the transitional generation, and mostly refer to obstacles to engagement. They discuss factors such as geographical location; available infrastructure for youth activities and public transportation; a school’s size; and parents’ support as crucial factors for youth engagement. For instance, Sonja discusses the idea of engagement within the limitations of the place in which she grew up, and provides a direct link between those conditions and her personal development.

There were no opportunities for the development of hobbies. Because all those hobbies I was interested in were not available. And then I thought that I'd develop them when I moved to Ljubljana, but then of course I didn't. [...] For anything else we had to go to Sežana. There is nothing in Dutovlje, like language courses or music school (Sonja).

Sonja’s opinion demonstrates that, while the idea of youth engagement is still pertinent among younger participants, it is instigated by individual rather than collective activities. The socialist ideological framework of collective youth engagement is, in this era, replaced with consumerist practices (Ule, 2000). The link between individualisation processes and engagement has been recognised as an

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93Moj vsakdanjik. Zjutraj sem ustal, kaj je bilo verjetno sedma ura, sel na avtobus in se odpeljal v sulo v Dutovlje. Tm smo poslušali, ki so mi imeli za predavanj, sem prstom domu, moja dobra nona je skuhala kosilo, sem pojel kosilo, vrgu borso v kvt in sel pred racunalnik, dokler ni mama prtekla domov, prsli szi službe in aa me napodila se wct. Delat domaco nalogo. In aay pole je bila za jh spal in vsak dan se je ponavljal. In zdej, zdej pa cez, kdr je bil pa tata doma, pa aay se je slo kej s tatotom ven, v ksn vinograd, tm delat, ksn vinograd, dosti ne, ker je bil tata, je on delal bl z nonotom, jst sm bil se majhen in tu je tu.

94Sam pa tudi ni bilo ful neki moznosti ne, za hobije recimo. Kr vse tiste hobije ku bi jh tla, ni bilo jih tle in poli sej si mislis, da jih bos, ku bos v Ljubljani ne, sam pol itak ne, ne, ne vem. [...] itak druge se vse kr si tel, si mogu it v Sezano, ne. V Dutovljah itak ni ne. Recimo, teji jezikovni tecaji in glasbeni. 184
emerging pattern of the transitional generation (for more see: Section 5.2). This thread is recognised in these findings, too, but the data also shows how decisions to participate in available activities—or not—depend more on young people’s individualised commitment. This trend continues in the stories of the youngest generation, and in order to examine its relevance for coping and resilience, it needs to be explored in greater detail.

Personal stories of this generation illustrate another new trend connected with youth engagement, one that is linked to the expression of individual initiative and interest. In comparison with socialist youth, for whom the idea of self-initiative arose from socially-supported and nurtured practices, post-socialist youth link self-initiative with their individual choices and decisions. The personal stories of interviewees show that youth engagement is connected with participants’ personal goals and ambitions. Those stories have to be read in connection with the personal development of individuals, while their link with a wider society appears to be lost. One of participants, Alenka, shares some of her experiences with youth engagement. She presents herself as a pro-active person who is always looking for new projects and activities. She explains that engagement in activities is a personal project. She decides to get involved in activities if they correspond with her current interests and goals. For instance, in her latest project, she organised a fashion show as a part of her university programme. She points out that she was in charge of the organisation and implementation of the project, which helped her to develop communication and organisational skills.

The organisation of my fashion show: the aim was to implement it, to organise it and I think—no, actually, I know—that I achieved this goal. The fashion show was a success, there were no problems in its implementation, and people were satisfied. I am especially happy that it received so much publicity [...] [I learnt] quite a lot from this area [fashion], as I learned how to organise such an event, all the things that are needed: then I learned how to deal with the media, how to communicate with them, and also about teamwork, as otherwise it can
all collapse. I also learned how to be more decisive: I was the main organiser, so I had to decide how things should be. 

This story highlights the changing patterns of youth engagement in the post-socialist setting. Despite Alenka’s emphasis on self-reliance when she speaks about organising the activity, further analysis shows that her initiative was actually supported by her family and friends. Alenka’s story demonstrates the ways in which the processes of individualisation and commercialisation resulted in different attitudes towards youth engagement. Individual motivation and interest are considered to be the main catalysts that drive young people in their engagement in activities.

Further analysis of youth engagement shows that this generation positions their participatory experiences within a newly-emerged youth structure in the main town, Sežana. The stories of structural lag which were strongly present in accounts of the transitional generation are, in this setting, replaced with the experiences that youth have with a youth club called “Podlaga” (The Base). They present the place as a meeting point, where they gather and socialise with their friends and acquaintances. They explain that the space was not used for the development of their own activities, but rather as a base for joining pre-designed programmes. Most of them explain that the place was available for young people, but that they were not personally involved in the activities it organised. Only one participant, Polona, reports on active engagement in youth club activities. She explains that being engaged in it presented her with opportunities to meet new people, and it had a positive impact on the development of her personality.

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Moja, organizacija modne revije. Cilj je bil predvsem, da to modno revijo izpeljem, da jo organiziram in aa jst mislim, oziroma jst vem, da sm ta cilj dosegla, ker modna revija je uspela aaam ni blo nobenih vecjih kaku bi rekla, vmes tezav, mislim pr sami izvedbi ne, ce gledamo in aa ljudje so bli zadovoljni, aa predvsem pa se mi zdi fajn zatu ker aa je blo veliko medijev [...] Kar dosti, v bistvu prvo, ce gledamo sploh s podrocja tega foha ne, kar se lahko naucis sploh kako poteka organizacija prireditve, aa kaj vse je potrebno, aa pole, mal se navads tudi ku so bli mediji, kaku se navadis komuniciranja z mediji, pa tudi nekako delovanje v timu, ker tisti dan vseeno more bit vse timsko, moras delt skupi, ker ce ne, ne gre, mislim, vse razpade, aaa pa tudi tku bl odlocen se navads bt ne, zdej kukr za eno organizacijo in ti si glavni organizator in ce recs da je taku, mora bit taku ne.
For example, in secondary school I participated in Podlaga [youth club] for approximately two years. In secondary school it was Podlaga, those activities. [...] We were a group of people who were socialising together over time. The majority were already students at that time, but we still continue to meet up on Fridays and Saturdays. That’s how it is; it shapes your personality (Polona)\textsuperscript{96}.

She positions the idea of personal development within her experiences in Podlaga, including meeting new people, being involved in various tasks, and meetings and working on international projects. Polona explains that people who met in the youth club were not best friends, but they used the space to share their common interests nonetheless. They met exclusively in the youth club, and this experience helped her to be more tolerant towards people of different opinions.

It was actually interesting that in Podlaga I socialised with people who were not, in general, my best friends. They were actually not even a part of that group of friends I had during the secondary school. But we all worked in Podlaga: that was our similarity. So, we were sort of friends, but this was not a group of people I would hang out with on a daily basis (Polona)\textsuperscript{97}.

Polona’s story demonstrates the way in which her participation in the youth club was rather exclusive, and is an exception in comparison to the majority of young people. She joined the club almost by accident, by following the example of a close friend whose brother was actively involved in the organisation of youth and student activities. In this context, Polona explains that youth engagement depends on personal and parental ambitions. This example shows how the individualisation and commercialisation of activities changed societal, family, and youth perceptions of youth engagement. What implications (if any) individual engagement processes have

\textsuperscript{96}Recimo v srednji soli jst sm ful sodelovala v Podlagi, sicer ene dve leti, to me je ful v bistvu izoblikovalo in zaznamovalo.V srednji je bla pac ta Podlaga ne, ta kao aktivnost. [...] Ker smo bli tm res ena družba ljudi, ku smo se družli samo tm. Pa vecina jih je bla ze tku malo na studiju in smo se vseeno ob petkih obvezno srecali tm in ob sobotah ne. To je tko, te izoblikuje no kot osebnost. Te, te, zunanj dejavnosti ne

\textsuperscript{97}V bistvu zanimivo je blo, da tle v Podlagi sem se jst družla z ljudmi k se dru, k niso bli moji najboljši prijatli ne. V bistvu so bli popolnoma loceni od une skupine ljudi k sm jo jst imela kt glavno skupino prijatlov recimo v sklopu srednje sole. Aaa ampak ja, to smo bli vsi tisti, k smo delali tudi drgaci v Podlagi.... Ampak je res, da v tisti skupini ljudi smo bli sami taki k smo pa res delali tudi v svojem prostem casu tm. Tako, da smo bli prijatli med sabo, ampak ni bla to moja skupina s katero sem se družla drgaci vsak dan v srednji soli pa pol.
for coping and resilience during transitions to adulthood requires further examination.

5.4.3 Experiences with Individualised Transitions to Adulthood

This section investigates the way in which the changing patterns of support and individualised engagement affect young people’s experiences with transitions to adulthood. Under post-socialism young people’s personal choices and resources shape their experiences with youth civic engagement. In comparison with socialist youth, their experiences are individually specific and not supported by wider state and community initiatives anymore. The link between ideas of *domesticated youth* and *privatised support* are examined in relation to changing relationships and routines (Gilligan, 2009). The personal stories of post-socialist youth demonstrate that they associated transitions to adulthood with changes to their daily routines and with the need to adapt to new settings. This involves the uncertainties that are connected with a move to new, unfamiliar places. Many participants link this with a physical move. As Anej says, a move to a new place exposed him to the unpredictability inherent in an unfamiliar setting.

Yes, I went to secondary school in Izola [approximately 70 kilometres from his hometown], to the secondary school for tourism. The first three years I stayed in a dormitory, and in the fourth year I moved into a rented flat. In the beginning, I had problems with homesickness (Anej).98

Young people’s stories demonstrate that a move connected with transitions depends on the experiences they encounter and the relationships they build in their new environments. Participants mostly connect the difficulties that accompany transitions to the loss of current relationships, and the establishment of new ones. They report on a lack of available support from friends and peers in new schools. Transitions separated friends and peers, and it took time to build relationships in new educational settings. A move to a new school could be challenging, especially when young people were not able to establish new connections easily.

98Ja, jst sm srednjo sulo pole delu v Izoli, na turisticni sem bil, prve tri leta v dobu, v cetrti letnik v stanovanju. Sem na zacetku imel en malo tezav tudi s tem domotozjem.
Once you went to Ljubljana, all of a sudden you replaced the known environment in which everyone knew you with an unknown one. Yes, all those friends who you are with on a daily basis during secondary school...all of a sudden they go on to study different things, they have their own schedules and obligations and all of a sudden there is a gap. I mean, you cannot meet up every day anymore, or when it suits you. Afterward, also, everyone finds new company at the university (Polona). Polona’s opinion corresponds with previous findings on transitions to adulthood, as reported by socialist and transitional generations. However, the stories of this generation show that capacities to adapt to new social contexts strongly depend on young people’s individual resources and social contacts. Personal narratives demonstrate the ways in which individualised engagement and privatised support impact youth coping with transitions to adulthood.

Nevenka describes her experience with transition to secondary school as difficult. She links this period with the loss of contacts and strong friendships that she developed in her previous educational setting. Her new school was organised in a hierarchical way, in which teachers played an authoritative role. She describes a strict daily school routine that was focused on studies and homework. Moreover, Nevenka comments, her new educational environment was mostly focused on individual work. School was the only preoccupation in her life at the time, and Nevenka did not manage to develop strong relationships with her schoolmates or with people of her age outside the school. She says that her best friend from primary school had moved to another place, and she was not able to share her thoughts and daily problems with anyone. She found the new setting hard to deal with, and considered this period of time to be a problematic one. This lack of support resulted in disturbances to her daily routines and in limited connections with peers and friends. Nevenka recounts that adolescence was a difficult developmental stage as

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99Ma tudi kar naenkrat ku si prsu v Ljubljano, kr naenkrat nisi bil v temu okolju, ku si ga taku dobro poznal in ku so te vsi poznali. Ja, vsi ti prijali ku so s tabo vsak dan ne v srednji suli, kr naenkrat ma vsak svoj faks, vsak ma svoj urnik, vsak ma svoje obveznosti in kar naenkrat zmanjka ne. Mislim, v smislu, da se ne moreš videti vsak dan, al pa kadar tebi pase, al pa da potem vsak dobi tudi neko družbo s tega faksa ne.
such, while the loss of connections with friends from primary school brought feelings of insecurity and loneliness. In this setting, Nevenka was unable to initiate a discussion about her problems. When I ask her how she reacted to the problems, Nevenka responds negatively.

I had big problems. Actually, puberty and growing up are hard periods as such, but the environment in the Gymnasium didn't help. I had even bigger problems because of it. That was the hardest time of my [life]. It was problematic for me because I was not able to accept this new style of working and socialising as it was set in this school [...] I was not able to externalise problems. I internalised them instead and I didn't respond to them positively. I had problems with myself as I didn’t externalise and debate the problems. To have a discussion with other people, or to have someone I could talk to, or that I could establish something like that. This period in the Gymnasium was the worst because of this (Nevenka)\textsuperscript{100}.

Nevenka’s response shows that she was not able to cope with her situation because she could not discuss her problems with other people of her age. At the same time, she found teachers to be authoritative and discriminatory. She connects her problems with personal issues and with wider societal changes. Nevenka explains that this was a period during which the formation of the new state structures coincided with the emergence of different patterns of thinking, and of changing values and social practices.

In primary school we still experienced the transition which was linked with ideas and mentalities that corresponded to Communism. Then they were gradually (in secondary school) replaced with mentalities and characteristics typical of capitalism. [...] Our parents also probably lacked experiences or some supportive pillars that could (help). They did not possess “recipes” which they could share with us so that we would be

\textsuperscript{100}Jst negativno, ker sem se pol recimo nisem uspela eksternalizirat te probleme, ampak sem jih internalizirala in taku da, nisem pravilno recimo odreagirala. Sem si delala pac, sem imela potem probleme sama s sabo, namesto da bi pa recimo eksternalizirala te probleme, skusala ne vem vzpostaviti neko debato, diskusijo z drugimi, al pa karkoli ne in pac nisem imela tudi nekega sogovornika s katerim bi lahko kej tazga aa vzpostavila, tako da tudi zaradi tega, mislim zame obdobje gimnazije je blo res najhujse no, ker.. Jst sm imela velike probleme. V bistvu tud sama s, ze itak je odrascanje, puberteta tezko obdobje, ne, ampak potem tudi glede na okolje, ki sem ga pac imela v gimnaziji, oziroma, ki me je obkrozalo, sem potem tudi zaradi tega se toliko vecje probleme imela z ne vem, nisem se mogla vec zame je pac to blo najtezje obdobje recimo mojga, sem res imela, je blo problematicno zame. Ker sem tezko sprejemala tak nacin dela, druzenja, ki je potekalo pac na tej soli.
able to deal with those problems. They never experienced such things, and they didn’t know them (Nevenka).101

As Nevenka points out, a sudden social change had an impact on practices of social support and coping mechanisms which were available to older generations. This interesting observation implies that the previous social practices used to nurture transitions to adulthood are no longer applicable to the new socio-political context. These changes had an impact on both adults and young people, as they were not accustomed to more individualised and commercialised social practices. Nevenka explains that her parents were not able to help her with her problems, since they had no experience with the scope of challenges she faced at that time. In this case, family support alone was not enough to help Nevenka to cope with her problems. When I ask her how she resolved the problems, she explains that moving to a new social setting helped her to view these challenges from a new perspective. Nevenka found an opportunity to study abroad and enrolled in a university in Italy, which exposed her to new experiences and people. She explains that this was an environment in which she was able to resolve her problems by seeing them as a part of a wider social context, and not merely as individual issues. For Nevenka, a collective approach to problem-solving is crucial.

I resolved my problems by moving abroad. I went to study abroad and I managed to resolve those problems. I lived on and I managed to overcome them. I actually started to externalise those problems and I managed to link them with the wider social context from which they emerged. I didn’t perceive them so much as only my individual problems anymore (Nevenka).102
As shown in this story, young people still consider help from other people to be crucial for coping successfully with the challenges presented by transitions to adulthood. However, due to the changing socio-political context, the way in which they access support has changed. In comparison to the socialist generation, the youngest generation utilises “individual resources” when coping with the challenges inherent in transitions. Further analysis also demonstrates the prevalence of this strategy in the stories in which young people describe positive experiences with transitions to adulthood.

Reliance on oneself is also connected with making choices about transitions to adulthood. Some participants associated transitions with a need for change, and with the potential for exploring something new when growing up. Their accounts demonstrate their proactiveness in making those decisions, which were mostly linked with choosing educational programmes situated outside of their hometowns. In this respect, young individuals show how they tried to influence decisions that were linked to changes in their educational settings. For instance, Tina’s example reveals how participants made their decisions about changing location during educational transitions: for Tina, a move to another town opens up the possibility of being exposed to new experiences. Her parents and friends advised her not to enrol in a school away from home because they considered the daily commute to be tiring. However, she was undeterred, explaining that she needed a change of environment.

I didn't want to stay in Sežana [hometown]. During that period I had to change my environment. I needed that. Well, I remember that I went to Postojna [another town, 40 kilometres away from hometown] and that I found my way. I adjusted to the new context and I think I didn't make a mistake by going there (Tina)\textsuperscript{103}.

This shows how transitions that are less supported may provide some young people with more agency when they are making educational choices. Tina’s story also reveals the ways in which she actively engaged with her new circumstances in order

\textsuperscript{103}Jst nisem hotla bit v Sezani. Jst sm tkrt v tistem obdobju, jst sm prow rabla, menjat okolico ne. No, in jst sm lepu sla in tkrt se spommm, da sm sla in sm se tako kr znajdla no in prilagodila in aa mislim, da nisem fallila. Nisem nardila napako, da sem sla v Postojno.
to be able to adapt quickly to her new environment. These new circumstances were not easy to deal with, since she did not know anyone at first. Tina joined a school basketball cheerleading society, which helped her to develop new interests and meet new people, and she made new friends with some of the team members. As a team, they had to organise several events and attend trainings two or three times a week: as a member of the league, she improved her organisational skills, and learned to work as part of a team. She thinks that other people from school appreciated her contribution to the league and all the effort she put into it.

First we were four, and then some other girls joined, so there were ten of us, I think. And we also socialised and built friendships outside of the league. We also attended training together and became friends. We are still in contact with some of them. Every week we went somewhere or some other team came to Postojna, and there were matches and we had to attend training, and we had to organise all the events (Tina)\(^{104}\).

As shown in the above example, engagement in the basketball league helped Tina to adapt to the new school environment and to build new friendships. However, as examined in this section, youth experiences with engagement and social support are not taken for granted, and depend on each individual’s circumstances. On one hand, these stories show that young people may have more choices available to them during transitions to adulthood, and that they can express more agency in decision-making, which helps them feel that they have control over the situation. On the other hand, a lack of security, social spaces, and support gives young people the impression that transitions depend on their personal commitment and individual resources. Also, in this context, young people consider experiences with supportive and participatory practices as important factors in determining whether their transitions are risky or non-risky.

\(^{104}\)Ns je blo, najprej nas je blo 4 punce na zacetku, pol pa nas je prslo kar na enih 10. In smo se tu ful lpu družili in smo tm, tudi smo si, smo spleli taku prijateljstva tudi izven tega krožka, izven te dejavnosti. Aa ne vem, pol tm smo trenirale skupi, smo ratale kr prijateljce, z enim sem v kontaktu tudi se dns. Vsak teden smo sli nekam, al pa je ksn drugi prsu v Postojno in so bile te tekme in tu je blo treba vse zorganizirat in natrenirat in tku.
The above stories demonstrate that experiences with privatised sources of support and individualised engagement make youth experiences with coping more individually specific. They also indicate that changing social ecologies may impact youth opportunities for accessing social support and for engaging in new social settings and activities.

5.4.4 Unequal Access to Opportunities and Resources for Post-Socialist Youth

The youngest generation discusses the access to resources within a similar framework to that of their transitional and socialist predecessors. They link resources connected with youth development to job opportunities, available housing, and social welfare. Those stories, however, have to be read within a post-socialist context, and in light of the current economic recession. The emergence of precarious and more flexible youth employment has resulted in insecurities in individuals’ lives, and has also limited youth access to housing (Mandič, 1996; Ule & Rener, 2000; Hlebec, Filipovič - Hrast & Kogovšek, 2010).

Like the transitional generation, post-socialist youth widely discuss a lack of opportunities in terms of the job market, and state that education no longer ensures a subsequent job. Their stories present the complex nature of the post-socialist employment scheme, which does not ensure employment for youth. Those who have student status have more opportunities for temporary employment, due to the loose taxation system applied to the student population. However, economic difficulties over the last few years have resulted in decreased working opportunities for students also. Most participants mention that personal and family connections are more important than individual merit when it comes to job-seeking, as Polona, an interviewee from the youngest generation, explains.

I received a response from one company that said they had received 168 applications for a student job. 168 for a student job! That tells you a lot. It means that we are prolonging our students’ status because it is easier to get a job if you are a student. However, in the last two years, this is not a guarantee anymore, either [in terms of getting a job]. Not anymore. [...] Even if you manage to get a job interview and you really like the task
description, they expect you to have such a high level of experience. So, I didn't get it. And I have several references, and I think I would be very good at that job. So, I don't even know what they are looking for, I have no clue. Or you have to have connections [...] I mean, I also got a student job last year through connections, I have to admit that. If my parents hadn’t known that person, I never would have been chosen. That is for sure (Polona).

Polona’s comment describes how young people prolong their dependence on families and educational institutions due to the lack of opportunities on the labour and accommodation markets. Transitions to adulthood are not supported by the state anymore, while participants’ stories demonstrate an increased dependence on social capital and on the material support of their family members. This context shows how a change in the socio-political, economic, and state system has brought about rapid changes in young people's lives.

Another example of the deterioration of opportunities for youth is presented by Anej, who compares the current situation with the possibilities available to youth under socialism. On the day of the interview, Anej had just quit his student job, explaining that the working conditions were very poor and relationships among his colleagues were unpleasant. In his opinion, young people today have to face more life challenges than previous generations. Anej explains how socialist youth were more connected to and supportive of each other, while nowadays, young people are more dependent on themselves. Socialist youth were provided with more opportunities, while today young people are involved in capitalist, profit-making processes. Anej does not think that circumstances are necessarily worse than they were in the past, but he does believe that they expose individuals to more stress and inequality.

105 Tudi recimo, sm dobila sm dobila z ene firme mejl, da so dobili 168 prosenj al neki za studentsko, 168 za studentsko delo. Tu ti, tu ti dosti pove ne, da si samo studij podaljsavas ne, ker je kao preko studenta lazje dobit delo. Tu ne velja vec, zadnje dve leti, tu ni vec. Ni vec res. [...] Tudi, ce ti prides na en razgovor in ti je ful dobro, v bistvu bi mogu imet take izkusnje, pac tega nisem dobila ne. Pa mislim, da imam dolocene reference, da bi tisto lahko ful dobro opravila. Tu, da niti ne vem kaj oni iscejo mislim to mi ni jasno. Al pa preprosto vse preko vez. [...] Aaa, sej tud jst sem lani imela eno studentsko delo ku sm ga dobila preko vez ne. Tku da, moram tudi to priznat ne. Ce moji starsi ne bi tle nekoga poznali, bi pac, ne bi opravljala tega dela ne, tu je res.
There are many life challenges today, many more than in the past. I am not saying that it was easier before, but there were many more opportunities. A simple example is [the availability of] flats. Where to find money? If you inherit, or if you are very successful, very hard-working, and if you are also paid according to your effort, then you may have a chance. In my opinion it is way harder, now that it is all capitalised: and of course there are advantages and disadvantages. We [the younger generation] have many opportunities older generations didn't have. For example, they didn't see the sea until they were 15. Nowadays, it is considered weird if kids don't see the sea until they are 7. Now there are other things taken for granted which were not considered in this way in the past [...] I don't know, in the past it was more important to spend time together, that was important for Tito's youth [...] We face unhealthy pressures today. You have to produce for the sake of production, while in the past, people were producing so they could live better (Anej).

Anej’s view is especially noteworthy, bearing in mind that this generation had relatively few (if any) experiences with the socialist era. Anej’s account also shows how the collective socialist memory still shapes public opinion and expectations connected with youth opportunities and resources. As shown in the narrative of the socialist generation, those stories have to be read in connection with nostalgia for socialism (Boym, 2001) and specifically Yugo-nostalgia (Velikonja, 2008a). Stories of the younger generation also present the most current report on growing-up conditions in post-socialism, as well as their critiques of those conditions. This is further explored within their views on available social opportunities and adulthood.

In comparison with older generations, post-socialist youth associates the idea of being grown up with financial independence. Most of them express the opinion that,
in order to become an adult, young people need to have access to secure, paid jobs; lodgings; and general social security. Interestingly, the idea of young people gaining independence through social inclusion is recognised across the generations. However, in comparison with the socialist generation, the youngest interviewees mostly discuss the obstacles to achieving this social status. As Sonja points out, young people of her age prolong their studies as they are not able to get jobs. She studies the Slovenian language and sociology, and expresses doubts that she will be able to work in her chosen area of study, due to a surplus of graduates from those academic fields. Sonja also considers the problems connected with prolonged educational transitions by saying that young people still think of their lives as developing around predictive stages, including going to the university, getting a job, getting married, and having a child. However, those views are not compatible with the reality of prolonged and blurred transitions (Kuhar, 2009) and young people may never achieve some of the aforementioned stages. Sonja further examines the difficulty of gaining financial independence for contemporary youth by linking prolonged processes of education and staying at home.

It is actually not unusual [to live with one’s parents] when one, for instance, finishes university at the age of 27. You cannot expect people to be able to have, or to earn, enough to buy their own flats. It is impossible. At the same time, there are expectations that when you are 30 or 32 you will do something, and people think you are weird if you live with your parents at that age.107

Tanjra: And what is important to you personally?

Sonja: To me it is important to finish the university and to gain some education, to get a job so you don't have to worry constantly about finances. I would die not knowing whether I’d be able to survive or not. So, it is important to know that you can survive normally.108

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107 Sam v bistvi ne vem, v bistvi ne kej tazga ne, ker ti pa ne vem, recimo or 27-ih pa koncas faks, ne, povprečno. In ne vem, ne morez zdej ti, ne morez pricakavat, da si bos pa v treh letih ustvaru vse, zasluzu zadosti, da si bos kupu svoje stanovanje in vse ne. Itak ne murs. Sam pa se zmjri se pricakuje tu, da ne vem, da pr nekih tridesetih letih, al pa ne vem 32-ih, da bos pac ne vem neki, ne vem, ce se zmjri zivis pr starsih si mislji taku, ne vem, da je cuden.

108 Pomembno mi je, pomembno mi je, da bi koncala faks, da pac imas neko izobrazbo in dobis službo, da pac ti ni treba stalno skrb, da nimas soudow, ku tu bi jst umrla, d recimo, da vsak mesec mors, da lih kr prides skuzi ne, pac taku, da normalno zivis.
Sonja’s opinion clearly demonstrates that society’s-and young people’s-expectations do not necessarily match the circumstances on the job market. However, like previous generations, younger participants consider social security to be both a crucial resource and an opportunity for gaining independence and social inclusion. This is especially important when we bear in mind that these interviewees face precarious conditions on the job market, and have only a limited possibility of finding housing of their own. Also, young people are aware of the limited opportunities in their society, but still nurture the same pattern of thinking from the socialist era: that is, believing that higher education may safeguard them against precarious working conditions. At the same time, their personal testimonies show that opportunities depend hugely on family resources and connections. Table 5.4 presents the main findings of post-socialist youth by considering the main objectives of this research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Focus</th>
<th>Main Findings</th>
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| **To explore perceived experiences of social support with respect to post-socialist youth** | • Young people rely on private sources of social support. Family support is recognised as an important source of support among post-socialist youth.  
• Parents provide emotional support to youth.  
• Friends and peers are recognised as crucial sources of help. Young people particularly value friends’ ability to listen and not critically judge their decisions.  
• There is a lack of stories about peer mentoring.  
• Participants perceive teachers’ support in a more ambivalent way and their experiences are individually specific.  
• There is a lack of stories of provision of support by community members.  
• Post-socialist youth discuss experiences with youth civic engagement in connection with spaces in which they participate on a daily basis.  
• They associate youth civic engagement with opportunities for participation. They connect |
### To explore perceived experiences in youth civic engagement with respect to post-socialist youth

- They recognise primary schools as important organisers of youth activities, while there are no activities organised by secondary schools.
- Youth civic engagement is connected with individual choices and activities. Commercial activities are important for youth engagement.
- For youth, civic engagement is connected with personal development, the expression of one’s own initiative, and individual decisions to get involved.
- Youth club is mentioned as an important centre for youth gathering in most of the stories. However, most of them use the place as a meeting point, not a site of active engagement.

### To explore perceived differences with risk and coping with respect to post-socialist youth

- Youth associate transitions to adulthood with changes to their daily routines and adaptation to new settings.
- Young people connect transitions with encounters and relationships that they build in new contexts.
- Similar to the transitional generation, the success of transitions to adulthood depends on individual sources and resources.
- Social support and engagement in youth activities and social spaces proves to be important in coping with the risks inherent in transitions.
- Young people report that self-reliance and self-activation are strategies they use to cope with the challenges inherent in transitions to adulthood.
- They also find that moving to new social contexts can be an important coping strategy.
- Youth have the opportunity to choose among available paths of transitions. Their stories show that they can express more individual agency when making decisions connected with transitions to adulthood.
- Teachers and adults do not support youth transitions to adulthood in a systematic way.
- Youth stories demonstrate a lack of evidence of state presence in their lives.
To examine state provision of opportunities in respect of post-socialist youth

- They associate opportunities with job opportunities, available housing and social welfare.
- They report a lack of opportunities on the labour market, and their stories show the negative impact of the economic recession on those opportunities.
- Youth rely on their or their families’ social connections when they search for jobs.
- Youth have only limited opportunities to move into accommodation of their own, and are forced to live with their families for longer periods of time.
- In these accounts, it is also possible to recognise nostalgia for socialism in connection with state-provided opportunities and resources.
- Youth consider blurred and prolonged transitions as problematic as they prevent them from becoming financially independent.
- Nostalgia for socialism is a present discourse in accounts of post-socialist youth.

Table 5.4: Summary of findings population three (post-socialist youth)

5.5 Summary of Findings Comparing across Three Populations

This section summarises the key findings of this research with respect to each objective. This narrative is distilled from the repeated version of the summary provided below in Table 5.5.

Objective One: To compare perceived differences in social support across three generations (socialist, transitional, and post-socialist) in Slovenia

Youth-perceived experiences with social support in diverse socio-political contexts display similarities and differences across the generations. Socialist youth report on the holistic provision of help, which is linked to their experiences with a high social welfare net and societal care. Transitional youth does not perceive social support holistically anymore, and they indicate that social support practices have changed due to the corresponding socio-political changes. In comparison with socialist youth, this generation does not perceive the role of teachers as supportive, while peers and
friends are recognised as central sources of help. The role of family support intensifies in this context, which (as per western countries) is recognised as a core source of support among post-socialist youth. Narratives of post-socialist youth demonstrate the prevalence of informal and privatised sources of support in individuals’ lives. A comparison across generations shows that there are also recognised similarities among youth. For example, reciprocal exchange of help with friends, peers, and family members is recognised in youth accounts across generations.

Objective Two: To compare perceived differences in youth civic engagement across three generations of young people (socialist, transitional and post-socialist) in Slovenia

Young people across generations associate youth civic engagement with opportunities for engagement in the settings in which they participate on a daily basis. However, there are recognised differences in perceived experiences with these opportunities. Socialist youth discuss opportunities within their experiences with “doing things” and being involved in activities, while transitional and post-socialist youth focus merely on obstacles to participation, such as transportation or a lack of activities offered. All generations mention the relevance of primary schools in the organisation of youth activities, and the lack of these practices in secondary school settings. However, there are several differences recognised across generations. Socialist youth discuss their participatory experiences within the idea of supported engagement. The state, communities, and schools are recognised as crucial in supporting and organising youth participation. This generation connects youth civic engagement with pre-designed and self-organised activities. The ideological and developmental role of the core youth organisation, The Socialist Youth Alliance, is discussed by most participants. Engagement in activities results in a strong sense of self-efficacy. Transitional youth experience a structural free-fall and a lack of youth activities due to the socio-political transformation. There is also a recognised shift in thinking regarding the meaning of youth civic engagement. This generation links youth participation with youth activities that are focused on development of personal
skills and on self-actualisation. In this context, the idea of engagement refers to paid, commercial activities. These trends are recognised among post-socialist youth too, which connects youth civic engagement with personal development and participation in individualised and commercialised activities. Post-socialist youth position their experiences in newly-established youth structures, such as youth club. However, like transitional youth, they connect youth engagement with a lack of activities and of opportunities for participation.

**Objective Three:** To compare perceived differences in risk and coping with transitions to adulthood across three generations of young people (socialist, transitional and post-socialist) in Slovenia

Socialist youth experience smooth, linear and state-supported transitions to adulthood, which have impact their perceptions of risk. This generation’s accounts demonstrate that youth do not perceive any major problems when growing up. Socialist youth consider holistic support and supported engagement to be practices which help youth to adapt to new daily routines and to establish new relationships in new social contexts. At the same time, they consider the role of teachers and adults to be crucial to their successful adaptation to new settings. Transitional and post-socialist youth consider transitions to adulthood as individually specific and risky, and in their narratives there is an absence of stories of state support and regulation of pathways to adulthood. They link this period of their life with shock, horror, and crisis. Transitional and post-socialist youth experience supportive relationships and youth engagement in an individual and contextually specific way. These generations utilize their own capacities and resources in order to cope with the challenges they face. At the same time, the stories of younger generations show that they can choose from a wider range of opportunities when experiencing transitions to adulthood.

**Objective Four:** To compare state provision of opportunities for youth across three generations (socialist, transitional and post-socialist) in Slovenia
Despite different experiences with state-provided opportunities, youth stories across generations have to be read within the framework of nostalgia for socialism, which is linked with state-ensured social security. Socialist youth talk about state-provided opportunities, such as jobs, accommodation, internships, and scholarships. Transitional and post-socialist youth do not talk about these opportunities anymore, but they still associate youth opportunities with a welfare regime and with security provided by the state. The socio-political transformation resulted in changing opportunities for youth in the labour market. The transitional generation considers these changes within their experiences of a lack of jobs and other individually specific conditions. These circumstances worsened for post-socialist youth, who discuss the importance of connections and social capital during times of financial crisis. There is a recognised change in the provision of accommodation for youth. Youth stories show that there were numerous lodging funds, such as state, municipality, or workplace funds for socialist youth, while younger generations rely on personal or familial resources when seeking accommodation. Findings in this research demonstrate that changing social ecologies have a profound impact on the provision of youth opportunities.

In the next chapter, these key findings are further discussed within a more comprehensive context of relevant practice and policy literature.
Table 5.5 Summary of findings across three populations (socialist, transitional and post-socialist)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Population one (socialist youth)</th>
<th>Population two (transitional youth)</th>
<th>Population three (post-socialist youth)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To compare perceived differences in social support across three generations (socialist, transitional and post-socialist) in Slovenia</td>
<td>Perception of support</td>
<td>-Young people perceive social support in an holistic way. The provision of social support is embedded in the socialist system within a high social welfare net, and wider societal care.</td>
<td>-Social change influences youth experiences with social support. Social support is not perceived holistically, but in a more fragmented and individual way.</td>
<td>-Individualised experiences with social support are recognised in post-socialist context. Young people rely on private sources of social support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>-The role of teachers and adults in the provision of support is recognised as crucial: they encourage supportive relationships, cooperation and solidarity among youth.</td>
<td>-There is lack of stories of teacher and adult support in the context of social change.</td>
<td>-Participants perceive teachers’ support in a more ambivalent way, and their experiences are individually specific.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>- Friends and peers are recognised as important sources of support. Young people are involved in a reciprocal exchange of help. Peer mentoring is recognised as important type of support among youth.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>- Family support is taken for granted and described within experiences of exchange of material help between young people and family members.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Friends are recognised as a central source of support in the context of social change. Young people discuss specific types of social support, such as peer mentoring in connection with their growing-up experiences in socialism.*

*Family becomes more important source of support in the context of social change.*

*Family is recognised as crucial source of support among post-socialist youth. Parents provide emotional support to youth.*
To compare perceived differences in youth civic engagement across three generations of young people (socialist, transitional and post-socialist) in Slovenia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunities for engagement</th>
<th>Structures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-Youth civic engagement is associated with opportunities for participation in settings in which young people are involved on a daily basis.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| -Youth consider youth civic engagement to be connected with opportunities “to get involved” and “to do things”.
| -The socialist state has a prominent role in the |
| -Transitional youth associate youth civic engagement with opportunities for participation in settings in which they are daily involved. |
| -Youth associate opportunities with obstacles for engagement, such as transportation and a place of living. |
| -There are lack of youth structures and activities |
| -Post-socialist youth discuss experiences with youth civic engagement in connection with spaces in which they participate on a daily basis. |
| -Youth connect opportunities with obstacles to participation, such as geographical location. |
| -Opportunities for engagement are individualised and dependent on young people and their families’ resources. |
| -Youth club is recognised as an |
Types and Meaning

- The Socialist Youth Alliance is a core youth organisation established by the Yugoslav state. This organisation is both ideological in nature and responsible for youth development.

- The engagement in youth activities is presented in a broad way, focusing on self-organised and pre-designed youth activities. Youth civic engagement is discussed within the idea of supported engagement.

- Youth civic engagement is linked with pre-designed activities focused on self-actualisation and development of personal skills. The emergence of commercialised and paid activities is recognised in this context.

- Youth civic engagement is discussed within the idea of individualised engagement. Commercial activities are important for youth engagement. Youth civic engagement is connected...
Schools

- Primary schools are recognised as important providers of youth activities. Secondary schools do not provide activities for youth, while teachers support and encourage youth initiatives.

- Young people report a strong sense of self-efficacy and possibilities for expression of their own agency due to

- Youth who are not involved in any activities report a lack of interest

- Young people who are engaged in activities report about a development of self-esteem, self-efficacy and

- Primary schools are important providers of youth activities, while secondary schools do not provide any activities for youth.

- Primary schools are main providers of youth activities, while there are no activities organised by secondary schools.

- Young people report a lack of interest with youth personal development, the expression of their own initiative and individual decisions to get involved.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact</th>
<th>Engagement in youth activities</th>
<th>and goals, and spend their free time in negative ways, such as drinking alcohol.</th>
<th>organisational skills.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transitions</td>
<td>-Youth experience smooth, linear and state supported transitions to adulthood.</td>
<td>-Youth are exposed to more individualised and less-supported transitions to adulthood.</td>
<td>Youth experience more heterogeneous pathways to adulthood. Their experiences show that the outcomes of youth transitions to adulthood</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
to adulthood across three generations of young people (socialist, transitional and post-socialist) in Slovenia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk/Challenges</th>
<th>Support and engagement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Socialistic youth do not associate transitions to adulthood as challenging. They describe their growing up experiences as “risk-free.”</td>
<td>Young people’s experiences show that they adjust more easily to new routines due to engagement in activities and exposure to different social contacts in new settings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitions to adulthood are linked with words like “horror, shock and crisis” and are connected with the fear of the unknown.</td>
<td>Youth report that relationships they develop with other people and involvement in youth activities help them to adjust to new social context during transitions to adulthood.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>Coping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-State provision of resources and opportunities for social engagement help young people to search for alternative options during transitions to adulthood.</td>
<td>-There are no stories of coping applicable to this context. Some young people share stories of resistance in rebellion as a response to socialist political regime.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Young people report that self-reliance and self-activation are the strategies they use to cope with challenges posed by transitions to adulthood. However, these coping strategies are not always successful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-They also find a move to a new social context to be an important coping strategy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To compare state provision of opportunities for youth across three generations (socialist, transitional and post-socialist) in Slovenia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welfare regime</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education and Jobs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-The Yugoslav state considers youth to be an important social group which is portrayed within stories of a high integration of youth in society.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-The state provides several social and welfare benefits for youth, including internships, scholarships, jobs and accommodation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-The state regulates young people’s lives by</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-There is a lack of stories on state presence in young people’s lives.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-The changing welfare system has a direct impact on young people’s lives. Young people do not mention any available scholarships and internships.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-The changing social context results in a lack</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-There is a lack of opportunities on the labour market and youth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-There is a lack of stories on state presence in young people’s lives.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-They associate opportunities with resources connected with job opportunities, available housing and social welfare.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nostalgia for Socialism and social security</td>
<td>generating opportunities for their inclusion in education and work process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Youth perceptions of the role of the state and social ecologies have to be read within the stories of “nostalgia for socialism”. Socialist youth associate the social change with the deconstruction of the state-provided support and connected it with the provision of jobs and affordable accommodation for youth.</td>
<td>-Transitional youth associate individual security with state provision of opportunities and welfare for youth. Socialist values of hard work and cooperation are present in young people’s accounts.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
socio-economic transformation of the state.
Chapter Six: Discussion of Key Findings

6.1 Introduction
This chapter discusses research findings in relation to the main research question and objectives, with reference to the literature review and context, presented in Chapters Two and Three. In Chapter Two a comprehensive literature review focused on the conceptualisation of resilience, youth and transitions to adulthood in a social context. This literature review also considered the role of social support and youth civic engagement as protective factors which enable coping and resilience in youth. The conceptual framework combines all those aspects which are analysed in the findings Chapter Five.

The overarching aim of this PhD dissertation is to explore how socio-political transformation influences the provision of protective mechanisms (e.g. social support and youth civic engagement) and youth coping as aspects of resilience during transitions to adulthood.

The study has four key objectives as follows:

1) To compare perceived differences in social support across three generations (socialist, transitional, and post-socialist) in Slovenia;

2) To compare perceived differences in youth civic engagement across three generations of young people (socialist, transitional, and post-socialist) in Slovenia;

3) To compare perceived differences in risk and coping with transitions to adulthood across three generations of young people (socialist, transitional, and post-socialist) in Slovenia;

4) To compare state provision of opportunities for youth across three generations (socialist, transitional, and post-socialist) in Slovenia.
6.2 Research Objectives - What has been achieved?
This section discusses the main findings in connection with the four objectives. First, the main findings related to youth experiences with social support in socialist and post-socialist Slovenia are discussed. Second, it elaborates on the main ideas around youth civic engagement. Third, the experiences with transitions to adulthood and coping in the context of social change are examined. The last, fourth, objective discusses the main findings related to the state provision of opportunities for youth across the generations.

6.2.1 Objective One: To compare perceived differences in social support across three generations (socialist, transitional, and post-socialist) in Slovenia
The aim of the first objective was to compare young people’s experiences with social support across three generations in Slovenia. This section discusses in which way social change impacted youth experiences with provision of support and what sources of support young people recognised as important under socialism and post-socialism.

Key Finding: There is a significant change in the perception of social support across generations. Socialist youth associate support with the holistic provision of help from macro to micro-societal layers. Transitional youth report about experiences with individualised and fragmented support, while friends are recognised as central sources of help. A withdrawal of state support is recognised in accounts of post-socialist youth. Reliance on family support becomes a prevalent form of support in this social context.

This study demonstrates a strong link between social support, state ideologies and socio-political systems, and their impact on young people’s lives. Similar to Williams, Barclay and Schmied’s research (2004), this PhD thesis has shown that there is a strong connection between wider social ecologies and youth perceptions of social support. The main message drawn from the findings of this study is that there is a clear division between societal care and individual provision of support.
recognised across all three generations. Socialist youth discussed the provision of help in a holistic way across macro- and micro-societal levels. Within that context, social support was associated with the socialist state welfare regime. The possibility of help was available in different spaces in which young people participated on a daily basis, including schools and youth organisations. For example, the opinion that help was available to all young people is a common thread in stories of the socialist generation. Socio-political change based on the introduction of a market economy and capitalism resulted in the decreased provision of social benefits for youth. A declining state’s provision of help for young people resulted in more individualised ways of accessing support (Rener, 2000). Similar to western societies (Wallace & Kovacheva, 1998; Catan, 2004; Biggart & Walther, 2006), post-socialist youth rely on privatised sources of help. Transitional youth reported about fragmented and individualised aspects of social support, while post-socialist youth mostly relied on privatised sources of support. They did not report on the opportunities and resources provided by the state, but linked their experiences to specific situations in which they needed help. This shows that there is a radical shift in the provision and perception of support by younger generations. Or, as reported by one of the research participants, this is evidence of a changing relationship with the state, and of changing expectations regarding the state’s provision and organisation of support.

A key finding from the empirical data reveals that friends and peers were recognised as the main sources of support during adolescence. Similar to Canavan and Dolan’s (2000) and Pinkerton and Dolan’s (2007) research, this study showed that peers and friends were recognised as “natural helpers” among most young people. Findings demonstrated the ways in which participants perceived the connection between support and friendship. Friendship was based on acts of listening and exposure to non-judgmental treatment. The role of friends was crucial and taken for granted by all participants, who talked about friendships as reciprocal acts of support that were integral to young people’s everyday lives. As argued by Dolan and Brady (2012), reciprocity of help is essential to youth perception of support, since young people provide help to one another just as they accept it from each other. An interesting finding in this research was that friends were particularly important for transitional
youth: when wider societal care and a high-security welfare net diminished, youth mostly relied on their friends for the support they needed. Data analysis showed some differences in the provision of peer support between generations. For instance, peer mentoring was recognised as an important practice of support by socialist and, to some extent, transitional youth. This type of support was recognised as important in nurturing youth solidarity and cooperation. While few participants mentioned that it corresponded with the socialist ethos, they did link its disappearance to changes in the socio-political system.

Changes in the socio-political system must also be considered in connection with the involvement of teachers and adults in youth supportive practices. Their role proved to be crucial to the provision of help for young people which corresponds with other research (e.g. Sosa, 2012). Socialist youth reported on supportive acts being incorporated in schools and communities holistically, while the role of teachers and community members in supporting their initiatives has been crucial for the development of youth initiatives. Socialist youth reported on the access to this support within the framework of engagement in diverse social activities in schools and their local communities. On the contrary, these stories are absent in narratives of transitional and post-socialist youth. Transitional youth in particular discussed the absence of supportive initiatives enacted by teachers and community members. These participants linked the absence of support with social change and a wider social apathy. Adults’ disinterest in young people’s initiatives and ideas resulted in young people developing feelings of disengagement and disorientation. This finding is significant: it shows the importance of adults’ support and enthusiasm for young people’s development.

Similar to research conducted by Ule (1996; 2012), Rener (2000) and Šadl, (2005) this thesis shows that families were important supportive structures during socialism, while their role intensified in post-socialism. Family support was recognised as a vital resource across generations. This study showed how parents supported their children, providing them with material assistance and advice. However, as shown in
the previous chapter, family support became more important within the context of social change. Transitional, and particularly post-socialist, youth discussed the importance of family support to their daily lives. Social change resulted in changing relationships and decreased access to wider sources of support, which has led to additional burdens for families (Rener, 2000). For instance, the variety of sources of social support during socialism enabled young people to access support in different environments, while in post-socialism this burden fell mostly on families. Reliance on family members, materially or emotionally, was discussed under socialism, too, but was considered to be crucial for members of the youngest generation.

6.2.2 Objective Two: To compare perceived differences in youth civic engagement across three generations of young people (socialist, transitional, and post-socialist) in Slovenia

Examining youth experiences with youth civic engagement within the context of social change corresponds with the second objective of this PhD dissertation. In this study, youth civic engagement considers the impact of diverse socio-political and economic systems - namely socialism and capitalism - on the provision of opportunities and the organisation of youth activities. This section addresses a triad of ideas in connection with youth engagement: a) opportunities for youth engagement in the context of social change, b) continuity and discontinuity of practices of youth participation in Slovenia, and c) changing meaning of youth civic engagement for socialist, transitional and post-socialist youth.

Key Finding: Youth civic engagement evolves from available opportunities and practices generated by diverse socio-political contexts and associated ideologies. Political systems prescribe a social role to youth, while the status youth have in society impacts how youth initiatives and activities are supported on different societal layers. Youth voices should be included in examining the meaning of youth civic engagement.
As argued by Flanagan & Levine (2010) and Zaff, Kawashima-Ginsberg & Lin (2010), there is a strong link between the provision of opportunities and a socio-political context. Similar to Amnå’s study (2012), this research demonstrated that youth activities emerge within daily routines in social contexts of young people’s families, communities, peers, and schools. Yet, a unique finding in this thesis is that social change radically changed generational experiences with participatory opportunities. A wider societal provision of opportunities for youth engagement was recognised within a socialist context. The socialist state provided a wide array of possibilities for youth participation within society, particularly in schools and local communities. Terms, such as “to do things” and “to get involved” were frequently used to depict these possibilities.

On the other hand, the socio-political change exposed young people to individualised experiences with participation. As reported by transitional youth, this initially resulted in a lack of youth activities. For example, one participant explained that her rich experiences with participation in societies in primary school were replaced with a wider social apathy and a lack of support in secondary school. As argued by Wuthnow (1999) and Winter (2003), this study also showed that social change caused a radical shift in society’s attitude towards youth engagement. This investigation clearly demonstrates in what ways political ideologies and changing social values impact these social attitudes. A period of transition to post-socialism signified the replacement of state interventionism with the logic of choice and market economy in this field. As shown in the findings chapter, transitional and post-socialist youth depicted this change by using words such as “no activities” and “disengagement”. Both generations considered barriers to participation, such as a lack of transportation and a limited choice of activities in their local neighbourhoods and communities, as the core issue impacting youth participation.

This new development showed that participation became strongly dependent on young people’s individual resources and that of their families. Family support, whether financial or practical (e.g. transportation to and from activities) was
As argued by Ule (2000), this study also showed that market provision of activities exposed youth to more choice (e.g., language, music courses, and sporting activities). Considering youth disinterest in politics and public disengagement (Lavrič et al., 2011), it is crucial for youth researchers and policy makers to be aware of this state versus market approach towards the provision of opportunities for youth engagement in Slovenia. A market-led approach proved to be insufficient, leading to unequal access to youth activities and favouring youth from families that are more financially secure. In this context, societal provision of equal opportunities for youth engagement is crucial.

The comparison across generations showed that there were recognised practices of continuity and discontinuity in youth participation under socialism and post-socialism. Changing opportunities for youth engagement had a major impact on the wider provision of practices in local communities and society in general, while primary schools remained the main institutions of youth civic engagement under post-socialism. Primary schools proved to be the most important promoters of youth civic engagement across generations. Most participants mentioned examples of engagement in school societies that were focused on social and cultural activities, sports, or crafts. Secondary schools, however, were not recognised as important in this regard. Despite the presence of this trend across generations, a lack of available activities in secondary schools was particularly noticed among transitional and, to a lesser extent, post-socialist youth. This implies that the socio-political transformation had a major impact on the discontinuity of practices of youth civic engagement on other societal layers—particularly communities. A majority of transitional and post-socialist youth pointed out that they experienced a lack of social inclusion and disengagement from the public sphere during adolescence. In a context in which communal practices of youth participation were not relevant, the absence of secondary school support proved to be problematic.

The discontinuity of youth civic engagement practices coincided with diminishing community and state structures. This research shows that the socialist state provided
structures for youth engagement, particularly in local communities and neighbourhoods (Azanjać et al., 2012). The Alliance of Socialist Youth, for example, was a core youth organisation under socialism and it mobilised young people on a large scale (Jere, 2003; Vurnik, 2005). An important observation was that young people in the 1980s associated The Alliance of Socialist Youth with both political and youth development. Most participants discussed the relevance of this organisation for youth socialisation and for the development of youth initiative. This organisation dissolved due to the socio-political change which resulted in a “structural lag” (Flanagan et al., 2012). As Ule (2012) has shown, practices which were connected with the socialist political system were dismantled, but were not replaced with new ones. This is particularly evident among transitional youth, whose experiences with adolescence involved a lack of activities and gathering-spaces geared towards young people. Like transitional youth, members of the post-socialist generation also argued that there were no activities available, despite the presence of a newly-established youth structure. This sheds light on how young people perceived available youth structures in post-socialism, and indicates that more attention should be given to the encouragement and recruitment of young people to youth organisations. Also, as the socialist context has demonstrated, strong youth participation in The Socialist Youth Alliance depended on its presence in different societal levels, including schools, neighbourhoods, and communities (Jere, 2003).

New evidence from this study reveals that a sudden social change radically altered youth understanding of civic engagement. This research demonstrates that the understanding of youth civic engagement developed within the political ideologies and social values of socialism and post-socialism. Socialist youth in Slovenia understood youth participation in a broader sense, focusing on self-organised and pre-designed activities. Analysis showed that these activities could be categorised as social, political, cultural, and leisure-time activities. Social inclusion and active participation in society were essential parts of their experiences, as recognised by previous research (e.g. Wallace & Kovacheva, 1998). Supported engagement based on principles of solidarity, cooperation, and mutual support underpinned participatory practices under socialism. Teachers and community members
encouraged youth initiatives and the inclusion of young people in social activities. Several participants mentioned that this type of supported engagement helped them to develop a strong sense of self-efficacy and initiative. This suggests that supported practices at all societal levels were crucial to youth understanding of civic engagement under socialism.

Some interviewees argued that individualised and commercial types of youth participation can expose young people to feelings of disengagement. Similar to this finding, individualisation of youth (Catan, 2004; Roberts, 2009) and capitalism have brought significant changes to the meaning of youth civic engagement in postsocialism. The lack of interest in youth matters by the post-socialist state resulted in the “disappearance of youth” from the public sphere, and the social role of youth has not been recognised as important (Ule, 2009, 2012). Individual engagement became a recognised type of engagement among transitional and post-socialist youth. Practices of supported engagement were replaced with activities that were focused on self-actualisation and leisure time. This corresponds with the literature (Ule, 2000; Lavrič et al., 2011) which shows that individualised forms of participation were prevalent among post-socialist youth. Personal development and individual decisions became the main characteristics of youth engagement. The role of teachers and community leaders was minor in this context, while families became the main promoters of youth participation.

This study also showed that youth civic engagement in Slovenia has to develop in consultation with young people. This corresponds with Hopma and Sergeant’s (2015) and UNESCO (2011) reports, which show that positive engagement of youth in matters that affect their lives (e.g. educational planning) is required. As demonstrated in the findings, Chapter Five, youth across generations showed a willingness to contribute to youth civic engagement activities and practices in Slovenia. For instance, socialist youth had the opportunity to participate in pre-designed and self-designed activities. However, their accounts demonstrated that there was a lack of youth participation in policy and communal decisions linked to
Youth civic engagement activities. This trend continued with younger generations, who experienced a deterioration of conditions in the area of youth participation in the public sphere. This suggests that the development of a more integrative youth work sector supported by the state is required in order to identify and develop practices of youth civic engagement in accordance with youth social values and needs.

6.2.3 Objective Three: To compare perceived differences in risk and coping with transitions to adulthood across three generations of young people (socialist, transitional, and post-socialist) in Slovenia

Exploring generational experiences with transitions to adulthood and coping in the context of social change corresponded with the third objective of this PhD dissertation. This section examines how socio-political change influences youth experiences with transitions to adulthood. Particularly, it discusses challenges and coping strategies used to overcome those challenges in respective social contexts.

**Key Finding:** Supported and individualised transitions to adulthood are recognised in socialist and post-socialist contexts. Coping mechanisms, such as supported youth engagement and societal care are ingrained in socialist society. Individualised transitions expose youth to more challenging experiences with transitions to adulthood under post-socialism. Reliance on personal or family resources, are used as coping strategies to overcome risks connected with transitions.

This study demonstrated that socio-political contexts influence the transition from childhood to adulthood. Smooth and linear transitions to adulthood have already been recognised under socialism (Ule & Rener, 2000). However, data analysis showed that youth pathways to adulthood were designed and planned by the socialist state. Interviewees were all exposed to similar practices of state intervention, but their ability to make individual decisions regarding education or employment was
significantly limited. The majority associated smooth and risk-free transitions with social security and a welfare regime which provided them with financial independence. As discussed in Chapter Three, state support included social benefits, internships, scholarships, and available jobs for youth (Mandič, 1996; Wallace and Kovacheva, 1998; Roberts 2009). On the contrary, blurred and hazardous transitions to adulthood are recognised among transitional and post-socialist youth (Kovacheva, 2001, Kuhar, 2009; Kuhar & Reiter, 2012). The accounts from these interviewees demonstrated more choice available in spheres of work and education and increasing motivation in making decisions in these spheres of life. However, the Slovenian state did not support young people, which was a factor in the unpredictable nature of transitions to adulthood.

Data analysis revealed two types of transitions to adulthood that emerged in socialist and post-socialist contexts: supported and individualised. Supported transitions under socialism included holistic state and societal support that derived from socialist values - emphasising solidarity, cooperation, and help (Azanjac et al., 2012). As reported by most participants, teachers and community workers played a crucial role in nurturing, guiding, and supporting young people on a daily basis. Adults also supported youth engagement in social activities. One participant suggested that their role was more pedagogical than merely supportive. However, as this research demonstrates, those strategies can become obsolete due to rapid socio-political change. Similar to Burrell (2011), this research shows that transitional youth experienced “double transitions”. A sudden socio-political transformation coincided with their transitions to adulthood. Their stories indicated that supportive and communal practices in primary school were replaced with individualised experiences with transitions in secondary school. As this research illustrates, in the context of “double transitions”, youth disinterest was a part of the developmental process, but it also coincided with wider societal apathy and a lack of support. Transitional youth discussed this emerging apathy, particularly in relation to teachers. Finally, individualised and privatised transitions to adulthood were recognised under post-socialism. Transitions were not nurtured by society (teachers, adults, social activities), which forced young people to rely on personal sources and resources of
support (Rener, 2000, 2002). The outcomes of pathways to adulthood in this setting hugely depended on parents’ support.

Similar to Gilligan’s research (2009), this PhD thesis showed that a secure base (e.g. routine and relationships with other people) is crucial for successful transitions to adulthood. However, macro systems and institutions can contribute hugely to the establishment of youth perceptions of a secure base. This corresponds with other research (e.g. Gunnestad, 2006, 2010; Bottrell, 2009; Theron et al., 2011) which shows that cultures, social institutions and social contexts can play a protective role for youth coping. Socialist youth, for example, argued that schools and community institutions provided conditions for easier adjustments in new environments. Practices of supported engagement exposed individuals with access to various social activities during transitions which were considered beneficial, especially when they still had to adapt to a new school routine. Access to diverse social spaces exposed participants to wider social networks which helped youth to embrace new encounters in new educational settings. On the other hand, the withdrawal of institutional support made adjustment to routines and encounters with people in new social settings harder, as pointed out by transitional and post-socialist youth. Several participants mentioned that the adaption to new social settings was contextual and dependent on luck. That was clearly demonstrated in the story of one participant, who pointed out that a structured daily routine and strong relationships with peers in secondary school were replaced with competitive, individualised experiences at university. This is an important message for the area of youth and life transitions in general, as it shows that exposure to new routines and encounters hugely impacts people’s experiences with transitions.

Different types of transitions to adulthood have a major impact on youth perceptions of these transitions as risky. As demonstrated in the findings Chapter Five, supported transitions under socialism resulted in limited perceptions of risk among youth. This study showed that the provision of a high security net provided by the socialist state to be positive. Linear and predictable pathways to adulthood equipped youth with a
feeling of control over their life choices. Also, the availability of engagement in various social spaces and activities proved to be beneficial. As one participant recounted, engagement in youth activities encouraged him to set new goals when he did not pass an entry exam for secondary school.

In contrast, transitional and post-socialist youth considered their transitions to adulthood as challenging and confusing. Words such as “shock”, “crisis” and “horror” were used to depict their experiences with transitions. This is a very indicative finding, as it shows that a sudden socio-political transformation resulted in an increased perception of risk among this population. As argued by Rener (2002), young people in post-socialism are more frightened about the progress of life than is really necessary. Findings in Chapter Five demonstrated that when life transitions became “privatised”, the outcomes of these transitions became less equal—on many occasions, individuals were unable to cope with the change. This is reflective of the period when neo-liberal and neo-conservative policies towards youth in Slovenia had been implemented (Ule, 2012). Several participants considered transitions as moments when they “got lost” and “experienced major problems” in their lives. Findings showed that lost connections with friends, a lack of adult support, and the absence of initiatives in a new social context exposed young individuals to feelings of isolation. For example, one participant pointed out that previous socialist practices were replaced with competition and individualism, which exposed her to anxiety and personal problems. The data in this study clearly shows that state and societal care is crucial during transitions to adulthood: this needs to be addressed by policy makers and youth workers in Slovenia.

Knowledge and experiences of the socialist generation were not applicable to the new post-socialist context. Similar to Kuhar and Reiter’s research (2012), findings in this study also showed that rapid socio-political and economic change had a huge impact on social relationships, values, and practices. Previous practices, based on the strength of cooperation and mutual relationships, were replaced with ideas of personal responsibility and individualism. Young people mentioned changing styles
of parenting and increasing reliance on families to be paramount in this context (Rener, 2000; Ule, 2009, 2012). However, parents did not have experiences with these changes, considering that their upbringing took place within a context in which communities and state were strongly present in young people’s lives. For example, several young people explained that they could not rely on their families when facing the challenges posed by transitions. At the same time, an apathy and disorientation were recognised among adults who worked with youth, too. Previous values related to schooling, knowledge, and worldviews were not recognised as important anymore. This requires special attention from future researchers, who must consider the responses of people to social change. As demonstrated in the findings, newly established social patterns and relationships can hugely disturb people’s perceptions of society, and can have major implications for other types of life transitions also. In this regard, it is worth considering how sudden socio-political changes impacted cultural knowledge and strategies for coping and resilience, and how other social groups responded to such changes.

The shift from a holistic nurturing of youth to dependence on individual resources is strongly present in the narrative of transitional youth. This study demonstrated that youth transitions also reflect typical adolescent behaviour (Compas, Orosan & Grant, 1993) which is connected with the development of new roles and responsibilities. One participant remembered that she had to learn how to be on her own, and to assume greater personal responsibility in order to deal with the changes inherent in transitions. At the same time, it is interesting that these types of stories were not prevalent among socialist youth. As demonstrated by transitional youth, their experiences are more ambivalent and depend on individual context and sources. Youth protective and coping processes were ingrained in the socialist context within practices of supported engagement and wider societal support. As already noted by Dolan (2010, 2012), young people who are civically engaged have access to wider sources of support. An intriguing finding in this research was that young people who were engaged in youth activities and were socially integrated did not perceive transitions to adulthood as challenging. But the withdrawal of institutional support during transitions required individuals to rely on personal resources and skills.
Transitional and post-socialist youth developed different coping strategies within the context of social change. Reliance on individual resources and capacities were recognised as the main strategies used in these cases. Similar to Rener’s (2000) and Ule’s and Rener’s (2000) studies, this research showed that reliance on individual resourcefulness makes such transitions riskier for younger generations. Coping strategies mentioned by youth in this context were self-activation and self-dependence (Roberts, 2009). One of them explained how resolving problems during transitions to adulthood involves long-term planning and personal engagement in finding solutions. Surprisingly, few of them mentioned that a change in social setting or a move to a new social context was an important coping strategy at the time. Youth wishing to explore something new in a different social context corresponded with a developmental stage of youth and it showed that more flexible transitions exposed youth to such opportunities. At the same time, these opportunities are not recognised by all youth, which indicated that family resources had a huge impact on such decisions.

6.2.4 Objective Four: To compare state provision of opportunities for youth across three generations (socialist, transitional, and post-socialist) in Slovenia

Finally, the fourth objective discusses the main findings related to the state provision of opportunities for youth under socialism and post-socialism. Social change has had a major impact on the state provision of opportunities for youth and the meaning young people prescribe to those opportunities. The data shows that youth resilience is a social construct connected with opportunities and resources young people can access in society. This section discusses these changes in detail.
Key Finding: The role of youth in society, state provided opportunities and resources for young people have altered in the context of social change. These changes have been acknowledged within narratives of nostalgia for socialism which emerged as an important theme in people’s stories across generations. This research shows that youth resilience is a social construct which meaning changes in place and time.

This research showed that opportunities and the role young people have in society are inextricably intertwined. An active and inclusive role of youth under socialism corresponded with the ideological nature of the socialist state (Wallace & Kovacheva, 1998). Socialist youth pointed out that, for them, social inclusion was taken for granted. As discussed by one participant, young people were expected to develop “all-round personalities” which was often a prerequisite for their engagement in different spheres of society. Other examples demonstrated that youth development was holistic, and was tightly connected with social environments in which youth participated on a daily basis. An interesting finding in this regard was that social inclusion resulted in youth empowerment and increased interest in social affairs, as discussed by most of the participants. This suggests that taking an active role in society has a positive impact on personal and societal development. On the contrary, post-socialist youth argued that their invisible role in society particularly influenced their prolonged transitions to adulthood and their financial dependence on their families. What the data revealed is that the socio-political change brought about these different experiences of growing up among transitional and post-socialist youth. Stories of social disengagement and wider societal disinterest in young people’s lives were important findings in this context. As pointed out by several participants, social apathy resulted in feelings of isolation and redundancy. Particularly during secondary school, the disappearance of youth from the public sphere had a negative impact on individuals’ lives: many of them struggled to find their places in society.
An unexpected finding that emerged in this thesis was the impact of diminished social welfare support for transitional and post-socialist youth. The socio-political transformation had a devastating impact on public access to resources and support that young people need when they are exposed to significant life challenges. The socialist state provided a high welfare security net in the form of internships, scholarships, full employment, and access to lodgings for young people (Wallace & Kovacheva, 1998; Roberts, 2009). Transitional youth argued that the shift from socialism to capitalism resulted in a lack of public spaces, an absence of scholarships, insecurities on the job market, and a lack of available lodgings or accommodation. Data analysis showed a rapid shift from state care to individual responsibility. A lack of state regulation and a free-market provision of employment proved to have a negative impact on younger generations’ employment and lodging experiences. Several young people said that the social change brought unregulated conditions in the sphere of work. If socialist youth experienced fixed but secure job opportunities, then their younger cohorts reported limited choice and insecurity in terms of employment. Financial support provided by families became crucial in a post-socialist context. However, findings in Chapter Five showed that these changes can have major implications for young people’s lives, such as unequal access to opportunities. At the same time, negative practices such as underpayment and the increased exploitation of youth at work were reported by a few young people.

The financial crisis in 2008 had exacerbated these conditions. Post-socialist youth discussed a lack of jobs and a strong reliance on families’ and friends’ connections when searching for employment. A number of participants noted that family support and resources were crucial when they were applying for a flat loan or searching for a job. Financial dependence prolonged youth staying with their families of origin (Mandič, 2007; Kuhar & Reiter, 2012). As reported by one participant, this resulted in increased conflict among family members. Another post-socialist youth participant commented that staying with one’s parents until one’s mid-thirties is not ideal. This suggests that fast social changes may not correspond with people’s perceptions of adulthood and can influence family and intergenerational conflicts.
Findings across generations demonstrated that young people associated life opportunities—such as education, jobs, accommodation, and family formation—with social security and financial independence. This has not been previously identified by researchers in Slovenia, and therefore provides new evidence to the field of youth studies. Similar to Ungar’s study (2008), this research showed that opportunities and meanings that youth prescribe to these opportunities are linked with youth coping and resilience. As pointed out by socialist youth, their experiences with full and secure employment, a prospective future, and secure accommodation resulted in non-risky transitions to adulthood and faster independence from young people’s families of origin. An interesting finding in this regard was that socialist youth found these conditions crucial for their understanding of risk and coping (Objective Three). This suggests that state provision of social security, including financial resources and practices which help youth to develop independence, are paramount in this context.

On the contrary, several transitional youth participants argued that, due to individualisation of life and a lack of public support, they were exposed to riskier pathways to adulthood. Yet, data analysis showed that despite deteriorations in state provision of social security (Roberts, 2009), younger generations continue to link adulthood with the same processes. Younger generations continue to associate “adulthood” with financial independence and a secure life. For example, one post-socialist youth participant pointed out that insecure job prospects exposed her to fear about her future. This sheds light on how socialist ideas of social security were transferred from older to younger generations, while state-provided opportunities and resources radically changed.

In a similar way to national nostalgia, used as the core framework in the study of resilience in post-socialist youth in Russia (Didkowsky & Ungar, 2010), nostalgia for socialism refers to the way people across generations try to make sense of a sudden socio-political transformation, involving new value systems, ideologies, and social expectations. Findings in Chapter Five showed how young people across
generations associated coping processes with opportunities for social engagement, social inclusion, and state support for gaining financial independence. Experiences with those processes in socialism and post-socialism were different, but interestingly, young people had similar aspirations and societal expectations. As argued by Velikonja (2008a), nostalgia for socialism does not reflect a mere reality of the past, but it presents dissatisfaction with the current situation and a yearning for times that never existed. To understand what nostalgia for socialism represents for the meaning of coping and resilience, it is crucial to discuss state versus individual provision of sources and resources. Although younger generations have been exposed to the reverse practices of public disengagement and “domestification” (Ule, 2012), they continued to associate coping and resilience with available societal opportunities and resources. This is a strong message to policy-makers, who should consider the importance of cultural and societal views on coping and resilience being transferred to younger generations via older cohorts.

Similar to previous research (i.e. Ungar, 2008; Bottrell, 2009; Schoon, 2012), this study argues that the meaning of resilience develops in a social context. Resilience is “ordinary magic” (Masten, 2001, 2014) which derives from positive relationships, opportunities and resources available in society. Yet, a unique finding in this PhD dissertation is that political ideologies and social policies have a major impact on development of resilience processes and outcomes. State provided opportunities and resources for young people enabled secure and “smooth” transitions to adulthood under socialism. Protective mechanisms (i.e. societal care, social support and youth civic engagement) which enabled youth coping were ingrained in all societal systems (e.g. state, communities, schools and families). In this context, resilience is understood as a social process which develops between individuals and their social contexts. Individualisation of youth and limited access to state provided opportunities and resources intensified youth perceptions of risk under post-socialism. Unsupported transitions referred to a lack of societal and state support. Protective mechanisms which were under socialism embedded in all societal layers have been dismantled. Reliance on individual resources and help (Objective Three) and the absence of state and societal support resulted in the individualisation of
coping and resilience (Wilkinson, 2001; Bottrell, 2009, 2013). The neoliberal aspect of coping and resilience (Evans & Reid, 2014), which is associated with individualism and responsibility for oneself, corresponds with the political agenda of the post-socialist state. This is a significant finding in this study as it shows that social change radically impacted the meaning of resilience in Slovenia - from a social to an individual process. This suggests that wider socio-political contexts, ideologies, and values have a major impact on youth understanding of coping and resilience.

6.3 Conceptual Framework
This study has demonstrated that there are several interconnected components which need to be included in order to research youth coping and resilience in the context of social change. The findings in this study support the conceptual framework presented in Chapter Two which highlights the connection between access to resources, social support, youth civic engagement and youth coping as aspects of individual resilience. This model (Figure 6.1) is revisited here in the light of the research findings.
Socio-Ecological Approach to Research on Coping and Resilience

It was evident that wider social ecologies have a strong influence on youth coping and resilience. Similar to Ungar (2008), findings in this research show opportunities and the meaning youth prescribe to those opportunities are crucial for youth coping and resilience. Socio-political and economic systems, cultural and social values create conditions and generate possibilities for young people in the context of social change. As shown in Chapter Five, young people prescribe different meanings to opportunities under socialism and post-socialism. Under socialism, state provided opportunities and recognition of youth as active social actors provides individuals with more equal access to resources. A distribution of resources via state welfare system exposes young individuals to equal, but limited opportunities during their transitions to adulthood. Lack of state provided opportunities, welfare support and
“disappearance of youth” from the public sphere strengthens the importance of families in provision of resources. On one hand reliance on family resources exposes young individuals to more opportunities and choices, but also increases chances for youth being excluded from these opportunities. Nostalgia for socialism is recognised as the prevalent social attitude towards distribution of resources and opportunities across generations. This indicates that despite the changing social context, youth still consider state provided support as crucial for successful transitions to adulthood.

**Protective Factors**

It is evident that there is a significant link between external protective mechanisms embedded on different societal levels, including families, schools, communities and a state, and youth coping and resilience. As argued by Masten et al. (2004), protective factors are nurtured by societies and cultures. However, as shown in this thesis, a sudden socio-political transformation has a huge impact on these protectors. External protective factors (resources) contribute significantly to youth coping and resilience. These resources are available in settings in which youth participate on a daily basis, including, families, schools and communities. A link between macro-system (e.g. state and political ideologies) and other levels of society has to be considered when researching what type of resources are available for youth in these settings. Social policies and social values determine in what ways these resources are distributed and also navigated by young people. As shown in this study, socialist and neo-liberal social policies have different effect on youth coping due to different distribution of resources among youth. This also indicates that there is a link between resources and assets. Personal skills required for coping in diverse social contexts depend on available resources. For example, knowledge and coping strategies applicable to one social context are not necessarily relevant in changing social setting. In this regard, there is a dynamic relationship between a social context, resources, assets, youth coping and resilience. The changing nature of protective processes due to socio-political transformation is particularly evident within practices of social support and youth civic engagement.
Social Support
Social support and relationships with other people are crucial for youth coping and resilience (Dolan, 2011; Shaw et al., 2012). Reciprocal exchange of help between friends and peers is particularly important for young individuals. Friends as “natural helpers” (Canavan & Dolan, 2000; Pinkerton & Dolan, 2007) perform an important role during the social change when other sources of support are missing. Similar to Williams, Barclay and Schmied (2004), this model shows the wider social ecologies have a significant impact on organisation, provision and perception of social support. As demonstrated in the Slovenian context, holistic provision of support under socialism has been replaced by individual and family sources of support under post-socialism. A wider societal care and holistic provision of support in all spaces in which youth participate on a daily basis prove to be important for successful transition to adulthood for majority young people. Relationships with teachers and other adults outside of a family are important sources of help and assistance during transitions to adulthood. On the contrary, individualised sources of support (e.g. family) are exclusive and not available to individuals to the same extent. Reliance only on this type of support can be a burden for providers and recipients.

Youth Civic Engagement
Practices of youth civic engagement develop in a social and personal context (Zaff, Kawashima-Ginsberg & Lin, 2010). Social inclusion and engagement exposes young individuals to wider networks of relationships with other people. Promotion and support of youth civic engagement in all spaces in which youth participate equips young people with social skills, nurtures self-initiative and their onward looking behaviour. Supported engagement as an emerged concept demonstrates that youth civic engagement can be promoted by all stakeholders working with young individuals on a daily basis. As shown in the findings Chapter Five, lack of youth activities and structural lag have strong implications for youth experiences with social participation. Lack of societal opportunities for youth engagement increases chances for youth involvement in alternative practices of social gathering, which may not be necessarily positive and satisfactory. Practices of individual forms of youth civic engagement provide young people with a wider choice of participatory
activities. However, these opportunities are highly dependent on family resources and support.

**Coping with Youth Transitions to Adulthood**

Macro conditions have a strong impact on youth experiences with transitions to adulthood. Resources available to youth, such as material support and available social opportunities (e.g. internships and jobs) shape the course of transitions. At the same time, involvement in youth civic activities and relationships with other people are recognised as important tools to nurture youth coping and resilience. Youth experience smoother transitions to adulthood within practices of supported engagement and holistic provision of support. In accordance with Dolan (2010), this research shows that engagement in social activities exposes young people to a wider set of relationships and support, while adaptation to a new daily routine is easier. Secure base (Gilligan, 2009) developed in relationship with other people and engagement with new daily routines, prove to be important for youth perceptions of transitions being (non) risky. This proves to be particularly important during transitions to adulthood, as practices of youth engagement, and support deriving from relationships with different people (e.g. teachers, community members and friends) enables a quick adaptation to a new setting. The absence of support and engagement results in perception of transitions as challenging. In this context, reliance on personal resources and assets (e.g. self-reliance as a coping strategy) is recognised as a core protective mechanisms.

**6.4 Conclusion**

This chapter provided a discussion of the research findings in relation to the research objectives in light of the available literature. The discussion demonstrated that youth experiences with social support, youth civic engagement, youth coping as aspects of resilience develop in a social context. The socio-political transformation has had a major impact on organisation and provision of support for youth. At the same time, opportunities, structures and meanings of youth civic engagement develop in social and individual contexts. As shown in this research, an active role of youth needs to
be promoted in order to support youth activities and development of self-initiative in young individuals. A comparison between supported and individualised transitions to adulthood showed there is a need for establishment of secure base in youth so they can experience successful transitions to adulthood. This section also demonstrated that practices of supported engagement and holistic support proved to be important for youth development. The last objective clearly indicated that state provision of opportunities and support is essential in order to nurture youth coping and resilience in all youth during transitions to adulthood. The tentative conceptual model was revisited in accordance to these findings. In the light of this discussion, the last chapter considers a set of policy, practice and research recommendations in order to inform future work.
Chapter Seven: Conclusion - Recommendations for Research, Policy and Practice

7.1 Introduction
This thesis aimed to investigate the link between youth civic engagement, social support and youth coping as aspects of resilience in the context of Slovenia as a changing state. Chapter One introduced the purpose of this investigation and stated the need for researching the roles of protective factors and youth coping in the context of social change. In Chapter Two the reader is introduced to the relevant literature and knowledge on the topic of resilience, youth, youth coping, youth civic engagement, and social support. Chapter Three contextualised this study by outlining the main socio-political characteristics of Slovenia and Slovenian youth. A narrative methodological framework was used to research the topic in the context of social change, as outlined in Chapter Four. Chapter Five presented relevant findings inside and across generations growing up under socialism, during the transition to post-socialism, and under post-socialism. Chapter Six provided a discussion of these findings in relation to the key objectives and aims of this project. This chapter also indicated the relevance of the conceptual framework (developed in Chapter Two) for researching youth coping and resilience in the context of social change. This, concluding, chapter presents some final conclusions and recommendations for future research, policy and practice.

7.2 Research Rationale and Aim of the Study
Youth civic engagement and social support have been recognised as important protective factors which enable youth coping and resilience. However, what impact a wider social context has on this link has been under researched. This is particularly important to explore in societies which have experienced a sudden social change, such as Slovenia. Slovenia has been exposed to a rapid socio-political transformation since the collapse of the former socialist Yugoslavia in the beginning of the 1990s. Young people in particular have been affected by this rapid socio-political
transformation. Three generations of youth discussed their perceived experiences with social support, youth civic engagement and coping under socialism, transition to democracy and post-socialism. The findings in this study support the conceptual framework presented in Chapter Two, which shows that protective mechanisms develop in a social context.

The overarching aim of the study was to explore how socio-political transformation influences the provision of protective mechanisms and youth coping during transitions to adulthood, with particular emphasis on social support and youth civic engagement.

The next section provides a short summary of the main theoretical, methodological, and practical aspects of the study.

7.3 Theoretical and Methodological Framework of the Thesis
The main area of interest for this research concerned young people’s growing up experiences in the context of social change. This study developed around theoretical areas of resilience, youth, youth coping, youth civic engagement, and social support. These key areas illustrated the main ideas that are relevant for this research and were reviewed in Chapter Two. A socio-ecological approach to coping and resilience was used in order to examine youth growing up experiences in the context of social change.

A qualitative framework was applied to explore this link within diverse socio-political contexts. Twenty people discussed their experiences with growing up under socialism, the transition to post-socialism, and post-socialism. A combination of narrative and semi-structured interviews was used to explore their perceived experiences with youth civic engagement, social support, and coping. A narrative
approach was used to make sense of the data and to translate meanings across social contexts and cultures.

### 7.4 Key Research Findings

The key findings are linked to a corresponding objective and grouped under four headings, as outlined below. Table 7.1 lists research objectives and corresponding key findings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Key Finding</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To compare perceived differences in social support across three generations (socialist, transitional, and post-socialist) in Slovenia</td>
<td>There is a significant change in the perception of social support across generations. Socialist youth associate support with the holistic provision of help from macro to micro-societal layers. Transitional youth report about experiences with individualised and fragmented support, while friends are recognised as central sources of help. A withdrawal of state support is recognised in accounts of post-socialist youth. Reliance on family support becomes a prevalent form of support in this social context.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To compare perceived differences in youth civic engagement across three generations of young people (socialist, transitional, and post-socialist) in Slovenia</td>
<td>Youth civic engagement evolves from available opportunities and practices generated by diverse socio-political contexts and associated ideologies. Political systems prescribe a social role to youth, while the status youth have in society impacts how youth initiatives and activities are supported on different societal layers. Youth voices should be included in examining the meaning of youth civic engagement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To compare perceived differences in risk</td>
<td>Supported and individualised transitions to</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.1 lists research objectives and corresponding key findings.
and coping with transitions to adulthood across three generations of young people (socialist, transitional, and post-socialist) in Slovenia

Adulthood are recognised in socialist and post-socialist contexts. Coping mechanisms, such as supported youth engagement and societal care are ingrained in socialist society. Individualised transitions expose youth to more challenging experiences with transitions to adulthood under post-socialism. Reliance on personal or family resources, are used as coping strategies to overcome risks connected with transitions.

To compare state provision of opportunities for youth across three generations (socialist, transitional, and post-socialist) in Slovenia

Nostalgia for socialism emerged as an important theme in people’s narratives across generations. This nostalgia needs to be considered in connection with state provision of opportunities and societal care for young people. Youth resilience is a social construct and its meaning evolves within a relationship between individuals and wider socio-political discourses.

Table 7.1: List of research objectives and corresponding key findings

7.4.1 Diverse socio-political and economic contexts have a strong influence on the organisation, provision, and perception of social support by and for young people

As shown in this study, social contexts have a strong impact on the organisation, provision, and perception of social support. Under socialism, a holistic provision of support was generated on all societal levels, while families and friends were recognised as the main sources of support under post-socialism. Socialist youth relied on sources of support beyond members of their own families, such as teachers and community members. Youth experiences indicated that material and emotional support provided by sources beyond family members may have strong implications for youth development. On the contrary, the withdrawal of state support exposed younger generations to decreased perceptions of societal support. Social support is
fragmented, while reliance on friends, peers, and family members is essential for post-socialist youth. In this context, access to support beyond family members is limited, and opportunities to access support are no longer equal. Peer mentoring was discussed as a core practice nurtured among socialist youth, but post-socialist youth shared no stories of peer-mentoring. This research also shows that young people across generations found friends and peers to be the most important sources of support. Friendship is based on a reciprocal exchange of help.

7.4.2 Youth civic engagement evolves from the available opportunities generated by diverse socio-political systems and associated ideologies

Socio-political systems prescribe a social role to youth. Moreover, the status youth have within a society impacts the way in which youth initiatives and activities are supported across different societal layers, including schools and communities. Under socialism, young people were considered to be active builders of the socialist society, while the capitalist state no longer considers the social role of youth to be of importance. Thus, patterns of continuity and discontinuity with regard to youth civic engagement were recognised across generations. Some youth engagement practices continue across the generations; for example, primary schools have been the main providers of activities for youth, while secondary schools have not been as involved in the organisation of youth activities. Yet, discontinuities were recognised in connection with community and state-provided youth activities. Socialist youth structures (e.g. the Alliance of Socialist Youth) dissolved, and were not replaced with new ones. This, as transitional youth reported, resulted in a structural lag. In comparison, post-socialist youth recognised the importance of the newly established youth club as a meeting place for young people—an example of the way in which the privatisation and commercialisation of society brought about new, individualised types of youth activities.

These processes have also had an impact on the perceived meaning of youth civic engagement among younger generations. The concept of “supported engagement”, prevalent in the stories of socialist youth, was replaced with an idea of
individualised engagement” for transitional and post-socialist youth. Individualised experiences were recognised as activities intended to foster youth needs and personal development. Yet, a surprising finding that emerged from the data was that younger generations continued to associate youth civic engagement with social inclusion and participation in public life.

7.4.3 Supported and individualised transitions to adulthood are recognised in socialist and post-socialist contexts
Youth perceptions of risk and coping examined within youth experiences with transitions to adulthood prove to have different meanings across social contexts. The socialist group did not find transitions to adulthood risky, but associated such transitions with supported engagement, state-provided opportunities, and resources, including internships, scholarships, jobs, and available housing. Individualised, and more challenging, pathways to adulthood were reported by transitional and post-socialist youth. This implies that youth transitions to adulthood are nurtured differently according to the values and ideologies of a specific political and economic context. As shown here, supported engagement and societal care—recognised social practices under socialism—were replaced with individual engagement and resources applicable to post-socialism. The development of coping strategies in accordance within a specific social context was a unique finding recognised in this study. Under socialism, protective factors were ingrained in all settings in which young people participated on a daily basis. However, knowledge and experiences applicable to a socialist context could not be used in a post-socialist setting. Coping is associated with individual resourcefulness and self-help. A comparison of generations also reveals that meanings of risk, youth coping, and resilience vary across different social contexts.

7.4.4 Nostalgia for socialism is used to explain the meaning of state provision of opportunities across generations
Surprisingly, nostalgia for socialism emerged as a theme that spanned generations. State provided resources and opportunities emerged as an important finding in
connection with the organisation of youth activities, social support, and youth coping. As shown in this research, there was a radical change in state provision of those opportunities. The strong state support that existed under socialism has diminished, exposing younger generations to unequal access to opportunities. Despite having more choice available in the sphere of work and education, youth reported precarious and insecure conditions in the area of employment. At the same time, younger generations continue to link adulthood with social security and financial independence. Participants expressed strong expectations from the state in terms of provision of support and opportunities for young people.

7.5 Recommendations for Future Research, Policy and Practice
This section provides recommendations which are applicable to future research, policy, and practice.

7.5.1 Recommendations for Policy and Practice
Youth Civic Engagement across All Contexts - One of the key messages of this study is that conditions and opportunities for engagement should be generated by all societal layers, such as state, local communities, and schools. Further development of youth engagement in a post-socialist context has to consider spaces, motives, ways, and opportunities for youth engagement. The participation of all young people, regardless of their financial, educational, or ethnic backgrounds, should be encouraged though a wider national youth civic engagement programme. Such a programme should be designed in consultation, organisation, and implementation with young people. All institutions in which young people participate on a daily basis should promote the social inclusion of young people in public life.

National and Local Promotion of Youth Civic Engagement - There is a need for promotion and implementation of youth civic engagement on national and community levels. As this research demonstrates, the lack of engagement activities is particularly apparent in secondary schools. Therefore, youth civic engagement programmes should focus on youth between the ages of 15 and 18. Both the
Slovenian state and local communities should provide opportunities for participation within spaces with which youth engage on a daily basis, such as secondary schools and universities. Policy makers and practitioners should consider how best to develop those practices in a changed social context in which individualised forms of engagement are recognised as a prevailing practice among youth.

**Development of Local Strategy to Engage Youth in Local Structures** - On a local level, current local structures, such as the youth club in Sežana, must develop a strategy for engaging young people into their activities more widely. This strategy should involve plans for the recruitment of youth, and should open the space for the initiation and implementation of youth ideas. Youth structures must implement strategies that appeal to as many young people as possible, and must establish social spaces, programmes, and initiatives that actively engage young people as well. At the same time, local communities and neighbourhoods should focus on cooperation with young individuals, and should make efforts to support their initiatives.

**Schools as Promoters of Youth Civic Engagement** - The role of schools in the organisation and provision of youth activities is crucial. Primary schools were recognised by most participants as the main providers of youth activities. On the other hand, secondary schools are no longer involved in the organisation of such activities. Policy makers should work towards a long term strategy that would focus on the provision of youth engagement activities at second level. Policy and practice must also recognise the role of teachers in the provision of support for youth initiatives. This investigation showed that adult-supported youth initiatives resulted in the empowerment of young individuals.

**State Support of Youth Transitions to Adulthood** - As discussed in Chapter Three (Context), the National Youth Programme 2012-2021 has recognised the need for a holistic approach to the provision of support for young people during transitions to adulthood. Minimising the challenges posed by such transitions should be one of the
goals of this programme. As demonstrated in this comparative research, state provision of opportunities in spheres which support youth financial independence, such as work and accommodation, is required. Strategic planning and regulation of accommodation and first employment for young people should be particularly acknowledged by this programme and other applicable policies. In consultation with young people and employers, policy makers should also consider increasing the numbers of paid internships, which would enable easier access to jobs and would promote young people’s financial independence. The state should consider its role in supporting young people: for example, it could establish different housing schemes, and offer incentives to public and private companies for providing internships and scholarships for youth.

Family Support as Recognised Practice of Social Support - Policy and practice should consider the other types of support that have become relevant in the new socio-political context, such as family support. The importance of adult support outside of young people’s immediate families should be recognised by policy makers and youth workers. A stronger policy focus on family support may benefit youth and their families. This may work particularly well in connection with youth transitions to adulthood, when youth and their families require more support than ever.

Institutional Nurturing of Secure Base (Routine and Relationships) in Youth - Social institutions in which youth participate on a daily basis should enable conditions for nurturing daily routines and relationships to support youth transitions to adulthood. As shown in this research, routines and relationships can be nurtured through engagement in different activities and the provision of institutional support. Supportive practices which would enable easier adaptation to new routines should be also considered and planned. Protective and coping processes can be ingrained in social settings in which young people participate, via practices of supported engagement and wider societal care. This aspect of coping and resilience should be contemplated in connection with other types of life transitions also. Policy makers should consider how to support people as they adapt to new roles and contexts at
different life stages. Social policy should provide conditions and available resources for implementing a variety of social spaces, programmes, and activities for engagement throughout an individual’s lifespan. Those programmes should ponder what activities and supportive practices are required by different groups of people, such as youth, older people, or the unemployed. For this reason, it is recommended that people who experience transitions are consulted about their needs and requirements, and are actively involved in the preparation of such programmes.

**Resilience as Concept should be Used with Caution** - Policy makers and practitioners should avoid applying the concept of youth coping and resilience uncritically as a solution to all youth problems. They should first examine the conditions in which young people live, and consider what meaning resilience has for them in that specific living environment. Furthermore, a unique approach to resilience (based on predetermined ideas of risk and coping) might lead to a false intervention strategy. Therefore, more attention should be given to developing coping strategies which correspond to a particular social context.

**Positive youth civic engagement and resilience should be promoted by states and governments** – A positive and integrative approach towards young people should be used by governments and states in connection with a current radicalisation of youth in Europe and across the world. There is a need to provide youth with relevant and accessible opportunities to engage meaningfully and constructively in their societies. Youth civic engagement and resilience should be used as tools for supporting positive youth development. States and national governments should develop youth programmes (in cooperation with young people) focused on active and positive social inclusion of youth on all societal layers. Social policies should provide access to equal opportunities, resources and social activities for all young people regardless of their ethnic origin, race and religion.
7.5.2 Recommendations for the research

The Relevance of Societal Care for Youth Coping and Resilience - Findings that arose during the course of this research reveal a potential for future research based on emerging concepts and ideas. The concept of societal care and its meaning for coping and resilience represents an area which deserves further exploration in other post-socialist countries. By developing a new research project, the meaning of societal care could be compared across cultures and countries. This aspect of research could contribute to a better understanding of the role of different societal layers, from macro to micro, in the provision of care for young people in order to consider in what ways those aspects of care influence youth coping and resilience.

Supported Engagement should be Researched Further - The emerging idea of supported engagement is another area which would be interesting to examine further. As shown in this study, the role of adults and social institutions in supporting and encouraging of youth engagement is pivotal. The relevance of this aspect should be examined particularly in societies in which practices of youth civic engagement are underdeveloped. The relevance of this idea, particularly for youth civic engagement and its link with the development of certain characteristics in young people—for example, self-initiative and other positive potential outcomes—should be explored. This research should apply diverse methodological designs, possibly using a mixed-methods approach, to test the validity of this concept for future research and practice.

Better Youth Voice in Research - Raised as a limitation of this research, the lack of people’s voices growing up today could be considered when planning a new research project. The youngest group—generations growing up since Slovenia entered the E.U. (2004)—were absent in this research. Examining their experiences with youth civic engagement, social support, youth coping, and resilience would contribute to further understanding of this link in Slovenia’s changing society. This project would also shed light on the impact of the individualisation process on youth participation, and would show the relevance of nostalgia for socialism for these new generations. There is also a need to include gender as an aspect of further studies. Taking gender
into account would more precisely analyse the processes through which both gender went during the socio-political change.

**Socio-Ecological Approach to Social Support** - The ways in which different welfare regimes and social policies affect people’s perceptions of social support needs further examination. The relevance of social policies and socio-political systems on the creation and perceptions of social support must be better integrated into future research. Research should particularly consider the link between values, ideologies, state policies, and developed supportive practices. This approach may especially consider how those supportive practices could be promoted across an individual’s lifespan.

**Influence of Social Change on Life Transitions** - Research should also examine what impact this socio-political transformation had on other types of life transitions. A more comparative approach of different types of transitions—for example, transition from work to retirement—would indicate more clearly what types of support and engagement individuals require in order to adjust to new living circumstances. This kind of study could also include different methodological approaches, including ethnographic or mixed methods research. This could contribute to a more holistic overview on the impact of the social change on people’s everyday lives.

**Political Discourses and Resilience** - This research also revealed the important interrelation between individual resilience and wider political narratives. This would shed light on a possible discrepancy between individual and state-promoted ideas of resilience. For instance, the concept of resilience is used uncritically in policy documents, being mostly linked with the development of personal skills or the ability to “bounce back”, which requires further attention. Further research should also analyse prevailing political discourses and should consider the link between social welfare systems and the meanings of resilience. In this regard, other types of
research methodologies, including a mixed-methods approach and longitudinal studies, would also be beneficial to further examination of the link between resilience and wider socio-political contexts.

**Researching Youth Coping and Resilience in other ex-Yugoslav Republics** – As shown in this research, the role of a state in provision of opportunities for young people has changed. In reverse, this has had a major impact on young people’s perceived experiences with coping and resilience. Future research should focus on a comparison of youth growing up experiences in all former Yugoslav republics. A comparative approach would show the relevance of the established link between the changing social context, youth coping and resilience across the republics.

**7.6 Concluding Remarks**

In this thesis, youth experiences of social support, youth civic engagement, transitions to adulthood, and state-provided opportunities in the context of social change were examined and compared. A combination of theoretical concepts brought together in the conceptual model has shown that wider ideological and societal processes have a significant influence on youth coping and resilience. This study demonstrated the ways in which protective factors can be ingrained in societies and cultures, and provokes a further study of the link between individual and societal resilience. It demonstrated that young people require support and social engagement during transitions to adulthood in order to cope with daily challenges posed by these transitions.

This thesis shows that the transition to capitalism contains unanticipated risks for young people. The socialist generation enjoyed secure, state-supported transitions to adulthood, which included the provision of stable, permanent jobs and affordable and available accommodation. In contrast, transitional and post-socialist youth have experienced prolonged transitions to adulthood. The withdrawal of state provision of
support and a lack of youth structures and social support have increased young individuals’ vulnerability. This has had consequences for young people’s access to opportunities and financial independence. In these circumstances, youth had to develop new strategies in order to respond to the challenges of transitioning to adulthood. They have shown more personal agency in making decisions, in areas such as schooling and lifestyle, and increased use of family social capital and networks. For example, family connections prove to be particularly important within the sphere of employment. However, not all families possess sufficient knowledge and resources to support their offspring. As a result of this, the lack of wider societal and state support can have a negative impact on future generations of young people, and may lead to social exclusion and poverty. In contrast to the socialist eras, young people are no longer considered to be active and valuable social actors, but as a “problem” to be addressed or solved. Youth work has been introduced in order to respond to youth challenges in this context. Yet, as presented in this thesis, this area of work is undervalued and underfunded in Slovenia.

Nostalgia for socialism has been recognised as an emerging theme in people’s narratives across generations. People’s accounts demonstrate that all three generations associate youth transitions and the idea of adulthood with the provision of equal opportunities in areas of education, jobs, and lodgings. This nostalgia demonstrates that wider societal care and state-provided support are required in order to ensure that those conditions are met. A strong, state-led strategy focused on youth work is needed in order to validate young people as important and valuable social actors. At the same time, conditions which would encourage youth participation in society need to be provided. Structures and youth participatory activities can be introduced for this purpose. Practices of youth civic engagement and social support can be promoted on all societal levels. In this regard, it is crucial to recognise young people as active agents in their own right, and to provide consistent, holistic support to youth initiatives and programmes on both community and state levels. At the same time, young people’s creativity, and their ability to contribute to and participate in society, should be affirmed and supported.
This investigation also sheds light on the conceptualisation of resilience. The contrasting contexts examined in this research clearly demonstrate the link between individual resilience and wider political narratives. As explained above, this has a significant impact on social processes that nurture resilience in youth. Furthermore, political narratives also have an impact on the meaning of resilience. Resilience research has been recently critiqued for encouraging ideas of self-governance and neoliberal thinking (Botrell, 2013; Evans & Reid, 2014). However, as shown in this dissertation, the concept has different meanings in diverse socio-political and economic contexts. This is a significant finding which indicates that resilience, as a concept, is not only associated with adaptation to risk and “bouncing back”, but also with aspirations for a social justice, equality and a better future.

As shown within the narratives of nostalgia for socialism, specific socio-political values are inspirational not only for individuals, but also for collective resilience. Despite the fact that younger generations were exposed to isolated transitions, in which ideas of reliance on individual resources and helping oneself were promoted by the state, these young people still associate resilience with supported engagement and available state resources. This link between the individual and the collective, and their embeddedness in specific political ideologies, requires more attention, as it shows that there may be a discrepancy between top-down and bottom-up discourses of resilience. This is particularly important in contemporary society, in which young people are expected to rely more extensively on personal resources, while state support has been withdrawn. Thus, individual resilience, especially during life transitions, must be nurtured within wider, societal processes which, in turn, should incorporate ideas of equality and social justice. Finally, apart from the creation of new knowledge, this research wishes to contribute and serve the interests of young people—in Slovenia, in wider post-socialist settings, and worldwide.
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Appendix A: Information sheet in English

Participant Information Sheet

Date:
Version: 1

Title of study: The influence of civic participation on resilience

Study Objective: The main objective of this research is to examine people’s experiences of civic participation and resilience across the generations in Slovenia.

You are being invited to take part in this research study. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why this research is being done and what it will involve. This Participation Information Sheet will tell you about the purpose, risks and benefits of this research study. If you agree to take part, we will ask you to sign a Consent Form. If there is anything that you are not clear about, I will be happy to explain it to you. Please take as much time as you need to read this document. You should only consent to participate in this research study when you feel that you understand what is being asked of you, and you have had enough time to think about your decision. Thank you for reading this.

Purpose of the study

This research is a part of a PhD focused on the influence of civic participation on resilience processes during transitions to adulthood. Civic participation relates to social activities, such as volunteering, helping out in community activities, or being involved in associations, for example student, youth clubs and community centres. Participation in these activities and networks helps people to cope with life difficulties, such as unemployment, poverty, personal problems etc. It contributes to development of resilience; protective and survival strategy when facing those situations. This research will focus on your experiences with civic activities in a growing up period and their impact on the development of coping mechanisms.

Who can take part in this study?
If you are between 18 and 24 years old or 50 and 55 years and have lived in the Kars region, Slovenia, you may participate in the study.

**Taking Part in the Study**

**Do I have to take part?**

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a Consent Form. If you are unsure or something is unclear to you, I will be happy to explain it to you. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time, or a decision not to take part, will not affect your rights in any way.

**What is involved?**

You will be asked to take part in an interview of between one and two hours about your experiences with civic activities (for example volunteering, ecological actions, working brigade activities, organising social events or similar) and social networks (participating in local, student, youth associations, non-governmental organisations, etc.) and their affect on your lives when growing up. The interview will take place in a comfortable and confidential space. With your permission this interview will be audio recorded.

**What are the benefits in taking part?**

By taking part in this research you will have an opportunity to have your voice heard and to contribute to the debate around the impact of civic participation on people's lives in Slovenia.

**What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?**

The risk of upset is minimal but at the end of the interview I will provide you with contact information about useful services should they be required.

**How are my Personal Data Protected?**

All the information collected about you during the course of this research is confidential and will not be shared with anyone else. The information collected in this research study will be stored in a way that protects your identity. We will store the original recordings securely until transcription have been made after which they will be destroyed. The transcriptions and notes made during the interview will be kept in a safe location in the premises of National University of Galway, Ireland for five years after which they will be destroyed. Results from the study will not identify you or others in any way.

**What happens at the end of the study?**
The data gathered from this study will be analysed as part of my doctoral research. The results from this study will be reported as group data in any publications and will not identify individuals in any way.

**What happens if I change my mind during the study?**

If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. Your rights will not be affected in any way if you decide to withdraw.

**What if I have a complaint during my participation in the study?**

If you have any questions or complaints before, during or after this study you can address them to the research supervisors listed at the end of this Participant Information Sheet. You may also contact the Chairperson of the NUI Galway Research Ethics Committee **c/o Office of the Vice President for Research, NUI Galway, ethics@nuigalway.ie.**

Thank you for taking the time to read this Participant Information Sheet.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions, suggestions or concerns you may have about the study:

Tanja Kovacic  
National University of Ireland, Galway,  
Child and Family Research Centre,  
School of Sociology and Political Science  
E-mail: t.kovacic1@nuigalway.ie  
gsm: 0038631212980

**Supervisors:**

Prof. Pat Dolan  
UNESCO Chair and Director  
Child and Family Research Centre  
School of Political Science and Sociology  
National University of Ireland, Galway  
Email: pat.dolan@nuigalway.ie  
Phone (Direct) 0035391492930

Dr. Anne Byrne  
Senior Lecturer  
Arus Moyola, Room 314  
School of Political Science and Sociology  
National University of Ireland, Galway  
Email: anne.byrne@nuigalway.ie  
Phone: 0035391493035

If you have any concerns about this study and wish to contact someone independent and in confidence, you may contact the Chairperson of the NUI Galway Research Ethics Committee; **c/o Office of the Vice President for Research, NUI Galway, ethics@nuigalway.ie**
Appendix B: Consent form in English

CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: Participation and resilience in Slovenia: a retrospective and contemporary account

Name of Researcher: Tanja Kovacic

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read the information sheet dated....... (version.....) for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions. 

2. I am satisfied that I understand the information provided and have had enough time to consider the information.

3. I agree to this interview being audio recorded.

4. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, without my legal rights being affected.

5. I agree to take part in the above study.

Name of Participant Date Signature

Researcher Date Signature
Informacije o raziskavi

Datum:

Naziv raziskave: Razumevanje družbene participacije, spopadanja z življenjskimi izzivi in družbene pomoči v kontekstu socialistične in post-socialistične Slovenije

Namen raziskave: Raziskava namerava raziskati medgeneracijske izkušnje z družbeno participacijo, spopadanjem z življenjskimi izzivi in družbeno pomočjo v obdobju socializma in post-socializma na Krasu, Slovenija.


Namen raziskave

Ta raziskava je del doktorske disertacije, ki preučuje vpliv kulture na družbeno participacijo, spopadanje z življenjskimi izzivi in družbeno pomoč v obdobju odraščanja. Zlasti se osredotoči na izkušnje z aktivnostmi v okolju odraščanja, življenjskimi izzivi v tem obdobju in njihovimi vplivi na življenje mladih.

Kdo lahko sodeluje v raziskavi?

K sodelovanju ste vabljeni, v kolikor ste stari med 18 in 52 let in ste odraščali na področju slovenskega Krasa.

Sodelovanje v raziskavi

Ali je sodelovanje obvezno?
Sodelovanje v raziskavi je prostovoljno in vanj vas ne sme nihče prisiliti. V kolikor se odločite za sodelovanje, vas bom prosiš, da podpišete izjavo o sodelovanju. V kolikor česa ne razumete, sem vam na razpolago za dodatna pojasnila. V kolikor ne želite sodelovati v raziskavi ali želite izstopiti iz nje, lahko to v kateremkoli trenutku, brez dodatnega pojasnila, tudi storite.

Kako poteka raziskava?

Raziskava bo potekala v obliki intervjuja, ki bo trajal približno 1 do 1,5 ure. V intervjuju vas bom spraševala o vaših izkušnjah z odraščanjem na Krasu, sodelovanjem v družbenih aktivnostih (npr. prostovoljne dejavnosti, organiziranje družbenih dogodkov, sodelovanje v prosto-časovnih aktivnostih, kot npr. športne, kulture, itd.) ter vaše izkušnje z izzivi v omenjenem življenjskem obdobju. Intervju bo potekal na ustrezni, javno dostopni lokaciji. Z vašim privoljenjem se bo intervju snemal.

Kakšne so prednosti sodelovanja?

V kolikor se boste odločili za sodelovanje v raziskavi, boste imeli priložnost izraziti vaše mnenje in boste pomembno prispevali k nadaljnji razpravi o odraščanju na Krasu.

Ali je sodelovanje v raziskavi tvegano?

Sodelovanje ne prinaša večjih tveganj, lahko pa povzroči morebitno vznemirjenje vezano na spomine iz preteklosti.

Ali je zaščita osebnih podatkov zagotovljena?

Vse osebne informacije zbrane med raziskavo so zaupne in bodo uporabljene zgolj v namene te raziskave. Informacije zbrane med raziskavo bodo shranjene tako, da jih ne bo mogoče povezati z vami. Originalni posnetki bodo do prepisa intervjujev shranjeni na varnem mestu, nakar bodo uničeni. Prepisi intervjujev in zapiski vezani nanje bodo shranjeni na varnem mestu, pod zaščito Nacionalne Univerze na Irskem, Galway, za obdobje petih let, nakar bodo uničeni. Rezultati raziskave ne bodo vključevali nikakršnih osebnih podatkov vezanih na vas ali ostale udeležence raziskave.

Kaj se zgodi po zaključku raziskave?

Informacije pridobljene med intervjujem bodo analizirani za potrebe doktorske disertacije. Rezultati uporabljeni za publikacijo, bodo predstavljeni kot skupinski podatki in ne bodo na noben način povezani z vašim imenom.

Kaj se zgodi, če se med raziskavo odločim za prekinitev sodelovanja?

Za prekinitev sodelovanja se lahko, brez dodatnega pojasnjevanja, odločite kadarkoli. V kolikor se odločite za izstop iz raziskave, bo vaša odločitev tudi upoštevana in spoštovana.
Na koga se lahko obrnem v primeru pripomb o raziskavi?

V kolikor imate pred, med ali po koncu raziskave pripombe na potek študije, se lahko obrnete na raziskovalke mentorje ali kontaktirate odgovorno osebo Raziskovalne etične komisije: c/o Office of the Vice President for Research, NUI Galway, ethics@nuigalway.ie.

Hvala, ker ste si vzeli čas in prebrali zgoraj zapisane informacije!

V kolikor imate kakršnakoli dodatna vprašanja, ideje ali zadržke vezane na raziskavo, vam z veseljem ostajam na razpolago.

Tanja Kovačič
National University of Ireland, Galway,
Child and Family Research Centre,
School of Sociology and Political Science
E-mail: t.kovacic1@nuigalway.ie
gsm: 0038631212980

Mentorja:

Prof. Pat Dolan Dr. Anne Byrne
UNESCO Chair and Director Senior Lecturer
Child and Family Research Centre Arus Moyola, Room 314
School of Political Science and Sociology School of Political Science and Sociology
National University of Ireland, Galway National University of Ireland, Galway
Email: pat.dolan@nuigalway.ie Email: anne.byrne@nuigalway.ie
Phone: 0035391493035 Phone (Direct) 0035391492930
IZJAVA O SODELOVANJU V RAZISKAVI

Naslov projekta: Razumevanje družbene participacije, spopadanja z življenjskimi izzivi in družbene pomoči v kontekstu socialistične in post-socialistične Slovenije

Raziskovalka: Tanja Kovačič

V kolikor se strinjate z izjavo, prosim, da označite spodnje kvadratke

1. Potrjujem, da sem prebral/a informacije iz dne...... vezane na zgoraj navedeno raziskavo in sem imel/a priložnost postaviti dodatna vprašanja v zvezi s to raziskavo

2. Informacije so zadostile mojemu vedenju o raziskavi. Imel/a sem dovolj časa za razmislek o sodelovanju.

3. Raziskovalka lahko v namene raziskave intervju zvočno posname.

4. Sodelovanje v raziskavi je prostovoljno in iz nje lahko kadarkoli in iz kakrašnegakoli razloga izstopim.

5. S tem dajem svojo privolitev za sodelovanje v raziskavi.

Ime intervjuvanca ____________ Datum ____________ Podpis ____________

Raziskovalka ____________ Datum ____________ Podpis ____________
SODELUJ V RAZISKAVI
“ODRAŠČANJE NA KRASU”

V kolikor ste stari med 18 in 55 let in ste odraščali na Krasu, vas vabim k raziskavi, ki se osredotoča na vaše izkušnje z odraščanjem. Zanima me kako ste premagovali težave na poti odraščanja in kakšne možnosti ste imeli za vključevanje v družbene aktivnosti.

Kako poteka raziskava?
Raziskava poteka v obliki intervjuja. Intervju, v obliki pogovora, vam ponuja priložnost za izražanje osebnih mnenj in izkušenj, ki so pomembne za vas osebno in za širše razumevanje odraščanja na sežanskem Krasu.

Kontakt:
V kolikor želite sodelovati v raziskavi, se obrnite na: Tanjo Kovačič, elektronski naslov: t.kovacic1@nuigalway.ie ali GSM: (031) 212 - 980.

*Zaupnost podatkov in anonimnost je zagotovljena vsem udeležencem raziskave.

Appendix F: Email Advert in English

*Experiences with Youth Civic Participation during Socialism and Today*
I am a PhD student in NUI Galway and am carrying out research on the topic of youth civic participation in the socialist and contemporary Slovenia.

Participation in civic activities, such as volunteering, contribute to development of social skills, making new friends and strengthening of social support. These activities do not only contribute to community, but also personal well-being. Therefore, I would like to explore more about your experiences with these activities and their impact on your life.

Youth growing up during socialism had been involved in different civic activities than young people today, for example participation in the youth working brigades and community work. On the other hand, youth today have more choices for participation in leisure activities, but are not involved anymore in collective actions.

If you are between ages of 18 and 55 growing up in the Karst region, your experiences, attitudes and knowledge are extremely valuable. If you decide to participate in the research, I will invite you to the interview lasting between one and two hours. By taking part in this research you will have the chance to contribute to the debate around possibilities and challenges of youth civic engagement.

*Complete confidentiality and anonymity are guaranteed to all participants.

This study is being undertaken through the Child and Family Research Centre at NUI Galway.

If you are interested in taking part please contact the researcher Tanja Kovacic at t.kovacic1@nuigalway.ie

Thank you!

Tanja Kovacic
*Izkušnje mladih s civilno-družbenim udejstvovanjem v obdobju socializma in danes*

Moje ime je Tanja Kovačič in sem doktorska študentka Nacionalne Univerze na Irskem, Galway. Za potrebe doktorske disertacije opravljam raziskavo na temo mladinskega civilno-družbenega udejstvovanja v obdobju socializma in danes.

Raziskave kažejo, da udejstvovanje v družbi pozitivno vpliva na razvoj družbenih veščin in da je pomemben dejavnik pri sklepanju novih poznanstev in krepitvi družbene pomoči. Tovrstne dejavnosti tako ne ugodno vplivajo zgolj na družbeni, pač pa tudi na osebni razvoj.

Mladi, ki so odraščali v času socializma so, v primerjavi z današnjo mladino, imeli drugačne možnosti za civilno-družbeno udejstvovanje, kot na primer sodelovanje v mladinskih delovnih brigadah, delovanje v družbenih akcijah, itd. Današnja mladina gre skozi bolj individualne izkušnje odraščanja in se ne kolektivno vključuje v družbene aktivnosti.


*Zaupnost podatkov in anonimnost je zagotovljena vsem udeležencem raziskave.*

Raziskava poteka pod okriljem Centra za raziskovanje mladine in družine (Child and Family Research Centre) Univerze v Galwayu, Irsko.

V kolikor ste zainteresirani za sodelovanje, mi pošljite email na: t.kovacic1@nuigalway.ie

Najlepša hvala!

Tanja Kovačič
Appendix H: Interview Guide

Introductory, narrative question:

- Can you share your experience of growing up in the Karst region?

Semi-structured probing questions:

- What did your daily life in the secondary school look like?
- How did you spend your free time?
- In what kind of activities did you participate when growing up?
- What opportunities did you have to show your talents when growing up?
- What were the opportunities to get a job?
- What were the opportunities to get access to lodging?
- What kind of challenges did you face when growing up?
- Who helped you to deal with challenges?
- How did you resolve those problems?

Would you like to share some other thoughts I did not ask you about?