

**Youth Digital-Social Entrepreneurship in the Post-Socialist
Context: A Comparative Case Study of Kosovo and
Slovenia**

Georgina Whiteman
School of Social Sciences
Cardiff University

This thesis is submitted in the fulfilment of the degree

Doctor of Philosophy

August 2024

Declaration

This work has not been submitted in substance for any other degree or award at this or any other university or place of learning, nor is being submitted concurrently in candidature for any degree or other award.

Acknowledgements and Dedications

To my supervisors, Dr Dean Stroud and Prof. Phillip Brown. Thank you for taking a chance on me back in 2020, and providing me with three long years of guidance, support, encouragement and dedication. It's been a long journey, full of ups and downs, but I'll be eternally grateful for the time and wisdom you have both given me.

To the ESRC and Cardiff University, for providing me with the opportunity to pursue my doctoral degree and funding this research, I am eternally grateful for the support and opportunities that this journey has given me.

To my participants (and now friends) in Kosovo and Slovenia. Thank you for sharing your stories with me, I can't wait to watch you change the world. I have never been more inspired than when listening to you talk about the work you do – I am so honoured to have been able to spend time in your world.

To my partner, Josh. I could not have done this without you – for your compassion when the PhD journey has almost broken me, to feeding me coffee whilst I write for hours on end and for showing me what unwavering love and support looks like. I could never thank you enough.

To my parents, your unconditional encouragement, love and faith in my ability powered me through all of this (of which there were many). To my grandparents, for showing me what strength and perseverance looks like, and always offering open arms and reassurance. To my wider family – Daniel, Jess, Dominic, Jess, Maia, Finley, Mandy, Simon, Maureen and Steve, for the lessons that you teach me every day about resilience and strength in the face of adversity. To my friends, for your kindness, patience and healthy distractions – I can't wait to socialise with you again now this journey is over. Getting to share this accomplishment with you all is the biggest achievement of my life

To Lorraine, Max, and everybody else I lost along the way - for changing my life and making my world a better place – I wish I could be finishing this journey with you here.

Abstract

There is a growing interest in youth digital-social entrepreneurship in the European policymaking landscape due to the opportunities it offers for tackling youth unemployment and offering solutions to some of the global challenges outlined by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. For post-socialist economies, there is an even greater call for development of youth entrepreneurship due to the unique challenges that young people face entering employment in these countries.

This thesis investigated the experiences of young digital-social entrepreneurs in two post-socialist countries, Kosovo, and Slovenia, in order to understand the antecedents and barriers of youth digital-social entrepreneurship. A qualitative approach was adopted, comprising a series of semi-structured interviews, to generate understanding of the experiences of young digital-social entrepreneurs in both countries.

This thesis reveals that young digital-social entrepreneurs are intrinsically motivated by the desire to make social change, but with key differences. Young digital-social entrepreneurs in Kosovo are motivated by their local environment and the problems encountered day-to-day, whilst young digital-social entrepreneurs in Slovenia are motivated by global challenges and desire a greater international impact. In both countries, young digital-social entrepreneurs are constrained by financial barriers, lack of social support and a weak policy environment. Young women digital-social entrepreneurs face a double disadvantage of being young and female, and experienced gendered barriers to entrepreneurship – relating to the perceived legitimacy of their entrepreneurial ability.

The findings draw attention to the particular challenges experienced by young digital-social entrepreneurs, and the ways in which formal and informal institutions in post-socialist countries can constrain innovation. The thesis emphasises the importance of strengthening the provision of support arrangements within the entrepreneurial ecosystem of each country, as well as the value in developing a more supportive social entrepreneurship policy in each country. The current policies in place need to be extended to better define social entrepreneurship and to provide incentives and financial support, in order to better diversify the economy and tackle societal challenges.

Contents

Declaration	2
Acknowledgements and Dedications	3
Abstract	4
List of Figures	Error! Bookmark not defined.
List of Tables	11
List of Abbreviations	12
Chapter 1 – Introduction	13
1.1. Introduction.....	13
1.2. Background and Significance	13
1.3. Research Questions	16
1.4. Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks.....	16
1.5. Thesis Structure	18
Chapter 2 – Literature Review	19
2.1. Introduction.....	19
2.2. What is Entrepreneurship? The Entrepreneur as an Innovator	20
2.2.1. What (Is Not) Entrepreneurship?	25
2.2.2. Why is Entrepreneurship so Important?	26
2.3. Drivers of Entrepreneurship	28
2.4. Institutions and Post-Socialist Entrepreneurship	30
2.5. Entrepreneurial Ecosystems	34
2.6. Digital Entrepreneurship	37
2.7. Social Entrepreneurship	39
2.8. Youth Entrepreneurship	43
2.9. Digital-Social Entrepreneurship	45
2.10. Conclusion	48
Chapter 3 – Research Context	50
3.1. Introduction	50
3.2. What and Where was ‘Yugoslavia’?	51
3.3. The Breakup of Yugoslavia.....	53
3.3.1. Slovenian Independence: Ten Days of War and European Integration.....	54
3.3.2. Kosovan Independence: Systematic Oppression, Ethnic Tensions and NATO Interventions.....	56
3.4. The Current Situation – A Socioeconomic Review	59

3.4.1 Slovenia – Role Model Recovery or Just Lucky?	59
3.4.2 Kosovo – A Newborn State and a New Era.....	62
3.5. Youth Digital-Social Entrepreneurship Policy Environment	64
3.5.1. Kosovo’s Digital-Social Entrepreneurship Policy Environment.....	65
3.5.2. Slovenia’s Digital-Social Entrepreneurship Policy Environment	68
3.6. Youth Digital-Social Entrepreneurship Eco-System	70
3.6.1. Kosovo’s Digital-Social Enterprise Ecosystem.....	71
3.6.2. Slovenia’s Digital-Social Enterprise Ecosystem	73
3.7. Conclusion	75
Chapter 4 – Methodology	77
4.1. Introduction	77
4.2. Research Overview, Objectives and Questions	77
4.3. Methodological Approaches: Ontology and Epistemology	78
4.4. Research Design.....	84
4.5. Sampling Access	87
4.5.1. Sample Size	87
4.5.2. Sampling Strategy	88
4.5.3. Sampling Access	89
4.6. Research Methods and Data Collection	89
4.6.1 The Initial Plan: A Survey – What Went Wrong and What Happened Next.....	89
4.6.2. Semi-Structured Interviews.....	90
4.7. Data Analysis	95
4.7.1. Thematic Analysis of Semi-Structured Interviews	95
4.7.3. Participatory Analysis	98
4.8. Ethical Considerations.....	99
4.8.1. Recruitment.....	99
4.8.2. Consent.....	100
4.8.3. Potential Harms / Safety	100
4.8.4. Data Protection.....	101
4.9. Reflections and Limitations.....	101
4.9.1. Mixed-Methods to Single Method: Survey Failure.....	101
4.9.2. Semi-Structured Interviews: Nature and Process, Difficulties and Solutions	102
4.9.3. Participatory Analysis: How to Keep the Momentum Going?	103
4.9.4. Validity, Reliability and Generalisability	104
4.9.5. Positionality: On the Outside Looking In	106

4.10. Conclusion	107
Chapter 5. “They Treat Me Like I’m This Young Child” – The World of a Young Digital-Social Entrepreneur	109
5.1. Introduction	109
5.2. Setting the Scene – What is Digital-Social Entrepreneurship?.....	110
5.2.1. The Young Digital-Social Entrepreneur Perspective.....	111
5.2.2. The Support Actor Perspective	113
5.2.3. Defining Digital-Social Entrepreneurship	116
5.3. Drivers of Youth Digital-Social Entrepreneurship	119
5.3.1. Intrinsic Motivations	120
5.3.2. Extrinsic Motivations.....	128
5.4. Barriers for Digital-Social Entrepreneurship.....	129
5.4.1. Issues of Legitimacy and Discrimination	130
5.5. Conclusion	136
Chapter 6: I’m 100% Self-Educated, Because You Have To Be”: Entrepreneurial Ecosystem, Education and Extracurricular Activities	138
6.1. Introduction	138
6.2. The Education System	138
6.2.1. Outdated Curriculum and Lack of Entrepreneurial Training.....	139
6.2.2. Entrepreneurship Education	145
6.3. Non-Formal Training and International Mobility	147
6.3.1. The Role of Extracurricular Activities and NGOs as ‘Support’ Actors.....	148
6.3.2. International Mobility and Exchanges	155
6.4. Incubators and Accelerators	157
6.4.1. Incubators	157
6.4.2. Accelerators.....	165
6.5. Conclusion	167
Chapter 7: “It’s A Small Place, And Everybody Knows Everybody, Right?”: Institutional Barriers, Entrepreneurial Ecosystem and Business Environment.....	169
7.1. Introduction	169
7.2. Socialist Legacy	169
7.2.1. Yugoslav Legacy and Cultural Attitudes to Entrepreneurship.....	170
7.2.2. Attitudes to Digital-Social Entrepreneurship.....	175
7.3. Policy Environment.....	177
7.3.1. Kosovo’s Political Environment.....	178
7.3.2. Slovenia’s Political Environment	182

7.4. International Donor Community	187
7.5. Business Environment.....	189
7.5.1. Business Administration (Registration and Taxation)	190
7.5.2. Accessing Finance.....	192
7.5.3 Post-Conflict Business Environment.....	196
7.6. Conclusion	197
Chapter 8: Discussion	199
8.1. Introduction	199
8.2. Drivers and Barriers of Youth Digital-Social Entrepreneurship	200
8.2.1. Drivers of Digital-Social Entrepreneurship	201
8.2.2. Barriers to Digital-Social Entrepreneurship	204
8.2.3. Gendered Differences of Digital-Social Entrepreneurship	206
8.3. Importance of the Digital-Social Entrepreneurial Ecosystem	209
8.3.1. Importance of Formal Education System	210
8.3.2. Role of Incubators and Accelerators	214
8.4. Institutional Constraints for Youth Digital-Social Entrepreneurship.....	217
8.4.1. Regulatory Frameworks.....	218
8.4.2. Societal Attitudes to Digital-Social Entrepreneurship	219
8.5. Conclusion	220
Chapter 9: Conclusion.....	224
9.1. Introduction	224
9.2. Research Questions.....	224
9.3. Theory and Practice Implications.....	227
9.4. Policy Recommendations	229
9.4.1. Further and Higher Education.....	229
9.4.2. Supporting Actors and Policymakers	230
9.5. Limitations.....	231
9.6. Future Directions	232
Bibliography.....	234
List of Appendices	264
Appendix 1: Participant Recruitment Poster	264
Appendix 2: Participant Information Sheet (English).....	265
Appendix 3: Consent Form (English).....	269
Appendix 4: Participant Debrief Form.....	271
Appendix 5: Interview Schedule for Young Digital-Social Entrepreneurs	274

Appendix 6: Interview Schedule for Supporting Actors 276

List of Figures

Figure 1: The Entrepreneurial Ecosystem	35
Figure 2: Map of Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia 1945 (ICTY).....	51
Figure 3: Research Onion (Saunders and Tosey 2013; p59) (Crawford, et al., 2016).....	79
Figure 4: Interview Process.....	94
Figure 5: Thematic Analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006).....	97
Figure 6: Micro, Meso and Macro Factors of Youth Digital-Social Entrepreneurship (Authors Own)	109
Figure 7: Digital-Social Entrepreneurship Definition (Mort et al 2003; Giones and Brem 2017; Ghatak et al 2020)	110
Figure 8: Digital-Social Entrepreneurship (Authors Own)	117
Figure 9: Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation (Ryan and Deci 2000).....	120
Figure 10: Barriers to Youth Digital-Social Entrepreneurship	130
Figure 11: Mapping of Business Priorities and the UN SDGs	203
Figure 12: Mapping of Gender, Business Priorities, and the UN SDGs	208
Figure 13: Level of Education Attainment of DSE.....	211

List of Tables

Table 1: Kosovo Digital-Social Entrepreneurship Policy Overview.....	68
Table 2: Slovenia Digital-Social Entrepreneurship Policy Overview.....	69
Table 3: Kosovo Digital-Social Enterprise Ecosystem.....	73
Table 4: Slovenia Digital-Social Enterprise Ecosystem.....	75
Table 5: Participants in Kosovo	92
Table 6: Participants in Slovenia	93
Table 7: Digital-Social Enterprise Spectrum (Authors Own).....	118

List of Abbreviations

CEE	Central Eastern European
EU	European Union
ICK	Innovation Centre Kosovo
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
JNA	Yugoslav National Army
KLA	Kosovo Liberation Army
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

Chapter 1 – Introduction

1.1. Introduction

This thesis explores the experiences of young digital-social entrepreneurs in two post-socialist countries, Kosovo, and Slovenia, in order to map out understandings of the antecedents and constraints that they face and thus generate insights for advancing youth digital-social entrepreneurship policy and practice. This chapter starts by outlining the background and significance of the study (Section 1.2), setting out the research questions (Section 1.3) and the theoretical and conceptual frameworks (Section 1.4), before concluding with an outline of the thesis (1.5).

1.2. Background and Significance

Young people are considered to be both more digitally literate and socially conscious than their older counterparts, accredited to their increased awareness of social and environmental justice issues from an early age due to a growing prominence in digital technologies and easily accessible information in their everyday life (Tan and Lau 2010; Fischer et al 2017; Rowsell et al 2017; Naderi and Steenburg 2018). However, despite their heightened digital literacy and perceived social awareness, they are also more likely than their older counterparts to be unemployed, which has been heightened by the impacts of the COVID19 pandemic and the subsequent policy responses that have exacerbated the pre-existing issue of young people struggling to find stable and permanent employment. Periods of unemployment in the early stages of a young person's career can hinder a young person's ability to gain their own independence and autonomy, both social and financial independence. It also has a corrosive legacy on both the individual and wider society, with higher levels of youth unemployment positively correlating with lower economic productivity, lower levels of innovation, higher poverty levels and lower life satisfaction and wellbeing (Mroz and Savage 2006; Dietrich 2012; Lee and Kim 2017).

The concept of 'stable and permanent employment' has changed over time and space, considering the significant changes in economic structure, labour market structure, technological advancements, and societal structures (Green, 2013). The ability to enter into particular professions has also changed, with certain roles requiring more advanced qualifications than once was the case due to the growing rates of young people entering and

completing further and higher education (Brown et al 2020). Further, institutional inefficiencies in aiding young people into employment, means that many young people are instead seeking to create their own job opportunities by pursuing entrepreneurship as a traditional career alternative, or as a 'side hustle' to maximise their income and pursue their personal interests (Green 2013; Ćoćkalo et al., 2020). Entrepreneurship, and more specifically, youth entrepreneurship, is argued to provide wider societal benefits, such as job creation, increased innovation, raising competitiveness and responsiveness to changing economic opportunities and trends (Green 2013). Further, for a young person, entrepreneurship has the capacity to provide employment opportunities for those within their community, contribute to the economic growth of their local area and increase the diversity of goods and services within a market, as well as potentially contributing to sustainable and socially driven changes within that market (Blanchflower and Oswald 1998).

Youth entrepreneurship, and the training and ongoing support of young entrepreneurs, has become a key part in the global development agenda, signified by the 2019 UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs' commitment to Youth Entrepreneurship and Self-Employment in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as the 2020 EU Youth Strategy commitment to encouraging entrepreneurship (UN DESA 2020; European Union 2020). The commitment from large intergovernmental and supranational organisations such as the UN and EU, as well as the commitment from individual governments in terms of financing of resources and training for young entrepreneurs, suggest the growing importance of youth entrepreneurship to the economic development, diversification, and growth of countries around the world. As a result, youth entrepreneurship is growing in importance in the international youth unemployment policy agenda and has been prioritised in both Slovenia's Youth Strategy 2013-2022 and Kosovo's '2021-2025 Programme', two countries which are the case studies for this research project. (Guthrie, 2014)

There is a growing emphasis on the importance of digital entrepreneurship for COVID19 recovery and economic development, in which digital entrepreneurship is the pursuit of entrepreneurial opportunities that are created and pursued through the use of digital platforms, as a business activity that primarily takes place online or through a digital medium Giones and Brem (2017). Novel technologies such as mobile and social solutions, social networks, cloud computing and data analytics provide young people with a new range of opportunities for entrepreneurship within the digital economy (Bogdanowicz 2015). The European Commission launched its Digital Strategy for the Western Balkans in 2018, with the aim of supporting the transition to a digital economy by investing in digital entrepreneurship and developing more youth digital entrepreneurs, which suggests the importance of digital

entrepreneurship in the youth entrepreneurship policy agenda (European Commission 2018). Alongside digital entrepreneurship, there has also been a growing interest in social entrepreneurship, and how these organisations 'fill the gap' where the market and governments have failed.

Social entrepreneurship can be defined as market and nonmarket activities that can lead to the creation of opportunities inducing social impacts (Hockerts 2007; 2010; 2017). Some scholars consider social entrepreneurship as combining commercial enterprises with social impacts, whilst others consider social entrepreneurship to be the process of innovating for social impact (Alvord et al 2004). In Central and Southeast Europe, there is a growing interest in the role of social enterprises amongst both academics and policymakers, with a rise in social business incubators targeting young entrepreneurs to develop more socially conscious enterprises, and to bridge the institutional gaps in the regions post-COVID19 recovery (Halunko et al., 2018). Between these two realms of entrepreneurial behaviour, there is an emerging cross-over of 'digital-social' entrepreneurship, which looks at *"the reshaping of technology to cope with emerging social issues, and the creation of socio-economic impact"* (Battisti 2019; p.135). This has also been defined as *"the development of products, processes, and services mediated by technologies or closely linked to technological innovations with social purposes"* (Edwards-Schachter and Wallace 2017; p136).

Therefore, this study will focus on the emergence of young digital-social entrepreneurs, exploring the contributing factors to the development of digital-social entrepreneurs and the current barriers to growth and development. Digital-social entrepreneurship is an emerging field of interest within the broader entrepreneurship field. The former-Yugoslavia context has the potential to shift current understanding about the role of the social economy and digitalisation, as well as increasing market competitiveness, developing public-private cooperation's, creating new jobs, providing better social support, and contributing to the economic growth of the region (Miloseska et al 2020). Slovenia and Kosovo were chosen as the two comparative case sites due to their economic and political similarities: they are both post-conflict and post-socialist states from the former Yugoslavia. However, they both experienced conflict and transition differently, and are at different points of their economic development and their entrepreneurial eco-systems, economic power and institutional environments differ completely, making them interesting for comparison. For both countries, youth entrepreneurship, digitalisation and social innovation have emerged in their most recent policy agendas (National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia 2013; Republika e Kosovës 2019). Therefore, focusing on youth digital-social entrepreneurship combines these three

significant policy priorities, whilst also contributing to the broader literature in the emerging field of youth digital-social enterprise formation (Battisti 2019).

1.3. Research Questions

This research aims to develop understanding of youth digital-social entrepreneurship, determining the contributing factors to young people's decision to pursue this form of entrepreneurship, and the ways in which they navigate the business and institutional environment of their respective countries. The central question of this thesis is: '**how do young people engage with and experience digital-social entrepreneurship in the post-socialist country context?**' which is informed by four sub-questions, as follows:

RQ1. What is the current policy and business environment for encouraging digital and social entrepreneurship in post-socialist Kosovo and Slovenia?

RQ2. What are the drivers and barriers for young DSEs in Kosovo and Slovenia, particularly relating to gender, age, institutional environment and social capital?

RQ3. What are the current support arrangements (e.g., training, mentorship, etc.) for developing youth DSEs in Kosovo and Slovenia, and how do they experience them?

1.4. Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

This study aims to explore the experiences of young digital-social entrepreneurs in Kosovo and Slovenia, utilizing an institutional lens to analyse the antecedents and barriers for youth digital-social entrepreneurship, and an entrepreneurial ecosystems approach to map out the current start-up environment and support mechanisms in place.

Institutional theory has been a popular theoretical foundation in which a wide variety of topics are explored, such as organisational studies and business management (Cavallo et al., 2019). In recent years, it has become a more common lens through which to study entrepreneurship, and to help explain the forces which influence entrepreneurial activity and shape entrepreneurial success. It is increasingly acknowledged that entrepreneurs are both constrained and enabled by the institutions surrounding them, whether they be 'formal' institutions such as the rule of law and regulatory environment, or 'informal' institutions such as the values, culture, norms, and unspoken rules of the game (North, 1994; Ahlstrom & Bruton, 2001; Scott, 2007). Broadman (2004) identified how many of the post-socialist countries in Eastern Europe were constrained by weak formal institutions and their institutional

voids, so became more reliant upon forming and facilitating 'informal' institutions for security and success. The institutional environment is pivotal for navigating the challenges of legitimacy that many entrepreneurs face, as navigating the informal institutions effectively (and playing by the unspoken rules of the game) is one of the key ways of achieving entrepreneurial success (Ahlstrom & Bruton, 2001; Freeman et al 1983). For young digital-social entrepreneurs, who face legitimacy issues due to their age, the institutional environment can make or break their entrepreneurial activities – institutional voids are more difficult to overcome when you have less perceived legitimacy due to age and experience (Shirokova et al, 2022).

Institutional theory acknowledges the importance of economic forces and technical imperatives in shaping social and organizational systems, such as the development of entrepreneurial ecosystems and their role in supporting entrepreneurs to navigate entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurial ecosystems are “... *an interconnected group of actors in a local geographic community committed to sustainable development through the support and facilitation of new sustainable ventures*” (Cohen 2006; p3). Stam (2015) argues that entrepreneurial ecosystems are specific to their institutional context, and that they are complex composites that evolve over time. De Brito and Leitão (2021) highlight how ecosystems evolve through the individuals engagement with the different actors in the ecosystem, and other entrepreneurs, emphasising how different types of entrepreneurs may experience the ecosystem differently. For young digital-social entrepreneurs, productive engagement with the entrepreneurial ecosystem may derive from sociocultural capital, leaving those from more marginalized groups (such as women or ethnic minorities) disadvantaged when accessing and engaging with the entrepreneurial ecosystem (Pillai and Ahamat, 2018).

Alvedelan and Boschma (2017) identify a gap in the entrepreneurial ecosystem research relating to the role of institutions, whilst Kshteri (2014) identifies a lack of entrepreneurial ecosystem research relating to post-socialist countries, particularly those from the former Yugoslavia (with some existing entrepreneurial ecosystem research occurring relating to Baltic and Central and East European (CEE) states). Pillai and Ahamat (2018) highlight a gap in knowledge relating to how young people engage with and experience entrepreneurial ecosystems. This study seeks to address these gaps by developing understanding of how young people engage in digital-social entrepreneurship, including their experience of the institutional environment and their perception of and engagement with the entrepreneurial ecosystems of their country.

1.5. Thesis Structure

This first chapter has outlined the aims, objectives, questions, theoretical and conceptual framework, and this study's contribution to literature. Chapter 2 explores the key literature which frames the arguments for this thesis, including a discussion about entrepreneurship, the impact of post-socialist institutions on entrepreneurship, the development of entrepreneurial ecosystems and the more in-depth discussions of youth, digital and social entrepreneurship, before discussing the emergent domain of digital-social entrepreneurship. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a theoretical framework and literature-based context for the study and setting the scene. Chapter 3 will explore the two case sites for this study, Kosovo, and Slovenia, focusing on the recent history of each country before providing a political, social, and economic analysis of each country. Chapter 4 will review the studies design and methodology, justifying the qualitative approach and use of semi-structured interviews and participatory data analysis.

The following chapters (Chapter 5-7) will address the research questions outlined for the thesis by analysing the findings from the interviews. The reporting comprises three sections: micro (Chapter 5), meso (Chapter 6) and macro (Chapter 7) factors. Chapter 5 explores the motivations and specific barriers and constraints faced by young digital-social entrepreneurs, including discussions surrounding the gendered experience of youth digital-social entrepreneurs. Chapter 6 discusses more broadly the entrepreneurial ecosystem of each country, analysing the role of the education system and supporting actors in developing the competence of young digital-social entrepreneurs in each country. Chapter 7 then discusses the wider institutional environment for each country and the effect this has on youth digital-social entrepreneurship, including the role of governments and the influence of international actors on the development of youth digital-social entrepreneurship.

The key insights from Chapters 5-7 will be discussed in Chapter 8, linking findings more broadly with the literature, conceptual and theoretical frameworks outlined in Chapter 2. Chapter 9 concludes the thesis by outlining the key findings of the study, addressing the studies objectives, questions and contributions, as well as the limitations, recommendations, and future directions of the research.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

The subject of entrepreneurship, what it is (and is not), what it entails, who does it and what it accomplishes is a significant area of interest for academics, policymakers, and practitioners around the world. Entrepreneurship has become an activity that is heavily praised for its contribution to society, with regular discussions about entrepreneurs' impact on job creation, economic growth, healthy competition, and innovation (Block et al 2016). There is a growing interest from educators on how to increase the entrepreneurial competences of young people, and a curiosity from people of all generations on how to be more entrepreneurial (Coary, 2022). Governments across the world, in both developing and developed countries alike, spend significant amounts to stimulate entrepreneurship, and with many regional, national, and international efforts aimed at increasing innovation, and innovative entrepreneurs (European Commission 2015). In recent times, entrepreneurship has been embraced as a potential solution to significant and prominent social and environmental challenges, such as the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Gregori and Holzmann, 2020; Gast et al., 2017).

Entrepreneurship, and what makes an entrepreneur, has been studied extensively across a variety of disciplines in recent decades, with the field of entrepreneurship studies developing into an incredibly dynamic field and according to some, growing to rank as one of the most relevant fields of study within both the fields of management studies and social sciences (Wiklund et al. 2011). However, with a growth of interest in the field, has come a growth in the varying definitions of entrepreneurship, with various approaches and strands of literature defining entrepreneurship in varying and conflicting ways. It is commonly recognized that the field of entrepreneurship lacks a single, unified definition of what is and is not entrepreneurship, and as the field has grown, so has the varying definitions of what constitutes entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial activity (see, for example, Sexton and Smilor 1986; Bygrave and Hoder 1991; Shane and Venkataram 2000; Gedeon 2010). Furthermore, some also believe that "entrepreneurship has become a label of convenience with little inherent meaning", where the word has become so overused to the point it has become a vague term (Gartner 1990). Hence, it is important for this study to clearly articulate what it means to be an entrepreneur for the purpose of this research, and how this view has come to be – meaning, how this study will define entrepreneurship, and what that does and does not entail.

Understanding what makes an entrepreneur will assist in understanding emerging and niche sub-categories of entrepreneurship, such as the digital-social entrepreneurs (hip) that this study explores. Understanding the role of the external environment, including the socioeconomic and political contexts of a post-socialist country, and external drivers and barriers of entrepreneurship, aids in understanding how we can create environments that encourage and promote the pursuit of entrepreneurship, particularly, digital-social entrepreneurship. This chapter will discuss the historical and current debates surrounding entrepreneurship, outlining the theoretical framework for this study (2.2), before discussing the specific drivers of entrepreneurship (2.3), the entrepreneurial ecosystem (2.4) and the institutional constraints that entrepreneurship in post-socialist countries can bring (2.5). It will then discuss the debates surrounding youth entrepreneurship (2.6), digital entrepreneurship (2.7) and social entrepreneurship (2.8), before deliberating on the central focus of this study, youth digital-social entrepreneurship (2.9) and summarizing the key points discussed in this chapter (2.10).

2.2. What is Entrepreneurship? The Entrepreneur as an Innovator

Whilst entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship are broadly recognised as playing a significant role in economic growth and the broader development and advancement of society, as of yet, there is no universal agreement to what constitutes entrepreneurial behaviour and activity, and how to accurately define entrepreneurship (Shane 2009; Levine and Rubinstein 2013; Acs et al 2016). The terms 'entrepreneur', 'entrepreneurial' and 'entrepreneurship' are heard across many facets of day-to-day life, in academia, on the news, the media, and by ordinary people in casual conversation, but it can often mean different things to different people. The overarching question is, as Garter (1990; p16) states, "*is entrepreneurship just a buzzword, or does it have particular characteristics that can be identified and studied?*". Despite the number of publications relating to the field of entrepreneurship in recent years, from a diverse range of disciplines such as anthropology, economics, education, history, political science, psychology and social science, there is still no generally accepted definition of entrepreneurship (Henrekson and Sandaji 2014).

To Cantillon (1755), considered to be the founding father of entrepreneurship research (Block et al 2017), an entrepreneur is an arbitrageur, someone who equilibrates supply and demand in the economy, and bears the risk of the uncertainty with this. As opposed to a 'waged worker' or a landowner, Cantillon's entrepreneur earns uncertain profits from the difference between a known buying price and an unknown selling price (Hebert and Link 1988). This distinction between waged worker and entrepreneur is based on the amount of risk that an

individual bears from their labour, with waged workers receiving a set wage each month (or week) for a set amount of labour, whilst an entrepreneur generates a fluctuating income based off of the labour put into their business activity and the risks taken. Say (1821) defines the entrepreneur as being an independent economic agent that combines and coordinates productive factors, defining an entrepreneur as being a coordinator within the economic process of equilibrating supply and demand, commanding, supervising, and coordinating the system. This distinction of the entrepreneur as an independent economic agent provides a distinction between an entrepreneur and an intrapreneur, in that an entrepreneur catalyses economic activities off of their own accord through creation of a new business, an intrapreneur catalyses economic activities within a company in order to launch new innovations and initiatives (Antoncic and Hisrich 2001).

Neo-classical scholars, such as Hawley (1907), Palmer (1971) and Schultz (1975) define the primary activity of an entrepreneur as being risk-taking, where an entrepreneur is an individual that organizes and manages the business by undertaking risk for the sake of profit. This school of thought argues that entrepreneurs are more willing to take risks associated with uncertainty, and that the very choice of the pursuit of entrepreneurship is inherently risky in itself. Individuals are assumed to make a choice between the security provided by waged labour (as an employee), and the hazards of entrepreneurship, with this choice influenced by the individuals attitude towards risk (Newman 2007). Those that are more risk averse are more likely to prioritise security, whereas those who are less risk averse are more likely to chase potential profits through the pursuit of entrepreneurship. Knight (1963) further argues that entrepreneurs are individuals who take up challenges with enough confidence of success that they 'back up' their risk-taking activity (such as business activities) with financial resources that may be at risk (such as investment capital).

Alternatively, Schumpeter and Baumol highlight the role that entrepreneurs play in accelerating the generation, dissemination, and application of 'innovations', and regard entrepreneurship as a catalyst for economic growth. Schumpeter (1912) distinguishes between inventors and innovators, where inventors discover new methods and materials, whilst innovators apply these inventions to make new combinations – and defines the entrepreneur as being an 'innovator'. These innovations can take the form of introduction of new goods or methods of production, the opening of new markets, the discovery of new sources of raw materials or new industry structures (Schumpeter 1912). The end game of these innovations is not equilibrium, but progress, growth, and higher standards of living (Gilbert et al 2006). Schumpeter's definition of entrepreneurship is based on the idea that entrepreneurs are drivers of 'creative destruction', a process in which long-standing arrangements, assumptions and actions are typically destroyed to free up resources and

energy that are then deployed for innovations. In order to create something new, something old must be destroyed. Creative destruction is considered to be an evolutionary process that rewards improvements and innovations by punishing less efficient ways of organizing resources (Hagedoorn 1996).

Other scholars, such as Kirzner (1973), argue that entrepreneurs seek out opportunities to exploit for profit-seeking purposes, defining entrepreneurs as individual agents that balance supply and demand by identifying market imperfections and exploiting them. According to Kirzner's (1973) view, the profits that entrepreneurs gain from their entrepreneurial activities are the reward for their tolerance of the uncertainty associated with entrepreneurship, and one of the key characteristics of an entrepreneur is their alertness to opportunities. Entrepreneurial profit is simply a return to alertness of profit-seeking opportunities, and entrepreneurs are the 'middlemen' that put together new consumption patterns between buyers and sellers, where the entrepreneur takes the difference between the buying and selling price as pure profit. Kirzner's definition of an entrepreneur emphasizes the important distinction that entrepreneurial profit is not always a return to personal wealth, and that an entrepreneur can be lacking in personal wealth, or economic resources yet still be alert to profit-seeking opportunities. However, Kirzner argues that the entrepreneur is born with alertness, and it is not a skill that is teachable, yet the ability to 'realize' an entrepreneurial opportunity still requires resources, whether they be economic resources (financial capital) or social resources (such as social capital) (Ricketts 1992). Kirzner's definition of entrepreneurship also fails to recognise the importance of entrepreneurial imagination and innovativeness, with his idea of alertness for opportunity seeking implying arbitrage activities – in that entrepreneurship is merely a game of exploiting short-lived variations for profit, rather than the innovation of new ideas, products, and services (White 1987).

According to Wenners and Thurik (1999), entrepreneurship can be defined as a form self-employment, and follows the notion that an individual can either be unemployed, self-employed, or in waged employment, which is a distinction also made by Cantillon. To Hebert and Link (1989; p4), an entrepreneur is defined as "*someone who specializes in taking responsibility for, and making judgemental decisions that affect the location, form and the use of goods, resources or institutions*". This definition broadly encompasses the key defining characteristics of an entrepreneurship previously discussed, in that the entrepreneur takes on the risk (by taking responsibility), seeks to exploit opportunities for profit-making (by making judgemental decisions) and innovate (through their decisions surrounding the form and use of goods, resources or institutions). Expanding on this definition, Wennekers and Thurik (1999;

p30) conducted a systematic literature review of existing definitions of entrepreneurship, and identified thirteen distinct defining characteristics, roles, and attributes of an entrepreneur:

1. The person who assumes the risk associated with uncertainty.
2. The supplier of financial capital.
3. An innovator.
4. A decision-maker.
5. An industrial leader.
6. A manager or a superintendent.
7. An organizer and coordinator of economic resources.
8. The owner of an enterprise.
9. An employer of factors of production.
10. A contractor.
11. An arbitrageur.
12. An allocator of resources among alternative uses.
13. The person who realizes a start-up of a new business.

Ultimately, different scholars and schools of thought have differing opinions and approaches to defining entrepreneurship, with some believing that to be an entrepreneur is to be a risk-taker, others believing it is to be alert to opportunity, and several believing it to be an innovator. For the purpose of this study, it is perhaps difficult to apply an overarching definition and framework of what defines an entrepreneur, given the evident difficulties of defining the term/concept. Hence, what is necessary is to be cognisant of what the concept encompasses when considering the particular focus of this study. The focus of this study, on a specific subcategory of entrepreneurship i.e. digital-social entrepreneurship, is on a group of entrepreneurs using technological innovations to create positive social impact. This approach to entrepreneurship and business formation is in itself, innovative, and aligns with Schumpeter's view that entrepreneurs create new markets and forms of organization. Hence, this study leans towards a Schumpeterian definition of entrepreneurship, that an entrepreneur is an innovator that is able and willing to seek out and create new economic opportunities and turn new ideas into marketable products and services (Schumpeter 1934; Wennekers and Thurik 1999; Acs et al 2009; Block et al 2013). However, this study is open to incorporating wider perspectives – particularly where the participants may view themselves in ways that fit more neatly with, or closer to, other interpretations. That said, the Schumpeterian perspective captures well the digital-social entrepreneur, which as a subgroup of entrepreneurs that by nature of their activity – using digital technologies to generate social value – are considered to be 'innovative entrepreneurs' (Battisti 2019; Faludi 2020; Ibáñez et al 2022).

In the course of innovation, comes creative destruction, which Schumpeter (1934) argues occurs when innovations make existing arrangements obsolete, freeing resources to be utilized elsewhere, and ultimately, resulting in greater economic efficiency. The process of creative destruction saturates major elements of the economy, impacting long-term economic growth as well as economic fluctuations and structural adjustments, with Caballero (2006) arguing that the process of creative destruction accounts for over 50% of productivity growth. The entry of new firms and products into the market drives the transformation of the market, relating to the production processes used, the technology used and the preferences of consumers. A historical example of the creative destruction process is the assembly line created by Henry Ford, in which the implementation of the assembly line in automobile manufacturing revolutionized the entire industry and created new jobs, whilst also forcing out older markets and employees – forcing people to adapt with new developments (Davis et al 1996). However, Schumpeter's emphasis on creative destruction is centred around innovation in the capitalist economy – therefore, studying this process of 'doing things differently' in societies that are reconstructing to 'to do things differently' after conflict and communism (Lukeš 2013), provides an interesting case site for the study of how innovative entrepreneurs are perceived and supported in societies that only recently began to encourage innovation and the creative destruction process, such as Kosovo and Slovenia.

The idea of 'innovative entrepreneurship', using Schumpeter's definition of entrepreneurship, suggest that entrepreneurship originates from a nexus of individuals and opportunities, and innovation is more likely to occur from opportunities that are knowledge-based, technology or research-driven (Acs et al 2009). Innovative entrepreneurship is associated with certain socioeconomic and personality characteristics, such as higher levels of academic education and technical backgrounds. Innovativeness is influenced by the environmental context in which the entrepreneur exists, in that the availability or accessibility of resources from stakeholders, alliances and networks influences the ability to pursue entrepreneurship (Eisenhardt and Schoonhoven 1996; Elfring and Hulsink 2003). Innovation is more likely to occur in emerging markets, or in established markets when challenging existing firms, as it enables entrepreneurs to demonstrate different types of competitive behaviour (Samuelsson and Davidsson 2009). Innovation outcomes, such as inventions, products, or new business models, have substantial consequences for the individual, the firm, the industry and even the regional or national level – with many scholars arguing the importance of innovation for individual and regional wealth generation, and for societal progression and economic development (Schumpeter 1942; Aghion and Howitt 1992).

2.2.1. What (Is Not) Entrepreneurship?

Measuring entrepreneurship is a difficult task due to a lack of uniformity over the definition, and ultimately, entrepreneurialism is a behavioural characteristic that can typically only be measured with indirect indicators, such as self-employment statistics. In recent decades, rates of self-employment across the world have risen, with approximately 14% of the European population considered to be self-employed in comparison to 8% in the 1980s (Bologna 2018; Giupponi and Xu 2020). European countries typically display higher levels of self-employment than in other OECD countries (OECD 2020). Self-employment is currently male-dominated, and rates of self-employment are lowest for youth at only 5% (Masso et al 2015). This increase in self-employment, particularly across Europe, is equated to an increase in entrepreneurship due to entrepreneurship being measured by self-employment status. Entrepreneurship is often conflated with self-employment, and the concept and measurement of entrepreneurship is usually linked with self-employment, but there are important differences that distinguish an entrepreneur from a self-employed individual.

The shifting nature of the labour market represented by the rise in 'flexible' staffing, 'gig' employment opportunities, and rates of freelancing and contract work in recent years, has made it difficult to distinguish the difference between self-employment and entrepreneurship. From one perspective, a self-employed worker can be seen to be entrepreneurial due to their exploitation of new opportunities, however, is this opportunity exploitation from a position of risk-seeking and autonomy, or is from a place of necessity, and trying to 'make ends meet'? Can somebody who contracts for a company such as Uber or Deliveroo be considered an entrepreneur, because they ultimately take on all the costs (such as licensing fees, vehicle fees and other maintenance costs), declare their own taxes (thus meaning they do not have 'employee status'), and subsequently, create their own work by picking up jobs as and when necessary? Whilst employee status can often be complex, and in recent years, contractors for companies such as Uber and Deliveroo have managed to increase their employment rights and gain employee status, this still lends the question as to whether a self-employed, gig economy worker, can be considered an entrepreneur (Malos et al. 2018; Halliday 2021).

Cantillon's traditional definition of 'entrepreneur' outlined two types of working person: the employees (who have a fixed income that insures them against risk), and the entrepreneur (fitting within the neo-classical school, those 'risk-seekers' searching for market opportunities, see Casson 1990). Therefore, a lack of fixed income, the bearing of risk and a pursuit of market opportunities seem to historically define an 'entrepreneur', yet also, signify self-employment.

However, many of these definitions derive from a time in which employment was typically more formalized and regulated and informal employment was strictly reserved for the 'global poor' to 'get by', which does not reflect the modern labour market (Jolanta and Skrzek-Lubasińska 2018). Guerra and Patuelli (2016) argue that self-employment and entrepreneurship are often considered jointly as the individual bears the risk and benefit of independence at work, often filling gaps in the market for skills and tasks required, which signifies entrepreneurial skills and abilities. By this definition, self-employed people run their own business, as they fill market niches and respond to customer needs more flexibility, quickly and ultimately, better than larger companies. By utilizing Schumpeter's approach to entrepreneurship, entrepreneurs can be distinguished from self-employed by the way that they are innovating, creating a new good or method of production, or tackling market issues using a new approach (Braguinsky et al 2009).

Ultimately, self-employment and entrepreneurship are often used interchangeably by both academics and policymakers alike, due to the complexities in measuring what is and is not entrepreneurship. Whilst some scholars equate self-employment with precarious work (Cranford et al 2003; Wall 2015), others equate self-employment as a labour market pathology to represent flexible employment (such as freelancing and contracting) (Purcell 2000; Shane 2009; Congregado et al 2010). Alternatively, Blanchflower et al (2001) alongside Davidsson (2003) categorise entrepreneurs as being individuals who independently work on their own, regardless of the size of their economic activities – with Nooteboom (2002) and Shane (2003) highlighting independence as a key factor of what constitutes entrepreneurship. However, Shane (2008) and Cieřlik (2017) argue that entrepreneurship is based upon risk-bearing, in the sense that engaging with significant financial assets or employing other people are risky behaviours that in the case of business failure, can be substantial. This suggests that entrepreneurs are those engaging in larger economic activities, in that they are large enough to require external financing (such as venture capital) and other resources (such as additional employees), which differentiates from a self-employed individual who requires minimal financing and does not hire other employees. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, an entrepreneur is an individual that is undertaking innovative business activities, taking risks with these activities, and taking on the responsibilities of larger economic activities.

2.2.2. Why is Entrepreneurship so Important?

In recent years, policymakers have taken an increasing interest in the role of entrepreneurship for economic growth and development. This has been stimulated both by

the rapid growth of the private sector in emerging economies such as Brazil, Russia, India and China (BRICs) and on the realisation of the need for private sector strength in fragile and failed economies such as Somalia and DR Congo (Naudé 2007). Much of the economic growth in post-socialist economies is argued to have stemmed from entrepreneurial activity, with entrepreneurs rapidly filling gaps in the market that were neglected under socialism, such as construction, trade, and commerce (Berkowitz and DeJong 2001). However, entrepreneurship is not just seen as a vital lifeline for the economic development of developing economies, but also as a tool for larger economies such as the US, UK, or EU countries to regain and maintain their competitive lead in the global economy (Baumol et al 2007). Parson and Smelser (1956) argue that entrepreneurship is one of the two necessary conditions for economic development (with the other being increased output of capital), whilst Baumol (1968) states that the main question from every market economy is how to increase entrepreneurial activity. Minniti (1999) suggest that entrepreneurs are the catalyst for economic growth as they create a networking externality which promotes the creation of new ideas and new business formation, whilst Schumpeter (1934) states that the key to economic success lies in the spirits of entrepreneurs persisting in developing new products and technologies and increasing economic efficiency.

Many scholars argue that economic growth and entrepreneurship are interrelated, as well as innovation and economic outcomes. Wennekers et al (2005) finds a positive correlation between entrepreneurial activity and innovative capacity in developed countries, whilst Murphy et al (2006) argues that the emergence of entrepreneurship enabled per capita income to grow exponentially in the Western economies from the 1700s. This suggests that by increasing the level of entrepreneurial activity, developed countries can improve their ability to 'produce a stream of commercially relevant innovations', whilst developing countries can boost economic growth with higher levels of entrepreneurial activity. However, this positive correlation is not necessarily evidence of a positive causal effect of entrepreneurship, as other studies suggest that the correlation between a country's proportion of self-employed, and the GDP per capita, is negative, and it is only when employing stricter measures of entrepreneurship, such as innovative and high growth entrepreneurs (Shane 2009) or venture capital backed entrepreneurs (Lerner 1994), that this relationship becomes positive (Henrekson and Sanandaji 2014; Acs et al 2016). The societal benefits of entrepreneurship are linked to 'Schumpeterian entrepreneurs', innovative entrepreneurs pursuing high-growth ventures, rather than 'necessity entrepreneurs' such as subsistence farmers and small-scale family businesses (Henrekson and Sanandaji 2014). However, the share of high-growth enterprises represents only two to six percent of the enterprise population for most countries, with a particularly low share for most European countries (OECD 2015).

For the post-socialist context, the view of entrepreneurial activity as an engine for economic growth stems from the observation that the post-socialist economies that experienced fairly robust patterns of entrepreneurial development also managed to enjoy relatively high levels of economic growth (McMillan and Woodruff 2001; Sobel et al 2007; Smallbone and Welter 2008). In the case of Slovenia, prior to transition there was already a relatively well-developed small-scale private sector due to ongoing economic reforms, which saw a substantial increase throughout the transition period (Stubelj et al 2017). Alternatively, in the case of Kosovo, there was very little development in the private sector prior to the transition period, and the transition period was stagnated due to conflict and ongoing tensions, resulting in relatively low levels of economic growth in the early years of transition (Sen and Kirkpatrick 2010). For many post-socialist countries, the conversion of informal entrepreneurship to formal entrepreneurship is a critically practical challenge, as often, the institutional environment is not conducive for supporting entrepreneurship (De Soto 2000; Stoica 2004; Kshetri 2009). Therefore, the relationship between entrepreneurship and economic development and growth is often unclear, highly debated, yet important to consider when discussing the impact of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial pursuits on society – particularly in the context of digital-social entrepreneurs, a group of entrepreneurs specifically focused on the societal impact of digital innovations.

2.3. Drivers of Entrepreneurship

To understand better how to aid and support entrepreneurial activity, it is important to understand what drives entrepreneurial activity in the first place. The primary drivers of entrepreneurship relate to an individual's personal characteristics, sociocultural and economic factors, institutional support and policies, knowledge transfer and regional infrastructures, and these factors often intermingle to create differing entrepreneurial environments amongst countries from similar backgrounds, geographical regions, and levels of socioeconomic development (Simon-Moya et al 2014; Fuentelsaz et al 2015).

Entrepreneurs are considered to either be pushed into entrepreneurship due to a dissatisfaction with their current socio-economic situation and the absence of alternative opportunities (necessity entrepreneurship) or pulled into entrepreneurship voluntarily for the sake of seeking new opportunities (opportunity entrepreneurship) (Amit and Muller 1995). These push and pull antecedents of entrepreneurship are not binary, however, as entrepreneurs can be driven by both – in a poor economic situation but identifying an

opportunity to take advantage of (Dawson and Henley 2012). Deci and Ryan (1985) identify how individuals are either intrinsically or extrinsically motivated, where intrinsic motivation is the undertaking of an activity (such as entrepreneurship) for its inherent satisfaction, whilst extrinsic motivation describes the undertaking of an activity for external factors, such as reward or punishment (Reiss, 2012). Examples of how this applies to entrepreneurship are proposed by Arshad et al (2019), who identifies intrinsic motivations of entrepreneurship amongst business graduates as being personal growth and community contribution, and extrinsic motivations for entrepreneurship as being financial success and fame.

The most common theories used when discussing entrepreneurial characteristics in the field of entrepreneurship studies are McClelland's (1961) theory of the need to achieve, and Rotter's (1966) locus of control theory. McClelland (1961; 1985) argues that individuals that are highly aspirational with a strong desire for achievement are typically amongst those seeking to solve problems, and that individuals with this drive for achievement often pursue entrepreneurship more frequently, and are more successful in entrepreneurship, than those without it. Rotter (1966) argues individuals have a locus of control that can be either internal or external, and this is what drives or deters entrepreneurship. Internal control refers to control over an individual's life (such as individual economic conditions), whilst external control refers to the actions of others (such as sociocultural attitudes), and that internal control is typically a driver towards entrepreneurial activity. According to numerous studies, the need to achieve is related to the desire to achieve targets, whilst the locus of control is related to turning thoughts into actions, and that individuals need a pre-existing drive to achieve before they begin to pursue (Bird 1992; Littunen 2000). These characteristics are also argued to be the key characteristics of entrepreneurs in studies conducted in post-socialist states, such as in Russia (Kalantaridis & Labrianidis 2004; Green, et al 1996), Croatia (Borozan and Pfeifer 2014), Hungary (Laki 2003) and the Czech Republic (Kozubíková et al 2017), and in post-conflict states such as Burundi and Rwanda (Naudé 2009), Croatia (Borozan and Pfeifer 2014) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (Demirgüç-Kunt et al 2011).

In more recent decades, the relationship between sociocultural attitudes and entrepreneurial activity has received increasing attention (Berger 1991; Hayton et al 2002; Steyaert and Katz 2004; Urbano et al 2011), due to the embeddedness of entrepreneurship into the social context (Granovetter 1985; Aldrich and Zimmer 1986). Scholars argue that business start-up decisions are predominantly shaped by embedded social and cultural values (Hayton et al 2002; Pinillos and Reyes 2011), such as attitudes to entrepreneurship, effective governance (Van de Ven 1993), and human capital (Becker 1964). Earley (1997) and Autio and Wennberg (2010) found that patterns of social groups are up to three times more

influential on propensity towards entrepreneurship than personal attitudes, so societies that are more individualistic typically produce more entrepreneurs, and entrepreneurs within these societies are more successful due to this individualism (Gorodnichenko and Roland 2012). This is because individuals in individualistic societies derive more utility from their position within society, and due to personal attitudes and social legitimation – making entrepreneurship more appealing, and innovation easier (Dopeke and Zilibotti 2014).

Historically, one of the most relevant factors affecting entrepreneurship and driving entrepreneurial activity has been the economy – with people pursuing entrepreneurial activity either out of economic desperation (necessity entrepreneurship), or to innovate and pursuit of strong returns on their investments in the form of high profits (opportunity entrepreneurship) (Simon-Moya et al 2014; Fuentelsaz et al 2015). Entrepreneurial activity is typically more prevalent in countries with higher levels of income inequality, and in low-to-middle-income economies, necessity-driven entrepreneurship is more common than opportunity entrepreneurship (Reynolds et al 2001). Times of economic uncertainty and crisis, such as the COVID19 pandemic or the 2008 economic crisis, are powerful push factors for entrepreneurship, where people are pushed towards entrepreneurship due to a lack of viable alternatives – however, this predominantly results in necessity entrepreneurship, and not innovative opportunity entrepreneurship that is commonly associated with economic growth (Verheul et al 2010). Opportunity entrepreneurship, in times of economic crisis, is seen to enhance technological innovations that improve growth forecasts – however, a poor economic environment can limit opportunities occurring and hinder the entrepreneur's power to exploit these opportunities (Weick 1995; Peris-Ortiz et al 2014).

2.4. Institutions and Post-Socialist Entrepreneurship

The majority of leading entrepreneurship literature stems from studies of the US and other 'Western' economies, making it difficult to apply to other sociocultural settings, such as post-socialist countries. During the early 2000s, there was a growth in scholarship surrounding the economic development of post-socialist countries, particularly those within the European landscape such as former-USSR and former-Yugoslav countries. Yugoslavia was the fastest growing socialist economy in the post-WW2 era, and one of the fastest growing countries in Europe during the 1950s and 1960s, making it a key player on the international stage (Sapir 1980; Balassa and Bertrand 1970). There is an increasing awareness about the importance of entrepreneurship amongst post-socialist economies, with many governments in Central and Eastern Europe encouraging and incentivizing entrepreneurship, and many international non-

governmental organisations investing in and promoting entrepreneurship support and training in these regions (Stoica 2004; Runst 2013; Vorley and Williams 2017). However, not all post-socialist countries ‘transitioned’ the same, and since the dissolution of Yugoslavia in the 1990s (discussed further in Chapter 4), the countries that made up the former Yugoslavia descended down different transition pathways.

King and Szelenyi (2005) outlined three varieties of post-socialist pathways towards capitalism: capitalism from without, capitalism from above and capitalism from below. Capitalism from without occurred when capitalist economic structures were introduced through external forces, such as foreign investment, international organizations, and global market pressures, in which privatization, deregulation and trade liberalization are typically accelerated. Capitalism from above involves top-down economic reforms implemented by a centralized government, typically the state or ruling elite, in which the state plays a significant role in orchestrating the economic restructuring – through privatization, market liberalization and the establishment of legal frameworks. Capitalism from below involves grassroots-driven economic changes, such as through the rise of small businesses and local entrepreneurship, typically informal sector activities. Whilst these three categories are useful for outlining the transition pathways of Central European and Former-USSR countries (which was the emphasis of King and Szelenyi (2005) paper and the examples provided), the transition pathways of some of the former Yugoslav countries are more difficult to categorize. This highlights how understanding the antecedents and barriers for entrepreneurship in these unique post-socialist pathways contributes to a knowledge gap surrounding post-socialist institutional environments and entrepreneurship.

Slovenia’s economic transition could be categorised as a hybrid mixture of capitalism from without and capitalism from above, where Slovenia’s approach to transition was gradualist and took a more cautious and controlled approach to economic restructuring (as opposed to the shock therapy experienced in many Central European countries). Slovenia’s government played a significant role in orchestrating economic reforms such as privatization and market liberalization (aligning it with capitalism from above), but there was heavy involvement from foreign investors in the privatisation of state firms, and a strong influence from international actors, such as the European Union (aligning it with capitalism from without) (King 2002). Slovenia’s quick integration into the European institutions and into the global economy, alongside the predominant role of the state in orchestrating the gradual economic reforms, make Slovenia an excellent case site for exploring the institutional environment (Kržan and Birač 2021). The institutional environment in Slovenia is seen as being strong, with strong institutional frameworks in comparison to other former-Yugoslav countries – legal and

regulatory frameworks were established quickly and with the influence of external actors (Mencinger, 2001).

Kosovo's economic transition aligns more clearly with capitalism from below – due to a lack of foreign investment and influence, and a prominent informal sector and series of grassroots economic activities (Casady & Peci, 2021). Kosovo's economic transition was quite particular due to the combination of i) transitioning to capitalism and ii) recovering from violent conflict within a short-time period – the double disadvantage of economic transition and post-conflict recovery, tied in with its complex history and systematic oppression under the later periods of Yugoslavia. Under the latter stages of the socialist Yugoslavia, Kosovar Albanians were kicked out of public life and forced into informal employment, which led to a growth in informal markets, small-scale entrepreneurship, and community-based initiatives as a tool for economic survival (Loku & Loku, 2020). These grassroots initiatives emblemise capitalism from below, as the development of a 'private sector' stemmed from the development of small-scale entrepreneurship that occurred during the Yugoslav period. In the aftermath of the war, there was a lack of centralized authority or coherent 'state', and in the years following, the government struggled to establish effective governance structures and institutional capacity – leading to a series of institutional voids which have made economic development challenging (Krasniqi & Branch, 2018). This led to a lack of foreign investment or involvement, with international institutions involvement in Kosovo primarily being for peacekeeping purposes in the early years – and more recently being related to economic development. The post-conflict nature of Kosovo's institutional environment adds an additional complexity to the development of entrepreneurialism and the support for entrepreneurship today.

Brainard and Chollet (2007) find strong links between conflict and weak economic performance, and existing literature tells us that times of stagnant or negative economic growth lead to the increase of unproductive, necessity entrepreneurship (Collier and Hoeffler 2004). Conflict can also shift entrepreneurial activity from productive to unproductive, where in time of economic crisis, individuals are more likely to engage in rent seeking behaviour to be able to 'get by', than to be contributing to productive entrepreneurship – often out of necessity and collapsed state institutions (Naudé et al 2011). In the aftermath of conflict, entrepreneurs often contend with loss of employees (either due to migration or injury/death), and loss of business assets (due to destruction), which can have a significant effect on firm-level investment and growth and can result in increasing business failures (Brück & Schindler, 2009). In the post-conflict recovery stage, entrepreneurs can also be active in peace-building initiatives and the reconstruction stage, with the idea of a 'peace-dividend' where the positive effects of peace provide economic benefits to the entrepreneur, which can incentivize

peacebuilding (Demirguc-Kunt et al 2009). However, in societies that are still divided post-conflict, such as Kosovo, the issue with the 'peace-dividend' is that everyone gains from peace, including the oppressors, leading to a collective action problem (Mustafa and Krasniqi 2018). After conflict, there is often an emergence of social entrepreneurs, seeking to improve the welfare of citizens and society effected by violent conflict – such as seen in Kosovo today (Milovanović and Maksimović 2018).

There is an increasing awareness about the importance of entrepreneurship amongst post-socialist economies, with many governments in Central and Eastern Europe encouraging and incentivizing entrepreneurship, and many international non-governmental organisations investing in and promoting entrepreneurship support and training in these regions (Stoica 2004; Runst 2013; Vorley and Williams 2017). Whilst these economies do not lack entrepreneurial ability, they do lack in institutional and systemic support for entrepreneurs, with informality and corruption more readily apparent in post-socialist economies than in other, mature market economies (Stoica 2004; Kwok 2007). The post-socialist context can be considered a hostile environment of institutional change for entrepreneurs to navigate, and inefficient transitions can lead to institutional constraints and institutional voids. Institutions are the “humanly devised constraints that structure political, social and economic integration” (North 1990), and consist of formal and informal institutions. Formal institutions are the constitutions and laws, economic rules, property rights and contracts, whilst informal institutions are embodied socially through the norms, values, customs, and traditions of a society (Estrin & Mickiewicz 2013).

The pathway of economic transition has a lingering effect on the development of institutions within a country, where Kosovo and Slovenia's divergent pathways post-Yugoslavia have resulted in two distinctively different institutional environments. For Slovenia and their transition 'from without' / 'from above', this has resulted in the development of stronger formal institutions due to the influence of international organizations in standardizing institutional frameworks. Informal institutions, such as the cultural norms and values, are considered to be more conservative due to the dominance of external actors limiting opportunities for them to develop. This is reflected in the 'neutrality' towards entrepreneurship in Slovenia, where cultural norms and values are more supportive of playing 'the game' in terms of seeking formal employment (Pšeničny et al., 2014). In Kosovo, the transition 'from below' alongside the post-conflict recovery has led to a gradual development of formal institutions, which has resulted in institutional voids in the country. There is greater reliance on informal institutions, such as patronage and corruption, in order to navigate these institutional voids – which has led to a strong sense of 'community' and resource sharing within the community (through weak ties) in order to circumvent this (Krasniqi and Branch 2018). The

institutional setup of each country is further discussed in Chapter 4, alongside the implications of this on the emergence of each countries entrepreneurial ecosystem.

2.5. Entrepreneurial Ecosystems

Since the 1980s and 1990s, there has been a shift away from the individualistic and personality-based research on entrepreneurship towards a broader community approach that examines the role of social, cultural, and economic forces for entrepreneurial development and success. Entrepreneurship is considered to be a 'collective achievement' that requires a supporting and nurturing environment to facilitate it, where regional economic and social factors play an important role in facilitating entrepreneurial activity. The idea of an 'entrepreneurial ecosystem' was introduced by Cohen (2006), Isenberg (2010) and Feld (2012), highlighting the role of community and culture in stimulating and aiding entrepreneurship. However, the concept of an entrepreneurial ecosystem can be traced back to Marshall (1920), whose research focuses on the factors that stimulated enterprises in certain territories – described as 'industrial districts'. This then developed into research on 'regional clusters' and 'regional innovation systems', which refers to a geographic concentration of interrelated businesses, suppliers, and associated institutions in a particular industry or field (Porter 1998; Cooke et al., 1997). The notion of an entrepreneurial ecosystem expands on these existing approaches by centring entrepreneurship (where regional innovation systems considered entrepreneurship as peripheral to the focus on manufacturing), and shifting the focus of enquiry onto 'productive entrepreneurship' as opposed to new venture creation (any type of entrepreneurship) (Spigel and Harrison 2018).

The entrepreneurial ecosystem is described by Audretsch and Belitski (2017; p4) as being "*a dynamic community of inter dependent actors (entrepreneurs, supplies, buyer, government, etc.) and system-level institutional, informational and socioeconomic contexts*" which enable entrepreneurship within a particular region or area. This highlights the role of different actors in developing the entrepreneurial ecosystem and emphasizes the importance of socioeconomic context in development of an entrepreneurial ecosystem. Spigel (2017; p50) explains how the entrepreneurial ecosystem is "*a combination of social, political, economic, and cultural elements within a region that support the development and growth of innovative start-ups and encourage nascent entrepreneurs and other actors to take the risks of starting, funding, and otherwise assisting high-risk ventures*". This highlights the importance of 'formal' and 'informal' institutions in creating a favourable environment for entrepreneurship and stimulating entrepreneurial activity. According to Isenberg (2010), it consists of elements that can be grouped in six domains: (1) favourable culture; (2) facilitation of policies and leadership;

(3) availability of specific finance; (4) relevant human capital; (5) markets favourable to products; and (6) a wide range of institutional and infrastructure support (Figure 1).

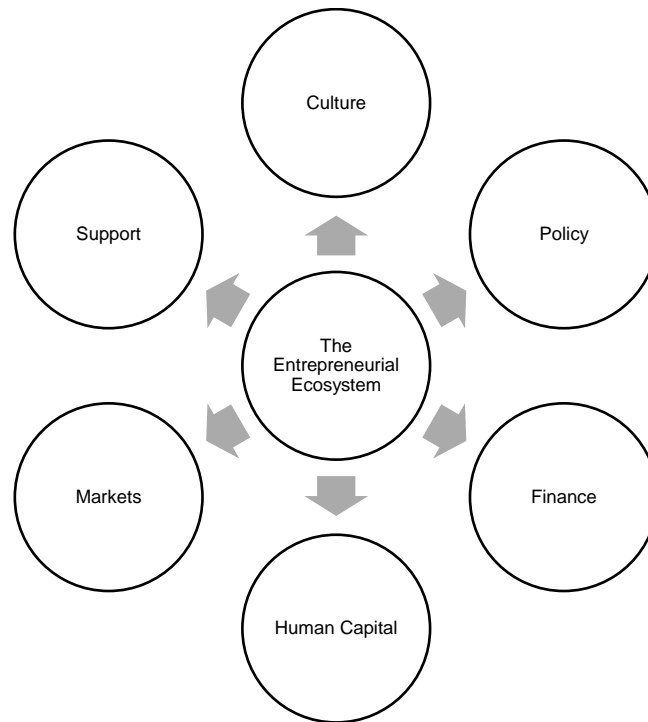


Figure 1: The Entrepreneurial Ecosystem

Entrepreneurial ‘culture’ reflects the extent to which entrepreneurship is valued in society, traditionally measured indirectly with the prevalence of new firms or rates of self-employment, indicating how ‘common’ starting a business is within a particular region (Fritsch and Wyrich 2014). However, the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor also measures it as to the degree to which successful entrepreneurs are valued and the extent to which self-employment and entrepreneurship is seen as a viable career choice. Policies and leadership refer to a supportive institutional environment for entrepreneurship, including business friendly policies such as low taxes, investment in innovative technologies and support for R&D (Sotarauta, et al., 2017). Access to finance refers to the availability of capital for start-ups, typically measured by amount of venture capital invested into a region. It can also be measured by the presence of angel investors, accessibility of loans and grants, and attitudes and support for crowdfunding (Stam 2018). Human capital refers to the availability of skilled labour within a particular region, which is typically measured by the share of a population with advanced education (Stam and Spiegel 2018). It also explores the role of education institutions within the ecosystem, in terms of the designated support and training they provide to advance the human capital within a region (Unger et al. 2011). Markets favourable to new products refers to markets in which there is potential demand, and there is support in harnessing that (such as

through export support services) (Stam 2018). Availability of institutional and infrastructure support refers to the supply and accessibility of intermediate business services, such as incubators, accelerators, and other support mechanisms. These aid in facilitating the development of nascent entrepreneurs and provide structured and targeted support, bridging the gap where educational providers might have failed in provision of entrepreneurial education.

Entrepreneurial ecosystems are conceptualized in two ways: ecosystems that can be built (ontologically) and ecosystems that are always there but vary in quality (epistemologically). The ontological view of entrepreneurial ecosystems discusses how they emerge in particular regions at critical points of entrepreneurial development, in which scholars such as Stephens et al (2019) and Colombelli et al (2019) examine the social and economic factors associated with the emergence and development of an entrepreneurial ecosystem. The epistemological view proposes that ecosystems are always there, but their quality as economic systems that enable (or constrain) productive entrepreneurship varies. Considering the context of this study, two countries in which the economic structure has undergone drastic transition in recent decades, an ontological perspective of entrepreneurial ecosystems that highlights the role of the institutional environment in the construction and development of the ecosystem is adopted. Where entrepreneurship was heavily suppressed during Yugoslav times, post-Yugoslavia both countries had no institutional framework for facilitating and encouraging productive entrepreneurship, leading to the entrepreneurial ecosystem needing to be built 'from scratch' (Andonova et al 2018).

Current criticisms of entrepreneurial ecosystems are the overemphasis on the key elements of the system with limited investigations into the connections between these elements – how does each component of the ecosystem interact with each other, and how does this aid in facilitating a supportive entrepreneurial ecosystem (or not) (Stam 2015). Borissenko and Boschma (2017) discuss how there is limited investigation into the evolution of entrepreneurial ecosystems over time, and how each element of the ecosystem is considered 'equally important'. For some groups of entrepreneurs, certain elements of the ecosystem may be more important than others – for marginalized entrepreneurs with limited resources, access to capital or policy environments may be more important elements of the ecosystem than culture or human capital development. Young digital-social entrepreneurs are heavily embedded within the ecosystem, and their success depends on how well these elements interact. Therefore, it is important to understand the individuals' domains of the ecosystem, how they are impacted by each other and how young people engage with and experience each of these domains. For the purpose of this study, the entrepreneurial ecosystem of Kosovo and Slovenia will be mapped and examined, in which participants

discuss their perspective on the strength and importance of different elements on their own entrepreneurial endeavours.

2.6. Digital Entrepreneurship

Digitalization is argued to be one of the most important forces within the domain of entrepreneurship, due to the continuous advancements in digital technology and their extraordinary revolution of economic and social activities (Berger et al 2021). Since the outbreak of the dotcom economy at the end of the twentieth century, there has been a growth in both theoretical and empirical research investigating the relationship between digital technology and entrepreneurship (Janson and Wrycza 1999; Steininger 2019). The emergence of digital entrepreneurship and the digital economy, and the corporations that started as digital start-up's such as Google, Microsoft, and Facebook, have completely changed the way that we interact with each other, and have been hailed as some of the most significant economic developments since the industrial revolution (Zhao and Collier 2016; Kraus et al 2019). However, digitalisation is not just one single development in entrepreneurship, but rather a total shift in business model towards an entire digital environment. Therefore, for this discussion, digital entrepreneurship will follow Giones and Brem (2017) definition, where digital entrepreneurship is the pursuit of entrepreneurial opportunities that are created and pursued through the use of digital platforms, as a business activity that primarily takes place online or through a digital medium. Digital entrepreneurship allows companies or individuals to expand their target market and enables them to reach out to a wider audience than traditional entrepreneurial ventures such as storefronts (Kraus et al 2019). Cumming and Johan (2010) identified the emergence of the internet as spurring entrepreneurial activities, by enabling the clustering of entrepreneurs across industries and economies.

Digital entrepreneurs utilize technology in the form of three distinctive but associated elements – digital artifacts, digital platforms and digital infrastructure. A digital artifact is a digital component, application or content that forms part of a new product or service, providing a particular functionality or value to the end-user (Ekbja 2009; Kallinikos et al 2013). Contemporary examples of digital artefacts include apps that run on smart watches (such as FitBit or Strava), or apps that form part of home appliances (such as Amazon Alexa). Digital platforms are defined as being a common set of services and digital architectures that hosts complimentary offerings, including digital artifacts (Tiwana et al 2010; Parker et al 2016).

Examples of digital platforms include the Apple's iOS or Google Android operating systems, which enable apps to run on their respective systems. They provide a wealth of opportunities for entrepreneurs to develop complimentary products and services (such as apps), whilst providing an ecosystem that enables a deepening of specialization for digital entrepreneurs (Zahra and Nambisan 2011). Digital infrastructure refers to the tools and systems (such as cloud computing, data analytics, online communities, 3D printing, social media, etc) that offer communication, collaboration and/or computing capabilities to support innovation and entrepreneurship (Aldrich 2014). These digital infrastructures enable founders to build scalable products and services that have the capacity to drive change and stimulate growth, due to generativity that enables digital technologies to facilitate unprompted actions by large, uncoordinated audiences (Zaheer et al 2019). The emergence of these infrastructures, particularly, social media, are considered to have led to the democratization of entrepreneurship, enabling a greater and more diverse set of people engage with the entrepreneurial process (Zahra and Nambisan 2011).

By embracing these digital technologies, digital entrepreneurs are able to realize the potential of everyday digital items and systems, such as smartphones and social media, to expose themselves and others to new markets and opportunities, reach a wider target audience, and expand their products and services more broadly (Hansen 2019). Digital technologies have become a key tool for designing successful start-up's, enabling the creation of new businesses that can both comprise physical (tangible) and digital (intangible) components (Foroudi et al 2017). According to the European Commission (2015), the growing usage of advanced digital technologies by young entrepreneurs and SMEs has the potential to boost both economic growth and employment. However, digital entrepreneurs are typically already considered to be young, urban, well-educated individuals that gain experience through working for innovative start-ups, suggesting that young people's proximity to innovation and digitisation in their everyday life stimulates youth digital entrepreneurship (Delacroix et al 2019).

According to Zaheer et al (2018), the key to a digital entrepreneur's success lies in their experience, their education, and their personal connections, as well as their vision, purpose, values, timing, and focus. Family background, such as experience of entrepreneurship and technological expertise drive individuals to pursue digital entrepreneurship due to having a supportive ecosystem to assist in their pursuit (Ziyae et al 2014). Proximity to entrepreneurial ecosystems, such as business and tech incubator hubs, is considered to significantly drive individuals' propensity to pursue digital entrepreneurship due

its influencing role in increasing the individuals' personal connections within the tech-sphere. Where incubators are typically located in larger cities, this means that those within a geographical proximity to a tech hub, such as Silicone Valley in the USA or the 'Danube Valley' in Central Europe are better positioned, and thus, more driven to pursue digital entrepreneurship (McAdam et al 2019).

Whilst there are numerous drivers for digital entrepreneurship, there are also significant barriers that prevent the pursuit of digital entrepreneurship for many aspiring entrepreneurs, such as lack of training, disproportionate competition, lack of investment and exorbitant start-up costs (Antonizzi and Smuts 2020). Typical business start-up training and business support across many companies focuses predominantly on more generic entrepreneurship support, rather than assisting in the development and pursuit of more niche entrepreneurial activities such as digital entrepreneurship (Darnihamedani and Hessels 2016). This is considered to be due to a lack of understanding surrounding the parameters of what constitutes digital entrepreneurship, and the relative newness of digital entrepreneurship in the broader entrepreneurial landscape (Antonizzi and Smuts 2020). Due to the growing interest in digital entrepreneurship and emergent digital technologies, this has led to a reduction in availability of investor interest due to an oversaturated market, meaning many digital entrepreneurs are left unable to attain start-up capital (Davidson and Vaast 2010). Rindova et al (2007) discuss how the exorbitant start-up costs and subsequent need to keep up with disruption factors and costs when utilizing digital technologies are considered as significant economic barriers to digital entrepreneurship. Technological development and digital entrepreneurship occur under high degrees of uncertainty, in that new technologies are expensive to produce and difficult to determine pre-development the relative success of these technologies within the market (Brundin and Gustafson 2013). Whilst continuous market feedback and rapid product development are ways to cope with high uncertainty, this requires significant economic capital and agility, which acts as a barrier for many entrepreneurs from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and with less access for start-up funding (Ojala 2016).

2.7. Social Entrepreneurship

Many academics argue that 'traditional' entrepreneurship is vital to the successful growth and development of an economy, and ultimately, for improvements in societal wellbeing, whether the entrepreneurial activity is factor-driven, efficiency-driven, or innovation-driven (Furman et al 2002; Abu-Saifan 2012). Whilst Bygrave and Minniti (2000) argue that every act of entrepreneurship inherently has a social function; social enterprise differs from 'traditional' entrepreneurship, as its primary mission is for the creation of social value rather

than for the generation of private economic gains (Mair et al 2012; Bedi and Yadav 2019). Social entrepreneurship is attracting an increasing amount of investment and attention, however, with this growing popularity has come less certainty about what exactly constitutes as social entrepreneurship, and what social entrepreneurs really do (Martin and Osberg 2007). Social entrepreneurship is often described as a process that 'bridges the gap between business and benevolence', filling the gaps where government and public institutions are failing to support those most vulnerable in society (Roberts and Woods 2005), in which issues of poverty and welfare motivate firms and entrepreneurs to conduct businesses with an embedded social mission (Doherty et al 2014).

The term 'social entrepreneurship' is considered to be 'ill-defined' (Barendsen and Gardner 2004), 'fragmented' and with no coherent theoretical framework (Weerawardena and Mort 2006), meaning that it is a difficult concept to define due to meaning different things to different people. This is because social entrepreneurship is a multidimensional construct, and many of those engaged in social entrepreneurship activity would refrain from describing their activities as marketable due to their central ethos being that of social impact rather than profit-seeking behaviour (Roberts and Woods 2005). Social entrepreneurship is typically defined as "entrepreneurial activity with an embedded social purpose" (Austin 2006; p22) and has become an important phenomenon across the world for addressing basic human needs with business practices (Mair and Marti 2006; Seelos et al 2011). However, it has also been defined as the simultaneous pursuit of economic, social, and environmental goals by enterprising ventures (Doherty et al 2014), suggesting that there is a relatively equal emphasis on each of these goals. This definition vastly contrasts with more pragmatic definitions that consider social entrepreneurship to be the generation of income by ventures pursuing social outcomes (Zietlow 2001). A broader definition by Martin and Osberg (2007) argues that social entrepreneurship involves three components: the identification of a social issue, the identification of a business opportunity that addresses this social issue, and the creation of business activity that aids in alleviating this social issue. It ties in the concept of the 'triple bottom line', a sustainability framework measuring a business's success in three key areas: profit, people and planet (Norman & MacDonald, 2004). For social enterprises, each of these components are as important as the other, whilst for traditional enterprises, profits are typically prioritized whilst people and planet are secondary goals (Kamaludin, et al., 2024).

In the United Nations (UN) Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on the 25th of September 2015, they call for "businesses to apply their creativity and innovative to solving sustainable development challenges" (United Nations 2015; p29). They outline the importance

of private business in achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with the purpose of moving social, economic, environmental and governance dimensions forward. Social entrepreneurs are seen as innovating for the purpose of societal change, whether that be in relation to micro-social challenges in the local community or macro-societal frameworks such as the UN SDGs. Many academics highlight the particular role that social enterprises can play in accomplishing these global goals (Morioka and Carvalho 2016; Radhari et al 2016), however, there is an ongoing discussion about the extent to which this impact can be accurately measured, or whether social enterprises even align themselves to the SDGs (Veronica et al 2020; Dupain et al 2021). Dupain et al (2021) found that only 40% of social enterprises in Europe examine the SDGs when assessing their impact, whilst less than 60% of social enterprises examine their impact at all. This was supported by Vujaninović et al (2018), who found that less than 17% of social enterprises mapped in Europe (with an emphasis on Eastern European post-socialist countries such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Russia, Slovenia, etc.) identified the SDGs in their marketing material at all. This highlights a gap between how social enterprises align their social purpose, and how the SDGs are not as popular as a tool for impact measurement than the UN intends for them to be.

Leading examples of social entrepreneurship have originated from developing countries, such as Mohammed Yunus and the Grameen Bank – a microlending facility providing ‘microloans’ to economically disadvantaged people to enable them to start their own businesses and invest in their community (Elkington and Hartigan 2008). Social entrepreneurs’ harness social innovations, such as microlending, at a systemic level in order to bring change to the social equilibrium, acting as agents of change motivated by a double bottom line of financial and social impact (de Bruin and Ferrante 2011). However, it is not just in ‘developing economies’ that social enterprise activity is popular, but it is also a growing phenomenon in more economically developed countries as well (Morioka and Carvalho 2016). Whilst social entrepreneurs typically start with small-scale initiatives, they often target issues that have a local presence, but also a global relevance – such as gender inequality, access to employment opportunities or waste management. Therefore, these innovative solutions developed by social entrepreneurs are often scalable or replicable across other geographies or industries. The growing prominence of social enterprise activity raises the argument that social entrepreneurship is becoming almost as important a phenomena as commercial entrepreneurship, but it still remains vastly understudied in comparison to commercial entrepreneurship. The organizational structures that have emerged with the growth of social entrepreneurship are unique, in that they often take the form of a ‘hybrid’ organization that includes both for-profit and mission-driven, not-for-profit traits (Alter 2006; Townsend and Hart 2008). However, recognition of this organizational form of social enterprise is mixed, with some

countries such as the UK creating a new form of 'community interest company' legislation to encompass these in 2004, whilst other countries, such as Kosovo, do not legally recognise social enterprises as a separate business model.

Whilst one of the central drivers of entrepreneurial activity is opportunity recognition, scholars argue that the social enterprise opportunities vastly differ from their commercial counterparts, with social enterprise opportunities focused on social problems and social value creation (Dees 1998; Dorado 2006; Austin et al 2006). Social entrepreneurs are driven to create social value, through engaging with social problems and aiming to generate solutions for these problems – such as generating wealth for the economically disadvantaged or providing sustainable food sources for those in poverty-stricken areas (Dees 1998). It is broadly understood that the main driver towards social entrepreneurship is a social or ideological goal, which ultimately results in the prioritization of social contribution and social value for the social entrepreneur (Stirzaker et al 2021; Brieger and DeClerq 2019). However, there is growing evidence that suggests social entrepreneurship is more complex than just an overwhelming desire for social or ideological change, with many scholars exploring the various traits and drivers that push people towards social entrepreneurship. Zahra et al (2009) suggests that social entrepreneurs are traditionally opportunistic, and often act like commercial entrepreneurs by way of profit and success being a key driver, before they realize their social enterprise opportunity. Whilst typically, altruism and compassion are considered to be some of the most dominant personality traits of a social entrepreneur, Stirzaker et al (2021) argues that social entrepreneurship is driven by a variety of factors, such as personal values and experience, backgrounds, and circumstances. When exploring personal values Stirzaker et al (2021) found that direct personal experience with the social issue often drove individuals to pursue a social enterprise to tackle that issue, and discussed the role of traits such as empathy, moral judgement, and self-efficacy in driving social entrepreneurial action. Mair and Noboa (2006) discuss the important role of a 'precipitating event' in triggering social enterprise activity, and that whilst individuals can have social enterprising potential and intention, it's the precipitating event that turns that intention into behaviour.

Yitshaki and Kropp (2016) and Hu et al (2020) discuss how, besides agency, context is also a key influence for social entrepreneurship – that is, the institutional context in which the social entrepreneur is positioned. Social enterprise opportunities are typically embedded into the social or institutional context; therefore, social entrepreneurs often encounter societal and institutional barriers to exploiting these circumstances. Mair and Noboa (2006) argue that the availability of social support, such as that from government and other support

organisations, drives socially enterprising activity, and thus, on the inverse, a lack of institutional support acts as a barrier to social enterprise activity. A weak institutional environment, symbolised by a weak legislative system surrounding social enterprise, is thus a significant barrier to social entrepreneurship, and according to Pelucha et al (2017), disproportionately discriminates disadvantaged individuals more so than their more privileged counterparts in pursuing social entrepreneurship. The culture of the business environment is also fundamental to the pursuit of social entrepreneurship, with a weak business environment (signalled by rule of law, corruption, and ease of starting up) acting as a significant barrier to social entrepreneurship (Yujuico 2008). This culture is also reflected in societal attitudes towards social enterprises – in communities in which social enterprise is a new concept, there can be high levels of distrust of the motives of social entrepreneurs, which acts as a barrier to success and a deterrent for social enterprise intentions (Pelucha et al 2017). A lack of funding is often cited as a barrier to social enterprise start-up, both as a consequence of levels of distrust of social enterprise and uncertainty surrounding the economic viability of the social enterprise model – which often stems from insufficient knowledge and experience with social enterprises from funders. This is particularly prominent in Central and Eastern European networks, where social enterprise is still considered an emerging model, and thus, underfunded in comparison to other forms of entrepreneurship (Pelucha et al 2017).

2.8. Youth Entrepreneurship

Today's young adults ("Millennials" or "Gen Z"¹) are considered to be more entrepreneurial, tech savvy and socially conscious than previous generations (Hewlett et al 2009; Salkowitz 2010). They are also more poorly positioned to enter the labour market than previous generations, due to job scarcity and unstable labour markets, meaning that young people are disproportionately more likely to be unemployed or underemployed in the early stages of their professional life. For this reason, more young people are pursuing entrepreneurship, either as a full-time career or a 'side-hustle', both in order to improve their chances in the labour market and provide themselves with income, and to improve their experiences, skills, and knowledge within a field of their interest. With a growing youth unemployment and underemployment rate worldwide, governments and intergovernmental organisations seek new ways to engage youth in the labour market. Youth entrepreneurship has thus, become increasingly acknowledged as an innovative approach to integrating young

¹ A Millennial is anyone born between 1980 and 1995, whilst a member of Gen Z is anyone born between 1996 and the early-mid 2000s (Rue 2018)

people into the labour market and an essential strategy for job creation, aiding in the economic independence and improved life quality of young people (Green 2013; Zu 2019).

The intention to pursue youth entrepreneurship, and the subsequent motivation to start a business, stems from an individual's proximity to enterprise-related education and enterprising behaviour, as well as a conducive business environment. Young people engaged in enterprise education and related programmes are more likely to demonstrate interest and intentions to pursue entrepreneurship due to a better understanding of what entrepreneurship entails and a better support system to call upon (Turker and Selcuk 2009; Baxter et al 2014). There is an ongoing debate about whether enrolment in public or private higher education institutions is more conducive to the development of entrepreneurial intentions of young people, where private institutions are perceived as more practical and thus more supportive of entrepreneurs (Castro, et al., 2019; Ouragini, et al., 2023). Additionally, greater awareness about the support systems and infrastructure in place within the entrepreneurial ecosystem to support business start-up's, usually gained through personal networks, drives aspirations for entrepreneurship amongst young people (Sieger et al 2011).

However, it is not just direct personal networks that influence entrepreneurial activity, but also the growing phenomena of social media influencers, particularly on platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter, that are seen to drive young people's motivation for entrepreneurship, particularly for young women. Not only has social media made the pursuit of entrepreneurship more attractive to young people, but it has also made it more accessible, with a more significant social media presence improving young people's business and start-up networking opportunities (Wolff and Moser 2009). Entrepreneurship is also perceived to offer the individuals engaged with it personal fulfilment (Schmitt-Rodermund 2007), greater independence and autonomy (Green 2013), better employment opportunities (Davis et al 1996) and an increased standard of living (Emerson and Twersky 1996). For young people in countries such as Kosovo, categorized by sluggish economic growth and a weak labour market, youth entrepreneurship is seen as a lifeline for reducing youth unemployment levels and increasing the standard of living within the country (Green 2013).

There are many barriers to youth entrepreneurship, in which the Global Entrepreneur Monitor highlights a lack of start-up financing, lack of skills or infrastructure, gender and racial discrimination, fear of failure, financial risk, lack of mentorship or support, bad economic climate, lack of entrepreneurial culture, corruption and a lack of entrepreneurship education as the main barriers globally (Kew et al 2013). Schoof (2006) defines five key barriers to youth entrepreneurship: the social and cultural attitude towards youth entrepreneurship, lack of entrepreneurship education, lack of access to finance/start-up financing, weak administrative

and regulatory framework, and weak business assistance and support. In the specific context of the Western Balkans and Kosovo, Krasniqi (2012) highlights unfair competition, corruption, and the rule of law as being three prevailing barriers for youth entrepreneurship, arguing that the after-effects of the War have led to a culture of informal business practices, in which business is done either or entirely informally. With the prominence of informal business practices being a signifier of the prevalence of social capital within the region, it is vital to understand the role of an individual's social capital on their entrepreneurship experience and their broader labour market experiences.

2.9. Digital-Social Entrepreneurship

If the pursuit of social change is the driver for many young entrepreneurs today, then digital technologies are their vehicle of choice. Recent research suggests that digital technologies, such as cloud computing, artificial intelligence, 3D printing, or mobile computing, are more frequently being used to tackle the numerous challenges that social entrepreneurs are facing (Parida and Wincent 2019; George et al 2020). Where social entrepreneurship refers to entrepreneurial initiatives seeking to solve social problems and digital entrepreneurship refers to entrepreneurial initiatives that incorporate digital technologies in their core activities, digital-social entrepreneurship refers to entrepreneurial activity that use digital technology as an inevitable part of their business model to achieve social impact” (Short et al 2009; Battisti 2019). Digital-social entrepreneurship is a newly emerging sub-field of social entrepreneurship research, that considers digital-social entrepreneurship to be a form of social entrepreneurship that utilizes digital technology, rather than a ‘new form’ of entrepreneurship within itself (Ghatak et al 2020). It builds upon the transformative nature of digitalization, altering the nature of entrepreneurship and challenging and changing approaches to issues of sustainability and social impact (Lock and Seele 2017; Stuermer et al 2017)

Digital-social entrepreneurship is closely related to the recent discussions surrounding digital-social innovation (DSI), which emerged as form of social innovation that relies on new technology to solve a wide range of social problems (Milwood and Roehl 2019). Digital-social innovation involves the use of digital technologies to provide solutions that simultaneously address both social and business needs, and ultimately results in better resources, and use of said resources (Chian Tan et al 2014). Digital-social innovation is the process of creating, implementing, and providing new ideas, products, services, or models to address social issues using digital technologies (Edwards-Schachter and Wallace 2017). However, where digital-

social innovation refers to the broader processes of innovation that utilize digital technology for social good, digital-social entrepreneurship specifically refers to entrepreneurial activity, and the individuals engaging in this activity, that utilizes digital technologies for social good (Rodrigo and Palacios 2021). Whereas all digital-social entrepreneurs can be considered to be digital-social innovators, not all digital-social innovations are conducted by digital-social entrepreneurs, as digital-social innovation can be accomplished by private sector organisations, public sector organisations or NGOs (Edwards-Schachter and Wallace 2017).

Digital-social entrepreneurship enables entrepreneurs to offer sustainable products and services at competitive prices, by raising increased awareness surrounding the social issues targeted, increasing the remit of reach that these products or services have by connecting to and engaging with online audiences. It also enables entrepreneurs to begin to compete with larger-scale, private-sector, for-profit organisations by harnessing the same or similar innovative technologies that these organisations use, but in a way that tackles societal problems. Whilst digital-social entrepreneurship comes in various sizes, typically, larger-scale digital-social entrepreneurship requires cross-collaboration with many N-Helix actors (such as industry, government, university, non-profit organizations, civil society), which Ibáñez et al (2021) suggests that a push for more digital-social entrepreneurship could be a significant driver of sustainable innovation of these cross-industry collaborations. According to Gregori and Holzman (2020), it also provides a unique ability for value creation components, with the nature of digital-social entrepreneurship allowing for practises of community-development and co-creation that centre sustainability at the core of their practise, whilst also allowing for broader stakeholder integration.

However, digital-social entrepreneurship not only provides digital solutions to social issues, but also enables digital-social entrepreneurs the ability to create awareness and educational value, democratising the ability to organize masses of people and lowering participation costs in social action, as well as fostering new information and activities that go beyond the capacity of offline communities (Selander and Jarvenpaa 2016; Kavada 2018). This creation of awareness and education value suggests that the adoption of digital-social entrepreneurship for social entrepreneurs means that the socioenvironmental value capture from business activity is not necessarily bounded to sales of core products and services but allows for wider societal impact beyond the realms of economic activity (Stuermer et al 2017; Gregori and Holzman 2020). Therefore, the promotion and adoption of digital-social entrepreneurship has a rippling effect on the sustainable economic development, digitalization and growth of an economy, suggesting that digital-social entrepreneurship is one of the new emerging drivers of economic growth (Battisti 2019). Young entrepreneurs (defined as 'millennial and Gen Z') are considered to be more willing to embrace technological changes

and innovations, and more conscious of issues surrounding social justice and inequalities, which suggests that they overarchingly would be more inclined to pursue digital-social entrepreneurship than their older counterparts, providing the ecosystem was encouraging and they had the right support (Naderi and Steenburg 2018; Grzeslo 2020; Miloseska et al 2020).

Ribeiro and Oliviera (2021) conducted a systematic review of existing literature and highlighted the following determinants for digital-social entrepreneurship: perceived social value, access to digital technologies and the internet, a conducive digital-social entrepreneurship ecosystem, active involvement of key stakeholders, and risk management. Social value results from addressing a social need and is associated with the ability to change people's behaviours and experiences and increase the quality and quantity of human life, in which a perceived ability to realistically create social value and make a sustainable difference is a core component for driving DSE (Ghauri et al 2014; Dwivedi and Weerawardena 2018). The ability to connect anywhere and at any time because of the internet and other diversified digital technologies are key means for intermediating and delivering this social value to beneficiaries, therefore, access to digital technologies increases the scalability, access, and impact of digital-social entrepreneurship, and further drives digital-social entrepreneurship (Amuomo 2017; Angelidou and Psaltoglou 2017). The strength and availability of key actors directly or involved in digital-social entrepreneurship, such as policy regulators, financiers, investors, partners and suppliers' aids in positioning digital-social entrepreneurship into the broader entrepreneurial ecosystem in which it is seeking to operate (Mason 2017; Presenza et al. 2019). Digital-social entrepreneurship requires the active involvement of people to achieve its objectives of social impact, therefore, stakeholders need to be proactively involved in co-creating the collective intelligence and mission in order to achieve the end goal of social benefit (Ghauri et al 2014). A clear understanding of the main legal, political, environmental, and technological restrictions enables a digital-social entrepreneurship to successfully identify and navigate the main barriers in order for the digital-social entrepreneurship to be developed and implemented (Battisti 2019).

Ghatak et al (2020) investigate intentions towards digital-social entrepreneurship amongst post-graduate students in India, and identify empathy, moral obligation, self-efficacy, perceived social support, perceived feasibility, and perceived desirability as key antecedents towards digital-social entrepreneurship, as well as prior experience in social and digital activity. Besides Ghatak et al (2020), there is limited research on the antecedents and drivers of digital-social entrepreneurship, due to its recency as a sub-field and area of research, therefore, discussions surrounding drivers of digital-social entrepreneurship draw together existing discussions surrounding digital and social entrepreneurs independently, with digital-social

entrepreneurship assumed to operate within the intersection. Whilst digital entrepreneurs are considered to be driven by a need to be engaged in meaningful and challenging activities that enable them to innovate and connect with other like-minded individuals, social entrepreneurs are considered to be driven a sense of enthusiasm, energy and excitement, and a drive to create social value (Yitshaki and Kropp 2017). However, whilst both operate in different contexts, both digital and social entrepreneurs are passionate about engaging in meaningful business activity and leaving a mark on their local environment (Murnieks et al 2014). Ghatak et al's (2020) findings suggest that the perceived social support, feasibility and desirability are important drivers for digital-social entrepreneurship intentions. The sample size of Ghatak et al.'s research focuses on digital-social entrepreneurship in post-graduate students in a business school in India, therefore the antecedents for these young people in an environment that would provide significant support for digital-social entrepreneurship will differ from those in environments with more complex and stagnated environments – such as Kosovo or Slovenia, the case sites for this study.

2.10. Conclusion

This chapter has considered the different definitions of entrepreneurship and identified some of the key characteristics and traits of entrepreneurs, as well as the contributing factors that drive people towards entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurs are innovative, risk-taking opportunity-seekers with a drive for action and internal locus of control, often intrinsically motivated to create and contribute to society, and to be rewarded for this (Cunningham and Lischeron 1991). Not all self-employed individuals are entrepreneurs, and not all entrepreneurial activity results in self-employment, for the case of this research, entrepreneurship is distinguished by the creation of a new product or service, and through taking on the sole risk of the entrepreneurial activity – entrepreneurship is centred around the ability and propensity to innovate (Henrekson and Sanandaji 2014). This study leans towards a Schumpeterian approach to entrepreneurship, where an entrepreneur is an innovator that is able and willing to seek out and create new economic opportunities and turn new ideas into marketable products and services (Schumpeter 1934). This is because the Schumpeterian perspective captures the essence of digital-social entrepreneurship effectively, where digital-social entrepreneurs are innovatively using digital technologies to generate social value (Battisti 2019).

Much of the existing entrepreneurship research is heavily centred around or conducted in Western economics such as the USA or European countries, and little attention has been paid to countries that sit outside of this Western periphery (Kshetri 2009). Literature that has

explored post-socialist and post-conflict regions is often heavily focused on the institutional environment and the bureaucratic inefficiencies associated with conflict and transition, rather than the more individual mechanisms and motivations towards entrepreneurship, which this study seeks to address (Miloseska et al 2020). Digital and social entrepreneurship are more recent discussions in literature, with growing interest in both digital and social entrepreneurship in the European policy agenda (UN DESA 2020; European Union 2020). In recent years, there has been an emergence of a new form of entrepreneurship, that is, digital-social entrepreneurship, where entrepreneurial activity utilizes technological innovations to create social impact and to tackle social issues (Edwards-Schachter and Wallace 2017).

Young people are considered to both be more socially conscious and digitally literate, therefore, theoretically more inclined towards digital-social entrepreneurship (Tan and Lau 2010; Fischer et al 2017; Rowsell et al 2017; Naderi and Steenburg 2018). Therefore, this study seeks to explore the ways that young people engage in and practise digital-social entrepreneurship in the post-socialist and post-conflict contexts of Kosovo and Slovenia. To gain a deeper understanding of what this means for the context of the study, Chapter 4 will explore the specific settings of Kosovo and Slovenia, including their recent history and their current social, economic and policy environment, in order to provide context to the study.

Chapter 3 – Research Context

3.1. Introduction

Yugoslavia was a country in South East Europe that unified six republics and two autonomous regions under the banner of 'unity and brotherhood'. Whilst Yugoslavia began as a vision of unity, peace, and coexistence, it ended in a series of violent conflicts that caused millions of refugees, and hundreds and thousands of casualties throughout the 1990s. Each of the republics and regions have begun their transition from Yugoslav socialism to market capitalism, and started to heal the wounds that conflict left, with varying degrees of success and support from the international community. In 1988, Yugoslavia began a partial transition to a market economy, and began to allow private business start-ups – wherein shortly afterwards, hundreds and thousands of new entrepreneurs appeared around the country (Dana and Ramadani 2015). However, to understand the present-day situation in the former Yugoslavia, it is vital to understand the history – particularly, the role that entrepreneurship had in the specific Yugoslavian-form of self-managed socialism and partly decentralized decision making. Whilst for the most part, the Yugoslav experience, similar to other socialist movements, was built on the rejection of private property and entrepreneurship, it did allow for some forms of limited artisans, craftsmanship and agricultural farming. This socialist heritage still plays an important part in the former Yugoslavian successor states, and the way that people think about and do entrepreneurship, and how institutions, governments, families, and friends respond to and support entrepreneurs in their community.

This chapter starts by briefly outlining the history of Yugoslavia, with an emphasis on Slovenia and Kosovo's social, economic, and institutional environment, and their position throughout Yugoslavia as the richest and poorest states of the country (Section 2). It follows with a discussion of the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the factors that contributed to this, as well as the impact this had on Slovenia and Kosovo individually (Section 3). It then analyses the post-conflict reconstruction and post-socialist transition period, the movement towards becoming independent countries and the formation of entrepreneurial activity throughout this time period (Section 4). Section 4 also it reviews the current social, economic, and political situation in each country, and developments in each country since their independence declarations. This provides an understanding as to the rationale for the selection of these two case sites for a comparative case study. Next, it reviews the current policy environment relating to youth digital-social entrepreneurship as part of a wider strategy for economic development and youth employment (Section 5), before mapping out the current state of the digital-social

entrepreneurial eco-system in both countries (Section 6). The final section, Section 7, will conclude the discussions of this chapter, and frame them in the context of this study – the exploration of youth-digital social entrepreneurship in Slovenia and Kosovo, and how the environments in which they exist and operate are helping or hindering their ability to pursue digital-social entrepreneurship and utilized technological advancements to create positive social change.

3.2. What and Where was ‘Yugoslavia’?

Yugoslavia was a country in Southeast Europe that existed in varying forms between 1918 and 1992 and was made up of six constituent republics (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Slovenia) and two autonomous provinces (Kosovo and Vojvodina) (Figure 2). Although the official language of Serbo-Croatian was universally recognised and spoken across the former Yugoslavia, each republic and province had their own cultural backgrounds, languages, and customs (Dana and Ramadani 2015). It came into existence in the aftermath of World War 1 under the initial name of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (later renamed to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in October 1929) and constituted the first formal unification of ‘South Slavic’ people into a sovereign state. During World War 2, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia was invaded by the Axis powers led by Nazi Germany, and completely occupied and soon-to-be carved up by the Axis powers. In Croatia, Serbs, Jews, Roma, and anti-fascist Croats were killed in concentration camps, whilst Serbia came under the control of Germany, Montenegro under the control of Italy, Kosovo occupied by Albania and Italy and Macedonia invaded by the Bulgarians. This occupation and carving resulted in Yugoslav resistance – which came in two forms: the Royal Yugoslav Army in the Homeland, and the Communist Yugoslav Partisans.



Figure 2: Map of Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia 1945 (ICTY)

The Partisans were led by Josip Broz Tito, and under his instruction, the Partisan movement quickly established 'liberated territories'. In contrast to other nationalist militias that had begun to operate in occupied Yugoslavia, the Partisans promoted pan-Yugoslav 'brotherhood and unity', and represented the republican, left-wing and socialist sections of the Yugoslav political spectrum. Throughout WW2, the Partisan's managed to hold significant chunks of the Yugoslav territory, and by November 1945, a new form for Yugoslavia was recognised under international law – The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FPR Yugoslavia) and led by Tito. Yugoslavia was now, at this point, comprised of six nominally equal republics - Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Slovenia. In Serbia, the two provinces of Kosovo and Vojvodina were also given autonomous status. The Yugoslav government initially allied with the Soviet Union in the early stages of the Cold War, closely following the Soviet Socialist model of economic development that resulted in relative economic success in the early stages. This Tito-Stalin relationship began to sour due to conflicting views on geopolitical struggles in Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, and the wider Balkans, which ended up in the Tito-Stalin split.

Splitting from the USSR came at significant economic cost to Yugoslavia, due to the Yugoslav planned economy being dependent upon unimpeded trade with the USSR and Eastern Bloc, and an increased military expenditure due to anticipated war with the USSR (rising to a high of 21.4% of national income in 1952). Therefore, to combat this, Tito sought out economic aid from the United States, who committed to supporting Yugoslavia both as an opportunity to score a Cold War victory, and to strengthen the United States position in Southeast Europe (Woodward 1995). With the support of the West, Yugoslavia pursued numerous fundamental reforms throughout the early 1950s, pushing for change in three main directions: the rapid liberalization and decentralization of the political system, the institution of a new economic system, and a diplomatic policy of non-alignment (Crnobrnja 1996). Distancing from Soviet socialism resulted in the development of Yugoslavia's 'new way' of doing socialism, often described as 'Titoism', which included the introduction of workers self-management. This led to the emergence of a strong industrial sector, with annual GDP growth throughout the early 1950s averaging at 6.1%. Throughout out 1950's and 60's, economic development and liberalization continued rapidly, with the introduction of a variant of market socialism that entailed an open border policy, and rising rates of tourism (especially to SR Croatia) bringing in significant income.

The 1970s began with the Croatian Spring, and the leadership of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia pushing for an increase of autonomy and power for the individual

federal republics. Slovenes felt that they were being economically exploited, alongside Croatia, due to their relative economic success in comparison to other Yugoslav republics and inability to pursue their own economic policies. To avoid potential ethnically driven protests in the future, Tito initiated some of the reforms demanded by those protesting, giving more autonomy to the individual republics, and awarding a similar status to the two autonomous provinces – Kosovo and Vojvodina, so that they were recognised as individual republics in Yugoslavia. The particular case of Kosovo was (and still is) a point of contention for Serbia, who felt that Kosovo was part of a Greater Serbia, whilst the Kosovar population were majority Albanian, and felt no part of a Greater Serbia. These reforms also kickstarted a crisis of debt, as the republics, after gaining more autonomy over their regions in the 1974 constitution, began to borrow individually and uncontrollably from overseas, in order to boost their individual economic development. From the total amount that Yugoslavia borrowed internationally, only 35% was borrowed by the central government, whilst the six republics and two autonomous provinces had borrowed the remaining 65% - with the central government often unaware of the borrowing at lower levels of government (Bennett 1995). This resulted in the more economically successful republics, such as Croatia and Slovenia, ended up servicing more of the debt than other republics – due the disproportionate contributions they were obliged to make to the central government. These unequal contributions led to feelings of resentment, rising rates of nationalism and refusal to continue to do so – so as the wealth gap between rich and poor republics increased, the richer ones refused to financially support the poorer republics and provinces with transfers (Kovac 1995).

3.3. The Breakup of Yugoslavia

Tito's death on the 4th of May 1980 marked the beginning of the end for Yugoslavia, with ethnic tensions rising and conflicts of interest amongst the republics becoming irreconcilable. Tito was widely praised as being the creator of modern Yugoslavia and acknowledged for his role in the unification of all ethnicities and religions throughout Yugoslavia, initially under the banner of resistance throughout World War 2, and then under communism during his 35 years in charge. At Tito's funeral, a Kosovar Albanian politician, and former President of the League of Communists in Kosovo, Mahmut Bakali, reflected that "*we all cried, but we did not know that we were burying Yugoslavia.*" Tito had built strong relationships with the West for Yugoslavia and gained significant support to aid in the economic reconstruction and reform of the nation, allowing Yugoslavia to become a 'booming' example of socialism in Europe. Following the death of Tito on May 4th, 1980, ethnic tensions grew across Yugoslavia – with the Albanian majority in Kosovo demanding 'republic' status in the 1981 Kosovo protests whilst

Serbian authorities suppressed this idea and proceeded to diminish the provinces autonomy and pursue further oppression of Kosovar Albanians.

The legacy of the 1974 Constitution resulted in a reduction of Serbia's influence in Kosovo and Vojvodina, however, following Tito's death, Serbian communist leader Slobodan Milošević sought to restore the pre-1974 Serbian sovereignty, and regain some control over these two regions. However, other republics, particularly Slovenia and Croatia, condemned this move as being a resurgence of greater Serbian hegemonism, but with a series of moves known as the "anti-bureaucratic revolution", Milošević managed to reduce the autonomy of Kosovo and Vojvodina. This enabled Serbia to increase its influence over Yugoslavia, as in the eight-member Council, Serbia could rely on a minimum of four votes – Serbia, then Montenegro (who were loyal to Serbia), Kosovo and Vojvodina. This subsequently resulted in a series of protests across Kosovo, such as the 1989 Kosovo miners' strike organised by the ethnic Albanian miners in Kosovo, with Slovenia and Croatia showing their support for Kosovar to the indignation of Serbia's leadership. In the Autumn of 1990, the republics of Slovenia and Croatia proposed transforming Yugoslavia into a loose confederation of six republics, giving each republic the right to self-determination. This was subsequently rejected by Milošević, who argued that Serbs (including those in Croatia), should also then have the right to self-determination of their own autonomous regions.

On the 25th of June 1991, Slovenia and Croatia became the first of the republics to declare their independence from Yugoslavia, with the Republic of Macedonia following suit in September 1991 and Bosnia and Herzegovina in November 1991. Slovenia and Croatia's declarations of independence marked a series of separate but related wars across Yugoslavia, known as the Yugoslav Wars, starting with Croatian War of Independence from the 31st of March 1991 to the 12th of November 1995, and ending with the Insurgency in Macedonia from the 22nd of January to the 12th of November 2001. These wars are often described as Europe's deadliest conflicts since WW2, and were marked by various war crimes, such as genocide, crimes against humanity, ethnic cleansing, and rape. The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) was established by the United Nations to prosecute these crimes. According to the International Center for Transitional Justice, the Yugoslav Wars led to the deaths of 140,000 people, and a major refugee and humanitarian crises.

3.3.1. Slovenian Independence: Ten Days of War and European Integration

On the 23rd of December 1990, Slovenia held a referendum regarding Slovenian independence from Yugoslavia, which passed with 93.3% turnout and 88.5% voting in favour of independence. Whilst the act of independence was ultimately passed for the 25th of June 1991, this 'advance' for the date of independence gave the Slovenian government time to plan to gain an early advantage in the anticipated conflict with the Yugoslav military. This resulted in the 'Ten-Day War', where the Yugoslav Army (JNA) left their barracks in Croatia on the 26th of June 1991 to move towards Slovenia's border, and opened fire on the Slovenian Army from the 27th of June 1991. This conflict lasted for ten days, with a ceasefire being agreed on the 3rd July 1991. According to Slovenian estimates, the JNA suffered 44 fatalities and 146 wounded, whilst the Slovenians suffered 19 fatalities and 182 wounded, with 12 foreign nationalists also killed in the conflict. Due to the short-term and scattered nature of the fighting, there was limited property damage, and material losses were also low.

Whilst the success of the Slovenes within the Ten-Day-War provided a brief relief, the Slovenian government was quickly confronted with a number of pressing issues, such as the need to normalize foreign relations, reviving the economy, executing reprivatisation programs, writing a new constitution and development effective, democratic political institutions. Many policymakers were sceptical of Slovenia's ability to be an independent state, due to its population of less than two million, and no history of independent statehood in the last millennium. Slovenia was argued to be 'too small' to be viable, and many felt that if Slovenia split from Yugoslavia, it would inevitably need create some form of union with one of its neighbouring countries, such as Italy, Hungary, or Croatia. However, Slovenia has numerous important advantages that aided in its ability to split from Yugoslavia and pursue its own independence as a pluralist state. Slovenia's GDP per capita was twice that of similar Eastern European countries (such as Poland or Hungary) at the time, which gave it the economic strength to undergo the economic transition. The Slovenian communists themselves had begun to move towards pluralism prior to the split from Yugoslavia, throughout the 1980s, which meant that the shock of the split was somewhat lessened by the countries strong political and economic position. The population of Slovenia was largely homogenous in comparison to other Yugoslav republics, with approximately 90% of the population identifying as Slovenian, which meant there was less internal ethnic conflict, as seen in places such as Bosnia and Herzegovina. There were no active territorial disputes over the territories or borders of Slovenia, which meant there was little trouble to Slovenian authorities regarding territorial negotiations.

Although Slovenia was economically the most successful of the Yugoslav republics and had already begun to make the moves required towards market liberalisation, they still needed to seek recognition from the international community of their independence. Initially, the European Community and US warned against recognition of the 'breakaway republics' of Croatia and Slovenia, due to endorsements for the preservation of a unified Yugoslavia. This went so far as to impose economic sanctions on Yugoslavia in November 1991, which impacted Slovenia and Croatia just as much as it did Serbia – resulting in cancelled trade agreements between Yugoslavia, the European Community, and the US. However, this was short-lived, as by mid-December 1991, European Community foreign ministers eventually agreed to recognise Slovenia and Croatia, upon receiving guarantees that the successor governments were compelled to rule of law, human rights, and ethnic/minority rights. By April 1992, virtually all European States and the US had announced diplomatic recognition of Slovenia and Croatia, and the creation of economic agreements with other former communist states commenced throughout 1993, including with Poland and the Czech Republic.

3.3.2. Kosovan Independence: Systematic Oppression, Ethnic Tensions and NATO Interventions

Kosovo's experience throughout and after Yugoslavia significantly differs from that of Slovenia, with Slovenia coming out relatively unscathed from conflict in comparison to its neighbours, and able to swiftly transition and recover economically, whilst Kosovo is still in the recovery stages today. What we now know as Kosovo today, was formally created on the 3rd of September 1945 as the 'Autonomous Region of Kosovo and Metohija'. Initial contentions stemmed from the lower levels of autonomy that Kosovo has in comparison to both the other autonomous region of Vojvodina, and that of the six republics – Kosovar's felt that they were unequal to their Yugoslav peers, which had a detrimental social, economic, and political impact on the development of the region. High-ranked Serb communist officials such as Aleksandar Ranković also pursued dominance for Serbs in Kosovo by giving them more power in Kosovo's nomenklatura, which allowed for domination of Serbs and Montenegrins in Kosovo's government, security forces and industrial employment. Due to Kosovo being considered 'part of Serbia', rather than an independent region of its own, these movements towards Serb domination in Kosovo were not particularly protested or questioned by other republics in Yugoslavia, which led to further feelings of inequality in Kosovo, and more particularly, Kosovar Albanians, about their position within Yugoslavia.

After the ousting of Ranković in 1966, the agenda of decentralization reform in 1968 and the 1974 Constitutional Reform, Kosovo was given substantial autonomy, and there was

a formal recognition of a Muslim Yugoslav nationality. The 1974 Constitutional reform gave Kosovo its own Constitution, as well as enabling it to have its own administration and assembly, and legislative and judicial autonomy. This provided the Province of Kosovo was a seat in the Federal Presidium of Yugoslavia, giving it equal rights to the state of Socialist Republic Serbia. This led to rising tensions between Albanians and non-Albanians in Kosovo, as Serbia felt too many concessions were being given and that Albanians in Kosovo (the majority) were being given too much autonomy over what they considered to be Serbian territory. Albanians in Kosovo has been asking for the recognition of Kosovo as a parallel republic (and not a Province or Region) to Serbia within the Federation, and following the death of Tito in 1980, these demands were renewed with protests.

In March 1981, Albanian students in Kosovo started the 1981 Protests, in which a social protest about Kosovo's position within Yugoslavia resulted in a violent mass riot and nationalistic demands across Kosovo, which were contained by the Yugoslav authorities by force. This further increased ethnic tensions in Kosovo, with emigration of non-Albanians in Kosovo increasing and a rise in violent inner attacks between Albanians and non-Albanians, as well as rising attacks against Yugoslav officials and authoritative representatives. The aftermath of these protests resulted in resentment from Serbs in Kosovo to the current political situation in Kosovo, with many Serbs suspected deliberate 'Albanianization' of Kosovo, and Serbs being driven out of Kosovo due to these ethnic tensions (Duijzings, 2000). This was evidenced by claims of Serb population decrease in Kosovo from 23.5% in 1961 to 13.2% in 1981, however, this was predominantly due to an increase in the Albanian population (from 646,604 in 1961 to 1,226,736 in 1981) through increasing family sizes and migration from Albania, rather than a significant decrease in the Serb population (227,016 in 1961 to 209,498 in 1981) (Lendvai, 1991).

By September 1987, Slobodan Milošević took charge of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia's Serbian branch, with his rise to power coinciding with increasing Serb-Albanian tensions in Kosovo. After the election of Milošević, a populist campaign emerged in Serbia as a backlash to the 'undermining and oppression' of Serbia in Yugoslavia, in which the main points of the campaign argued the following: Serbs in Kosovo were being suppressed by the Albanian-dominant Kosovo government, Serbia has no control over its provinces (Kosovo and Vojvodina) due to the 1974 Constitution, the 1974 constitution was created so suppress and exploit Serbia, and that the constitution needed revising with an enhancement over Serbia's control. This led to a series of relatively small protests starting in February 1986, that erupted into mass protests in the latter half of 1988 of up to 400,000 people. The Parliament of Serbia proposed constitutional amendments in early 1989 that would significantly reduce SAP Kosovo and Vojvodina's autonomous status within the SR Serbia, in which following a series

of further demonstrations and protests against these amendments, the Serbian parliament approved these changes on March 28th, 1989.

Throughout the early 1990s, there were various attacks on police forces and authoritative officials that abused Albanian civilians carried out by the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), an ethnic Albanian separatist militia that sought independence for Kosovo. These attacks began to escalate due to further systematic oppression from Serbia, and from February 1996, the KLA undertook a series of attacks against police stations and Yugoslav government employees, which led to the Serbian authorities denouncing the KLA as a terrorist organization. After years of ethnic tension and unrest between the Albanian-Kosovans and Serbian-Kosovans, open conflict between the Serbian police and Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) began in February 1998, resulting in approximately half of Kosovo's entire population becoming displaced by the War (Clark 2000). Due to continued resistance from Milošević and the Yugoslav and Serb forces, NATO launched a 78-day airstrike intervention against Yugoslavia in March 1999 to resolve the tensions against the Albanian Kosovans. By June 1999, Milošević withdrew the Yugoslav and Serb forces, and the Kumanovo Treaty was signed, establishing new basic relations between Yugoslavia and Kosovo Forces. The United Nations Security Council further passed a resolution to end the War, set up the Kosovo Peace Implementation Force to restore peace within Kosovo and established a NATO peacekeeping force within Kosovo, providing it with some autonomy, including a 120-member assembly (Bieber and Daskalovski 2003).

International negotiations surrounding the final status of Kosovo, as envisaged under UN Security Council Resolution 1244, began in 2006 – with Kosovo seeking independence and Serbia fundamentally opposed to the notion. Despite disapproval from Russia, the U.S, UK and France were seemingly in favour of recognising Kosovo's independence, but a declaration of independence was postponed by Kosovar Albanian leaders until the end of the Serbian presidential elections on the 4th of February 2008. This was because many EU and US politicians felt that declaring independence prematurely to the Serbian elections would boost support for the Serbian nationalist candidate, Tomislav Nikolić, and lead to further tensions. Kosovo held its parliamentary elections in November 2007, with Hashim Thaçi claiming victory for the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) (with a 35% of the vote) and highlighting his intentions to declare independence shortly afterwards. Thaçi's party formed a coalition with the Democratic League (second place in the election with 22% of the vote), and ultimately, declared their independence from Serbia on the 17th of February 2008. However, because the International Court of Justice (ICJ) recognised the legality of the declaration under international law, the UN General Assembly passed a joint Serbia-EU resolution that called for an EU facilitated dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia . This led to the Brussels Agreement

in 2013, which was an agreement mediated by the EU High Representative between the Serbian Prime Minister Ivica Dačić and the Kosovan Prime Minister Hashim Thaçi. However, this was never formally signed, and the discussions surrounding Kosovo's independence are ongoing.

3.4. The Current Situation – A Socioeconomic Review

Kosovo and Slovenia were chosen as case sites for this study due to their shared history and diverging present day situations, regarding their general economic health and entrepreneurship development. In Yugoslavia, Slovenia was often considered to be the wealthiest republic whilst Kosovo the poorest, and whilst both countries exist outside of Yugoslavia today, this disparity is still ever-present and growing. Since the disintegration of Yugoslavia, Slovenia has seen relative economic success, and is now considered to be a high-income economy with the highest per-capita GDP in Eastern Europe, whilst Kosovo is a middle-income economy with the lowest per-capita GDP in Europe. Whilst Slovenia has a well-established entrepreneurial ecosystem and a strong start-up environment, Kosovo is slowly developing their entrepreneurial ecosystem – with the start-up environment growing in strength year-on-year, but from a very much lower base compared to Slovenia.

3.4.1 Slovenia – Role Model Recovery or Just Lucky?

Today, Slovenia is a high-income economy that is ranked amongst the top global economies in terms of human capital development. Although Slovenia comprised less than 10% of Yugoslavia's population, it was the most productive Yugoslav republic and accounted for 20% of its overall GDP. During Yugoslavia, Slovenia was forced to follow the development patterns of Yugoslavia as a whole, due to the unified nature of the state, which meant that Slovenian economic growth and development was somewhat stunted. However, when the disintegration of Yugoslavia occurred, Slovenia was already in the process of transitioning to a market economy and was already prosperous with strong economic relations with Western economies. Nevertheless, the first few years post-Yugoslavia were a traumatic period for the economy of one of Europe's newest countries, particularly due to the need to both undergo economic transition and reconstruction. After absorbing extensive direct and indirect costs associated with the disintegration of the Federation and the subsequent conflicts and refugees that came of this, Slovenia managed to recover economically relatively quickly, and its economic institutions rapidly evolved into a form more similar to those in the European Union

and Western Europe. One of Slovenia's main aims post-independences was to meet the Maastricht Criteria for accession into the European Union and European Monetary Union, in which it had applied with plans of accession for 2004. Slovenia joined CEFTA in 1996, joined the European Union on the 1st of May 2004, and adopted the euro in 2007. Slovenia was the first country from the former Yugoslavia to join the EU (Croatia later joined in 2013) and is one of two Yugoslav's country to have formally adopted the Euro (Croatia adopted the Euro in 2003, and Kosovo and Montenegro use the euro as de-facto domestic currency but are not part of the European Monetary Union).

Slovenia's successful economic recovery and growth stems from the gradualism of its transition to a market economy – even prior to the disintegration of Yugoslavia, Slovenia was making moves towards a democratic market economy, giving it a head start over its fellow Yugoslav republics. Rojec et al (2004, p461) accredits Slovenia's success to competitive neocorporatism, a high starting point of development and the shock therapy of the disintegration forcing change. The consolidation of 'competitive neocorporatism', a social market economy that includes strong labour unions and employers' associations, meant that in high job security, wage protection and generous pensions are central for firms to remain competitive – guaranteeing a strong working environment for individuals which in turn, aids in boosting economic growth through increased consumption (Stanojević 2012). Slovenia was consistently the strongest economy in Yugoslavia, and maintained this even throughout the disintegration, which left them in a strong position straight after independence and enabled them to reconstruct and transition with greater ease than other Yugoslav republics. The speed of the disintegration acted as a shock therapy for Slovenia to take the plunge in their economic transition – a move they were making prior to the disintegration, in which the disintegration only sped up this move and further pushed them to Western integration and marketization of the economy.

The economic transition from federal republic to independent nation was a complex journey, even for Slovenia, with the most immediate problem Slovenia faced being the loss of the internal Yugoslav market. This was compounded by the rapid shrinking of markets in the former communist countries of the CEE regions, as well as the recession in the Western European markets, and led to a 45.2% drop in exports post-independence. This depression persisted until mid-1993, where Slovenia had to quickly develop alternative markets for its exports, and growth began again in the second half of 1993, reaching 5.3% in 1994 and 4.1% in 1995 (Stanojević, 2012). According to Eurostat, Slovenia's GDP grew on average by 4.5% each year between 1993 and 2008, with per capita income rising from less than 50% of Western Europe's in 1993 to approximately 90% of the EU-27 average by 2009. The shift from socialist self-management and its heavy emphasis on heavy industry and goods production

had significant implications for the structure of the economy post-independence, in that the service sector was underdeveloped, and domestic demand was low. However, this recovery period was initially propelled by a significant increase in wages and salaries, and the subsequent increase in domestic demand – followed by a strong recovery in the exports of goods and services, and an increase in foreign investment into Slovenia. Foreign investment was slow to arrive due to the legacy of war, however, by the mid-1990s and early 2000's, Slovenia was starting to be perceived as a more stable economy to invest in and offered significant returns for investors. The rapid increase in Slovenia's service sector helped compensate for the slow recovery in goods production, and by 2000, the service sector outstripped goods production by almost eight times. This was particularly prominent in non-market services such as education and health, which saw significant investment and increases in strength post-independence, which is reflected in the strength of the labour market. Approximately two-thirds of people in Slovenia are employed in the services sector, and just over one-third are employed in industry and construction, in which generally, Slovenia has relatively low levels of unemployment. Slovenia's employment rate is higher than the EU average, sitting at 76% in comparison to an EU average of 72%, with unemployment rates falling below 5% in 2019 (OECD 2021).

Approximately 12% of adults in Slovenia who are not yet engaged in entrepreneurship, intend to start a business within the next few years, ranking Slovenia as above average for European entrepreneurial intention levels (GEM 2020). Pre-2020, this averaged at approximately 16%, with 20.59% of Slovene respondents agreeing the pandemic had negatively influenced their entrepreneurial intentions – predominantly due to a perceived increased risk of failure. Slovenia also ranks above the European average in terms of the perception of business opportunities (42.03% in comparison to European average of 39.52%) and the perceived ease of starting a business (62.03% in comparison to European average of 53.76%). The GEM report also found that support for entrepreneurship from the media is high in Slovenia, and that 68.87% of adults felt that entrepreneurship is a good career choice – suggesting a supportive environment for entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurs in Slovenia are primarily motivated by the desire to earn a living due to job scarcity (72.2%), make a difference (44.6%), to build significant wealth (39.7%) and to continue a family tradition (23.2%). Entrepreneurship in younger age groups is rising slowly, attributed to their better digital readiness and propensity towards remote working and gig work, however, it still lags behind many other European countries.

3.4.2 Kosovo – A Newborn State and a New Era

Kosovo is an upper-middle-income transition economy, undergoing the transition from central planning to market-led in the late 1990s, in conjunction with the social and economic recovery from the violent conflict of the Kosovo War. It was the poorest province within the former Yugoslavia, with its economy developed and modernised following a series of federal development subsidies under Tito's Yugoslavia in the 1970s and 1980s (Djolai 2021). However, the abolition of Kosovo's autonomous institutions and the violent ethnic conflicts in the 1990s led to poor economic policies, international sanctions, and limited external finance access, severely damaging an already weak economy. Following the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the conclusion of the Kosovo War, Kosovo faced a double-edged sword of undergoing economic transition and post-war reconstruction, resulting in a negative balance of trade, high debt levels and negative GDP until 2002 (Gribben 2018). Kosovo has an estimated population of 1.74 million people, ethnically composed of 88% Albanian, 7% Serbian, and 5% 'other' ethnic groups – such as Bosniaks, Gorani, Romani, Turks, Ashkalis and Janjevci (Croats) (CIA World Factbook 2009). The official languages of Kosovo are Albanian and Serbian, with all institutions committed to ensuring the equal use of both languages.

Between their declaration of independence in 2008 and the outset of the COVID19 pandemic in early 2020, Kosovo enjoyed consistent positive economic growth, averaging 5% GDP growth yearly. However, Kosovo is still the poorest country in the former Yugoslavia and the second poorest country in Europe (after Moldova), with a GDP per capita of \$4,287.2 (World Bank 2021). Moreover, Kosovo has been negatively impacted by the COVID19 pandemic (with a GDP contraction of -6.18% in 2020) and the restrictions brought about, mainly due to its dependence on its service sector (60% of GDP). Despite Kosovo's solid economic growth pre-pandemic, there are significant structural failings that have led to it being one of the poorest countries in Europe. Most consumer goods are imported from either neighbouring countries (North Macedonia and Serbia) or from cheap export markets such as China – with Kosovo importing €3.2 billion worth of goods in 2019. This has led to Kosovo having a significant structural trade deficit, only exporting €0.4 billion worth of goods in 2019² – predominantly to its neighbouring countries (North Macedonia, Albania, Montenegro), profoundly impact the country's export competitiveness in recent years. This dependency on imports has led to a lack of domestic production of 'local goods' and a high dependence on imported everyday products, which are regularly affected by import tariffs and quotas. In

² Kosovo's main exports are basic metals and their articles (43.8%), plastics, rubber, and their articles (12.6%), prepared food, drinks and tobacco (7.8%), mineral products (6.9%), various manufactured goods (5.9%), machinery, electrical and mechanical equipment (5.3%). (Santander Trade 2021)

addition, Kosovo is heavily dependent on remittances from its diaspora – where 18.87% of Kosovo's GDP in 2020 was due to remittance inflows from the diaspora in countries such as Germany, Switzerland, and the USA.

Since the country's independence in 2008, they have followed the neoliberal models of school improvement seen across other Eastern European states, focusing on reform and education shifts marked by outcome measures, comparative analysis, and Western European influenced systems (Selenica, 2020). The new education systems and reforms implemented in the past decade have focused on developing student competencies aligned with European goals. These changes are not focused on individual needs of the Kosovar labour market but towards a broader goal of European Union accession (Chankseliani and Silova 2018; Selenica 2018). However, Kosovo's education system is considered to be outdated, with much of its content not being updated or amended since before the Kosovo war in 1999, which has led to critiques of the system and its inability to adequately prepare young people for the current needs of the labour market (Saqipi and Rexhaj 2020). Many of these internationally funded education programs were also designed without coordination with the local community, without really assessing the needs of the local labour market and are often replications of programs in other countries which do not reflect the needs of the Kosovo context (Salihu et al 2019).

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) account for over 99% of the total enterprises, and their GDP share amounts to more than 50% of total GDP (World Bank 2021). More specifically, 96% of Kosovo's SMEs are micro-enterprises, meaning they employ 10 or fewer employees, in which they are usually family-owned and run businesses (Hashi and Krasniqi 2011). This dominance of micro-enterprises leaves limited capacity for innovation and ability to achieve beneficial economies of scale, and also means recruitment for new employees is often centred across personal networks – rather than through external recruitment. According to the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business, Kosovo has an 'easy' business environment, ranked 57th globally (World Bank 2021). Starting up a business, getting credit and trading across borders are seen as 'easy' to this report. However, issues such as accessing electricity, dealing with construction permits and enforcing contracts are significant challenges for Kosovo. Hashi and Krasniqi (2011) further find additional challenges in Kosovo's business environment, such as difficulty accessing start-up finance, unstable supplies of water and electricity and the insufficient rule of law and government corruption. On the Corruption Perception Index, Kosovo is ranked 83/180 in 2023, compared to Slovenia ranked 42/180 (Transparency International 2024).

Despite having one of the youngest populations in Europe, Kosovo has been unable to absorb these young people into the labour market, with unemployment being a consistent

issue – recording an unemployment rate of 27.2% in 2021, rising to almost 50% for its young people (15–24-year-olds) (World Bank 2021). One-quarter of young people are reported to not be in education, employment, or training (NEET), rising to over 30% for young women (World Bank 2021). Young people are disproportionately engaged in informal work, with approximately 8 out of 10 young people currently employed reporting to be in informal and temporary employment, predominantly in the services sectors (Riinvest, 2020). As a result of high rates of unemployment, a lack of job opportunities and dissatisfaction with the current state of Kosovo, as well as the “pull” of good work and better opportunities abroad, young people are continuing to leave Kosovo, leading to a significant ‘brain drain’ from the region (Arandarenko & Brodmann, 2019).

3.5. Youth Digital-Social Entrepreneurship Policy Environment

Where both countries have had varied economic trajectories since Yugoslavia, the current state of play for entrepreneurship in both countries is relatively unprecedented. Kosovo, despite consistently being the poorest country of the former Yugoslavia and still being highly dependent on the international donor community over twenty years on, has a highly entrepreneurial youth population (Bağış et al 2023). According to Stojčević et al (2022), 68.3% of surveyed young people in Kosovo (and Metohija) identified as being ‘determined to open their own business in their future’, with over 50% planning to open up their business within 0-2 years of graduating from their studies. In a similar study conducted in Slovenia, only 21% of young people surveyed reported intentions of establishing their own company or becoming self-employed (Fošner and Jeraj, 2018). Self-employment is becoming more common amongst young people in Slovenia, due to many European companies recruiting remote workers in Slovenia – and thus requiring young people to have ‘self-employed status’. In Fošner and Jeraj (2018)’s study, only 7.1% of young people surveyed reported intentions of founding their own company. A prosperous economy like Slovenia would logically indicate higher interest in entrepreneurialism, however, previous studies suggest the opposite – that young people are less interested in entrepreneurship than they are in more traditional forms of employment (European Commission, 2023).

In order to better understand how young people engage in digital-social entrepreneurship, it is important to understand the current and historical policy frameworks that facilitate it. Policy provides a contextual understanding of the institutional setup for digital-social entrepreneurship, outlining regulatory frameworks, access to resources, approaches to innovation, growth, networking and collaboration, and the broader development of the

entrepreneurial ecosystem. Therefore, this section will provide a brief overview of the current policy environment for youth digital-social entrepreneurship in Kosovo and Slovenia, with the policy overview going as far back as 2011/2012, where the oldest of the 18-30 cohort explored in this study (30-year-olds) would have been at the ‘youngest’ bracket for the study (18 years old). Additionally, policy documents were only available online as far back as 2011 for Kosovo (Program of the Government of Kosovo) and 2012 for Slovenia (Social Entrepreneurship Act).

3.5.1. Kosovo’s Digital-Social Entrepreneurship Policy Environment

This section provides an overview of current and historic policy relating to youth digital-social entrepreneurship in Kosovo, reviewing the national programs of the Government of Kosovo since 2011 (2011-2014, 2015-2019, 2020-2023) (Table 3.1). It also reviews the most recent programs from the key ministries working within this realm - The Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport, The Ministry of Innovation and Entrepreneurship, The Ministry of Finance, and the Ministry of Economic Development.

Key Actor	Policy Name and Year	Key Contributions to Youth Digital-Social Entrepreneurship
National Government	Program of the Government of Kosovo 2011-2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This document outlines four main pillars of the 2011-2014 Program: 1) sustainable economic development, 2) good governance and strengthening of the rule of law, 3) human capital development and 4) social welfare. In the first pillar, the government commits to “<i>designing training programs for employees and various categories of potential entrepreneurs both beginners and existing entrepreneurs in order to increase the performance of Kosovo SME-s which result in increased work productivity</i>” and “<i>working at the institutional level for changing the approach and entrepreneurial culture of Kosovar entrepreneurs, as well as promoting learning of entrepreneurship both in formal and informal education in Kosovo</i>” (p11). In the third pillar, the government does not make any commitments to youth entrepreneurship or employability programmes, however, it does outline that the overarching objective of this pillar is to “<i>increase the perspective for the youth, for more work, opportunities and right to entrepreneurship</i>” (p34).
National Government	Program of the Government of Kosovo 2015-2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The five main pillars of the 2015-2018 Program are as follows: 1) Sustainable economic development, employment, and welfare, 2) The rule of law, 3) The European agenda and foreign policy, 4) Education, science, culture, sports, and youth development and 5) Modern healthcare. In the first pillar, the government identifies the diaspora as being a key driver for economic survival and growth of Kosovo and commits to “<i>promote facilitations for</i>

		<p><i>Diaspora on opening and starting businesses in Kosovo</i>” (p13).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The government identifies the strategic importance of the IT sector in Kosovo and identifies main pillars for IT development in Kosovo that include a commitment to “<i>increase the level of entrepreneurship and job quality in IT enterprises</i>” (p26). ○ In this pillar, the government also identifies entrepreneurship as a mechanism to reduce dependence from social assistance, by committing to “<i>draft active social policies that promote entrepreneurship to reduce the dependence from social schemes, through entrepreneurship of youth and women</i>” (p32). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the third pillar, the government identifies its signing of the framework-agreement with the European Union that enables Kosovo to access EU programs, including programs relating to culture and youth (Culture, Youth in Action, Research, and Innovation), economic affairs (Program for Entrepreneurship and Innovation) and adoption of EU ‘IT policies’ (p45). • In the fourth pillar, the government commits to providing financial support for young entrepreneurs, through the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport (MCYS), that “<i>through which it will support opening new businesses from our youth... this fund will grow each year and will focus on different areas of the business</i>” (p72). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This pillar also commits to “<i>increase financial support to youth organizations for various youth activities</i>”, and the deepening of cooperation with international organizations engaged in youth work, in which a “<i>special focus will be the entrepreneurship, vocational education and promotion of truthful social values</i>” (p72).
<p>Government Ministry</p> <p><i>Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports</i></p>	<p>Kosovo Strategy for Youth 2019-2023</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This document outlines three key strategic objectives: 1) ‘Mobilizing Youth for Participation, Representation and Active Citizenship’, 2) ‘Providing Skills and Preparing Youth for the Labor Market’ and 3) ‘A Healthy and Safe Environment for Young People’ ▪ Strategic objective 2 is broken down into two components – non-formal education and opportunity creation for employment. ▪ For non-formal education, the MCYS identifies the need to develop entrepreneurship education activities, as currently, entrepreneurship education in Kosovo is considered to be ‘inadequate’ – outlining different methods of provision of these activities (such as workshops, training, conferences, etc) ▪ For opportunity creation, the MCYS commits to developing guidelines for entrepreneurship programmes for youth in alignment with National and European best practise, establishing a cross-sectoral coordinating party to implement youth entrepreneurship projects and providing grants and creative initiatives for new youth-led businesses.
<p>Government Ministry</p>	<p>Kosovo Economic</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This document outlines twenty priority measures for economic reform, including: Measure 12) Improving entrepreneurship and innovation environment, Measure 13) Expansion of relevant ICT network

<p><i>Ministry of Finance</i></p>	<p>Reform Program 2019-2023</p>	<p>infrastructure and services for socioeconomic development and Measure 19) Increasing the access of youth and women to the labour market through the provision of quality employment services, active employment measures and entrepreneurship.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Measure 19 commits to “<i>implementing active labour market measures focusing on young people and women and the development and implementation of the self-employment and entrepreneurship program</i>” and “<i>supporting voluntary work initiatives, contributing to youth employment</i>” (p95). ▪ Each of these three measures specifically identifies a targeted approach to reach vulnerable groups, such as women and youth, including in measure 12, the provision of specific funds and projects directed towards women and young people.
<p>Government Ministry <i>Ministry of Industry, Entrepreneurship and Trade</i></p>	<p>National Strategy For Innovation And Entrepreneurship (2019-2023)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This document outlines four strategic pillars, in which Pillar B refers to ‘Enhancement of the potential for innovation in Kosovan enterprises’ and Pillar C refers to ‘Supporting innovation and entrepreneurship among youth and women in businesses’ ▪ Pillar B commits to “<i>implement a programmatic and institutional innovation and entrepreneurship support scheme in an efficient manner</i>” (p38) through “<i>generic programmatic innovation support schemes (e. g. funds, subsidies etc.)</i>” (p38) and by “<i>strengthening and streamline the innovation intermediary landscape</i>” (p38) ▪ Pillar C identifies how “<i>currently neither vocation training schemes nor higher education curricula correspond to the needs of the economy... students and graduates are not fully able to apply their knowledge in economics, important elements with regard to innovation and entrepreneurship are missing</i>”. (p39) ▪ Pillar C commits to three operational objectives, that are, the modification of curricula to include “digital and entrepreneurial skills, media competencies, soft skills as well as innovative teaching methods” (p40, to “align vocational and higher education curricula with entrepreneurship and economic demands” (p40) and to “better integrate women in business through specific support programs”.
<p>Government Ministry <i>Ministry of Economic Development</i></p>	<p>Kosovo IT Strategy 2019-2023</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This document outlines nine strategic pillars, in which Strategic Pillar 7 discusses the role of, and development of entrepreneurship. ▪ It identifies IT as having the potential to play a crucial role in increasing the capacity for innovation of Kosovo’s economy. In addition to that the IT sector could also serve as a catalyst for entrepreneurship and the establishment of a vibrant start-up scene. ▪ It discusses the institutional framework for the “innovation system as well as its entrepreneurial ecosystem still at a very early stage” and highlights the biggest barrier as being a lack of access to finance. ▪ The key tasks for Strategic Pillar 7 are focused on increasing access to financing through a ‘high-tech start up fund’, organising consulting and mentoring services for IT entrepreneurs and increasing education on IT entrepreneurship for school and university students, including the creation of university IT entrepreneurship projects.

Table 1: Kosovo Digital-Social Entrepreneurship Policy Overview

This overview highlights how it is only since the 2019 reform program that youth entrepreneurship by itself has been identified as a policy priority, whereas prior to 2019, it was briefly considered as a small component of labour market policies, with very few initiatives specifically targeting this area (Riinvest, 2020). However, there is an overwhelming emphasis on digital entrepreneurship (otherwise described as ICT entrepreneurship) in Kosovo, highlighting how digital transformation has been a policy priority in Kosovo since the 2015-2018 reform program – this is supported by the number of NGO initiatives and incubators that were opened or grew around this time period. There is limited mention of social entrepreneurship and the social economy, with most emphasis being placed on the digital economy and ICT entrepreneurship. Additionally, in recent strategy (2019-2023), there has been an emphasis on developing the support available for entrepreneurship, as well as a focus on youth and women’s entrepreneurship. There is recurring discussion amongst civil society about the development of financing opportunities for entrepreneurs, including the proposition of a fund for young entrepreneurs – whilst this fund is not named in policy, this could potentially refer to the Sovereign Development Fund which was announced in 2023 (Democracy for Development Institute 2023). This emphasis on youth and women highlights an awareness that these groups face the most challenges when it comes to entrepreneurship, whilst the emphasis on skills training and support highlights an emphasis of the development of the ‘education’, ‘finance’ and ‘support’ components of the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

3.5.2. Slovenia’s Digital-Social Entrepreneurship Policy Environment

This section provides an overview of current and historic policy relating to youth digital-social entrepreneurship in Slovenia, reviewing the national and ministerial programs of the Government of Slovenia since 2011 (Table 3.2). There were fewer policy documents available for Slovenia than there was for Kosovo – however, this section reviews the recent national Slovenian Development Strategy 2030, as well as the programs from the key ministry working within this realm – the Ministry for Economic Development and Technology. This includes the Social Entrepreneurship Act of 2011 (and its amendments in 2018), and the Slovenian Industrial Strategy 2021-2030.

Key Actor	Policy Name and Year	Key Contributions to Youth Digital-Social Entrepreneurship
-----------	----------------------	--

<p>National Government</p>	<p>Slovenian Development Strategy 2030 (2017)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This document outlines five strategic orientations for ‘achieving a high quality of life’, in which the third refers to ‘a highly productive economy that creates added value for all’. • It outlines twelve measurable goals to achieve these five strategic orientations, including: • Goal 2: Knowledge and skills for a high quality of life and work. This goal is followed by a commitment to develop lifelong learning and training opportunities relating to entrepreneurship and promoting the concepts of sustainable development in the curriculum. • Goal 3: Decent life for all. This goal is followed by a commitment to strengthen cooperation, solidarity, and voluntarism, including through the promotion of social innovations. • Goal 6: Competitive and socially responsible entrepreneurial and research sector. This goal is followed by a commitment to promote social and environmental responsibility amongst companies and developing the support environment – particularly through development of ‘high-tech’ companies.
<p>Government Ministry</p> <p><i>Ministry of Economic Development and Technology</i></p>	<p>Social Entrepreneurship Act (2011) amendments made in (2018)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This document aims to promote social enterprises by establishing an ad hoc social enterprise status, which has restrictive provisions such as the obligation to employ disadvantaged workers (for type-B social enterprises) and operate in defined fields of activity. ▪ The 2018 revised Social Entrepreneurship Act changes include the contextualisation of the social enterprise within the social economy, erasure of the distinction between type-A and type-B social enterprises; removal of the obligation to employ disadvantaged groups and suppression of the limitation; mitigation of the administrative barriers in place to maintain the status; and introduction of a total non-profit distribution constraint.
<p>Government Ministry</p> <p><i>Ministry of Economic Development and Technology</i></p>	<p>Slovenian Industrial Strategy 2021-2030 (2021)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This document outlines a vision for Slovenian industry that is ‘green, creative and smart’. ▪ It identifies 14 measures/instruments for achieving this, divided into five ‘areas’ (RDI, entrepreneurship, internationalisation, human resources and business environment). ▪ For entrepreneurship, it discusses the creation of a supportive environment for enterprises, promotion of entrepreneurship and innovation, promotion of startups, support to SME growth and the promotion of investments. ▪ For human resources, it outlines plans to strengthen the competences, training and requalification of citizens in order to adapt to demographic changes. ▪ For business environment, it highlights the development of infrastructure and legislation as a means of developing the business environment.

Table 2: Slovenia Digital-Social Entrepreneurship Policy Overview

The Slovenian Development Strategy links into the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), using it as a guiding framework for its five strategic orientations, and linking its twelve measurable goals to individual SDGs (Hojnik, 2020). Linking the Development Strategy

into the UN SDGs highlights a national interest in sustainable development and targeting the global goals with policy, which is reflected in its emphasis on promoting social and environmental responsibility amongst organisations. This document places a significant emphasis on social innovation, linking into the broader digital-social entrepreneurship this study explores – where national strategy directly promotes social innovation and emphasis development of ‘high-tech’ companies. Additionally, both the Development Strategy and the Industrial Strategy place importance on the development of the ‘support’, ‘education’ and ‘policy’ mechanisms of the entrepreneurial ecosystems, identifying the need to develop infrastructure and create a ‘supportive’ environment for entrepreneurship. Whilst the initial Social Entrepreneurship Act created an ad-hoc status for organisations that employed ‘disadvantaged workers’ (such as disabled individuals), this was highly criticized by civil society actors (Hojnik, 2020), so the 2018 amendments rectify this and contextualise social enterprise within the broader discussions of social economy. This includes removal of the obligation to employ disadvantaged workers in order to receive ad hoc social enterprise status. The amended Social Entrepreneurship Act also outlines a mitigation of administrative barriers and an introduction of a total non-profit distribution constraint, which places limitations on how a ‘social enterprise’ may spend its profits.

3.6. Youth Digital-Social Entrepreneurship Eco-System

In Section 3.5, each country identified the importance of developing components of the entrepreneurial eco-system. In Kosovo, there was an emphasis on developing financial support, developing skills, and training provision and developing the support environment for entrepreneurship. In Slovenia, there was an emphasis on improving legal frameworks, developing skills, and training provision and developing a support environment for entrepreneurship, particularly relating to social and sustainable businesses. Isenberg (2011) outlines six components as part of the model of an entrepreneurial ecosystem, including markets, policy, finance, culture, support, and human capital (discussed in Chapter 2).

This section maps out the current state of the youth digital-social entrepreneurship ecosystem in Kosovo and Slovenia. This mapping was done both through desk-based research (the policy environment) and through the semi-structured interviews conducted, where participants outlined the key sources of finance, support, markets, and human capital they received, their experience of the culture, and their perspective of the policy environment (the ecosystem), which are discussed in further detail in Chapters 5-8. The purpose of this mapping was to contextualise the current ‘state of play’ in each country, exploring the

institutional set up that the young digital-social entrepreneurs interviewed in this study are required to navigate. By mapping out the current ecosystem, this provides a valuable insight into some of the opportunities and challenges faced by the young digital-social entrepreneurs, as well as providing a useful tool for comparison of ecosystems.

3.6.1. Kosovo's Digital-Social Enterprise Ecosystem

Kosovo's digital-social entrepreneurship ecosystem is mapped out in Table 3. This ecosystem mapping identifies the lack of access to finance (such as venture capital and angel investors) present in Kosovo currently, with only two identifiable providers of venture capital and one identifiable network for business angels. The activity (such as investment details) of KOSBAN were unavailable, so there is no data available to provide clarity on how strong the angel investor network is in Kosovo, nor the extent of its impact. In regard to the policy environment, there are a variety of policies relating to digital-social entrepreneurship, and in 2023, the introduction of the Sovereign Development Fund marked the first state-offered financial support for start-ups in Kosovo. There are numerous networks available for young entrepreneurs to tap in to, with more specialist networks such as the Women Entrepreneurs Network providing support to a more marginalized group of entrepreneurs (women).

There is a large presence of private universities, of varying 'quality', whilst it is predominantly the University of Prishtina that provides business education amongst the public universities. Additionally, the University of Prishtina has its own business incubator – Venture UP, which provides support and training to students to develop their own start-ups, with training including 'green' entrepreneurship training and digital skills training. There were only four incubators identified in Kosovo, with the two largest based in Prishtina (Innovation Centre Kosovo and Venture UP), whilst the other two were in the next largest cities (Prizren and Gjakova). Previous discussions surrounding Kosovo's entrepreneurship ecosystem highlight the centralization of entrepreneurial support to Prishtina and identify the lack of support available outside the city. This was addressed by the government with the opening of the ITP Prizren, and MakersSpace Prizren based out of ITP – in a hope to decentralize the support away from Prishtina. There is a large prominence of international donor support and non-governmental support for young entrepreneurs in Kosovo, with a significant presence of UN and EU funds, as well as various NGOs focused on entrepreneurship and sustainable/green entrepreneurship projects for young people.

Cultural attitudes towards entrepreneurship are explored in this study, however, extant literature highlights the higher levels of risk aversion and low tolerance of failure (Hashi & Krasniqi, 2011; Manolova, et al., 2019), as well as the changing social attitudes towards entrepreneurship (Adam-Muller, et al., 2015). Digital entrepreneurship is seen more positively, but social entrepreneurship is still seen negatively due to associations with post-war NGOs. However, despite the cultural attitudes towards entrepreneurs, there are many visible success stories in Kosovo, such as Gjirafa, who in turn, have created their own venture capital firm to reinvest back into Kosovo’s startup ecosystem.

Markets	Policy	Finance
<u>Networks</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Womens Entrepreneurs Network Business Alliance of Kosovo Founders Network Kosovo AmCham Kosovoo 	<u>Institutions</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kosovo Chamber of Commerce Kosovo Investment and Enterprise Support Agency (KIESA) <u>Policy</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kosovo Economic Reform Program 2019-2023 National Strategy For Innovation And Entrepreneurship (2019-2023) Draft Law on Social Enterprises (05-L-48), <u>Financial Support</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kosovo Sovereign Development Fund <u>Research Institutes</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kosovo Research and Education Network (KREN) 	<u>Angel Investors</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kosovo Business Angels Network (KOSBAN) <u>Venture Capital</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gjirafa COSME <u>Microloans</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> FINCA Kosovo Kreditimi Rural i Kosoves (KRK) KEP Trust <u>International Donor Programs</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) UNICEF Innovation Lab USAID
Human Capital	Support	Culture
<u>Public Universities</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> University of Prishtina Haxhi Zeka University Peja University of Mitrovica University of Gjakova “Fehmi Agani” Public University “Kadri Zeka” in Gjilan University of Applied Sciences in Ferizaj <u>Private Universities</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> AAB College RIT Kosovo European University of Kosovo 	<u>Incubators and Accelerators</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Innovation Centre Kosovo Jakova Innovation Centre VentureUP MakersSpace Prizren <u>Business Zones</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ITP Prizren Tech Park Prishtina <u>Non-Governmental Support</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Balkan Green Foundation STIKK Business Support Centre Kosovo (BSCK) 	<u>Visible Successes</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gjirafa Open Data Kosovo Kutia Jcoders Bonevet Hackerspace <u>Tolerance of Risk and Failure</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Higher levels of risk aversion due to lower tolerance of failure <u>Social Status of Entrepreneur</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital/Tech entrepreneurs seen positively.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European College Dukagjini • University for Business and Technology (UBT) • Universum College 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centre for Entrepreneurship and Executive Development (CEED) • Sustainability Leadership Kosova 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social entrepreneurs seen negatively. • Traditional entrepreneurs seen neutrally (changing attitude)
---	--	---

Table 3: Kosovo Digital-Social Enterprise Ecosystem

3.6.2. Slovenia's Digital-Social Enterprise Ecosystem

Slovenia's digital-social entrepreneurship ecosystem is mapped out in Table 4. The ecosystem mapping highlights the high levels of venture capital and strong prominence of entrepreneurial networks in Slovenia, as well as the availability of international donor programs. Whilst there is only one business angel network, they have invested over 8 million so far in 40 ventures since their establishment in 2007. There are numerous public funds available for entrepreneurs in Slovenia, including designated eco funds for green startups, which signifies a commitment in the ecosystem to 'sustainable' entrepreneurship. There is also a strong institutional support for entrepreneurship, with a designated support institution (SPOT) which provides startup guidance for nascent entrepreneurs, guiding them through the administrative process of registering and running a business in Slovenia. There is also an international-oriented institution (SPIRIT) which focuses on the internationalisation of Slovenian businesses.

There are fewer public universities in Slovenia than in Kosovo, however, each university has a strong business school, and most of the universities have some form of entrepreneurship training or business incubator available, promoting entrepreneurship to university students. Additionally, there is a vast amount of business incubators and accelerators in Slovenia, and they are spread relatively evenly across Slovenia, rather than being centralized to Ljubljana. Many of the 'regional' incubators have designated social and green entrepreneurship programs, and there is a designated 'Impact' incubator in Ljubljana for 'impact driven' entrepreneurs (Impact Hub Ljubljana). There are numerous established technology parks for startups situated across the country, however, there are fewer non-governmental organizations working on entrepreneurship training for young people. This could be due to the high availability of business incubation and acceleration across the country.

Cultural attitudes are explored in this study, however, similarly to Kosovo, literature highlights the higher levels of risk aversion and low tolerance of failure in Slovenia (Adam-Muller, et al., 2015; Arandarenko & Brodmann, 2019; Krasniqi, 2007). There is a changing attitude towards entrepreneurship, but existing studies highlight the lack of interest in entrepreneurship amongst young people (Fošner and Jeraj 2018), and some hypothesis that

this is due to the stable labour market and strong social security (Kozorog 2021). Entrepreneurship is seen as an unnecessary risk to take, with entrepreneurs seen negatively (Belás et al 2020).

Markets	Policy	Finance
<u>Networks</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CER Sustainable Business Network • Slovene Enterprise Europe Network • Start Up Slovenija • FYBC Slovenia Business Network • Slovenian Business Club • CEED Slovenia • Young Entrepreneur Institute • European Enterprise Network • SPIRIT Slovenia 	<u>Institutions</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital Innovation Hub Slovenia • SPOT Slovenia Business Point • Ministry of the Economy, Tourism and Sport • Chamber of Commerce and Industry <u>Policy</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Entrepreneurship Act • Slovenia Small Business Act for Europe • Slovenian Development Strategy 2030 <u>Financial Support</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slovene Enterprise Fund • Eco Fund • Public Fund for Entrepreneurship <u>Research Institutes</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slovenian Research Agency • The Institute for Economic Research 	<u>Angel Investors</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poslovni Angeli Slovenije <u>Venture Capital</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DTK Mura Venture Capital • META Ingenium • Fil Rouge Capital • South Central Ventures • Silicon Gardens • APFI Private Equity Fund • daFUND • FeelsGoodCapital <u>International Donor Programs</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OECD • Erasmus+ • EU Funds
Human Capital	Support	Culture
<u>Public Universities</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University of Ljubljana • University of Maribor • University of Primorska • University of Nova Gorica <u>Private Universities</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IEDC - Bled Business School • IBS International Business School Ljubljana • Doba Maribor College of Business • GEA College – College of Entrepreneurship, Piran • University of Novo mesto, • New University, • Alma Mater Europaea, • Emuni University, • Erudi 	<u>Incubators and Accelerators</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Podjetniski Inkubator Podbreznik • ABC Accelerator • Business Incubator Perspektiva • Bela Krajina Business Incubator • Impact Hub Ljubljana • Katapult • Incubator Sežana • Ljubljana University Incubator • SAŠA Incubator • Savinjska Incubator • Venture Factory • Social incubator, • Aurora, • Rotunda, 	<u>Visible Successes</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Juicy Marbles • Talking Tom • Pipistrel, • Zemanta, • Httpool <u>Tolerance of Risk and Failure</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher levels of risk aversion due to lower tolerance of failure <u>Social Status of Entrepreneur</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital/Tech entrepreneurs seen negatively. • Social entrepreneurs seen negatively (seen as NGOs).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entrepreneurial incubator Kočevje, Kovačnica, <p><u>Business Zones</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tech Park Ljubljana • Primorska Tech Park • Pomurje Tech Park • Styrian Tech Park <p><u>Non-Governmental Support</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simbioza Genesis • Knof, • Slokva 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional entrepreneurs seen negatively
--	--	---

Table 4: Slovenia Digital-Social Enterprise Ecosystem

3.7. Conclusion

This chapter provided a contextual background to Kosovo and Slovenia, rationalized the choice of these countries for a case study, and mapped out the current institutional arrangements and entrepreneurial ecosystem of each country. Whilst both countries come from the same country (Yugoslavia), their path out of Yugoslavia and their economic transition trajectory have varied significantly, with Slovenia thriving economically due to a slow transition period and minor conflict post-independence, whilst Kosovo faced significant violent conflict, a struggle for recognition of independence, and economic difficulty in the aftermath of COVID19. Despite this, Kosovo's youth are highly entrepreneurial and have strong aspirations towards entrepreneurship, whilst Slovenia's youth are less inclined towards entrepreneurship. This links into previous discussions (Chapter 2) about the antecedents of entrepreneurship, and raises the discussion of necessity and opportunity entrepreneurship, and where youth digital-social entrepreneurship in each country is situated (is it as black and white as necessity vs. opportunity or is it both?).

This chapter maps out the current policy environment in both countries, where Kosovo has a stronger emphasis in policy on entrepreneurship (especially digital entrepreneurship), whilst Slovenia's policy is more aligned with the UN SDGs, and emphasises the importance of social and environmentally responsible business. Both countries have underdeveloped regulatory frameworks for social entrepreneurship, where this is being rectified and addressed in Slovenia in the 2018 legal amendment to the Social Enterprise Act, Kosovo's policy environment highlights limited interest in developing social entrepreneurship. With the mapping of the digital-social enterprise ecosystem of each country, there is a stronger presence of international donor programs in Kosovo, whilst a significant amount of venture capital and incubators in Slovenia. Whilst both countries have state funds for startups,

Kosovo's sovereign development fund has only been recently announced, whereas Slovenia has at least three funds for startups, including a designated Eco Fund for sustainable businesses. Kosovo has a large amount of non-governmental organisations filling the gap where other support systems are lacking, whilst Slovenia's ecosystem has a significant number of networks for entrepreneurs. However, both countries have higher levels of risk aversion, lower tolerance of failure, and negative perceptions of entrepreneurs (although attitudes in Kosovo are changing, particularly in favour of digital entrepreneurs).

Chapter 4 – Methodology

4.1. Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology for this study, justifying the rationale of using a single method approach of semi-structured interviews, as well as the rationale for incorporating elements of participatory data analysis within the study. Within the social sciences domain, the term “methodology” typically refers to two considerably differentiated areas of work – the methodological issues arising from the theoretical lens utilized in the study, and the practical elements of specific research techniques, concepts, and methods (Outhwaite and Turner 2007). Therefore, this chapter will discuss the key research objectives and questions (Section 2), and the process of determining these, outlining the ontological and epistemological positions adopted within this study (Section 3), before discussing the research design (Section 4), sampling and access (Section 5), the research methods and data collection (Section 6), data analysis methods (Section 7), and ethical considerations (Section 8), before summarising the reflections and limitations of this study in Section 9. Finally, this chapter will conclude in Section 10 with a critical review of the methodological design and research methods employed in this study.

4.2. Research Overview, Objectives and Questions

This study focuses on the experiences of youth digital-social entrepreneurs in the post-socialist European context. The focus of this study derives from my personal working experience within post-socialist Europe (predominantly former Yugoslavia and Central/Eastern Europe) within the youth entrepreneurship space, in the capacity of Erasmus+ and international exchange projects over the past five years. The emphasis on digital-social entrepreneurship stems from a growing policy relevance of both digital innovation and social entrepreneurship within European policy agenda, particularly pertaining to youth entrepreneurs, and the development of the social entrepreneurship ecosystem in Europe. Therefore, the aim of this study is to determine the contributing factors to young people’s decisions to pursue digital-social entrepreneurship, and the ways in which they experience the social, business, political and institutional environment of their respective countries in regard to their digital-social entrepreneurial activities. With this aim, the central question of this thesis is: **‘how do young people engage with and experience digital-social entrepreneurship in the post-socialist country context?’**. Entrepreneurs do not exist within a vacuum,

therefore, understanding the social, business, political and institutional environment that they must navigate is important in understanding the specific drivers and barriers to the pursuit of digital-social entrepreneurship within this contextual environment, and consequently, providing insights for policymakers and practitioners to draw on when creating and amending youth entrepreneurship policy. Thus, to elicit this information, this comprises the following subsidiary questions:

RQ1. What is the current policy and business environment for encouraging digital and social entrepreneurship in post-socialist Kosovo and Slovenia?

RQ2. What are the drivers and barriers for young DSEs in Kosovo and Slovenia, particularly relating to gender, age, institutional environment and social capital?

RQ3. What are the current support arrangements (e.g., training, mentorship, etc.) for developing youth DSEs in Kosovo and Slovenia, and how do they experience them?

Therefore, this study will provide an insight into the current policy and business environment for digital and social entrepreneurship and compare and contrast these policies across the comparative case sites (Kosovo and Slovenia) to provide a better contextual understanding of the existing business and policy environment for youth digital-social entrepreneurs. Additionally, it will also explore how young digital-social entrepreneurs in both countries perceive and experience the entrepreneurial eco-system and the provision of support, before identifying the current environment and arrangements for young digital-social entrepreneurs and how these entrepreneurs interact, engage with and value these systems.

4.3. Methodological Approaches: Ontology and Epistemology

When considering the methodological design of a study, one must interrogate the philosophical principles and theoretical assumptions that shape our understanding of the world and the way that we believe knowledge is formulated. Saunders and Tosey (2013) highlight our 'research philosophy' as being "*the fundamental beliefs that we hold about how data surrounding a specific phenomenon or issue should be collected, analysed, and used*", whilst Guba (1990) defines it as "*the set of common beliefs and agreements shared between scientists about how problems should be understood and addressed*". Research paradigms are the epistemological stances that shape the way that researchers ask questions and understand the answers, representing the researcher's world view and the philosophical

assumptions that underpin that view (Bergman 2010; Kuhn 1970). Saunders and Tosey (2013) highlight some of the common research philosophies in their ‘research onion’ in Figure 3.

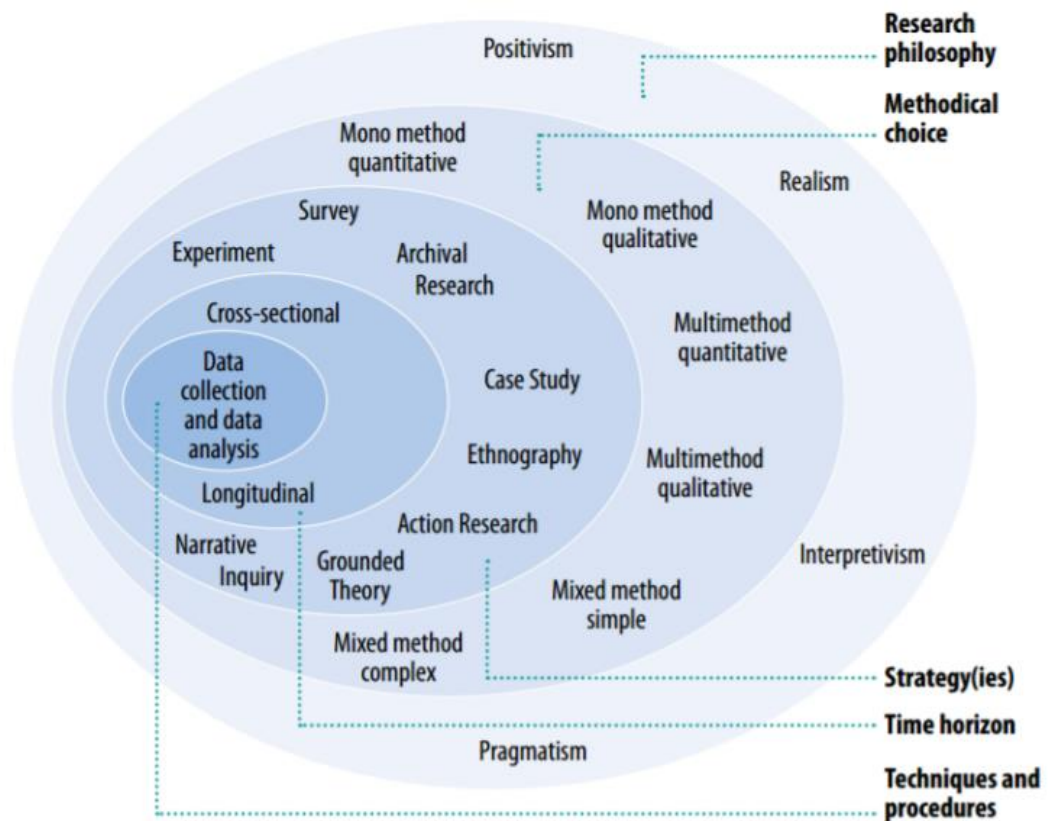


Figure 3: Research Onion (Saunders and Tosey 2013; p59) (Crawford, et al., 2016)

In social science research, there has been extensive ongoing debate surrounding the value and validity of major research paradigms – namely, the ‘paradigm wars’, with positivism and constructivism at either end of the debate. A positivist approach assumes the existence of an objective reality that can be discovered through the use of ‘objectively correct’ scientific methods and seeks out this ‘objective truth’ about the phenomena being studied (Long et al 2000). Alternatively, a constructivist approach assumes that each individual has their own reality, and places emphasis on the individual understanding of particular experiences and perspectives (Guba 1990; Howe 1988). However, in the specific field of entrepreneurship research, scholars still struggle to find a commonly agreed-upon approach to studying and explaining entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial behaviour, with modern scholars predominantly focusing on critical or evolutionary realism approaches (Ramoglou and Tsang 2016; Crawford et al 2016) – which falls within the ‘realism’ research philosophy outlined in Figure 3. There has been somewhat neglect of paradigmatic approaches such as interpretivism within entrepreneurship research, which has resulted in a greater focus on

determining 'objective' causalities of entrepreneurship rather than entrepreneurship as an individual choice based off of individual experiences, goals, and expectations (Packard 2017).

Therefore, this study adopts a constructivist and epistemologically interpretivist lens in line with subjectivist ontological frames in order to explore how youth digital-social entrepreneurship is understood and experienced within the specific context of the post-socialist environments of Kosovo and Slovenia. A constructivist methodological approach emphasizes the importance of understanding individual experiences in order to explore a phenomenon, as people construct their own realities based on their pre-existing knowledge of the world (Cohen & Manion 1994). The constructivist lens is gaining traction in the field of entrepreneurship studies, with an increasing number of scholars arguing that entrepreneurial opportunities are actually created and enacted through subjectivist processes of social construction and interaction, rather than the traditional, discovery approach that opportunities are just 'out there' waiting to be discovered (Alvarez et al 2013; Sarasvathy and Venkataraman 2011). An epistemologically interpretivist lens relies upon the "*participants view of the situation being studied*" (Creswell et al 2003; p8), as participants realities of the social phenomenon being studied is socially constructed and requires the participants insight in order to understand "*the world of human experience*" (Cohen and Manion 1994; p36).

Interpretivism is a philosophical approach to scientific study that considers social orders (such as economic markets and the entrepreneurial activities within them) to emerge from intentional actions and interactions at the individual level. An interpretivist approach considers reality to be socially constructed, that individuals experience the world and its social structures differently, and thus, to understand individual experiences of digital-social entrepreneurship, one must understand the 'world of human experience' that entrepreneurs encounter and the reality that has been socially constructed by them that influences their choice to pursue entrepreneurship (Mertens 2005). Interpretivism highlights human intentionality as a key determinant of behaviour, with entrepreneurship considered to be a chosen course of action by the individual rather than pre-determined or 'caused' by something. Examining entrepreneurship through an interpretivist lens allows us to conceive entrepreneurship as not just a particular event, but a continually unfolding process tied to the intentions and expectations of the entrepreneur, and not to any specific outcome (such as formation of new venture) (Packard 2017).

This differs from a positivist approach, which would consider entrepreneurship to be solely defined by objective, measurable outcomes (through quantitative measures), and would take a more determinist approach to establish cause-and-effect rather than understanding entrepreneurship as being subject to the entrepreneurs individual perspective and experience. It allows us to perceive entrepreneurial opportunities as being idiosyncratic to the entrepreneur, and that entrepreneurs and the social systems that they operate in co-evolve along the entrepreneurial process, and to view the entrepreneur as someone with agency who engages in purposeful action (Sarason et al 2006; Shane and Venkataraman 2000). The process of entrepreneurship is thus seen as a process in which opportunities are sought out and acted on by the entrepreneur, rather than the entrepreneur being born into this position and pursuing entrepreneurship as a response to the social structures in which they exist. With an interpretivist lens, we can gain insight into the individual experiences of entrepreneurs and the ways that they are both enabled and constrained by the social structuring of the specific context in which they operate, and how their activities aid in evolving that environment (Giddens 1991).

Interpretivist scholars often seek methods that enable them to understand in depth the relationship between human beings and their environment, and the role that this plays in the social phenomena or issue being studied (McQueen and Knussen 2002). Historically, interpretivist approaches to scientific study have favoured the use of qualitative methods, due to the overarching aim of “*capturing the actual meanings and interpretations that actors subjectively ascribe to phenomena in order to describe and explain their behaviour*” (Johnson et al 2006, p. 132). The use of qualitative methods has allowed for researchers to explore the complex and dynamic qualities of the social world, view their research ‘problem’ holistically and enter the realities of their participants in order to interpret their perceptions accurately and appropriately (Gephart 2004; Shaw 1999; Bogdan and Taylor 1975). The knowledge thus, that arises from interpretivist research is inherently linked to the participants and the context of the research (in this case, young digital-social entrepreneurs in post-socialist Kosovo and Slovenia), meaning that the products of the study are not universal theories or laws of entrepreneurship, but, rather, rich, and contextually situated understandings of the specific challenges and opportunities for young digital-social entrepreneurs in this context.

Therefore, this project adopts a qualitative approach to research, adopting a qualitative approach through a series of semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured interviews are conducted with young digital-social entrepreneurs and ‘facilitators’ digital-social entrepreneurship in each country, in which facilitators refers to key stakeholders – such as policymakers, incubator staff, NGO staff and those in a teaching or mentorship role.

There are two reasons for adopting an interpretivist epistemological approach for this study: suitability and subversion of unequal power dynamics. Interpretivism has typically been oriented towards individualistic and emergent phenomena, due to its emphasis on seeking individual experience rather than objective truth – in which digital-social entrepreneurship can be both considered to be individualistic (in that it is often pursued alone), and emergent (in that is a newly emerging domain of entrepreneurial activity). This approach allows me to identify the sources of digital-social entrepreneurship behaviour and activity in the individuals that exhibit them, instead of the more ‘macroeconomic market’ perspective that realists tend to study, which allows me to explore the emergence of youth digital-social entrepreneurship rather than assume its existence as an ‘objective truth’. Entrepreneurs co-evolve with the social structures of the society that they operate in to create opportunities, and thus, exercise their own agency over the direction of the entrepreneurial actions, rather than merely acting in accordance with the structures that realists perceive as being ‘objective truths’ that are unchangeable (Sarason et al 2010; Chiles et al 2007). Using an interpretivist lens to explore young people’s experience of entrepreneurship allows for the acceptance of concepts of economies, organisations, social groups, and structures as concepts only – and enables us to reject them as being ‘ontologically real entities’ – as they are up to the interpretation and experience of the individual that we study.

Additionally, there are two reasons for adopting a subjectivist ontological approach for this study: to acknowledge contextual sensitivities and to value personal narratives, interpretations and meaning making. A subjectivist ontology aligns with the notion that context plays a significant role in shaping an individual’s experience – how each young people experiences entrepreneurship within their country will differ, based off of who they are, their socioeconomic demographics, their resources, networks, and social capital. This also links in with the research design of this study – a case-based comparative cross-national approach, where the experiences of young digital-social entrepreneurs are compared, contrasted, and analysed (Further discussion in 4.4). This subjectivist approach allows for the exploration of how socioeconomic, cultural, and institutional context influences the experiences of young digital-social entrepreneurs in Kosovo and Slovenia. A subjectivist approach also places value on interpretation and meaning-making in understanding the ‘reality’ of the phenomena studied, therefore, adopting it for this study is valuable for exploring how young digital-social entrepreneurs interpret their experiences, values, and beliefs about the broader environment in which they enact their entrepreneurship. This also links in with the participatory analysis approach (further discussed in 4.7), allowing for further understanding of how participants interpret their own experiences and discussion during the interview process – and ensuring their meanings are represented throughout the analysis process.

Historically, a vast amount of entrepreneurship research has been conducted within 'Western Paradigms', and even when entrepreneurship in non-Western societies has been studied, it has typically been studied and analysed through a Western lens, predominantly using positivist and postpositivist approaches to seek objective truths and universal theories surrounding entrepreneurship that disregard important context. Studying people and their lived experiences, particularly as a 'Western' researcher studying 'non-Western' individuals and cultures, implies a certain power dynamic that positions the researcher's perspective and voice over that of the research subjects – which is typically perpetuated through the use of methodological approaches such as positivism that seek out 'overarching truths'. Whether Kosovo and Slovenia are considered to be 'Western' or 'non-Western' is subject to debate – when looking from a 'Global perspective', some scholars would consider them to be 'Western' in comparison to the global majority (Inglehart 2006; Stenning 2005). However, in the European context, there are other scholars who argue that those outside of the 'North European' periphery (such as the UK, France, Ireland, Norway, etc) are considered to be non-Western – and are often grouped as Central European (Slovenia) or Eastern European (Kosovo) – and not seen within the same lens (Visoka 2019; Radeljić 2014). Therefore, an interpretivist lens allows me to study the experiences of young digital-social entrepreneurs within the post-socialist contexts of Kosovo and Slovenia through their own eyes and allows me to better reflect and report on how their experiences of the specific social, cultural, and economic context in which they operate impacts their entrepreneurial activity. It is impossible to detach oneself from their positionality – I will always be conducting this research as an outsider, who has their own lived experiences of the phenomena being studied, therefore, will always have my own innate and underlying biases surrounding the topic regardless of how much I seek to divorce myself from this reality (Lincoln 1995; LeCompte 2000;).

An interpretivist epistemology and subjective ontology does not seek to provide objective truths or answers, but merely seeks to provide insight into the way that participants interpret and construct their own world and their own experiences of digital-social entrepreneurship. By emphasizing the importance of interpretation, and also including accuracy of interpretation checks through the use of participatory analysis methods, this can push towards a method of study that centres the voices and experiences of the participants as the key components of understanding for this study. The use of participatory analysis methods somewhat aids in subverting this power dynamic by giving control to participants over how their experiences are interpreted and presented and reduces the risk of misinterpretation of perspectives and experiences on behalf of the researcher. Analysing interviews collaboratively ensures my own

voice, interpretations and experiences do not overpower or skew the interpretation and representation of their experiences, and empowers participants to correct and contribute additional thoughts, feelings, and ideas in the analysis stage of the project.

4.4. Research Design

One of the key objectives of this research project is to examine and understand the experiences of young digital-social entrepreneurs in two post-socialist countries from the former Yugoslavia, Kosovo, and Slovenia. It broadly examines experiences with the institutional environment and the entrepreneurial ecosystem and explores how young digital-social entrepreneurs interact with and navigate this in pursuit of their entrepreneurial ventures. It was vital that the research design reflected this objective – of understanding the individual and specific complexities that young digital-social entrepreneurs face across two country contexts. In order to understand how young people engage in digital-social entrepreneurship in the post-socialist context, the country (case) and its historical and cultural context must be considered just as important as the phenomena (youth digital-social entrepreneurship) being explored. Therefore, the research design utilized a case-based comparative cross-national approach, as ‘the whole is greater than the sum’, and this approach seeks to understand the specific within the context of the whole case.

Case studies are an analysis of peoples, events, periods, projects, policies, institutions, or other systems which are studied holistically by one or more methods (Thomas 2011). They investigate a contemporary phenomenon (the case) in its real-world context, and is used to contribute to knowledge of individual, group, organizational, social, and related phenomena. The specific design adopted in this study; a case-based comparative cross-national design aims to understand a social phenomenon within the context of the whole case (the country/ies). Cross-national comparative research involves the comparison of political and economic systems, and institutional structures, where one or more units in two or more societies are compared in respect to the same concepts and concerning the same phenomena. It adopts a cultural and interpretive model that acknowledges that any behaviour, attitude, indicator, or event can only be understood within its historical, cultural, and social context. The purpose of a cross-national comparative study is to explain and generalize from them, helping distinguish between phenomena that derives from universal ‘principles’ and phenomena that derives from particular historical and cultural contexts (Slomczynski et al 1981). The successful use of case studies requires that the researcher follows an explicit design for all sites. At a minimum, this should specify the main topics to be covered

by the study, the type of individuals (or their roles) from whom information might be obtained, and the method of analysis (Yin 1981; p103). The main topic of this study is youth digital-social entrepreneurship and the motivators, barriers, and support mechanisms, the types of individuals involved in the study are young digital-social entrepreneurs and supporting actors from either a policymaking or facilitator role and the method of analysis semi-structured interviews. The target 'units' for each country are twenty interviews, with 15 being with young digital-social entrepreneurs and 5 being with supporting actors. Each interview follows a semi-structured guide, with young digital-social entrepreneurs and supporting actor interview following different guides but covering the same topics.

The reason for selecting a cross-national comparative country study approach for the research design derives from a desire to understand the underlying complexities that young digital-social entrepreneurs face in two countries from a similar background. Both countries are post-socialist and from the former Yugoslavia, however, their economic performance and social history vastly differ – with Slovenia being the most economically successful and Kosovo being the least economically successful. Slovenia had a relatively straightforward transition out of Yugoslavia and into its independent statehood, whilst Kosovo had a lengthy and difficult transition, mired with violent conflict and a continuing struggle for international recognition of its international statehood. Digital-social entrepreneurship is driven by the desire to create social change through entrepreneurship, and by utilizing digital technologies, all of which are driven and influenced by the contextual environment in which the entrepreneur operates. For young people, there are additional barriers to digital-social entrepreneurship such as legitimacy issues, social capital, access to resources and social support, all of which are highly dependent upon the context in which they operate. Digital-social entrepreneurship is influenced by the cultural, economic, and social contexts of the countries involved, so a cross-national comparative case study of Kosovo and Slovenia, allows for an exploration of how these contextual factors shape young people's experiences and strategies. By contrasting the perceptions of the institutional environments and policy frameworks cross-nationally, it allows for the identification of regulatory and support frameworks that are more conducive for youth digital-social entrepreneurship, providing greater insights into stronger policymaking.

Whilst there are many benefits to this design approach, there also many challenges to consider. The selection of appropriate cases for comparison is a key issue, with Simons and Zanker (2012) and Ebbinghaus (2005) identifying the need for each case to have 'reliable data' – and for the data being used to be measured in the same way across contexts. However, this study utilizes qualitative data – a series of semi-structured interviews, so the challenge of 'reliable data' is mitigated by the lack of use of statistics that would be measured differently across contexts. Karlsson (2019) highlights the need for considerations relating to

language, flexibility, contacts/networks and understanding the country and its system – where research needs to be unbiased towards one of the country contexts over the others. However, Masser (1984) identifies how the challenges of cross-national comparative case study research can be significantly reduced when there are only two countries to compare and one researcher to compare them – emphasizing the importance of the researcher being ‘familiar’ with the context in which the case studies are comparing. As the researcher, I had previous experience working in Kosovo for an extended period of time, which meant I had built a strong network in the country, familiarity with the language and a relative understanding of the country and its system. Whilst I was less familiar with the language and understanding of the country in Slovenia, I had a strong network from other international project work I had engaged in relating to social entrepreneurship – which provided me with a strong support system to conduct the research in this site. This ensured that the process of designing the research methods and data collection was well suited to my experience within and with each country’s ‘eco-system’, and that I was well equipped to carry out the project.

This case study approach focused on key constructs, such as the policy environment, entrepreneurial ecosystem, and individual experiences, which were selected based on their essential roles in shaping youth DSE. Each reflects the internal and external dynamics which influence DSE in Kosovo and Slovenia, therefore a comparison of these variables allowed for a nuanced understanding of how each factor can constrain or enable DSE activities. This approach aligned with the objective of case-based comparisons (Tellis, 1997), offering insights into the contextual influences of each institutional environment, and used as a means to draw detailed insights into systematic and individual-level experiences across different national settings (Baxter and Jack, 2008).

This study also employed a “most different” approach to analysis, which aided in understanding the similarities and the differences of two case studies in youth digital-social entrepreneurship within a shared regional backdrop but with distinct socio-political histories and economic structures (Hammersley & Foster, 2000). This approach stresses the interplay between shared and contrasting elements, highlighting how systemic factors influence outcomes for young entrepreneurs. While both countries face challenges in supporting youth entrepreneurship, the “most different” approach allowed the identification of unique country-specific barriers and supports, such as the impact of policy maturity in Slovenia versus the emerging yet evolving frameworks in Kosovo.

The purpose of the sociodemographic questionnaire as a replacement for a survey was to better shape the researchers understanding of the economic and social context of which the participant was discussing, such as the city in which they live and the level of

education they have received. This helped bridge gaps in the interview process, such as when a participant discussed their experience with the education system – by informing the researcher of the level of education which was being referred to.

4.5. Sampling Access

The strategic decisions around sampling strategy are just as important as decisions made around data collection and analysis strategies – particularly for qualitative research, where more in-depth and nuanced insights surrounding experiences and perspectives are sought. Sampling refers to the selection of specific data sources from which data are collected to address the research questions and objectives (Marshall 1996). When considering the sampling strategy for a research project, it involves deciding and selecting a representative part of a population in order to determine parameters and characteristics. For quantitative studies, sampling strategy is typically dictated by the need to be representative, and for there to be an *adequate* sample size, which has a direct bearing on the reliability, validity, and generalizability of the study (Morse 1990). However, for qualitative research, discussions around sampling size and strategy are more nuanced, and often requires a flexible and pragmatic approach (Suri 2011). There is no perfect way to achieve a perfectly representative sample (Marshall 1996), and the constraints of a time-limited doctoral programme and a solo researcher conducting the research meant that there was no ‘perfect’ solution to this problem.

4.5.1. Sample Size

I initially aimed to interview forty participants across the entire study, with twenty participants per country. In each country, five participants were set to be ‘facilitators’ of youth digital-social entrepreneurship, in roles such as policymaking, incubator staff, NGO staff or academics. This sample size was decided based off of Boddy’s (2016) research which highlights that twelve cases are the point where data saturation starts to occur amongst a homogenous population. Choosing 15 young DSE per country and 5 facilitators of DSE per country enabled diversity in participant group, whilst also allowing me to reach the point of data saturation.

However, due to the failure of the survey and the success of informant sampling, I ended up interviewing 66 people, with 44 of those being young DSE and 22 people facilitators of entrepreneurship. In Kosovo, I managed to interview more young DSE than in Slovenia. However, in Slovenia, I managed to interview more facilitators than in Kosovo. Overall, I

interviewed 10 facilitators and 23 young digital-social entrepreneurs in Kosovo, and 12 facilitators and 21 young DSE in Slovenia. This was balanced across gender relatively evenly, and in Kosovo, there was representation in both facilitators and entrepreneurs from the Serbian minority community.

4.5.2. Sampling Strategy

Accessing participants was conducted through purposive and informant sampling. Purposive sampling is when the researcher intentionally selects participants who are knowledgeable or experienced in the phenomenon being studied (Campbell, et al., 2020; Barratt, et al., 2015). Informant sampling is when the researcher recruits an 'informant' to the study, who can signpost them people within their network to participate in the study (Tremblay, 1957). Purposive sampling was done through LinkedIn, and directly contacting winners of 'social impact' related awards in both countries through email. This did pose the risk of skewing sample towards successful entrepreneurs, and thus those with more positive experiences (discussed further in Chapter 9). Through LinkedIn, participants were found through either searching 'Kosovo/Slovenia Digital Social Entrepreneur' or through exploring relevant incubator and NGO programmes posts and identifying who was engaging with them. This enabled me to select participants most beneficial to the study – those engaged in digital-social entrepreneurship. This sampling strategy was shaped by an intersectional approach, in which diversity of age (amongst the 18-30 category), gender and location (rural/urban) were sought out – of which this was achieved for age and gender. Diversity of location was difficult to achieve due to the mobile nature of entrepreneurs, where many had relocated for higher education and remained mobile whilst starting their business. Once contacted, participants confirmed their age with me, in which the definition for youth in this study outlines with that of the European Commission, which is 18-30. Informant sampling was done through using individuals in my professional network (incubator professionals and NGO staff in both country) to refer young digital-social entrepreneurs, policymakers, and other staff members to me to participate in the study. This enabled me to access participants who came 'recommended' by those in my network, however, this did run the risk of community bias and only picking up like-minded individuals, which is a key risk of solely using informant sampling (Hughes & Preski, 1997). This is why purposive sampling was also employed, to ensure balance in the sample. Out of the young digital-social entrepreneurs, 34 were recruited through purposive sampling and 10 were through informant sampling, whilst of the facilitators, 16 were recruited through purposive sampling and 6 through informant sampling.

4.5.3. Sampling Access

Accessibility of the sample was a key challenge, due to language constraints on behalf of the researcher (moderate Albanian and Serbian language skills and no Slovenian language skills), which meant that interviews were conducted in English. Whilst most young entrepreneurs in both countries would speak English due to the globalized nature of the support systems they would be involved in, this meant that those less confident in speaking English may have self-selected out of the study. For those participating in an interview in their second language, there are often challenges relating to effective communication, in which it more difficult to create a personal connection, which was one of the risks and challenges of conducting the study this way (Mackey & Gass, 2015). However, participants were always given the option to translate phrases with Google Translate during the interview, so they were able to effectively communicate their point, and somewhat mitigate this communication challenge. Another challenge was finding time, where many participants were busy – so could only participate in short interviews, as opposed to having more flexibility to be more in-depth with their experiences. Whilst this was partially mitigated by the participatory analysis and the ability to conduct follow-up questioning through this, the ‘rushed’ feeling of these interviews often meant that more raw accounts of experiences and challenges may have been missed out or not discussed as in-depth as they could have been.

4.6. Research Methods and Data Collection

Due to this studies constructivist approach; its interpretive epistemology and subjectivist epistemology, the methodological design for this study is a qualitative approach (Howe 1988). This study initially adopted a mixed-method approach, however, due to issues in the recruitment for a survey, this was reduced to a single method approach – which is discussed in Section 4.5.1.

4.6.1 The Initial Plan: A Survey – What Went Wrong and What Happened Next

Intially, this study was designed as a mixed-method study, incorporating a survey and a series of semi-structured interviews. However, when undertaking the data collection, the uptake for the survey was weak – with only 6 respondents in Kosovo and 8 in Slovenia, in comparison to the 100 people per country target response rate. There is an ongoing discourse about the lower response rates that web surveys face (in comparison to traditional survey

modes), where factors such as the host of the survey (the website) (Walston et al 2006), the length of the survey (Cook et al 2000), the presentation of the survey (Couper 2000) and the lack of incentives (Birnholtz et al 2004) are attributed to the lower response state. This survey was disseminated through social media, university business programs and through NGOs and incubators in both countries, but the response to the survey was weak – many of those who saw the poster advertising the survey got in touch in order to arrange an interview instead. Many of these young people expressed how they would prefer to have a conversation about their experience, how they wanted to share their story more in-depth than through a survey, and how they were not interested in filling out a survey and not speaking to the researcher behind this. This links to research conducted by Bosch et al (2019), who identify that online survey participation by millennials and Gen Z is significantly lower than from older generations, and that new methods of engaging with millennials and Gen Z and incentivizing participation need to be developed. The approach adopted for recruitment for the survey in this study did not accommodate for the different needs and demands of Millennials and Gen Z, who were the target participants for this study. However, this failure inadvertently led to a higher interest rate from young digital-social entrepreneurs for participation in the semi-structured interviews, which provided more rich and in-depth detailed discussions about their experiences of entrepreneurship – as opposed to just likert scale rankings of different components of entrepreneurship.

4.6.2. Semi-Structured Interviews

Following the failure of the survey, a series of semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted both virtually and in-person between January and April 2023. Qualitative semi-structured interviews are one of the most popular research methods for data collection across the social sciences. They allow researchers to explore subjective viewpoints and gain an in-depth understanding of people's experiences of certain phenomena (Flick 2009). A downside to interviews is the risk of taking discussions as 'face value' (Perri, 2018), however, the purpose of an interpretivist approach to research is to examine the participants understanding of the world, as opposed to seeking objective truths. However, this was partially mitigated by the data being up to the interpretation of the research, an outsider to the context and to entrepreneurship, as well as through the participatory analysis process of which participants 'fact checked' their own interviews months after participating in them. Statements about policy and organisations were also fact checked against reality through desk research, such as when participants discussed start-up tax rates.

The use of semi-structured interviews was chosen due to the potential they have for generating rich data regarding young digital-social entrepreneurs and young-digital-social entrepreneurship ‘facilitator’ experiences and perceptions of youth digital-social entrepreneurship (Luo and Wildemuth 2009). Semi-structured interviews ensure that questions are focused on a specific field of inquiry but allow for room for participants to talk spontaneously in order to gain further enquiry and additional information.

The initial interview schedule was designed based on the aims and objectives of this specific piece of research, drawing upon lessons from previous research conducted for my dissertation whilst completing my MSc Social Science Research Methods degree. This initial schedule was piloted with two young entrepreneurs from Kosovo and one ‘facilitator’ in Slovenia, who I had previously worked with on other projects relevant to the topic. This piloting was conducted in December 2022, after ethical approval had been awarded and prior to the commencement of the fieldwork period - providing enough time for alterations. The piloting provided an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the initial schedule and allowed for the modification of the schedule prior to commencement of the fieldwork in late January 2023. Weaknesses identified related to the order in which questions were being asked, the breadth of questions being asked not directly related to the research questions, and the pacing of my own speaking. Pilot participants were not included in the formal data collection stage due to their not being digital-social entrepreneurs (as is the case for the two entrepreneurs in Kosovo), and due to already being involved in the piloting (as is the case for the Slovenian facilitator).

Over the four-month period of data collection, there was an initial aim to conduct forty interviews in total, with twenty per country, and a quarter (5 per country) being with ‘facilitators’ of youth digital-social entrepreneurship (such as policymakers and business incubator staff) whilst the remaining three quarters (15 per country) would be conducted with young digital-social entrepreneurs. Due to the failure of the survey and more young DSE coming forward to speak about their experience after seeing the study on social media, a total of sixty-six interviews were conducted by the end of the period – over 1.5 times the initial targeted sample size. The details of the participants in Kosovo are in Table 5., with the pseudonym, age (for DSE), gender, country, SDG focus (DSE) and job role (supporting actor) included. The details for the participants in Slovenia are in Table 6, with the pseudonym, age (for DSE), gender, country, SDG focus (DSE) and job role (supporting actor) included. The pseudonyms generated are culturally appropriate (either being Albanian/Serbian names or Slovenian names), as this is important for representing the cultural context in which this study is situated.

Pseudonym (DSE)	Age	Country	Gender	SDG Focus
K1 / Agnesa	18-21	Kosovo	Female	SDG4
K2 / Bardhana	26-30	Kosovo	Female	SDG11, SDG12, SDG13
K4 / Blerta	26-30	Kosovo	Female	SDG11
K5 / Diellza	26-30	Kosovo	Female	SDG4
K6 / Agron	26-30	Kosovo	Male	SDG16
K9 / Afrim	26-30	Kosovo	Male	SDG3
K10 / Bardhyll	26-30	Kosovo	Male	SDG4
K12 / Elira	26-30	Kosovo	Female	SDG13, SDG14
K14 / Driton	26-30	Kosovo	Male	SDG4, SDG8
K15 / Elseid	26-30	Kosovo	Male	SDG4, SDG8
K16 / Fatbard	18-21	Kosovo	Male	SDG11, SDG15
K17 / Emina	22-25	Kosovo	Female	SDG7, SDG11
K18 / Luljeta	26-30	Kosovo	Female	SDG4
K21 / Majlinda	22-25	Kosovo	Female	SDG7, SDG11
K22 / Flamur	18-21	Kosovo	Male	SDG9, SDG11
K23 / Ndrita	26-30	Kosovo	Female	SDG4, SDG8
K24 / Ilir	22-25	Kosovo	Male	SDG13, SDG15
K25 / Jetmir	18-21	Kosovo	Male	SDG9, SDG11
K26 / Nora	22-25	Kosovo	Female	SDG4
K27 /Roze	22-25	Kosovo	Female	SDG4
K28 / Qendrim	26-30	Kosovo	Male	SDG7, SDG11
K29 / Zamir	26-30	Kosovo	Male	SDG11, SDG15
K32 / Sihana	22-25	Kosovo	Female	SDG2, SDG12, SDG15
Pseudonym (Support Actor)		Country	Gender	Job
K3 / Abdyl		Kosovo	Male	Policymaker
K7 / Arben		Kosovo	Male	Policymaker
K8 / Besart		Kosovo	Male	Incubator Staff
K11 / Driton		Kosovo	Male	Policymaker
K13 / Erjon		Kosovo	Male	Policymaker
K19 / Fisnik		Kosovo	Male	NGO / Incubator Staff
K20 / Vjosa		Kosovo	Male	Incubator Staff
K30 / Agnesa		Kosovo	Female	IT Community Leader
K31 / Marsela		Kosovo	Female	NGO / Incubator Staff
K33 / Meriton		Kosovo	Male	NGO / Incubator Staff

Table 5: Participants in Kosovo

Pseudonym (DSE)	Age	Country	Gender	SDG Focus
S3 / Alfonz	26-30	Slovenia	Male	SDG2, SDG12
S4 / Ana	22-25	Slovenia	Female	SDG3
S5 / Anton	26-30	Slovenia	Male	SDG3, SDG9
S7 / Bojan	26-30	Slovenia	Male	SDG4, SDG8
S9 / Barbara	22-25	Slovenia	Female	SDG12
S10 / Danijela	22-25	Slovenia	Female	SDG4
S11 / Branislav	26-30	Slovenia	Male	SDG8
S14 / Damijan	18-21	Slovenia	Male	SDG3, SDG10
S15 / Enej	18-21	Slovenia	Male	SDG9, SDG11
S17 / Irena	26-30	Slovenia	Female	SDG16
S19 / Jerneja	26-30	Slovenia	Female	SDG8, SDG9
S20 / Katica	22-25	Slovenia	Female	SDG3, SDG4
S23 / Marija	22-25	Slovenia	Female	SDG13, SDG14
S25 / Mirko	18-21	Slovenia	Male	SDG7, SDG13

S26 / Rihard	26-30	Slovenia	Male	SDG4, SDG8
S27 / Slavko	26-30	Slovenia	Male	SDG9
S28 / Tadej	18-21	Slovenia	Male	SDG2, SDG12
S30 / Nina	22-25	Slovenia	Female	SDG2, SDG12
S31 / Vilko	26-30	Slovenia	Male	SDG2, SDG12
S32 / Rozalija	26-30	Slovenia	Female	SDG11, SDG12
S33 / Viljem	26-30	Slovenia	Male	SDG9, SDG11
Pseudonym (Support Actor)		Country	Gender	Job
S1 / Borut		Slovenia	Male	Policymaker
S2 / Ana		Slovenia	Female	Policymaker
S6 / Bostjan		Slovenia	Male	Incubator Staff
S8 / Cirilla		Slovenia	Female	Policymaker
S12 / Doroteja		Slovenia	Female	Incubator Staff
S13 / Inesa		Slovenia	Female	Incubator Staff
S16 / Erazem		Slovenia	Male	NGO / Incubator Staff
S18 / Lidija		Slovenia	Female	NGO Staff
S21 / Ljerka		Slovenia	Female	NGO / Incubator Staff
S22 / Friderik		Slovenia	Male	NGO / Incubator Staff
S24 / Tilen		Slovenia	Male	Incubator Staff
S29 / Tinek		Slovenia	Male	NGO / Incubator Staff

Table 6: Participants in Slovenia

Interviews were conducted both virtually and in-person, and when conducted in-person, were conducted in a variety of locations in order to accommodate the participants needs. Some interviews were conducted in coffee shops, other interviews were conducted in participants offices, and one interview was even conducted walking through the park – due to the participant having a nursing baby that only slept in the pram. Young entrepreneurs are busy people, with complicated lives, and ensuring that I could fit the interview around their schedules was vital to ensuring full and enthusiastic participation. By scheduling interviews for times and locations that were more accommodating for each participant, this built a sense of rapport and trust with me – and it often seemed to relax the participant that the interview was on more ‘familiar’ territory for them. It also provided me with an insight into their day-to-day life working as digital-social entrepreneurs, where I could see the coffee shops they regularly worked out of or could feel the buzz of the office they have their team in. It connected me more with the values and missions of what they were doing and provided me with an understanding of some of the more day-to-day challenges they face in their journey.

Semi-structured interviews allow us to address key questions but leave space for further discussion, so I made sure that during each interview, I left room for the participant to talk spontaneously and to go ‘off-topic’. This allowed for new areas of discussion, new themes, and new ideas to evolve throughout our conversation and gave me a further insight into their experience in entrepreneurship. Each interview followed the same structure, in which the following steps in Figure 4 describe the process of the interview for each participant:

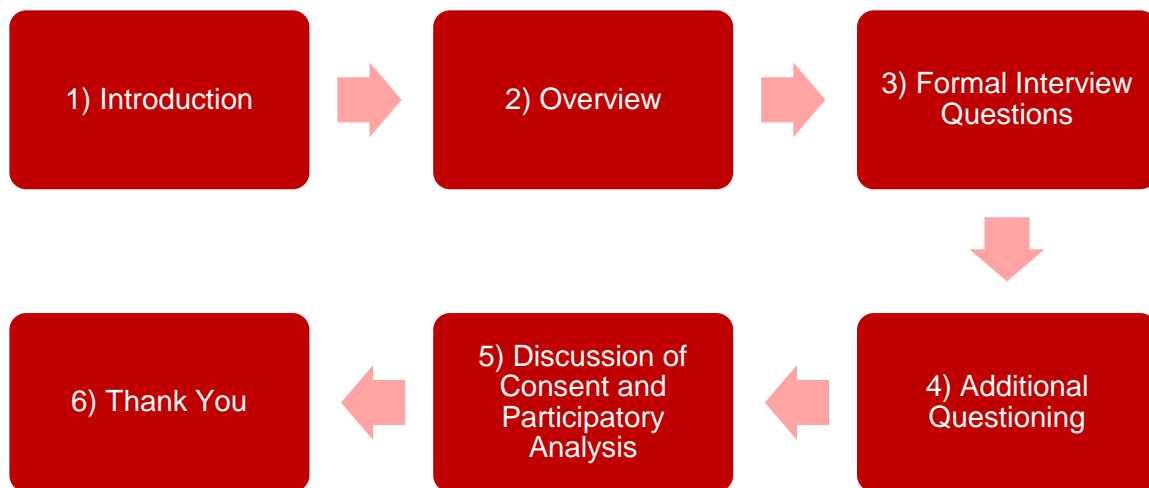


Figure 4: Interview Process

The first stage of the interview involved informal introductions and questions, such as ‘how are you?’ and ‘how is your day going?’. If interviews were conducted in-person, this typically also involved the purchasing of a hot drink for the participant and a casual discussion about this, and if conducted virtually, a joke about being seen through the screen. This was done to build rapport with the participant, make myself appear as friendly as possible so as to encourage an open and honest dialogue. The second stage involved providing an overview of the study, a brief discussion about the purpose of it, as well as discussing the participant information sheet, ensuring consent forms were signed and seeking permission to record the interview (discussed in Section 4.8.2.) – all forms were online, meaning this applied to both in-person and online interviews. In the third stage, interview was then conducted following the interview guide (see Appendix), with key ‘additional topics’ raised by the participant noted down for follow-up at the end in Stage 4. This third stage involved allowing participants to go off-topic, additional questions relevant to the initial question and prompting for further information about experiences or opinions (such as, ‘why do you think that happened?’). From the noted down topics, the fourth stage involved going back to certain points of the interview to follow up on some key issues noted (such as, ‘to X question, you mentioned this, I just want to go back to this and explore it further). Once all ‘additional questions’ had been exhausted, the interview recording was switched off, and the participant was debriefed in Stage 5. Stage 5 involved discussing the ability to withdraw their data from the study and highlighting the follow-up participatory analysis segment and answering any questions. Finally, Stage 6 involved thanking them for their participation, asking them to keep in touch about developments in their business (if a young entrepreneur) or new programs/policies (facilitator), and letting them know I’d be in touch in the coming months with the follow-up.

The interviews were either recorded through Zoom or through the 'voice record' function on my phone, uploaded to a secure OneDrive folder on the Cardiff University network and then transcribed through the Office 365 transcription function, before being manually checked and corrected by myself. Due to my own accent and the accents of the participants, the initial transcription was often highly incorrect, so re-checking each file manually and correcting all of the original data was essential to ensuring accuracy. Each file was given a pseudonym, stored in a spreadsheet, and only available to the researcher and supervisors (if requested).

4.7. Data Analysis

This section outlines my analytical approach, explaining my choice of thematic analysis combined with participatory analysis for the analysis of the semi-structured interviews. Analysis is an 'individualized process', which involves the interpretation of data, and different strategies for analysis will yield different results. Between the data collection and data analysis period, I took a 'break' for two months so that I would have a significant mental gap from the data collection period, and that I would be looking at the data with 'fresh eyes'. Due to the volume of interviews that were conducted and the time-consuming nature of transcribing these interviews (which took a total of one month of transcribing daily), a break from the data provided me with time to revisit my research questions and to reengage with the literature explored to frame this study. Before starting the 'analysis' process, I spent two weeks reading and re-reading the interview transcripts, which aided me in developed a conceptual understanding of the content of the data and how it would be used to answer my research questions. I then undertook the thematic analysis of the interview data, in which the rationale and strategy for this approach is discussed in Section 4.6.1. Following this period, I then sent the analysis off to participants, and left another month gap before re-analysing data and starting to write-up – in which during this time, the participatory analysis was in process (the rationale and strategy for this is discussed in Section 4.6.2.). The overall data analysis period took place over four months, involved a series of analysing and re-analysing of data, before I began to write up the findings (discussed in Chapter 6, 7 and 8).

4.7.1. Thematic Analysis of Semi-Structured Interviews

When discussing qualitative analysis strategies, content analysis and thematic analysis are often used interchangeably, despite referring to very different strategical analysis approaches (Vaismoradi and Turunen 2013; Leeman and Sandelowski 2012). Whilst these

approaches share a similar goal, in that they aim to find an understanding of a particular phenomenon from the perspective of those experiencing it, the process of each strategy is different. Content analysis refers to the systematic coding and categorizing approach needed to explore large amounts of textual data, and the purpose of this approach is to describe the characteristics of this approach (Bloor and Wood 2006). However, thematic analysis refers to the “*method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data*” (Braun and Clarke 2006; p79). Content analysis provides a surface level description of the key characteristics of text (Green and Thorogood 2004), whilst thematic analysis provides a richer, more complex account of the data – and goes beyond ‘the surface level’ to interrogate the data within its broader context (DeSantis and Noel Ugarriza 2000). Therefore, to analyse the interview data, I utilized a thematic analysis approach, due to its reputation for flexibility and simplicity (Braun et al 2019). Choosing thematic analysis over content analysis allowed the researcher to examine the perceptions of young DSE about the motivations, barriers and experiences with the DSE ecosystem, enabling for the identification of patterns and trends across interviews. Whereas a content analysis would only identify key characteristics of the text – such as frustration at the system, whilst thematic analysis enabled a deeper explanation into the justification for the frustrations at the system.

Due to the volume of interviews, flexibility in the analysis process and simplicity in the approach were important due to a need to analyse and re-analyse sixty-six interviews in a relatively limited period of time. Additionally, thematic analysis can help explore the perspectives of different ‘types’ of participants and allows for the comparison of similarities and differences between individual participants and between country contexts. Thematic analysis requires the researcher to move beyond counting specific words or phrases for frequency and focuses more on identifying and describing the themes or patterns of meaning within the data. It is used to explore questions about participants lived experiences, perspectives and beliefs, and the social processes and factors which influence particular phenomena, which for the purpose of this study, is youth digital-social entrepreneurship. Whilst the flexibility of the approach has led to criticism that the method lacks coherence and is often inconsistent in the coding, I worked to mitigate this by regular re-analysis of the data and constant referral to the research questions when re-analysing data. The process of the thematic analysis strategy is outlined in Figure 5. This ‘process’ flowchart provided me with an overarching guideline on how to conduct my thematic analysis in a way that was more inductive rather than deductive, and due to the less restrictive nature of this approach, it enabled me to incorporate elements of participatory analysis into my data analysis too.

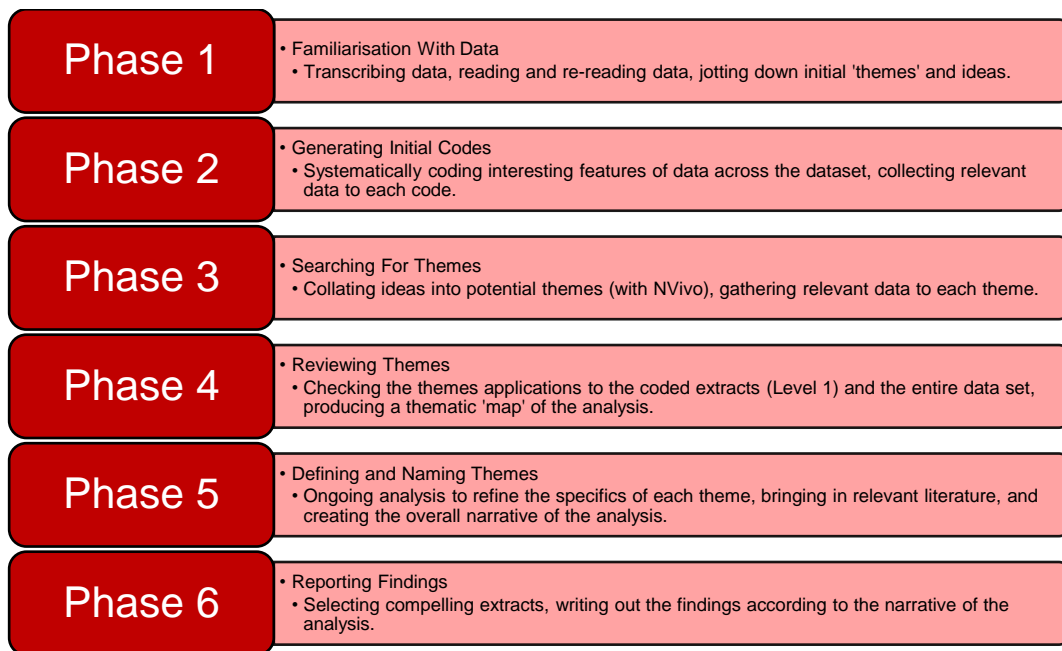


Figure 5: Thematic Analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006)

Phase one was conducted during April 2023, after the data was collected. The transcription of the data and draft mapping of 'initial themes' took a period of one month, with sixty-six interviews needed to be transcribed. The initial themes were handwritten in a notepad, with standout quotes written next to them to highlight how the theme had 'come about'. After a one-month break from the data, Phases Two and Three then went ahead in June 2023, where each file was uploaded into NVivo, categorized correctly and the coding process began. This process took a period of one month, before the initial analysis and follow up questions were emailed across to participants, and they were given a period of two months to provide their feedback and analysis. During this time period, I continued to re-analyse the data in-line with the research questions, connecting the themes together, identifying relationships and creating a 'map' of the key findings, broken down into chapters (Phase 4). At the end of the participatory analysis period, I then moved onto Phase 5, integrating the 31 additional 'feedbacks' from participants into the NVivo file and re-coding it to refine the specifics of each theme. At this point, I began to re-read the literature and source new relevant literature, before moving onto Phase 6 and writing up the Findings (Chapters 6, 7 and 8) and Discussions (Chapter 9) chapters.

4.7.3. Participatory Analysis

In recent decades, there has been a growing interest in the use of participatory research methods in academic scholarship, particularly in the social sciences, in an attempt to facilitate greater social justice and equality and provide accurate and fair representation of historically marginalized voices, especially when studying marginalised groups (Caretta 2016; Nind 2014). Participatory research methods aim to subvert power relationships typically present in the research process, such as the researcher-researched relationship, to provide participants with the opportunity to co-create within the research process, and for researchers to critique and challenge their own internalised biases (Kinpaisby 2008). According to Bourke (2009; p458), due to the many different motivations that researchers may have for adopting participatory approaches, there are 'no strict rules for what constitutes participatory research', or clarity about 'essential ingredients' for participatory research. Examples of this would involve asking participants to identify the key themes from their own interview, before presenting participants with the key themes from an interview by the researcher (Jackson, 2008). When it comes to participatory research, participation in the data analysis stage is often neglected in favour of participation in the conceptualisation and implementation of a project (Nind 2011). There is little to no guidance on what is, or is not, participatory research, which means it up to the interpretation of the researcher to determine what aspects or elements of the project should be 'participatory', and what 'participatory' looks like for their specific project.

For this study, I utilized participatory research as engaging participants in the analysis stage, which means, following my own thematic analysis of interview findings, sharing this with participants over either a virtual call or sharing the analysed notes of their interview over email, prompting for review, critique, and additional commentary where they feel necessary. If there is disagreement with interpretation at this stage, a follow-up phone call will be arranged to further discuss this disagreement and to develop a solution that fairly represents the participants interpretation of their own realities – this provides an opportunity for me to challenge my own bias and empower participants to ensure they are fairly and accurately represented in this study. Initially I planned to conduct this only through a follow-up call, however, when arranging these calls, I was made aware of how difficult it was for many participants to find an hour to sit and go through this process. Many highlighted how they would prefer to be sent the notes I have made so that they can process in their own time, allowing them time to reflect over the 'findings' and contribute additional follow-up commentary. This led me to change the participatory analysis strategy, where each young digital-social entrepreneur participant was emailed their interview transcripts and analysis, which included several follow up questions based off of the interview and provided with adequate time (two

months) to provide their feedback and additional information. The enthusiasm for this amongst participants was high, and whilst some 'fall off' is to be expected due to the length of time between interview and analysis (between 3-4 months), over one half (31/44) participated in this process. Three other participants expressed an interest in participating but highlighted how their currently busy schedules were hindering their ability to do so, and two other participants had just become parents, so had stepped away from work during this time and were thus unable to participate. This left eight participants who had not responded to the email, despite two follow up emails, however, this is to be expected due to the busy nature of entrepreneurship.

4.8. Ethical Considerations

This research was subject to the School of Social Sciences Ethics Committee (SREC) and was only permitted to proceed once permission had been given, in which the research outlined confirmed to the British Sociological Associations Ethics Guidelines. There were numerous ethical issues which needed to be considered in the design and delivery of this study. Predominantly, these issues were centred around consent, confidentiality, and data protection, due to the active participation of participants in interviews and the recording of and reporting on these interviews in this study.

4.8.1. Recruitment

Participants were recruited through a mixture of purposive sampling and informant sampling, which required ethical considerations about power dynamics and consent. In regard to consent, those recruited through purpose sampling were contacted either through LinkedIn or email with the participant information sheet initially and were left to respond accordingly as to whether they wanted to participate or not. There was one follow-up with those who did not respond approximately a month after initial contact, but beyond that there was no more contact made with those who opted not to join the study. Those who did choose to participate chose to do so from their own free will and were able to elect which mode of participation they wanted (in-person or virtual), and when in-person, dictated the location of the interview for their own comfort (Israel & Hay, 2006).

Regarding power dynamics, some participants were recruited through an 'informant', who was member of staff at a business incubator they worked at or an NGO they volunteered for – this could have potentially led participants to feel pressured to partake in the study

(Hughes & Preski, 1997). This was partially mitigated by the participants being given my contact details and reaching out to me if they wanted to participate, as well as a note in the participant information sheet about voluntary participation, reminding the participant there was no repercussions for non-participation or withdrawal of data at a later date, and that this would not be communicated back to the 'informant' and held against them – showcasing a participant-researcher confidentiality. This was reiterated in the interviews, that there was no repercussion for withdrawal, and they could stop the interview and withdraw their data at any time.

4.8.2. Consent

All participants in this study were informed in advance about the purpose of this study, provided with participant information sheets before signing up to participate. In the introduction of the survey, there will be a rigorous consent form required to be signed before moving onto the actual survey stage of the process. Before the interview (typically, the day before), participants were sent a rigorous consent form translated into the local languages (Slovenian, Albanian and Serbian) to sign (through Qualtrics). Participants were repeatedly made aware that their participation is voluntary, and they can withdraw themselves and their data at any time of the study – including up to the submission deadline of the study. At the beginning and conclusion of each interview, participants were asked to reconfirm their consent verbally and given a further opportunity to ask any questions if they had occurred and have the data protection policy re-explained.

4.8.3. Potential Harms / Safety

During the development stage of this project, potential harms and safety risks were outlined in order to seek ethical approval. The potential harms identified were discussions of personal networks that may be triggering for participants with complex family histories, however this was difficult to mitigate against entirely. Rather than referring directly to family support, it was discussed more broadly using terminology such as 'support system' and 'personal ecosystem', and when participants mentioned family, further questions were asked about family. Those who did not directly mention family or who mentioned complex family relationships were reminded that they could 'skip' questions if necessary. Additionally, with the support of local facilitators in each country, I created a toolkit of 'resources' to signpost participants too if they were distressed by anything in the interview – and highlighted this to

participants at the beginning of the interview, however, it was never utilized by any participants. This toolkit included local counselling services, sourced through desk research.

4.8.4. Data Protection

Following the interviews, the audio file was extracted, and all interview data was anonymized and coded – with the coding design reflecting demographics and dates of interviews, and files renamed accordingly. Participants were assigned a pseudonym recorded in a spreadsheet next to their interviews coded name, which was used in the write-up stage – so in the participatory analysis stage, participants saw how their interview has been coded (e.g., K2F – Kosovo, 2nd Interview, Female), but were not informed of the pseudonym. All files are stored on University OneDrive storage and will only be accessible to the researcher and their supervisors.

4.9. Reflections and Limitations

This section reflects on some of the strengths and challenges of the methodological design of the study, including the unexpected positive outcome of the survey failing, the logistical challenges with semi-structured interviews and keeping momentum for the participatory analysis. Additionally, I will reflect on the broader challenges of validity, reliability and generalisability that come with conducting qualitative research, and discuss my positionality as an ‘outsider’ researcher.

4.9.1. Mixed-Methods to Single Method: Survey Failure

Initially, this study was designed to be a mixed-method project that utilized both surveys and interviews to answer the key questions. However, due to poor reception of the survey amongst potential participants, and many of these potential participants wanting to participate in an interview to discuss their experience in further depth, this meant that the methodological design of the study needed to change during the fieldwork stage. Whilst the survey failure was disappointing and left several initial questions unanswered, the interview schedule was adapted to encompass some of these key questions – but with the questions reframed, so as to provide more in-depth answers than the survey would initially have uncovered. The ontological and epistemological approach to this study means that a single

method qualitative study was actually better suited to the approach than the original plan of a mixed-method study, where prioritizing qualitative methods meant for a more effective way of understanding the “*participants view of the situation being studied*” (Creswell 2003; p8). The failure of the survey and the overwhelming interest in interviews from participants meant that the initial target of 40 interviews was exceeded by over 50%, with 66 interviews being conducted in the end. After analysing the data and writing up the findings, the additional 26 interviews that the survey failure made way for provided this study with richer insight than the survey could have done. So, whilst initially being disappointed because of the survey failing, it was ultimately to the benefit of the research – as the additional data collected provides a wealth of insight into the lived experience of youth digital-social entrepreneurs and those that facilitate it.

4.9.2. Semi-Structured Interviews: Nature and Process, Difficulties and Solutions

Managing to ‘overachieve’ on the target number of interviews by over 50% is a significant accomplishment for any researcher, let alone during the short timeframe in which data collection occurs for a PhD student, and with the limited resources to be ‘in the field’ that a PhD student possesses. I spent two weeks in ‘the field’ (onsite) in each country, and an additional 3 months interviewing virtually across both sites. The two weeks ‘in the field’ were funded by the ESRC Overseas Travel Fund, but due to budget constraints and personal commitments, I was only able to spend a total of one month ‘onsite’ – meaning that the time onsite had to be methodically planned and orchestrated to perfection in order to interview everybody who had agreed to be interviewed / expressed interest in being interviewed.

Young DSE are busy people, so the logistics of planning and orchestrating many of the interviews required a high degree of flexibility amongst both participant and researcher. Many of the young entrepreneurs interviewed struggled to carve out designated time in their working day to participate in interviews. Therefore, some interviews were conducted after working hours, in coffee shops and other social hangouts across the cities – whilst others were conducted on a lunch break, and one interview even conducted whilst walking through the park, in order to get the young entrepreneurs newborn baby to sleep. When interviews were conducted in person, I found that the more casual the interview spot, the more in-depth, open, and honest the interviews felt. Talking about their experiences over a coffee in their favourite coffee shop or whilst strolling with a newborn allowed participants to unwind in a way that I didn’t see happen in more formal interview settings, such as office spaces. Each day was meticulously scheduled in order to accommodate multiple interviews in various locations, with interviews starting as early as 6am and finishing as late as 10pm in order to accommodate

both the participants busy schedules, and to allow for enough 'recharge' time for myself between interviews. Whilst this was stressful in itself to plan and manage, ultimately, it paid off in the end when interviews were conducted with energy, enthusiasm and enough 'social battery' for myself and the participants to deeply explore their experiences and perspectives. Participants were given the choice to be interviewed 'onsite' within the timeframe that I was around, or remotely outside of this period – so as to best accommodate their schedule and needs.

There were no significant language barriers faced during the data collection stage – due to a combination of most young people in both countries being more 'globalised' and learning English as a second or third language from a young age (especially more so for young digital-social entrepreneurs) and having translators available in country if required (which was never utilized due to a lack of need). For those engaged in digital-social entrepreneurship, the likelihood is that they would be 'online' and thus regularly engaging in international dialogues and exchanges, where English is almost always the 'default' language. Whilst some participants apologised for their perceived 'bad English', I always reassured them that their English was fine, and offered the support of a translator (and rescheduling the interview to enable that) if they were uncomfortable with speaking in English. This option was never taken up, however, on a few occasions, participants used Google Translate during the interview to translate some technical terminology relating to their work. Additionally, I always checked in with participants that they could understand me (due to having a relatively regional English accent and sometimes speaking too quickly, which can be difficult for some English as a Second Language speakers to understand) and devised a 'code word' for when I was difficult to understand. I also provided them with the interview schedule in advance so they knew which 'guiding' questions would be asked, as well as also writing down 'follow up' questions when necessary so they could translate if required.

4.9.3. Participatory Analysis: How to Keep the Momentum Going?

Whilst it was often difficult to schedule the initial interview with the participant, managing the follow up for the participatory analysis was even more so. The initial plan was to conduct follow-up calls to undertake the participatory analysis; however, this soon became a logistical nightmare due to the busy-ness of the participants, the larger than expected number of participants and a change in my own working commitments meaning I had less

flexibility during the working day. Many participants expressed interest and enthusiasm for the participatory analysis (with some highlighting how they'd like to hear their own thoughts in a few months' time, to see if they felt the same way), they highlighted how hectic their schedules could be, and how fitting in time for a call may be difficult, if not impossible. Therefore, the way in which the participatory analysis was undertaken was adapted – reducing the time commitment on the participants behalf.

Firstly, I did not undertake the participatory analysis with the 'facilitators' – as I wanted to prioritize undertaking it with the young digital-social entrepreneurs and knew that managing 44 different means of 'participatory analysis' would be much easier than managing 66. Secondly, I modified the participatory analysis meaning that it was hybrid – I sent across the analysed transcripts, key findings/summaries, and follow-up questions to them, and in their own time (within a reasonable timeframe), they sent back their thoughts, critiques, and additional answers. This was more effective as it gave them time to dwell on my initial findings, to gather their thoughts and expand on certain points they felt were missed, as well as giving them the flexibility to undertake it when they had a free moment (whether this be at 2am on a Sunday or 11pm on a Tuesday). Reducing the outright commitment from the participants (in terms of time) meant that I managed to have a stronger retention rate – with 31/44 participants participating in this stage. If I had stuck to the original plan of it being a follow-up call, I would have had a much lower retention rate. Whilst it would have been insightful to undertake this process with the facilitators, ultimately, time was a limited resource and was better spent undertaking it with the participants, as opposed to burning myself out trying to do it all.

4.9.4. Validity, Reliability and Generalisability

A key concern when designing and conducting any research project is "*how can an inquirer persuade their audience that the research findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to?*" (Lincoln and Guba 1985; p290). Traditionally, the issues of validity, reliability and generalisability are often raised in relation the methodological design, with Patton (2001) highlighting how these are the 'key factors' to consider when undertaking research. When designing this project, I initially planned to conduct a mixed-methods project, utilizing quantitative and qualitative data in order to triangulate my findings and strengthen the 'reliability' of my findings. This derived from my own quantitative background and competence, and my subsequently subconsciously 'positivist' held beliefs about 'validity' in research – that I needed quantitative data to validate the claims I am making. However, as the project developed, the research questions emerged through constant re-evaluation of my objectives,

and the uptake from participants of the survey was weak, I realized that numbers could not truly tell the story I wanted to tell. With qualitative research, reality is constructed by those who experience it – and our job as a researcher is to interpret it as fairly as we can. During this project, it was my job to draw out the experiences of young digital-social entrepreneurs and paint a picture of what digital-social entrepreneurship looked like for young people in Kosovo and Slovenia, based off of my subjective understanding of their constructed realities. On a different day, or with a different researcher, asking the same questions and analysing the same answers could draw up different findings – as the researcher is also constructing an interpretation of the constructed realities of their participants. Whilst validity and reliability are often essential metrics of quality for quantitative research due to the ‘quantifiable’ nature of the data collected, determining ‘validity’ in qualitative research is a much more complex mission.

Therefore, seeking ‘validity’, ‘reliability’ or ‘generalisability’ is a fool’s errand – and a new metric of ‘trustworthiness’ was proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985; p300) to measure the ‘quality’ of qualitative research. According to Seale (2002), the trustworthiness of a research project refers to the extent in which findings are credible, dependable, and can be trusted as accurate and meaningful representations of the phenomena under investigation. For Lincoln and Guba (1985), they visualise four general criteria for trustworthiness: credibility, confirmability, dependability, and transferability. Credibility refers to the extent in which the research findings accurately represent the experiences, perspectives, or phenomena being studied, whilst confirmability refers to the degree to which the research findings are free from researcher bias or subjectivity. To enhance the credibility of the findings, I underwent a ‘member checking’ process, where I utilized participatory analysis of the data so that participants could validate the findings (by checking my interpretation fairly represented their experience and perspective) and clarify and contribute additional information. This also aided in strengthening the confirmability of the findings, somewhat ‘triangulating’ the results by utilizing two different analysis techniques in order to ensure my interpretation of the findings accurately represented the participants experiences and perspectives, so that my own subjectivity and bias was minimized.

Dependability refers to the consistency and stability of the research findings over time and with different researchers, whilst transferability refers to the ability to generalize the findings to similar contexts or populations. By design, qualitative research does not aim for replicability or generalizability, as the ontological and epistemological position of the qualitative researcher requires a belief in multiple realities, where these constructed realities reflect the unique nature and breadth of the specific context under study, thereby restricting

generalisability to other contexts (Denzin and Lincoln 2011). However, there is an argument that if the qualitative researcher uses 'thick data', which provides a rich enough interpretation of the phenomena being studied, the transferability of the findings is not beyond the realms of possibilities. In order to aid this as much as possible, my discussion of context and methodology has been 'thick', in order to provide enough contextual information about the study so that it could potentially be applied to similar situations – other post-socialist countries. Additionally, to aid dependability, Stahl and King (2020) suggest the use of 'bracketing' during the data analysis stage – in which data analysis is split into 'raw data' (such as quotes) and interpretations of data. During the data analysis stage, for each participant, I compiled a list of key quotes and key observations from these quotes, and then compiled a list of my own interpretations of these quotes and observations – which was sent across to participants during the participatory analysis. This gave participants an insight into my thought process during the analysis stage and provided them with a platform to sense-check my interpretation to ensure it was representative of their experience and perspective.

4.9.5. Positionality: On the Outside Looking In

When studying countries outside of those in which you are born and raised, or studying communities of which you are not a part of, the issue of positionality is an important one. Whilst some see being as 'outsider' as an asset that provides you with a certain degree of objectivity that those more embedded into the country or community may not have, others see it as being intrusive or 'colonial' (Delamont, 2004). This is further amplified when coming from a 'privileged, western background', and studying countries and communities outside of this 'periphery'. This privilege and positionality are something I have been highly conscious of throughout this study, and have worked to both acknowledge, utilize, and mitigate all at once. My research position as a working-class woman allows me to empathise with many of the experiences of the young people, such as lack of social capital and challenges of gender discrimination. Throughout the entirety of this PhD process, I have acknowledged my position as a 'westerner' and 'non-entrepreneur', studying a phenomenon that I have worked on the periphery of for years in two countries that I have varying degrees of connectedness to. Whilst I am not a digital-social entrepreneur myself, I have worked closely in facilitating youth digital-social entrepreneurship as a juror and ambassador for two international organisations that train and finance young digital-social entrepreneurs – developing my own understanding of what it is, how it is done, what the challenges are and who the key players are. Whilst I have not currently experienced the challenges of entrepreneurship myself (those that cannot do entrepreneurship, study entrepreneurship), I am connected enough and embedded within

organisations and networks that provide me with deep insight into the key issues, processes, and challenges.

Additionally, I have spent extensive time over the last six years working, visiting, and volunteering in Kosovo for varying time periods, providing me with my own network within the country that I had nurtured prior to the PhD. I have undertaken Albanian lessons in order to be able to better engage in these networks, and to demonstrate a commitment to working in Kosovo and not just depending on people speaking English to me (although this is how the interviews ended up panning out). Whilst I have spent less time in Slovenia prior to this PhD, and had a weaker network, this is something I have developed over the PhD. Throughout the final year of my PhD, I have prioritized publishing articles with colleagues in Kosovo and Slovenia and amplifying the young entrepreneurs that engaged with this study through various media outputs (such as articles in Kosovo's biggest online magazine highlighting some of the businesses that participated in the study) in order to try and be less 'extractive' and to ensure I am co-creating knowledge with those who's lived experience I am exploring. I incorporated participatory analysis in order to partially mitigate the issue of positionality and outsider bias that I hold, and working with participants to ensure that my interpretation of their experiences is precise and reflective, and that their voices are fairly and accurately represented. Whilst it is impossible to entirely mitigate this, and the purpose of qualitative research is to be interpretative – experiences and perceptions are subjective, including the interpretations of the researcher from the data they collect, I wanted to ensure I am somewhat challenging my own internal biases by sense-checking my interpretations with the participants whose experiences I am interpreting and discussing.

4.10. Conclusion

The aim of this study was to understand the experiences of young digital-social entrepreneurs in post-socialist Europe (Kosovo and Slovenia). More specifically, the aim was to determine the contributing factors to young people's decisions to pursue digital-social entrepreneurship, and the ways in which they navigate the social, business, political and institutional environment of their respective countries in regard to their digital-social entrepreneurial activities. This study adopted a constructivist and epistemologically interpretivist lens in line with subjectivist ontological frames, in order to better understand "*the world of human experience*" experienced by young digital-social entrepreneurs (Cohen and Manion 1994; p36). A comparative cross-national case study method was adopted, comparing the experiences in Kosovo and Slovenia – the least and most economically successful of the

former Yugoslavia, to better understanding of how the background of the country shaped the development of the current situation for young digital-social entrepreneurs. Initially, a mixed-method approach was employed, however, this became a single method qualitative approach, utilizing semi-structured interviews as the main method.

The strengths discussed during this chapter were that the failure of the survey led to the 'overachievement' of the target interviews – with 66 interviewees as opposed to the target of 40, leading to more nuanced and in-depth understandings of the experiences of young digital-social entrepreneurs and the perspectives of those facilitating them. Additionally, participatory analysis empowered participants to remain engaged with the study, and led to a retention rate of 31/44 participants that completed the participatory analysis. Some limitations and reflections were also discussed, such as issues of reliability and positionality, and well as more broader reflections on the process of undertaking the research. Whilst some things went wrong, many things went right, and a combination of meticulous planning, flexibility and not taking it personally when things didn't go to plan ensured the successful undertaking of this project.

Chapter 5. “They Treat Me Like I’m This Young Child” – The World of a Young Digital-Social Entrepreneur

5.1. Introduction

The following three chapters will explore the ‘micro’, ‘meso’ and ‘macro’ factors associated with youth digital-social entrepreneurship (Figure 6), which in turn, target each of the three research questions outlined in this study. The purpose of Chapter 5 is to address the ‘micro-factors’ associated with youth digital-social entrepreneurship, addressing RQ2 “*What are the drivers and barriers for young DSEs in Kosovo and Slovenia, particularly relating to gender, age, institutional environment and social capital?*”

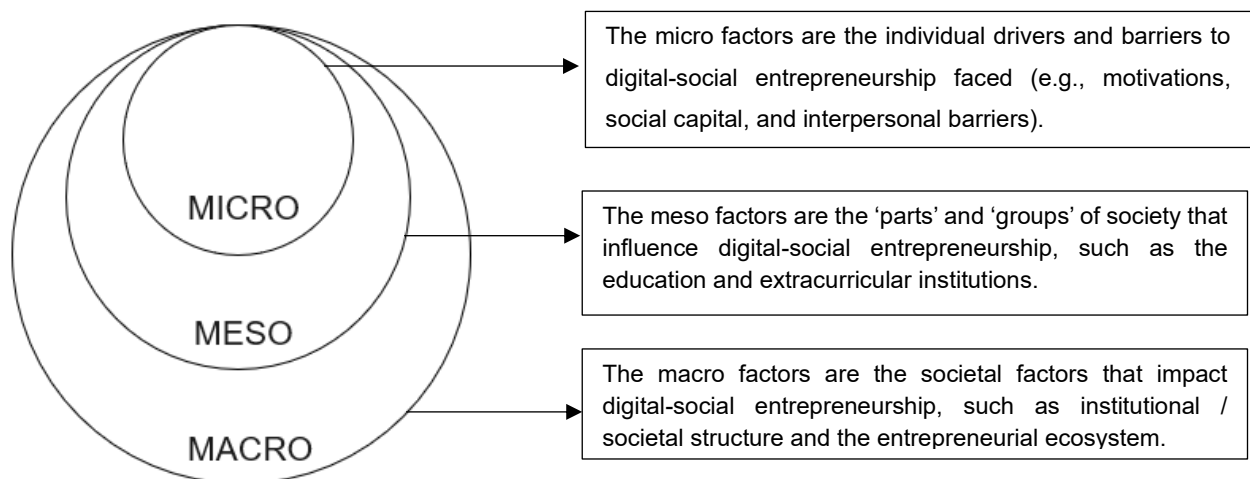


Figure 6: Micro, Meso and Macro Factors of Youth Digital-Social Entrepreneurship (Authors Own)

In both countries, digital-social entrepreneurship is a new phenomenon that is relatively undefined, meaning that each participants perception of what digital-social entrepreneurship is (and is not) varied. Therefore, this chapter sets the scene by defining what digital-social entrepreneurship is to the young people engaged in it, and how the facilitating actors of digital-social entrepreneurship define it. This will contribute to existing literature which defines what digital-social entrepreneurship it, however, the definition proposed in this study will uniquely reflect the definitions outlined by DSEs and the facilitating actors of digital-social entrepreneurship. This chapter will discuss the individual drivers and barriers of youth digital-social entrepreneurship, which will be discussed utilizing self-determination theory (Deci and

Ryan, 1985) and outlining the intrinsic and extrinsic motivations of young digital-social entrepreneurs. Understanding what brings young people to digital-social entrepreneurship is important for two reasons: it helps us to extend existing knowledge about motivations for digital-social entrepreneurship (in which there is currently a research gap), and it can assist with the formulation of effective policies and initiatives to create a conducive environment for youth digital-social entrepreneurship. This chapter will then explore the experiences of young DSEs, discussing some of the challenges faced in the post-socialist contexts of Kosovo and Slovenia. Exploring this through a comparative approach is important for understanding whether challenges are unique to their case site, or whether they are universal challenges which can be applied more. Finally, this chapter will conclude with a reflection on the key points highlighted in this chapter before they are further discussed in Chapter 8.

5.2. Setting the Scene – What is Digital-Social Entrepreneurship?

As discussed in Chapter 2, the definition utilized for the development and design of this study has been that of Ghatak et al (2020; p132), where digital-social entrepreneurship is a *“entrepreneurial initiative with a social purpose, developed by incorporating digital technologies into the business model”* It takes components of digital entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship, resulting in an approach to entrepreneurship that incorporates digital innovation and social impact as the core components (Figure 7).

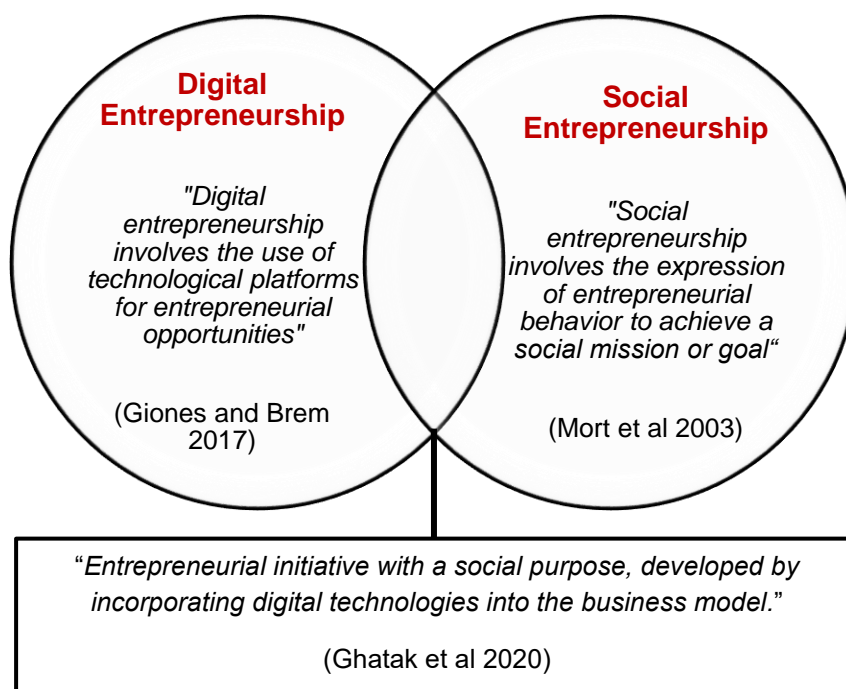


Figure 7: Digital-Social Entrepreneurship Definition (Mort et al 2003; Giones and Brem 2017; Ghatak et al 2020)

What 'is' and 'is not' entrepreneurship has been the subject of academic debate for an extensive period of time, as indicated by the discussion in Chapter 2, with this debate extending to sub-fields of entrepreneurship such as digital entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship. Where digital-social entrepreneurship is a relatively new area and has limited debate about its definition, discussions will draw upon how participants define digital entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship, before ultimately reflecting on how participants defined digital-social entrepreneurship and identified with the term. Understanding how DSEs identify themselves as 'DSEs' and supporting actors envision 'digital-social entrepreneurship' is an important component of defining and understanding this relatively new field. This also helps develop a framework of what digital-social entrepreneurship is, what drives it and what constraints it.

5.2.1. The Young Digital-Social Entrepreneur Perspective

For the purpose of this study, young DSEs are between the ages of 18-30 years old, which reflects the European Commission's and Council of Europe's definition of who constitutes 'youth' (discussed further in Chapter 4). Participants self-selected into the study by identifying with the 'DSE' label, which in recruitment material (Appendix 2), was defined as running an "*entrepreneurial initiative with a social purpose, developed by incorporating digital technologies into the business model*" (Ghatak et al 2020). Whilst none of the participants offered a definitive definition of what digital-social entrepreneurship is, each interview began with an explanation of their rationale behind their identification as DSEs, and how they incorporate digital technologies to achieve a social purpose.

For young DSEs in Kosovo, 'social impact' was repeatedly emphasized as a core component of digital-social entrepreneurship. When discussing what makes them a DSE, one DSE explained how "*I always try to choose projects that create impact or work within industries that are doing something positive. I have seen every year that this point is getting strong stronger to me, this social value, the part where I want to contribute and create impact with my work*" (Nora, Female, DSE, Kosovo). Another DSE explained their rationale for digital-social entrepreneurship as "*I wanted to start something new, something that to have an impact in Kosovo and also in our environment. Social value for me means a positive value that business creates for the economy, communities, and society around it*". (Emina, Female, DSE, Kosovo). For many of the DSEs in Kosovo, social impact was discussed specifically within the context of Kosovo – when discussing their business, it was specifically targeting a societal

challenge in Kosovo. In contrast, amongst many of the Slovenian DSEs in this study, the SDGs were highlighted as a guiding framework for creating social impact, reflected by one DSE, who explained how *“I’m developing my business in a direction that is more connected with the SDG’s”* (Vilko, Male, DSE, Slovenia). Another Slovenian DSE discussed how *“I’ve always thought about entrepreneurship as really just about solving big problems, like the SDGs”* (Anton, Male, Entrepreneur, Slovenia). This connectivity to broader, EU promoted (and UN implemented) frameworks highlights how young DSEs in Slovenia link social impact to broader societal frameworks such as the UN SDGs, rather than specific challenges faced in.

The notion of ‘social purpose’ for DSEs differed in each country, where for Kosovan DSEs their social purpose derived from their local context, whilst for Slovenian DSEs, their social purpose derived from broader, overarching frameworks of social challenges (such as the SDGs). Where Kosovo is a more isolated country in regard to freedom of movement, and less economically developed than Slovenia, this could potentially link to why much of the emphasis from young DSEs is centred on local challenges, and there was limited discussion of more global challenges. Whereas in Slovenia, young people are better connected (in regard to freedom of movement) and thus more likely to be aware of broader frameworks relating to global challenges, which is why many of the conversations with Slovenian young DSEs focused on tackling more global challenges.

In both Kosovo and Slovenia, the notion that the ‘digital’ component of digital-social entrepreneur was a social value due to it enhancing accessibility and expanding the reach of a product or service to more vulnerable or marginalized groups. This was explained by a Kosovan DSE, who highlighted how:

“we try to use digital tools in all our projects so that they’re more accessible for people. In most our projects we develop digital platforms to involve, to give the opportunity for it for the citizens here to be involved in the process through participatory planning, and then the final product is also available and open, open, open source, open data, and everything, so that the more people can benefit from it” (Blerta, Female, DSE, Kosovo).

This perspective was shared in Slovenia, where a Slovenian DSE highlighted how *“it’s easier to create an impact through when you can connect thousands of people at the same time in the same space, then it is to connect thousands of people at a physical event”* (Branislav, Male, DSE, Slovenia). This participant’s business was focused on tackling loneliness and issues on mental wellbeing amongst young people, in which impact was created through virtual networking and peer-counselling activities during COVID that extended into a career development and opportunity sharing digital community post-COVID. For many DSEs in both

Kosovo and Slovenia, the digital technology is often what facilitated the social impact of their business, rather than just being incorporated into the business mode. This highlighted how for some DSEs, technology is central to the business model, whilst for others, it merely facilitates the business model, which is discussed in further detail in section 5.2.3.

Whilst social impact is an important mission for Slovenian young DSEs, it is impossible to negate the role that 'profit-seeking' activities need to play, where another participant explains how "*at the end of the day you have to earn something. You're not really able to say, I'm going to contribute to the society and I'm going to make it better, but at the end of the day, you still have to earn money to survive, you know, yourself and also the business*" (Marija, Female, DSE, Slovenia). There has been a change in perception surrounding what 'social' entrepreneurship looks like, with another participant explaining how:

"I think that people start to realise that some kind of an organisation that helps the planet doesn't necessarily mean just opening up an NGO but being able to open up a company that's for profit. You can make a for-profit business make something good and I think people are getting more and more aware of this also because they are starting to use services that based on that" (Alfonz, Male, DSE, Slovenia).

In the discussions with Kosovan DSEs, 'profit' was not as central to the discussion as in Slovenia – conversations with Kosovan DSEs about their business centred primarily about the societal impact it was creating and the local challenges it was tackling. This could either reflect the heightened value that Kosovan DSEs place on social impact in comparison to Slovenian DSEs, or the nature of the labour market and lack of 'alternative' pathways (such as formal employment that is equally financially compensated as entrepreneurship) in Kosovo, which is discussed in further detail in Section 5.3.

5.2.2. The Support Actor Perspective

For the purpose of this study, supporting actors refers to those who are in positions of authority within the 'digital-social entrepreneurial ecosystem'. For each country, the 'supporting actors' incorporated those involved in direct policymaking roles relating to entrepreneurship policy, digital policy, and social entrepreneurship policy (policy makers), and those working at incubators, education institutions and training centres supporting young entrepreneurs (facilitators). Contextually, Kosovo and Slovenia have different frameworks and mechanisms to support and facilitate entrepreneurship – Slovenia has been a member of the EU since 2004 and thus is closer aligned to EU policy, whilst Kosovo is a newer country with a slowly developing framework for entrepreneurship. This is reflected in the level of

understanding of digital, social, and digital-social entrepreneurship, as well as in the frameworks for 'social entrepreneurship' (discussed further in Chapter 3.5 and Chapter 7.3).

In Kosovo, a policymaker of digital transformation defined digital-social entrepreneurship as:

"the way I understand digital-social entrepreneurship is that it is doing something with digital technologies, of course, at the end of the day, every business tries to create value for shareholders, but the social element in it is also looking at things which bring some higher value for society, because as you know, our society, like all the other countries, are facing challenges and they are related to inequalities which exist in the society" (Abdyl, Male, Policymaker, Kosovo).

This definition highlights the importance of the 'social element' in relation to the businesses central values – whilst providing shareholder value is important for attracting investment, which is a necessity for 'digital' enterprises, the importance of the 'social element' to the central social mission is acknowledged. In Slovenia, digital-social entrepreneurship was not the favoured terminology by supporting actors – where many of the supporting actors preferred to use 'impact' entrepreneurship to describe the social component of digital-social entrepreneurship. A member of staff at an incubator in Slovenia explained the distinction between 'impact' and 'social' entrepreneurship as:

"Companies that are 'impact companies' are more of commercial based companies that have this social or environment component emphasis, while social entrepreneurs have both dimensions emphasised in an equal way, so with the social/environmental component being the first purpose, but it's also that the profit component has to be there... we distinguish between both definitions." (Doroteja, Female, Incubator Staff, Slovenia).

Therefore, when discussing what digital-social entrepreneurship means in the Slovenian context, Doroteja explained that: *"they are mostly as I understand them, profit driven companies that have really an emphasis to impact or to improve some component in the environment or in a social context."*

In both Kosovo and Slovenia, the lack of coherent definition and framework for social entrepreneurship was discussed by supporting actors. A facilitator at a business incubator in Kosovo highlighted how *"there was a huge hindrance in terms of the law passing the law for social business because, there was this legal to start or draft the law for social business. But we haven't seen that happen yet, it's gotten lost into the dust like the other ones"* (Fisnik, Male, Incubator Staff, Kosovo). This demonstrates the lack of coherent definition or framework for social entrepreneurship in Kosovo, and the lack of priority for implementing such framework –

where any attempts to create a law for social business get 'lost into the dust'. In Slovenia, there is an existing 'status' for social businesses, but it does not reflect the current understanding of what social enterprise entails (discussed in Chapter 2). An staff member of a business incubator explained how:

"we in Slovenia have this status, yeah, which is not a certificate, but it's under law, it's a way of registering the business so you can register it as a social enterprise... *it's not a different kind of company, but it's just a 'status' that you can get...* most people regard this (social entrepreneurship) as *working with disabled people and employing disabled people*, so, being a non-profit or something, but actually it's not the whole story" (Doroteja, Female, Incubator Staff, Slovenia).

This highlights how in Slovenia, there was a clear distinction between social entrepreneurship (the employment of those with disabilities) and impact entrepreneurship (entrepreneurship with the purpose of improving societal or environmental challenges), which effects how young people perceive social entrepreneurship.

This is then reflected in how social entrepreneurship is perceived by young people, where a facilitator from a business incubator in Slovenia discusses that "*social entrepreneurship is a little bit more limited as a definition... social entrepreneurship has still a very, very negative connotation, especially among young people, because they don't even know what it is*" (Lidija, Female, Incubator Staff, Slovenia). This is highlighted in the rejection of the term 'social entrepreneur' by young people in Slovenia, which is explained by a Slovenian policymaker who notes that:

"*They don't call themselves social entrepreneurs, but they definitely operate their businesses as social enterprise*, meaning that they are having this, you know, main principles like my business model will be based on something that is good for the society or environment or something like that, meaning that we will respect all the criteria, for instance, that we will share our profit on a more fairly basis meaning also between our employees or you know in smaller amount or I mean a little bit adjusted. But what I saw is, and what I think is very positive is that they're not doing business only to make money or to just offer some digital solution, but this solution also has some impact on the society" (Ana, Female, Policymaker, Slovenia).

This suggests that digital-social entrepreneurship in Slovenia combines social values (both in the internal and external operations of the business) with 'digital solutions' – where entrepreneurs use these digital solutions to tackle societal challenges.

This is echoed amongst Kosovan support actors, where social enterprise is associated with ‘charity’ rather than a type of business, with a facilitator from a business incubator highlighting how:

“you know for a lot of institutions in Kosovo and the rest of the people, *if you mention social entrepreneurship, it's it diverts them directly to second-hand tools and shops and clothes* and so on and so forth. So that is completely not something that we always wanted to present and promote through our work” (Vjosa, Female, Incubator Staff, Kosovo).

This suggests that there is a perception of social enterprise as being not-for-profit work in Kosovo, to which the lack of legal framework discussed by policymakers and facilitators potentially contributes – however, facilitators are proactively moving away from this perception of ‘social entrepreneurship’ through education and incorporation of digital technologies for social impact.

In both Kosovo and Slovenia, there was an overarching stigma surrounding the term ‘social entrepreneurship’ (further discussed in Chapter 7) which impacted how digital-social entrepreneurship was defined and discussed by stakeholders. In Kosovo, the term ‘social’ was still used, but was linked into more ‘traditional business’ terms such as triple-bottom helix – the social in digital-social was taught from a traditional business approach. This was due to a lack of framework surrounding ‘social entrepreneurship’, which led to a lack of education and training opportunities centred around social entrepreneurship, and a perception of social entrepreneurship as being ‘charity’ as opposed to a legitimate business model. This is why, when social entrepreneurship was taught, it was framed in the ‘traditional’ lens of the triple-bottom helix – to avert the stigma of social entrepreneurship. In Slovenia, there was also a stigma surrounding social entrepreneurship and its relationship to charity – however, this led to it being reframed as ‘impact entrepreneurship’ – distinguishing that digital-social entrepreneurship are ‘traditional’ business that utilize digital technologies to create social ‘impact’. This rejection of ‘social’ was perceived as occurring amongst young people, who did not identify as ‘social’ entrepreneurs despite the fact their businesses were modelled in a similar manner to that of a social enterprise.

5.2.3. Defining Digital-Social Entrepreneurship

An important part of understanding youth digital-social entrepreneurship is the ability to define digital-social entrepreneurship through the eyes of the young people engaged in it and stakeholders facilitating it. From the Kosovar perspective, digital-social entrepreneurship

relates to digital entrepreneurship that incorporates social impact into the ethos – where there is a lack of formal mechanism or incentive to register as a ‘social business’. In the Slovenian perspective, digital-social entrepreneurship refers to a digital business that is operated ‘like a social enterprise’ – so, in relation to profit sharing amongst employees or creating ‘impact’ on the society. Stephan (2010) previously suggested a spectrum of social enterprise, which highlights the range of structures and definitions of social entrepreneurship based on previous literature (Short, et al 2009; Alter 2007; Bornstein 2007;). Where currently, definitions of digital-social entrepreneurship are limited, this study outlines a spectrum of ‘digital-social entrepreneurship’ based on the work of Stephan (2010) (which was adapted from Justo et al 2010). This spectrum highlights how digital-social entrepreneurship is a bridge between digital entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship (Figure 8), and how this is defined across a spectrum (Table 5.1).

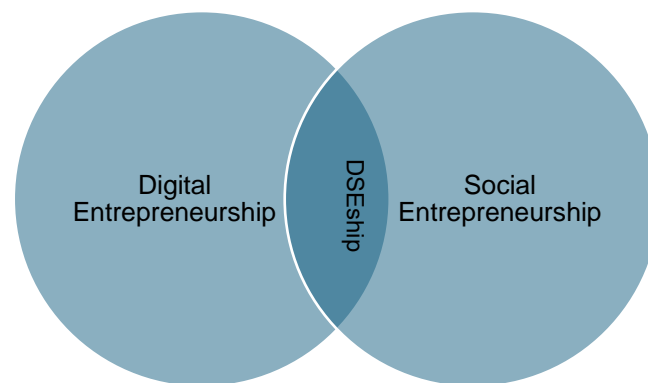


Figure 8: Digital-Social Entrepreneurship (Authors Own)

In Chapter 2, the definitions of digital entrepreneurship, social entrepreneurship and digital-social entrepreneurship were examined and discussed in-depth. From these discussions, came a consensus that digital-social entrepreneurship was the use of digital technologies to create social impact through entrepreneurial activity e.g. However, from discussions with young DSEs and key stakeholders (further discussion in Chapter 6 and 7), there were two ways in which digital-social entrepreneurship were being actualized in practice – hybrid digital-social enterprise and for-profit digital-social enterprise (Table 7).

NGO	Traditional Non-Profit Organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focuses on a social/environmental goal. • Registered as a non-profit organisation (funding received from charitable grants).
Social Enterprise	Not-For-Profit Social Enterprise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focuses on a social/environmental goal. • Registered as a non-profit organisation (funding from primarily charitable grants but some 'earned income'). • Utilizes digital technology innovations but not central to the 'model'.
Digital-Social Enterprise	Hybrid Digital-Social Enterprise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focuses on a social/environmental goal. • Registered as a not-for-profit organisation (funding primarily received from 'earned income' but with small charitable grants). • Digital technology facilitates the business model
	For-Profit Digital-Social Enterprise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High but not exclusively focused on social / environmental goal. • Registered as a for-profit organisation (earned income strategy) • Digital technology central to the business model
'Traditional' Digital Enterprise	Traditional 'For-Profit' Digital Enterprise with Social Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registered as a for-profit organisation (earned income) • Digital technology central to the business model. • Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives (i.e. recycling scheme)
	Traditional 'For-Profit' Digital Enterprise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registered as a for-profit organisation (earned income) • Digital technology central to the business model. • Purely economic motivations – i.e. maximising shareholder value / returns to the owner.

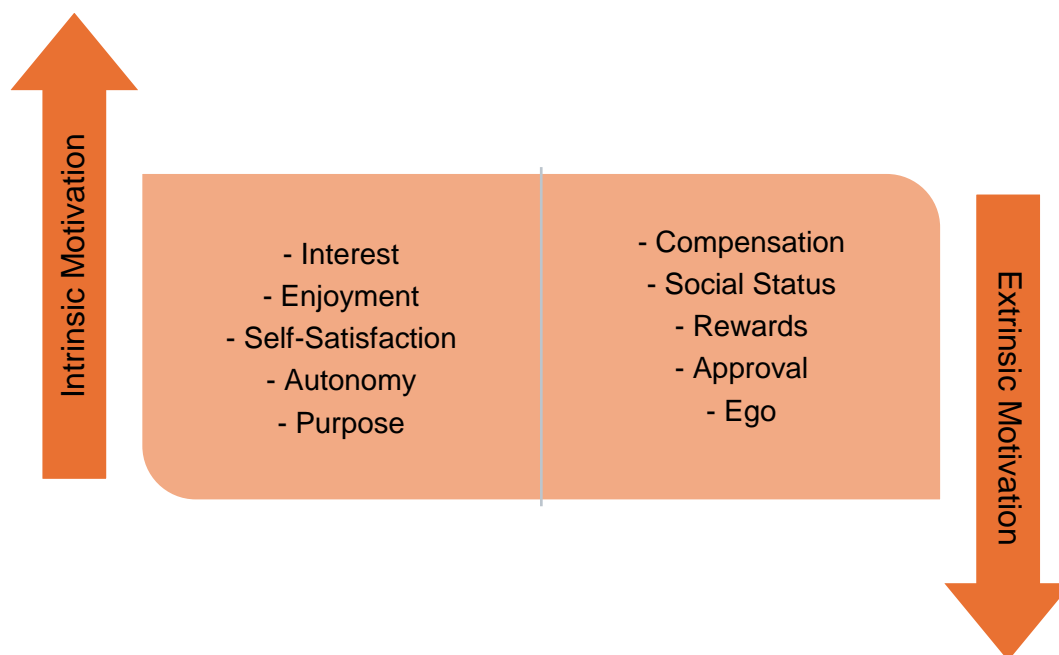
Table 7: Digital-Social Enterprise Spectrum (Authors Own)

Hybrid digital-social enterprises were formally registered as not-for-profit organizations (NGOs) but operating in a hybrid way (generating revenue from both charitable grants and through earned income), whilst for-profit digital social enterprises were registered as traditional businesses and generating revenue through earned income. Due to the high costs of start-up, low initial profitability and weak or lack of 'social enterprise' special status in both countries, many young people in both countries had to register their businesses as NGOs in order to access small grants and government support to get their business started and scaling. An example of this is Worldreader, who provide provides free digital books to children and families in under-resourced communities. These hybrid digital-social enterprises typically centred the social/environmental goal, and the digital technology facilitated the business model. Whereas the for-profit digital-social enterprises were primarily focused on the digital technology, and the social/environmental goal was not the central goal (although it was a high priority). An example of this is Goodera, a platform that helps companies manage their corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities. These businesses, due to being more market-oriented and typically more scalable solutions, were better equipped to generate their own income and survive independently from this. The reasons for the distinction between these two types of digital-social entrepreneurship are explored more in-depth throughout Chapter 6 and 7, and

the implications of what this means for defining digital-social entrepreneurship and distinguishing types of digital-social entrepreneurship will be discussed more thoroughly in Chapter 8.

5.3. Drivers of Youth Digital-Social Entrepreneurship

When interviewing young DSEs, conversations began with them introducing their business, and then being asked what motivated them to start their business and pursue digital-social entrepreneurship. There is ongoing discussion surrounding the motivations for entrepreneurship, whether this differs in relation to the demographic (such as young people, women, migrant and refugees) (Shinnar et al 2017; Zalkat et al 2023; Almobaireek and Manolova 2013) or what this looks like in varying geographical contexts (Arshad et al 2019; Furnham et al 1994). Traditionally, the motivation for starting a business has been seen to be economic (Schumpeter 1934), with economic gain the end goal of entrepreneurial activity (Carsrud and Brännback 2009). Existing research highlights how technological entrepreneurs are more motivated by the pursuit of independence and being their own boss than economic gain, whilst social entrepreneurs are more motivated by creating social value and building community. When discussing motivations for entrepreneurship, these are commonly categorized into intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, where intrinsic motivation refers to the doing of an activity for its inherent satisfaction (driven from within) whereas extrinsic motivation refers to the doing of an activity for its external awards (driven from outside) (Figure 9)



5.3.1. Intrinsic Motivations

5.3.1.1. Personal Fulfilment and Achievement

Amongst many of the young DSEs, the main driver for them was a sense of personal fulfilment. Across both countries, the sense of personal fulfilment was a common motivator. In Slovenia, there was a recurring theme of wanting to 'do something good' in their career which provided personal fulfilment, whereas in Slovenia personal fulfilment came more specifically from using their 'skills' to do something good providing personal fulfilment. In both countries, this sense of personal fulfilment derived from the notion of 'doing something good', and across a few of the interviews, there was a comparison made by the young DSEs to their non-entrepreneurial peers in relation to this. For example, one young DSE explained that:

"I guess as a person, for me this is this is important so. I mean, *of course we all want to make a good living. But you know the this for me is kind of a consequence of doing something good.* You know, for me, organising my business and life in a way that I do something that I love, and I do something that I find important and useful, this is the definition of success for me, right? And you know, of course, money is a part of it, but it's not the main motivator for me" (Viljem, Male, DSE, Slovenia).

For these young people, digital-social entrepreneurship provided an avenue to 'do something good' in their professional life, whereas there was a feeling that traditional employment did not offer the same type of fulfilment. This was highlighted by another participant, who compared digital-social entrepreneurship to employment in an NGO, discussing how:

"I have a friend that said *I just want to make the world a better place so I only will look for jobs in NGO's* and she uses Too Good To Go, so I said, why wouldn't you work for Too Good To Go? They're not an NGO, they're a for profit company, but they do good for everybody. She said, I didn't consider it, but you're right. So, *people are looking to work for or create something on their own and fulfil themselves this way*" (Alfonz, Male, DSE, Slovenia).

This highlights how young people are becoming more conscious of the way they can enact their values through employment, and that there is a growing awareness of digital-social entrepreneurship as an alternative to career paths such as NGOs for providing young people with that sense of fulfilment. However, in discussions with young DSEs and key stakeholders, there were reputational concerns associated with working with NGOs, which is discussed in more depth in Chapter 6.

Whilst the pursuit of 'doing good' aligns with the enactment of personal values and can be considered as socially oriented, it is also consistent with the findings of Germak and Robinson (2014) – that social entrepreneurship activity aligns with self-oriented motivation of personal fulfilment. For some, this was because utilizing their technical skills for social good offered a form of personal fulfilment, where *"I was always attached to doing something good and creating a positive impact, creating things that have an impact. So, I always try to use my skills for good. That was, I don't know, something that always has fulfilled me"* (Nora, Female, DSE, Kosovo). For others, this was because doing good made them feel better about themselves, explaining how *"I feel very good when I do something, but I feel very good when I do something better for environment, for social when I help someone. So, this fills all my all my mindset that I wanted to do in the future"* (Elira, Female, DSE, Kosovo).

Across both countries, personal fulfilment was a primary driver for digital-social entrepreneurship. In Slovenia this was more related to wanting to be fulfilled by meaningful employment, but in Kosovo this related to using skills to create a positive impact – which was reflected in the types of digital-social businesses created by participants in each country. In Kosovo, the main SDG targeted by DSEs was SDG4 Quality Education – which reflects the discussion about using skills to create social impact, where entrepreneurs were using their skills to 'skill up' next generations through their ventures. In Slovenia, the main SDG targeted was SDG9 Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure, reflecting discussions about how meaningful employment is the leading way to gain personal fulfilment. This discussion surrounding personal fulfilment and the pursuit of digital-social entrepreneurship to actualize these ties into the forthcoming discussion surrounding how young DSEs pursue entrepreneurship in order to enact their personal values.

5.3.1.2. Enacting Personal Values and Tackling Societal Challenges

Our personal values are what dictate many of our life choices – what we eat, what we buy, where we visit and who we maintain relationships with; these are the "standards that guide our behaviour and [also] lead us to take a particular position on social issues and influence others" (García-Álvarez and López-Sintas 2001; p210). For the majority of the young entrepreneurs interviewed, personal values were identified as being the overarching driver for their venture creation. One participant discussed how *"I didn't even completely know what I was getting into, with this entrepreneurship area, I just, you know, I just wanted to change something, I wanted to do something"* (Agnesa, Female, DSE, Kosovo). For some, such as Agnesa, it was their belief in their personal values that dictated their inclination towards

entrepreneurship, as this is where they felt they could make the biggest impact. A central theme running through many of the interviews was the notion of 'balancing your participation in society' – with participants framing their social entrepreneurship through the lens of 'giving back' to counteract what they are 'taking' from society. In an exploratory study of high school students attitudes to entrepreneurship, Kourilsky et al (2007; p41) identified that two-thirds of these youth wanted to 'give back to their community', marked by a "tendency among young people to combine an entrepreneurial spirit with a Peace Corps mindset". Linking into this notion of 'giving back' and 'combining entrepreneurial spirit with a Peace Corps mindset', one participant expressed how:

"I think like there's a shift in in the view like you cannot just see it as just yourself, I'm the one that has to do all things, I'm the one that has to take all the benefits. At some point, you turn back and say okay, what can I contribute back to the society? Right? So, at this point like if you have couple of individuals around yourself, you can actually make an impact" (Bojan, Male, DSE, Slovenia).

This demonstrates that young people have a growing awareness about their contribution to society. Digital-social entrepreneurship not only allowed participants to enact their personal values through entrepreneurialism, but it also enabled them to address the specific social issues within their local communities and broader global challenges, such as the UN SDGs. Whilst there is limited research on motivations for digital-social entrepreneurship, the embeddedness of social entrepreneurs into their local communities and the subsequent motivation to tackle social challenges through entrepreneurship has been the attention of many studies (Shaw & Carter 2007; Seelos, et al 2011; Kosmynin 2022). For young DSEs in Kosovo, there was an emphasis on tackling local challenges, such as youth unemployment and environmental challenges, whereas for young DSEs in Slovenia, there was an emphasis on tackling the global challenges – and on a broader scale (pan-European as opposed to just local, as in Kosovo). This could be due to Slovenia being a more 'globalised' country in the sense of EU membership and participation in various international organisations, whereas Kosovo is a more isolated country due to their partially recognised status limiting young people's ability to travel as freely.

The theme of tackling local environmental issues was prominent amongst Kosovan participants, as Kosovo has significant issues with air pollution and waste management (Lulaj 2020). One participant highlighted how their daily commute inspired their entrepreneurship by expressing how *"we were inspired from the air pollution in Pristina every day, so me and my colleagues coming from classes, from the lessons to home. But we had difficulty with the breathing during the winter, and we were inspired to create, to do things"* (Fatbard, Male, DSE,

Kosovo). Whilst another participant explained how *“I wanted to make this change because in Kosovo there is still use of pollutants and non-advanced technology... But also, there is a huge problem with water loss during irrigation in Kosovo, we predicted that in the next 10 years, it will be a problem, the lack of water”* (Ilir, Male, DSE, Kosovo).

For some participants, their motivation to positively impact local community not only led to them creating a ‘solution to the problem’, but also led to them seeking to create changes in societal attitude that caused that initial problem. This was an overarching theme in Kosovo, especially relating to environmentalism and sustainability and the broader societal awareness and knowledge of these issues. One participant discussed the issues surrounding the knowledge of the problem – and how their motivation was tackling the knowledge gap whilst also creating a technological solution: *“We see a lot of the problems in Kosovo, especially with garbage and the problem of recycling. So, if you want to recycle, we can see that with the people here, you need to have a lot of incentives, you need to actually let people know what the plastic is, how they can recycle and they need to think a lot about that. And we were thinking a lot about how we can improve this, let's automate that, you know the AI will do for you, so you just throw and go, you know, then the education comes second”* (Zamir, Male, DSE, Kosovo). Another participant discussed the lack of environmental knowledge in the local community as being the motivator for their business, highlighting how:

“what I've seen was that there was a very little information regarding environment, climate, sustainability, and all this stuff for the broader audiences, like someone from the academia would know about this stuff, and also the corporate world was engaged in it. But the broader masses, they're kind of left in the dark when it comes to this information, so I wanted to make it available to them” (Agron, Male, DSE, Kosovo).

Whilst an overarching theme from participants in Kosovo highlighted the lack of awareness about sustainability as motivators for their business, participants in Slovenia were more motivated by the inadequacies of the educational system – primarily in the education they provide young people. For one participant, they discussed how:

“we based our idea on our own experiences that we had through elementary school and also high school, so about sex education. We were like kind of a bit frustrated because we all know that relationships, gender and everything is like the basis of our being, but nobody teaches you about anything. I don't know about other countries, but Slovenia well, you get told nothing and are expected to know everything as soon as you're old enough... this is why I think we chose the path of creating something on our own rather than like just going to work in a school” (Katica, Female, DSE, Slovenia).

Another participant, a former teacher who started their own business during the pandemic, described their motivation as being because:

“there’s so much bureaucracy and there’s so much unnecessary paperwork to do as a teacher, and I wanted to give my students more than I could give them when I was a teacher. In the business, you still must reach certain goals and everything, same as a teacher in a public high school. But I’m really interested in technology and what you can do with it for good of society, so, I decided that you know, what if we just put school online, basically.” (Danijela, Female, DSE, Slovenia)

Many participants highlighted how their time studying, working, or travelling abroad had shaped their perspective on the needs of their local community – either taking inspiration from businesses encountered overseas, or seeing how things ‘could be’ and wanting to improve their home environment. For Kosovan participants, there was an overarching theme of wanting to bring back their international perspective to ‘improve’ their home environment, with one participant explaining how *“it’s just the general thing that I studied abroad, and then came back to Kosovo. So, a general need to be able to improve the environment around myself and the people I know, based on my knowledge from what I gained abroad”* (Blerta, Female, DSE, Kosovo). Another expressed that the reason for starting their business was because *“all I wanted was that we have the same opportunities here in Kosovo”* (Diellza, Female, DSE, Kosovo). However, Slovenian participants were more likely to express taking inspiration from business overseas and a desire to bring these to the Slovenian market. One participant discussed how:

“I’ve seen this kind of an app being used abroad, actually in Italy, mainly cause I’m in Italy a lot, so I’ve seen it used there, that it functions, I’ve spoken to the people there, they said it’s great. And I thought to myself well, if it’s so great it should exist in Slovenia as well, so that’s caused me to really lead me into starting to go with this” (Alfonz, Male, DSE, Slovenia).

Another participant, after discussing their time participating in Erasmus For Young Entrepreneurs in Spain and identifying the support for postnatal families available, explained their motivation as:

“So, I thought, like, OK, who is left behind in our society and even though they are, it’s very obvious that like family is being shattered now because of capitalism and everything and the values you know that are growing apart now. So that’s why I felt like families being left behind. So that’s where we need the support and even more though, when you have something like

postpartum depression or things like that. So that's why I focused on that" (Ana, Female, DSE, Slovenia).

Participants from both countries highlighted the importance of creating societal impact, but there was a significant difference in how they came to their awareness of the societal challenges they were working to counteract. For Slovenian participants, they were more likely to have been inspired by international experiences – such as studying and working abroad, which then reflected their inclination to be working towards broader ‘global challenges’ as opposed to targeted, local challenges. Whereas in Kosovo, whilst some participants were still influenced by international experiences (primarily those who had studied overseas), they were more inclined to be working towards targeted challenges within Kosovo – such as unemployment, education, and climate. When discussing the impact of their businesses, this was also reflected – where Kosovan entrepreneurs discussed the impact on the local community, whilst Slovenian entrepreneurs discussed scalability of their solutions.

5.3.1.3. Independence and Autonomy

The desire for independence and autonomy in ones working life is a significant motivation for entrepreneurship, as it often promises the notion of working for oneself and adapting your working schedule to your personal life (Kuratko et al 1997). For some entrepreneurs, entrepreneurship is seen as a way to exercise independence – by taking full accountability and responsibility for a start-up and taking these risks in order to see the subsequent reward. This was a more prominent discussion amongst Slovenian young entrepreneurs, where other career paths are often in the public sector and considered to be more bureaucratic and monotonous. One participant highlighted how the monotony of a corporate job and the lack of autonomy in their role pushed them to entrepreneurship, discussing how:

"I found that I'm the kind of person that needs constant challenges, and besides constant challenges, also a lot of diversity in the work. So, a lot of different things happening, if I get caught up doing just one thing over and over and over again in kind of a repetitive pattern, I get bored... running a business means I never get bored" (Danijela, Female, DSE, Slovenia).

Where those employed in traditional public sector employment or large private business would typically find themselves in one job role that limits their responsibilities or diversity in their working day, entrepreneurship is seen as doing multiple jobs within one role – entrepreneur. In Slovenia, conventional employment opportunities were viewed as ‘routine’, and thus, less

'interesting' than entrepreneurship. Existing research on social entrepreneurs identifies an objection to hierarchical business structures as being a strong motivator for social entrepreneurship (Christopoulos and Vogl 2015), which was a recurring theme amongst many of the Slovenian young DSEs, which is highlighted by:

"I wanted to take it on another level, I always wanted to work on something big and corporations or different companies were initially quite interesting for me, but when I worked there and I actually had two jobs with different big corporations already, I was like, OK, it's cool, but I don't really like the routine and same-ness of this. So, I started actually on this (the business), and I got myself accidentally a business manager and he was helping me out and basically, I started to commercialise my idea and eventually left my job" (Slavko, Male, DSE, Slovenia).

Across various studies of young entrepreneurs, there was a recurring desire for 'independence' from a young age, and there is an ongoing debate about whether entrepreneurialism is a 'trait' people are born with, or whether it is something that can be nurtured through education and training (Farrukh et al 2021; Nicolaou and Shane 2010; Nicolaou et al 2008; Shane et al 2003). This was discussed by one Slovenian participant, who identified that *"I guess like since I was younger, I never liked being bossed around and I always just wanted to like make my own things. So yeah, I like to be in charge, but also, I like having people around who kind of help in a way"* (Barbara, Female, DSE, Slovenia). For those entrepreneurs who expressed interest from a young age, there was an overarching theme of wanting to be challenged, with another participant discussing their motivation as being:

"from my personal point of view, I wanted to be an entrepreneur for all my life, because I think this is the way forward for me, like the freedom, being well, sleeping enough, eating good food, working from where I want to, and having this good work life balance. It's also important thing to have in mind, so this is like first personal value, second is the environment, the third is the financial thing" (Rozalija, Female, Entrepreneur, Slovenia).

The autonomy of entrepreneurship was seen as being an opportunity for a better work-life balance, with many participants echoing existing studies highlighting the flexibility of entrepreneurship as being a significant motivator for entrepreneurship (van Gelderen and Jansen 2006; Ezzedeen and Zikic 2015).

For the Kosovan participants, independence was discussed within the context of exercising their social values. For some participants (8 out of 26), they felt that the independence and autonomy that entrepreneurship brought was the only way that they could exercise their social values within a 'business' context. This was highlighted by one participant,

who discussed how: *“if you work for someone else, you have to go through their rules, and you cannot do something that you want to do. So, If you want to do something to make a change. you have to start from yourself”* (Elira, Female, Entrepreneur, Kosovo). This attitude was especially prominent in Kosovo, where societal attitudes towards ‘social impact’ and ‘sustainability’ were more widely criticized by participants as being a ‘young people thing’. The only way for many participants to live their social values was through creating their own path and starting a business that incorporated this – as existing ‘big’ companies did not encompass this social spirit. One participant expressed frustration at the lack of sustainability in the marketing organisation they were working for and discussed how:

“we started reading about it like sending each other these links, and saying, oh my god, look at that, look at this thing called greenwashing, and we were like starting to find out all these terms and what people were doing, in our field and company. It was like a wakeup call, and we were like OK, the three of us wanted to open a digital marketing agency, as that is the greenest thing we know” (Bardhana, Female, DSE, Kosovo).

Whilst this was a more common discussion point amongst Kosovan participants, a Slovenian participant also highlighted how entrepreneurship gave them the independence to exercise their social values, discussing how:

“I was like growing up really conscious of, you know recycling and stuff like that, and I saw that the world is not going to the right place. And also, because I had some contact with the products that were made, and I saw that we could do it better. actually, then I saw a niche that I could actually bring some value that was not met at the time” (Tadej, Male, DSE, Slovenia).

Ultimately, the autonomy that entrepreneurship brings was considered to be a key motivating factor, in that it could help them enact their social values and so that they had more ‘free time’ to pursue other interests. For Kosovo’s young DSEs, the autonomy of entrepreneurship enabled them to enact their social values, as these values difficult to enact within more corporate environments due to them being seen as ‘young people values’ and not serious societal concerns. For Slovenia’s young DSEs, the independence of entrepreneurship provided them with a better work-life balance, the ability to pursue other interests (including multiple businesses or ‘side hustles’) and the freedom to work from anywhere. This difference in perspective could stem from the differing working environments in both countries, where in Slovenia, youth unemployment is low, but many traditional jobs are considered to be ‘monotonous’ or ‘bureaucratic’. Whilst in Kosovo, youth unemployment is high, and traditional

work environments are considered to be 'old fashioned', and not aligning with the new generations more socially conscious values.

5.3.2. Extrinsic Motivations

5.3.2.1. Social Status

In both countries, there was a semblance of wanting to be seen as 'doing something good' – which highlights some form of extrinsic motivation for youth digital-social entrepreneurship in regard to the perceived social status that digital-social entrepreneurship brings. In some societies, such as the USA, entrepreneurship is seen as a noble pursuit and perceived positively, in other societies, such as Germany, it is seen as a reckless career choice and perceived negatively (Kalden, et al., 2017). However, existing literature highlights how social entrepreneurs are seen more favourably than traditional entrepreneurs (Menke 2020), although this is something that is contested in the post-socialist space due to the negative perception of social enterprises as NGOs (discussed further in Chapter 7 and 8). For the Slovenian participant, they felt motivated by the idea of being a role model, describing how:

“first thing for my business will be the community building on itself, because I would like to set up and be a role model for what I'm giving away to the people, you know, I would like to be the person that can connect the community and that's what I'm doing for my business as well, connecting people” (Ana, Female, Entrepreneur, Slovenia).

The notion of being a role model as something that offers fulfilments also aligns with McClelland et al's (1953) need for achievement theory, where people are motivated by the need to accomplish an achievement and be recognised socially for it. This motivation factor is not entirely dissimilar from a traditional entrepreneur, where social recognition and status are seen as driving factors for entrepreneurship. However, this can sometimes be seen as a desire to inspire more people to entrepreneurship (or in this case, inspire more people to digital-social entrepreneurship), where the goal of building community would lead to more people creating impact-driven ventures. Christopoulos and Vogul (2015) explore this in the context of social entrepreneurs, concluding that whilst social entrepreneurs are not motivated by economic gain, they are motivated by non-material benefits such as status, honour, fame, respect, and recognition.

This Kosovan participant highlighted how their motivation was driven by a desire for recognition of their 'social good' *“because I think that, like in many countries, especially the*

small ones, where, like people, get to know each other, and, like the circle, it's so small, entrepreneurs are kind of looked at, in a way, that they are in a 'higher social standard' than everybody else" (Jetmir, Male, Entrepreneur, Kosovo). With entrepreneurs being seen as role models and in higher social standing (amongst young people), the idea of personal fulfilment particularly driving digital-social entrepreneurship indicates that there is social status to be gained from 'doing good' – and being successful at 'doing good'. Parker and Van Praag (2010) discuss the relationship between entrepreneurship and social status, highlighting that entrepreneur in countries with too much 'low status' (necessity) entrepreneurship have lower social status than entrepreneurs operating in countries with less 'low status' entrepreneurship. For economies such as Slovenia with higher social security meaning less 'low status' entrepreneurship, this would suggest that entrepreneurship is perceived positively. Whereas in Kosovo, where there is less social security and thus more 'low status' entrepreneurship, the assumption would be that entrepreneurs are seen less favourably. However, where Kosovo is a much younger country (in regard to average population age), and where this research focuses on young entrepreneurs (who in the context of this quote, were discussing their perception from other young people), in line with other studies, younger generations typically view entrepreneurs more favourably than older generations would (Dioneo-Adetayo, 2006; Hulsink & Koek, 2014).

5.4. Barriers for Digital-Social Entrepreneurship

A poignant aspect of each interview was that for each driving factor that motivated them on this journey, there were two more barriers that impeded them. Barriers to youth entrepreneurship are well documented, ranging from legitimacy issues, access to capital, skills gaps, cultural attitudes, administrative frameworks, and access to support and further training (Arifi et al 2021; Avdullahi et al 2022; Gribben 2018). However, much of these discussions have been reflexive of the Western contexts in which the studies were conducted, and there has been limited studies exploring the unique barriers faced by young social entrepreneurs or young digital entrepreneurs, let alone young DSEs. Digital-social entrepreneurship is an emerging field of entrepreneurialism, and where the barriers to social entrepreneurship are often higher than that for traditional entrepreneurship, the barriers for digital-social entrepreneurship are even higher yet. This section outlines four thematic areas for the barriers to youth digital-social entrepreneurship (Figure 10), exploring issues of 'legitimacy' and societal attitudes (micro factors), social and human capital (meso factors), access to finance and resources (macro factors) and the institutional environment (macro factors). Micro factors

will be discussed in-depth, whilst the meso and macro factors will be subsequently explored further in Chapter 6 and 7.

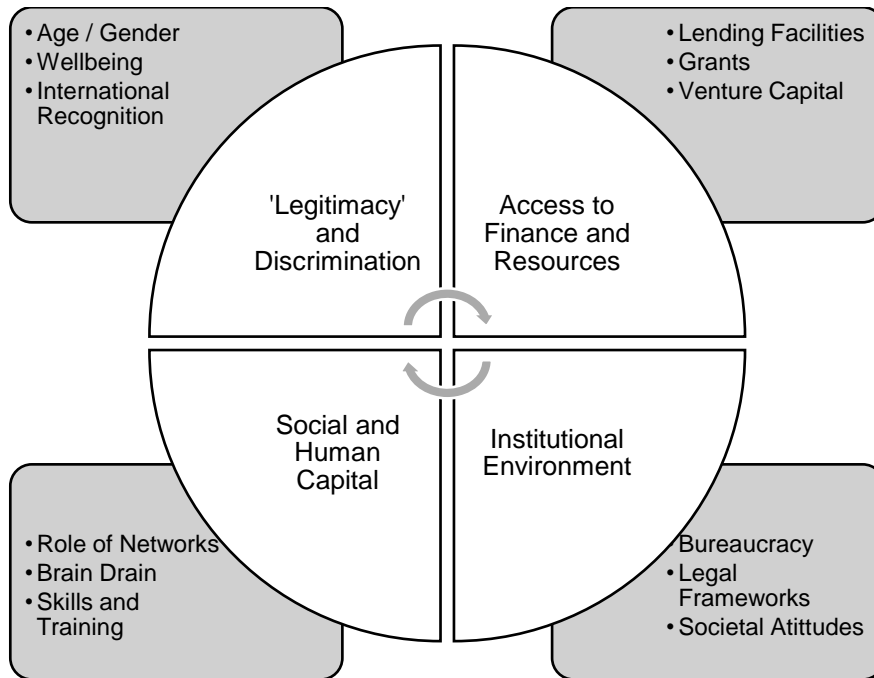


Figure 10: Barriers to Youth Digital-Social Entrepreneurship

5.4.1. Issues of Legitimacy and Discrimination

5.4.1.1. Age

The discussion here centres around the notion of age as a barrier, how age plays a role in entrepreneurialism and entrepreneurial activity and how age can act as a barrier to entrepreneurial success for those perceived as being too ‘young’ to be legitimate. When we speak about legitimacy in entrepreneurship, it is viewed as the generalized perception that the actions of the entrepreneur or organisation are ‘proper’ and ‘acceptable’ with the socially constructed system in which they operate (Suchman 1995). Although legitimacy and the pursuit of legitimacy is a significant challenge for most early-stage entrepreneurs, the stigma of age (and especially ‘youth’) plays a significant role in just how successfully an entrepreneur can establish legitimacy. A common notion amongst many of the participants was that their age was a significant factor in the way that they were treated by others, and it was a barrier to their perceived legitimacy as an entrepreneur. One participant discussed how the response to

their entrepreneurship is a 'mixed bag', where *"you have people that say ohh wow, it's so wonderful, you're so young and you're doing this, that's great, that's awesome. But you have the other part that is basically saying that this is too hard for you, or you shouldn't be doing this, because you're too young"* (Slavko, Male, DSE, Slovenia). The framing of being 'too young' for entrepreneurship links into this idea of legitimacy – where you are not considered as being the acceptable standard for what an entrepreneur does or should look like.

This issue of age was apparent in both contexts; however, it appeared more prominent in discussions with participants from Kosovo, with one participant discussing how:

"overall, there is a prevailing belief here that young people generally can't make it possible, and that's really sad because I think policy orients that and also political will has given a lot of negative signals towards youth that, I mean, this is what we can do, and this is what we're doing. There's no more that we can add to policies or whatever, and young people want to leave the country, so that that kind of gives you an answer as well... overall there is a prevailing belief here that young people generally can't make it possible" (Diellza, Female, DSE, Kosovo).

From discussions with participants, this seemed to be because youth are not viewed as full and competent members of society due to their age, but this appeared to be a common consensus amongst all Kosovan participants, where ages ranged from 18 to 30 years old. This is because young people are seen to lack the 'real life experience', the skill and the knowledge required for entrepreneurship, and are viewed as less responsible and thus less trustworthy than their counterparts (Arifi, et al., 2021; Avdullahi, et al., 2022; Gribben, 2018).

Hulsink and Koek (2014) discuss how legitimacy is an impediment for young entrepreneurs, as it has broader implications for accessing resources such as financial support or mentorship opportunities. When you are considered to have less experience (as young entrepreneurs are), you are considered higher risk for investment or loans, which is further amplified by the lack of collateral that young entrepreneurs typically have. This was discussed by one participant, who when explaining how they sought out investment to expand their operations, felt that *"because you're young, you have just one product and that one product is working well and you're saying OK, give me some money let me just try this and I will, you know, figure out how to increase the number, and they are asking these kind of questions about experience like you are a corporation"* (Zamir, Male, DSE, Kosovo). Young entrepreneurs face higher levels of scrutiny when seeking investment or pitching their work, with much of the scrutiny stemming down to their age and perceived knowledge and experience in their sector – even when they are well established (Gribben, 2018).

Another participant operating a highly successful venture made a comparison between German and Kosovan attitudes to young entrepreneurs, explaining that:

“when we speak with potential German clients, they do not say ‘how old are you?’ but rather, ‘how old is the company as the start up?’ Is it the startup company whose who invested in it? They are not seeing you like you’re a person, but as the company. But, in Kosovo, they were telling us you’re too young to have a company, too young to take on this project as it’s huge. They’re not seeing the company; they’re seeing like a person” (Afrim, Male, DSE, Kosovo).

Whilst this doubt may motivate some people, but for others, it led to a ‘defensiveness’ when engaging with public institutions, with another participant explaining how:

“I would say every time we participate in a conference or anything that has to do with us and the public institution, well, they’re surprised about age and whether we are even prepared, so we turn into a bit defensive mode, I would say, like we are prepared to be asked many questions, to be judged in our knowledge and in our experience” (Sihana, Female, DSE, Kosovo).

This was also discussed by another participant, who reiterated the impact that this negative attitude had on their own self-belief about their entrepreneurial ability. Upon reflecting about the difference between entrepreneurship in Slovenia (where they were currently) and entrepreneurship in Spain (where they did an Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs exchange), they explained how:

“in Slovenia I was always viewed as a student, you know, and even though I was very organised and very focused on my business, you know, students have this label of not trustworthy or that they still don’t know what they want to do. So, you kind of identify that within you, even though you’re not like that, and even though you are like a very appropriate candidate for having your own business. You just still don’t feel like that because you know it’s just the mentality people put on you” (Ana, Female, DSE, Slovenia).

Mueller and Thomas (2001) identify how culture plays an important role in the perception of competence of ‘young’ entrepreneurs, and how in ‘collectivistic’ cultures (more aligned with that of the post-socialist culture and heritage), there is less likelihood of a culture of support for young entrepreneurs.

5.4.1.2. Gender

In both countries, age and gender acted like a double disadvantage for many of the young women DSE’s interviewed in this study, where they were seen as inexperienced

because of their age and unfit for entrepreneurship due to their gender. One participant explained how this is a universal 'Western Balkan' experience, highlighting how:

"something that is a challenge is that besides us being young, we are also woman. So, as you probably know, in the Western Balkans, its youth and it's woman are always questioned, especially in regards to experience - cause if you go into state institutions or different type of institutions that you have to work with and they're either local or central government, they're all majorly people in maybe like 50s and so they grew up from like another system and did not really appreciate youngsters that much, so it is always a challenge. So sometimes I even have to say okay, my voice sounds maybe even younger than I am, so sometimes even in phone calls, people will not take you as seriously as they would, for example, take a man, or someone that it is older, so that has been of course a challenge" (Sihana, Female, DSE, Kosovo).

The legitimacy of young women entrepreneurs and how they are perceived societally was routinely addressed by the young women DSE, and how this legitimacy issue results in distrust of ability and knowledge. Another DSE discussed how:

"I think there is inherent distrust on what young people really know, and how much wisdom they have. I think that's even more visible when it comes to young women. I think. But I think that's also because there's actually so little, or it has been up to now, really, the politics and public life has been dominated by older people" (Irena, Female, DSE, Slovenia).

Whether this is a cultural misogyny or whether it's a lack of 'legacy' of young women pursuing entrepreneurship was debated amongst participants, with some discussing how it derives from the 'patriarchal system', and others highlighting how it may just be a lack of experience of working with young women (which is ultimately a result of patriarchy). When discussing patriarchy, one DSE explained how this impacts women's self-esteem when pursuing entrepreneurship – *"I mean I also can see this pattern, that women are usually more insecure about their ability and value than men because of how they are raised, and this overall patriarchal system, which was a big barrier for me"* (Nora, Female, DSE, Kosovo). However, another participant rationalized that *"but let's say, the most difficult part is because maybe people here are not so used to working with and trusting young people, especially young woman. So, this was difficult, and I didn't find any support in this side of things"* (Elira, Female, DSE, Kosovo). This cultural misogyny even stemmed down to the way that young women entrepreneurs were spoken to, with a participant explaining how:

"I mean it's just wherever I go. They treat me like I'm this young child I mean it's even the language the people use towards you, and you go to this big meetings, important meetings, and in Slovenia, with the language, you have, like the first person form, and third person form, and the third person form is this show of respect, and since you're young, they teach you, you need to use formal with people who are older and people in the business environment, and so

on. But as a young woman, people often talk to you with that informal language” (Irena, Female, DSE, Slovenia).

This issue wasn't only noted by young women DSE's, but a young male DSE in Kosovo, who discussed how:

“we had a lot of struggles in the beginning, people trusting our skills because of how the young age, like we have average age here is around 24 and almost 90% of our staff are woman, young woman, so the biggest challenge was to convince people that these young people are able to deliver big results“ (Driton, Male, DSE, Kosovo).

Whilst this distrust could have originated in the fact that it was a youth-led business, the clear distinction from the male participant about 90% of his staff being young woman and how this was a significant challenge for legitimacy of the business demonstrates the extent of the awareness of this barrier amongst young entrepreneurs.

This was demonstrated by another young women DSE from Slovenia, who discussed how she had a male co-founder and identified how the treatment they received in business exchanges was rife with microaggressions and exclusionary tactics towards her. She explained that:

“I guess it's not as bad as in some Balkan countries, but it can happen that you're coming to a meeting with a CEO, who is like, I don't know, a 50-year-old male and then he is like, yeah, you're a young woman, and they will say ‘how do you know about things?’ Actually, that happened to me, I contacted a potential client. We had the first meeting. It was great. And then on the second follow up meeting, my co-founder, he joined, and then at the end of the meeting, that CEO, he said, okay, I suggest we guys, we go for a beer, and we will do business, and I was just like sitting in the table and was shocked. So, I was joking out of it because it was awkward, but still, you can see that male gender is way more dominated in the business, so sometimes it's like harder, especially when you're young and 26 years old and it's a challenge” (Jerneja, Female, DSE, Slovenia).

Whilst this example clearly demonstrates discrimination against the young women founder in the form of the exclusionary meeting being held between “us guys” over beers, many young women participants had examples of these stories. Additionally, scholars have previously discussed this ‘masculine’ culture of entrepreneurship and the exclusionary impact it has on women founders and co-founders (Aggestam and Wigren-Kristoferson 2017; Modarresi and Arasti, 2021).

5.4.1.3. International Recognition and Legitimacy

The issue of legitimacy on an international scale was a recurring theme in interviews from Kosovan participants – due to Kosovo’s status as a partially-recognised country, its lack of international memberships (such as the European Union) its legacy of conflict (throughout the 1990s and recurring escalation of tensions with Serbia now). This was not an issue that occurred amongst Slovenian participants, due to the political stability and international recognition of Slovenia as a high-income economy. Many Kosovan participants noted that there was a stigma to working with Kosovo, with one participant explaining how:

“you're from Kosovo first. That's one barrier. You're from the Balkans. You know where people think it's still war there. I had this interview with this Swiss entrepreneur, he wanted to open an outsourcing firm in Ukraine. And then when the war started, they looked for another place. And I was talking about Kosovo, and he said, but what if Serbia attacks Kosovo and I'm like look, that's not going to happen... in people's mind, it's not safe to do business with someone from Kosovo” (Flamur, Male, DSE, Kosovo).

Despite the war being over for almost 25 years, there is still a greater perception of instability in Kosovo due to the ongoing tensions with Serbia over the country’s independence. Another participant explained how Kosovo was viewed poorly on a global scale by potential clients, is that:

“what we perceived, either from visiting different countries, including the UK and also German speaking countries, we saw that Kosovo or Balkans is perceived as a third country. Even though we tend to offer best in class services, at the end of the day, a company from India or from Pakistan competes in the same way as we compete” (Afrim, Male, DSE, Kosovo).

Due to Kosovo’s partially-recognised status and its lack of membership with the European Union and the Schengen zone, travel is a complex issue – visa liberalization for Kosovo citizens only occurred on the 1st of January 2024, so prior to this, acquisition of visa’s was difficult and costly, which limits young people’s ability to freely move for work and study opportunities. This also impacts people’s ability to conduct business and network, with one participant explaining that:

“the main thing is the travel restriction. Quite a few times we won awards, and we couldn't even go to actually receive the awards abroad because of visa regimes, so that that first one is really I think the worst one that that's forced upon. Once you remove that, I think it's easier to then go abroad, to discuss other ideas, maybe probably trying to find partners abroad or something like that, but I think that was the number one” (Jetmir, Male, DSE, Kosovo).

This not only has a direct impact on ability to freely travel, but the broader impact on the ability to upskill, network and further develop the businesses (whether this be an entrepreneur starting the business or a company scaling up and requiring mobility for staff to do so). The impact of this on business development was explained by another participant, where:

“for Kosova, how is the entrepreneur able to create a strategy if he or she doesn't know the external view, because he or she never has been outside to see more than he or she sees on the screen, so there are definitely some challenges” (Driton, Male, DSE, Kosovo).

Whilst the internet is good for some networking opportunities, face to face networking and skills development is considered to be more beneficial for skills development and relationship building – so the lack of visa liberalization hinders the ability of young entrepreneurs to further develop or expand their social and human capital.

5.5. Conclusion

From the conversations with young DSE, two typographies of digital-social entrepreneurship were outlined: hybrid digital-social entrepreneurship and for-profit digital-social entrepreneurship. Hybrid digital-social entrepreneurship was where businesses were registered as NGOs/third sector organisations due to the lack of sufficient formal social enterprise framework in each country, whereas for-profit digital-social entrepreneurship was where businesses were registered as traditional for-profit organisations. This distinction is important as it highlights the importance of the legislation in supporting digital-social entrepreneurship, and each typography of digital-social entrepreneurship had different institutional and economic barriers (discussed in Chapter 7).

Young DSEs in Kosovo and Slovenia were primarily intrinsically motivated, being driven down this path by a desire to gain autonomy and independence, enact their personal values and create social change. Young people in both countries were attracted to the autonomy and independence that entrepreneurship offers, however, Kosovan youth were more attracted to the autonomy of entrepreneurship as they felt they did not have that working within formal institutions, whilst Slovenian youth were more attracted to the idea of independence and being their own boss. When discussing personal values and social change, young DSEs in Kosovo are motivated by enacting social change locally, whilst Slovenian young DSEs had a more 'global' view of enacting social value. This is because young DSEs in Kosovo were driven by challenges that personally affected them in Kosovo, whilst Slovenian young DSEs were driven by broader global challenges, linking into broad frameworks such as the UN SDGs.

When discussing barriers for digital-social entrepreneurship, age and gender were the biggest 'micro' barriers faced by participants, as they impacted the 'legitimacy' of the young DSEs. Age was a significant barrier as young entrepreneurs were perceived as less competent, experienced, and trustworthy, whilst gender was a barrier as entrepreneurship was typically considered to be a 'masculine' activity and young women were perceived as not knowledgeable or competent enough to be running their own business (where age and gender were a double-edged sword). These issues were present in both countries, where ageism and misogyny were considered to be central components of the 'Western Balkan' experience and business environment by the young DSEs. For young people in Kosovo, the lack of international recognition impacted their international mobility (and thus opportunity recognition and participation), whilst the 1990s war and perceived political instability of the country meant that doing business in Kosovo was seen as unwise. This led to participants either omitting the fact they were from Kosovo, only doing business in Kosovo or the broader Western Balkans or planning to move to the EU or USA in order to move away from the negative stereotypes associated with being a Kosovan entrepreneur.

Chapter 6: I'm 100% Self-Educated, Because You Have To Be": Entrepreneurial Ecosystem, Education and Extracurricular Activities

6.1. Introduction

Entrepreneurs do not exist in a vacuum, they are nurtured and supported by an entire 'ecosystem' of actors and organisations. In Chapter 3, the literature surrounding entrepreneurial ecosystems was discussed, with Isenberg (2010)'s ecosystem model framing the presentation of the findings over Chapter 6 and 7.

Chapter 6 will discuss the meso-level factors of the entrepreneurial ecosystem that influence entrepreneurship, namely, the relevant human capital facilitators and supporting actors (entrepreneurial organisations) which support young DSEs. This includes the formal and informal education system and its perceived impact on young DSEs, and well as exploring the role of extracurricular activities and training activities on young people's experience of digital-social entrepreneurship. It seeks to address RQ3 "*what are the current support arrangements (e.g., training, mentorship, etc.) for developing youth DSEs in Kosovo and Slovenia, and how do they experience them?*". This chapter is structured as follows: the role of the education system and challenges of quality and preparedness for entrepreneurship (or lack thereof), the role of extracurriculars and international mobility, and the key 'support' actors in the entrepreneurial ecosystem and the support they provide.

6.2. The Education System

When we think about human capital, we think about the varying knowledge and skills that people have that contribute to their 'economic value', whether that be in the wage that they command (Becker 1964) or in their role in society. These knowledge and skills are developed both formally and informally: formally through education institutions and training programs, and informally through extracurricular activities, international mobility and other programs which provide young people with a wealth of opportunities to enhance their skillset and expand their thinking. Whilst education is seen to boost entrepreneurial intentions and develop entrepreneurial skills, DSE's in both countries recurrently highlighted the shortcomings of the education system as being a significant challenge for their

entrepreneurship, due to the outdated business education and lack of entrepreneurship education and the lack of practical training.

6.2.1. Outdated Curriculum and Lack of Entrepreneurial Training

One of the key discussion points with DSE's in Kosovo was the outdatedness of the curriculum at secondary, tertiary, and higher education levels. This has been noted over the past decade by various commentators (Benedek 2010; Rexhaj and Pupovci 2015; Islami 2018; Saliu and Bicaj 2022), who discussed issues with the outdatedness of textbooks, technologies and pedagogy used by teachers in Kosovo. One DSE explained how:

“what we learn at the University, I don't know if it's the same with other countries, but in Kosovo especially, everything I have learned about management is from the eighties, which is, you know, not relevant. I've had a lot of people talk about the University and everybody that comes here, like the students, most of them, let's say drop out of university, because they see it as a waste of time. When they go outside, they see that what they have. But it's doesn't teach what it is required in the job market” (Luljeta, Female, DSE, Kosovo).

This DSE then went on to discuss the issues this led to in their 'working life', where:

“and I was in the top 3 of my class, but when I went out and got my first internship. I felt like I didn't know anything. I mean, I don't think you can learn everything at the university, but at least you should be prepared enough to have like a confidence that what you're doing is right. So, if I struggled, imagine what it must be like for the other people that really didn't do well in school” (Luljeta, Female, DSE, Kosovo).

The issue with 'outdatedness' was expressed by another DSE, who highlighted how *“starting from the professors, the teachers, they're not competent enough and the materials are very outdated. I would say that what we learn in school, the programs are very outdated, and they are not very efficient”* (Agron, Male, DSE, Kosovo). Kosovo's outdated education system is a symbol for its status as a 'transition economy', a country still in the process of shifting from socialist to capitalist in the approach to economic management (and the way society is organised). For one DSE, whose father was educated during the Yugoslav period at the University of Prishtina, explained that:

“I would say there needs to be so much change in this institution to move with the times because even during my primary education and high school education, I have the same

modules my Dad had. You know, when he was in primary and high school, the same goes to the higher education, like BA degree or master's degree in the public universities. They have the same modules, the same system as you know, in Yugoslavia. So, nothing that worked back then works now" (Sihana, Female, DSE, Kosovo).

Many of Kosovo's young people are thus prepared to work under a socialist model, despite the fact that that it no longer informs the economic structure of the country – leaving young people underprepared for the working world, with higher competition for less jobs (Benedek 2010). This not only underprepares people for entering the formal labour market, such as working in public or private sector roles, but also leaves them underprepared for entrepreneurship – the business curriculum they learn is reflective of business activity under socialism, which does not reflect the current business environment.

When thinking about what 'competence' means for entrepreneurship, 'entrepreneurial competence' refers to the 'set of knowledge, skills, and beliefs that help individuals cope more efficiently with the increasing globalisation, uncertainty, and complexity of the world' (Gibb 2002; Lackéus 2015). However, the outdatedness of the curriculum in Kosovo impacts the competence of workers available for start-up's, particularly in high-skill domains such as digital-social enterprises, where another DSE explained that *"the education system here is very low quality, and it's one of our main problems, and that is why we can't produce competent people. And I would say that it's one of the main sectors of our society that needs a major improvement"* (Agron, Male, DSE, Kosovo). Educational institutions are supposed to provide young people with the skills and knowledge required to succeed in the workforce (Blenker et al 2011), such as technical skills needed for digital-social entrepreneurship. However, many young people are not able to accumulate those skills due to poor teaching quality – with one DSE discussing how:

"in the university, for example, I was a student there and there were some topics, for example, technology in business and what we learned was, for example, how to switch on the computer so you don't need that. You cannot get a job when you finish that because you didn't learn anything, to be honest" (Bardhyll, Male, DSE, Kosovo).

When thinking about what poor teaching quality means to young people these days, there are many discussions about technological advancements and adaptations in the classroom – with young people being digitally native and more likely to require 'digital' in their future work, it's important that teachers are innovative enough to adopt these new technologies. However, one frustration expressed by young people in Kosovo was the lack of technological advancements

in the classroom, where, such as discussed by Bardhyll, teachers were unable to even switch on a computer. Another DSE expressed the importance for Kosovo's education system to modernize in line with European standards, discussing how:

"we really must do something very fast on getting innovative education systems up and running within the country because every generation is smart, and if the teacher teaching them business is telling this generation the same thing as 2 years ago, and the students just can pop up on Chat GPT and answer the questions, or just watch YouTube tutorials on the same topic, and it's usually just way more correct. So, with having all of this in mind, students get frustrated, and students lose motivation if they don't feel they are being challenged in a quality way" (Iilir, Male, DSE, Kosovo).

This frustration was expressed in relation to teaching on business curriculums, where Saliu and Bicaj (2022) further highlight this lack of 'digital literacy' and competence in business curriculum in Kosovo – finding that only Education and Natural Science programs in Kosovo provide any digital competence training for students. This leaves students without the practical skills required for entrepreneurship, and for many, underprepared for the labour market.

Comparatively, in Slovenia, the education system was seen in a more positive light, where the curriculum system was not considered to be as outdated as that in Kosovo, and business and entrepreneurship were growing in prominence across curricula. One DSE, who had studied in both Slovenia and England, discussed how:

"I think the formal education here, I mean, it's really good in terms of what I've heard objectively and what I've seen compared to some people in England, I mean, comparing the education systems. I don't know how much it actually helps or not, but I've realised that people here in Slovenia are way more generally educated because we have to have like we have 13-16 subjects every year in high school" (Anton, Male, DSE, Slovenia).

Although this does not directly relate to preparedness for entrepreneurship, this participant highlights how provides a high level of general education to young people. The ability to undertake 13-16 subjects per year provides a broad general level of knowledge, whilst also preparing young people with the soft skills such as time management to manage this, which are vital for entrepreneurship. In relation to business and entrepreneurship education, multiple participants highlighted the growing presence of business and entrepreneurship education system in the country – albeit it being in its infancy. One DSE discussed how:

“At university, I guess we had one subject that was kind of with marketing and like doing some field studies, but it wasn't really, I don't think it was like the best, but I did actually do one course which was which was called entrepreneurship and it was really great and like the team, the professor was really good and we were also like working on our own projects and on group projects and I've learned a lot about entrepreneurship at that time and it was also a time in my life it was like actually the first year of university that I was like, always whenever I would see there's like an event happening about entrepreneurship” (Barbara, Female, DSE, Slovenia).

On a similar note, another DSE explained how *“I would say that we learn a lot in school, but not everything that we need for the for the entrepreneurship. But there are some workshops for enterprises who you can access and gain those skills” (Branislav, Male, DSE, Slovenia).* This highlights that whilst in Slovenia, the education system provides a broad curriculum, and there are some pockets of training provided for entrepreneurship, this is still in its infancy. Whilst there was a common consensus across both countries about the inadequacy of the education system for supporting and encouraging entrepreneurship (Gribben and 2018; Hashi and Krasniqi 2011), one Slovenian participant summarised that *“I just don't think our education really education system really encourages entrepreneurship” (Alfonz, Male, DSE, Slovenia).* Another Slovenian participant highlighted how:

“none of these schools was really trying to promote entrepreneurship in a way of either having any kind of subjects related to entrepreneurship. There were none as far as I know not even how it is called, like the activities after school. I don't think there were any of those and not even like some kind of host lecturers that would come and talk about it” (Alfonz, Male, Entrepreneur, Slovenia).

Across both case sites, participants expressed frustration at the state of the higher education system and its inability to prepare young people for entrepreneurship. Participants highlighted a variety of reasons for this, stemming from a lack of experience of entrepreneurship in teaching staff, a lack of understanding of how non-business programs can teach or encourage entrepreneurialism and a culture that was critical of entrepreneurship.

In Kosovo, one of the supporting actors (a policymaker in the field of entrepreneurship policy), when discussing the higher education system, explained how *“we have universities that are providing an entrepreneurship program and so on, but this is not fully understood by the universities, and it needs to be improved. It must be obligatory.” (Driton, Male, Policymaker, Kosovo).* The lack of provision is not from a lack of demand for entrepreneurship education in the higher education system in Kosovo, where another stakeholder (a facilitator at a business

incubator) explains that *“even though they are not presented with the same opportunities as people from outside, of course, we definitely lack more opportunities in many aspects, but I see a high motivation, especially in the youth, regarding this subject”* (Agnesa, Female, Incubator Staff, Kosovo). From the youth DSE perspective, one participant enrolled in the Business programme at University of Prishtina explained how:

“university never will inspire you to do things, it will just teach you how things work, and they will teach you to be an employee. The university was not so supportive, it was supportive on the experimental side, when you they allow you to do things in the lab, to do things on your own, but all the things are to be an employee, but when I said I wanted to start my own business, they were not supportive for you as a person – it isn’t seen as a formal vocation” (Zamir, Male, DSE, Kosovo).

There is ongoing scholarly debate about the role and aims of higher education institutions in relation to employability, where higher education institutions around the world are becoming more marketized and thus more aligned with meeting the demands of the market (such as with soft skill training and growing emphasis on employability) as opposed to knowledge exchange (Bell 2009; European Commission 2006). For the young entrepreneurs participating in this study, many highlighted their own frustrations at the lack of alignment to meeting the demands of the market – the limited employability and soft skills training they received. This is highlighted by one participant, who summarises that *“I don’t think education in Slovenia is very practical, and even when it gets practical, it’s not practical in the regard of encouraging entrepreneurship”* (Irena, Female, DSE, Slovenia). For students outside of business programmes (where entrepreneurship is more likely to be address in the curriculum), students in both countries were frustrated at the lack of entrepreneurship training and employability support. One young Kosovan DSE, who studied animation, highlighted how:

“I remember a particular time when I was still in my bachelor's degree, and I went to my professor and asked him if it could give me advice on like quoting and pricing and estimating my business. And he was like, no, I cannot do that. Why do you ask me that? I was in graphic design bachelor’s degree in University of Pristina. I could say 95% of the professors only focus on the concept and the theory of things, not even in the technical side. So, there’s nothing about how to pitch your presentation, those stuff were never mentioned. And I know that I’ve learned way more in a six-month internship that I had then in my university” (Nora, Female, DSE, Kosovo).

This frustration was echoed by a young Slovenian DSE, who studied Social Pedagogy, who discussed how:

“My studies in Social Pedagogy gave me really a lot, I would never go to another college or anything like that because it was really very insightful, it was a very powerful programme, it was really supporting me in a way to reflect on what I want to do and how will I achieve, but it was always the connotation of, well, the field that you choose, it's not made for profit. It's for helping people. So, we were never really encouraged to speak about businesses, or you know, we just have to help people and because we were across the street from the Faculty of Economics, and they always said if you are here for the money, just go across the street” (Ana, Female, DSE, Slovenia).

This highlights how in both country contexts, the young DSEs expectations of higher education were for support in employability and entrepreneurialism, which aligns with current debates surrounding neoliberalism and higher education, and what that means for students expectations of a university degree (Olssen and Peters 2005; Cannella and Koro-Ljungberg 2017; Mintz 2021). This led to a feeling of being unsupported amongst young DSEs, because they were considered to be ‘breaking the mould’ of the typical career path expected of them (which aligns with further discussions in Chapter 7 surrounding cultural attitudes to entrepreneurship). Many participants discussed how they felt the higher education system prepares them for public sector work, and anyone who deviates away from this field is unprepared and unsupported by the institution. One participant discussed how they had dropped out of their studies to pursue entrepreneurship, summarising that:

“the school environment, at least the place I studied, was just trying to destroy what I have and trying to change my way of doing things rather than helping me out on the way. Because the formal education does not foresee people being out of the system. And when they see you are out of the system. It's almost the same as you have bad grades or something. They treat you in the same way” (Slavko, Male, DSE, Slovenia).

It is unclear why higher education facilities are less supportive of students pursuing entrepreneurship than they are of those entering formal employment, whether it be because of the measurement of student success post-graduation is affected by entrepreneurship or due to a lack of a culture of entrepreneurship in the institution. One assumption is that there is little value seen in ‘entrepreneurship skills’ from a higher education perspective, as many educators do not associate them with general employability. One stakeholder (a policymaker in youth and education) discussed how:

“At the university level, it is only if you study economics or finances or something like that, then you have special entrepreneurial courses you can choose. The thing is, what we miss and what

I have fought for some time is that all young people should get access to entrepreneurial knowledge, not to necessarily be an entrepreneur at the end, but just to start thinking in entrepreneurial ways. We wanted these topics to get in the curriculum in high school and university, but we didn't manage to do this because they said that this is cool, but this is not business or another real subject. It's not business studies though, it's thinking differently, creative thinking, design thinking and things like that, the basic things of entrepreneurship. They just didn't see the value of it" (Ana, Female, Policymaker, Slovenia).

This ties in with the debates surrounding the aims of education, where in Slovenia, it appeared that students (and policymakers such as Ana) expected the education system to also focus on employability and soft skills training, whilst those in the education system still followed more a more traditional understanding of the role of education institutions in their provision of 'traditional' knowledge. This links to the following section, which further discusses the expectations of students from the higher education system, and its lack of vocational training to aid in their preparedness for entrepreneurship.

6.2.2. Entrepreneurship Education

Young DSEs in Kosovo and Slovenia both expressed the lack of 'practical' training in the formal education system and felt like this negatively impacted their initial entrepreneurial competences due to lacking the initial skills and confidence. In both countries, participants felt that they were being trained for the private sector, with very little emphasis on training young people for entrepreneurship. When further probing participants on how training for the private sector differed from training for entrepreneurship, it stemmed down to not being taught the 'life skills' required for entrepreneurship. This idea that there was no 'practical training' for entrepreneurship came from multiple participants, who outlined an expectation that the education system should provide them with the practical skills required for entrepreneurship (such as bookkeeping, team management). They discussed how:

"We don't get taught how to deal with taxes? Work with money. How to open your own company? Maybe something like that, or if you don't finish and if you don't get employed in educational jobs like if you're not a teacher if you're not working on a project. You don't really get much left than that, so I was missing a little bit more into that, just, if you're not, if you don't want to stay in those fields, then it's like, okay, you're on your own" (Marija, Female, Entrepreneur, Slovenia).

Another participant explained how *“the university prepared me for the technical side or my formal education, but the practical education all came from work and from my other experiences. So, it was this, I know how this thing works in theory, but I have no idea what steps I should take first”* (Ndrita, Female, DSE, Kosovo). The practical skills mentioned by both participants, such as finance, law or the first steps of starting a business are important entrepreneurial competences, and higher education should be a facilitator for developing these entrepreneurial competences (Verheul et al 2002). However, in both Kosovo and Slovenia, the facilitation of these practical skills by higher education institutions is weak, as highlighted by participants and in previous studies (Lajqi et al 2019; Potocan et al 2016). One stakeholder (a policymaker) highlighted that this was due to disconnect between university and industry, explaining how:

“I must blame the university, on the other hand, again because sometimes we must hire people who have not or are not studying something relevant... the university and industry do not have a good collaboration. We are not good in terms of the education system and the university is not performing well because those graduating into the labour market do not fulfil the market needs, and it takes time. If we do not improve the education system, if we do not have a strong collaboration with the university and industry, in increasing salaries and improving situations” (Agnesa, Female, DSE, Kosovo).

The lack of interlinkages between university and industry not only contribute to a skills gap for those entering the workforce, but also for those young people pursuing entrepreneurship – as industry-relations are important for keeping up to date with current trends and technologies, as well as for networking for young entrepreneurs. The lack of interlinkages in Kosovo was highlighted by a policymaker, who explained how

“I think collaboration is not at a good level and we need to have a strong collaboration. We need to have strong university industry collaboration. Unfortunately, industry complains that universities do not collaborate with them, and so on. On the other hand, the University of Pristina is not performing well in terms of contributing to research and development to research activities because I think they must increase knowledge creation.” (Driton, Male, Policymaker, Kosovo)

This demonstrates the weak relationship between universities and industry, in which the universities in Kosovo are described as being the weak link within the ecosystem.

One DSE, when providing advice to future young entrepreneurs, explained that *“if anybody would ask me now, if they already know that they want to go in entrepreneurial waters and*

*they're like 18. I always tell them do it. **** university. It doesn't help. Nobody cares"* (Anton, Male, DSE, Slovenia). This emphasises the frustration that young entrepreneurs have with the current system, and the lack of value that a higher education degree appears to signal in terms of a person's ability to do entrepreneurship. Another participant highlighted that:

"I think the case with Kosovo during the last 20 years is that business schools were the ones that had the most people trying or thinking of registering to study with them, but I am sure that at least 50% of them didn't have a clue that when you finish the Business School, it doesn't mean that you will be a businessman, or entrepreneur or something else" (Afrim, Male, DSE, Kosovo).

This highlights a perception that many people study business with the intention of being an entrepreneur, but with the end goal of working as an employee – which appeared to be seen negatively by the participant. Many scholars discuss the importance of practical training for encouraging and developing entrepreneurship amongst students, whether this be through tailored practice-based learning programmes (Hynes et al 2011) or through embedding enterprise skills within the pedagogical design of higher education curriculum across all disciplines (Gibson and Tavlaridis 2018). Whilst the higher education institutions in both countries provide the technical and theoretical training for students, they typically do not provide the 'practical' application for these skills – meaning the starting stages of entrepreneurship are often more difficult. The lack of support that young people get from higher education institutions pushes them to seek support elsewhere, such as from extracurricular activities, internships, and other places of specialist support.

6.3. Non-Formal Training and International Mobility

Human capital is not just accumulated through formal education, but also through work experience and informal education and training provision (Becker, 1962). The lack of entrepreneurship training opportunities in the formal education system was discussed in Section 6.2.2., where many of the participants expressed how their education was primarily theoretical, with little ability to test their knowledge in the 'real world'. Many participants took it upon themselves to pursue 'extracurricular' activities in order to develop their soft skills, their networks, and gain vital experience to help them with their entrepreneurship. This extracurricular engagement was either done through volunteering and training programmes with NGOs, participation in international exchanges and other international mobility and networking opportunities.

6.3.1. The Role of Extracurricular Activities and NGOs as 'Support' Actors

Engagement in extracurricular activities is considered to be one of the best ways for young people to develop their soft skills, more so than formal education, as it involves stepping outside of a comfort zone and taking on more responsibilities within the local community. In both countries, participants highlighted the importance of voluntary work in developing their competences for digital-social entrepreneurship, whether this be through skills training, internships, or networking. One participant explained their rationale for volunteering as being that *“the idea of it was to go beyond the doorstep in in a sense. So, these activities actually help more than just basic education because it's difficult to differentiate now if you only have a good education, I think you need another thing that makes you special”* (Jetmir, Male, Entrepreneur, Kosovo). In the Kosovan context, this highlights the role of extracurricular activities in developing competences, in light of previous discussions surrounding the outdated education system. This also highlights an ongoing broader discussion surrounding the returns to education under the neoliberal conditions in which many of these young people are operating – university degrees are not the signallers of skill they once were, which means young people need to do more to appear 'special' and stand out (Wolf, 2004).

This perspective was echoed in both contexts – where participants discussed their involvement in unpaid internship programmes in order to develop their entrepreneurial competences. They commonly expressed feeling let down by the lack of 'practical' training opportunities for entrepreneurship in the formal education system (such as simulation programmes and other creative pedagogy), so they sought out opportunities to gain practical experience elsewhere. One DSE explained how:

“I worked for free for a half year, I just wanted to join this team so bad that I decided to be there, for whatever it takes, and I was like, if you're going to teach me a lot of business, I can work for free, so that that's actually how it started. And I'm still very happy I did it. Just go there, do it for free for one month, prove yourselves and they they're going to employ you” (Enej, Male, DSE, Slovenia).

The willingness to work unpaid for six months suggests an awareness of the skills gap that the formal education system leaves for young people, and a need to develop the skills required through working for another start-up in order to develop their own entrepreneurial skills. Unpaid internships were also discussed by another DSE, who explained that:

“I just knew that my design skills weren't that good. I felt like I knew that I needed to go into an internship, even without payment, and in that time that this was in 2016 and I had joined a motion design course, and the lecturer had an animation studio and I said that, you know, after I finish the course, I have capacity, but I need to learn more stuff. So can I join your studio and he was like, yeah, I like you. I like your communication skills especially. But like, I have no budget to hire an intern now. I don't even have a project and I said OK, that's no problem. I don't want any payment. I know that I just want to learn. And it really helped me like seeing it. Like every studio and stuff maybe has its flaws, but for me it was one of my great learning experiences” (Nora, Female, DSE, Kosovo).

However, whilst on the surface this is a demonstration of how far young people can be willing to go to develop the skills required for entrepreneurship, working unpaid for six months is inaccessible for most young people and demonstrates a system that exploits young people's willingness to develop practical experience (Brook et al 2022; Roman and Paraschiv 2019). This suggests a lack of availability of paid internships and work experience for young people (which from the perspective of participants, should be facilitated by higher education institutions and youth centres), highlighting a weakness in the support mechanisms available for young people to develop their entrepreneurship skills (Antonci, et al., 2005; Avdullahi, et al., 2022).

In the Slovenian context, participants spoke about their engagement with paid internship programmes, such as the Erasmus+ internships and training programmes available to young people across Europe. These programmes are designed to increase the employability and entrepreneurial skills of young people and are fully funded for up to a yearlong period. Internships are often undertaken with youth organisations in other countries, on a project basis, where young people will support on project management and teaching-related projects to develop their own skillsets. Whilst both Kosovo and Slovenia both have involvement with the Erasmus+ programme, the levels of engagement differ – Slovenia is a member of the Erasmus+ programme, whilst Kosovo is a ‘third country not associated to the Programme’ (European Commission 2019). This means that Slovenian youth have full access to all Erasmus+ opportunities, whilst Kosovan youth have very limited opportunities, only relating to certain ‘Actions of the Programme’. This means that the availability of paid internship programmes is much larger for Slovenian youth, giving them more opportunities to develop their competences and be compensated for their time learning. One Slovenian DSE described the value of an Erasmus+ internship for boosting their entrepreneurial skills, explaining that:

“I went on an Erasmus internship this last year, so I could have a little bit of broader perspective of how to actually market my business and sell my services as a biology student, because let's face it, in biology at university, most of it it's voluntary, the work you do is volunteering and that kind of sucks” (Marija, Female, DSE, Slovenia).

Another DSE described their participation in an international volunteering and social impact creation project (similar to an Erasmus+ project), where they were required to work in international teams to develop a ‘impact-business’ to tackle a social challenge that they were volunteering in. They explained that:

“everything that I did, yeah, it helped me develop some competences or some experiences and also you connect with other people on the same wavelength as you, right? And I think this network then helps you further build your career and boost, and actually boosts it in the long term, right” (Bojan, Male, DSE, Slovenia).

Where DSE's have discussed the benefits of the Erasmus+ internship schemes and similar schemes available to EU youth, this highlights the discrepancy in opportunities available to young people in Kosovo and Slovenia. Young DSEs in Slovenia have access to more international training opportunities than Kosovan youth due to their EU membership, which leaves Kosovan youth less able to lean on these opportunities for skills development.

The discussion of impact and the motivations behind it were discussed by DSE from both countries, who when discussing their experiences volunteering with NGOs, either in their country or internationally, highlighted how engaging in this work boosted their interest in working to create social impact through their ventures. One DSE explained how:

“it helped me a lot because it expanded my network. I was more open to talking with different people and to see their point of view, and also to understand their problems, and to see how can I help them in any form? So, it was very helpful, and made me want to make this social change in my business” (Elira, Female, DSE, Kosovo).

Volunteering in these situations and engaging in intercultural dialogues provides people with an insight to challenges that they may not encounter or be aware of in their daily lives, so the ability to participate in these volunteering opportunities is an important tool for developing their human capital. Another DSE described their experience volunteering in the local division of an NGO, where they were tasked to develop a:

“really good social impact project and try to use your brains to do some impact there. In some sense it's a project where you must self-organise and create, you have some kind of deadlines and stuff, but you are mostly led to yourself, so you don't have a boss per say, but you need to do the things that you need to do. So, in that in that kind of view, it helped me just for the organisational part or how to how to produce something, like the financial stuff and everything else I needed to know to run my own business that I had never touched it in my college years” (Mirko, Male, DSE, Slovenia).

This demonstrates the role that these opportunities have not only in developing social awareness, but other entrepreneurial competences, such as leadership skills and networking.

One DSE explained how volunteering allowed them to engage with their future ‘volunteers’ more, and gave them the leadership skills and networking skills required to run their business because:

“all three of us were volunteering through college, and right now when we will meet volunteers, we could a bit better understand what they are dealing with, and so on, and it gave us some really good connections and helped us take charge, like, my mentor from the volunteer work was somebody that can help us right now with something that we are doing” (Katica, Female, DSE, Slovenia).

Extracurricular activities gave participants the opportunity to develop some of the entrepreneurial competences required for their business that are unable to be taught in the classroom – providing them with opportunities to practice these skills before launching their own business. Whilst volunteering was important for developing their social awareness, it was also cited as being valuable for developing their soft skills. One DSE explained the skills they gained through volunteering as being:

“really just knowing how to present things, knowing how to handle stress, knowing how to behave in front of people, being interesting, getting stuff going. That's really helpful because entrepreneurship is a lot about people, really not, not as much about other things than it is about people. So, if you know people, you can know how to achieve different things” (Anton, Male, DSE, Slovenia).

When discussing the entrepreneurial ecosystem, the category of ‘support’ involves those providing training and learning opportunities to the young DSEs. Whilst primarily, this would be formal education and incubators and accelerators, NGOs play a key role in

specifically supporting young entrepreneurs, where the primary 'actors' in this study were international donor organisations and youth-oriented NGOs (who typically operated with international donor funds). The presence of international donors such as UNDP and UNICEF were more prominent in Kosovo (due to the post-conflict reconstruction discussed in Chapter 3), whilst for Slovenia, EU funded projects through youth-oriented NGOs were significant supporting actors for young entrepreneurs. Young entrepreneurs in Kosovo were more likely to discuss support from other supporting actors, whilst in Slovenia, due to the widespread presence of business incubators (all across the country, as opposed to just in the capital like in Kosovo), there were very few discussions about non-incubator support mechanisms in place. In Kosovo, a DSE highlighted how vivid and active civil society was in nurturing youth digital-social entrepreneurship, explaining how:

"there are so many places in Kosovo with that offer these resources, which I really think it's something that we should be happy about because I know how hard it is for people to find free resources, you know. So, I think this is a great advantage for us especially being a country with a very high number of young people. And maybe this is also the reason why young people turn to opening their startups or, you know, so much interest in social tech as well. It's because of the resources that are being offered from the non-for-profit sector" (Sihana, Female, DSE, Kosovo).

This highlights that although there are limited opportunities through international programmes such as Erasmus+, civil society and the NGOs have stepped up to mitigate this in some capacity in order to provide young people with these opportunities. This DSE mentions 'social tech' as being a key priority for the NGO sector (which ties into this central focus on digital-social entrepreneurship and its relevance for youth), and goes on to explain how:

"a good thing I would say is that in Kosovo, the civil society or the non-for-profit sector is very vivid. So especially on the role resource building and trainings and workshops and developing know how. It's very vivid. So, you have so many organizations that offer training for entrepreneurship, for legal advice for. I don't know many different trainings for tech as well, be it from design to actually building software and everything. So, I would say that is the good side that it is offering all of these extra resources that are very useful for our young generation, which the education system, the public education system does not offer" (Sihana, Female, DSE, Kosovo).

The emphasis on training being provided for free is important, as a significant barrier to support for many young entrepreneurs is the cost of support programmes and further training.

Many of the 'free' programs provided by local NGOs are funded by international donors, such as UNICEF and USAID, who have an emphasis on developing youth

employability and entrepreneurialism as a part of their development agenda. For example, one young entrepreneur described how *“we raised some like €1000 or something like that back then from UNICEF innovation, we were the first start up that was involved with it, it was basically part of one of these UNICEF Innovations Labs”* (Flamur, Male, Entrepreneur, Kosovo). The support from USAID was considered an important resource for young entrepreneurs, with one young entrepreneur explaining how USAID played the ‘biggest’ role in their business success, where *“USAID and the US Embassy had the biggest role because they were always there to support our ideas. You know, when we were publishing our ideas, we have clear KPIs that we want to achieve with everything, every activity, and they are the only ones that trust that our idea and the results were amazing”* (Iilir, Male, DSE, Kosovo). Another DSE explained the support they received was:

“from an organization called Helvetas, we have done three projects with them, and it was quite good. Most of the support that we needed was financial support, because we had 2 projects with them, and that has helped us like get the attention of a lot of people, and also participate with a lot of companies, because you know, when you have projects with NGOs like that, from our perspective, it gets us credibility as well” (Luljeta, Female, DSE, Kosovo).

The notion that receiving support from an NGO or International Donor gives a young DSE ‘credibility’ for their digital-social entrepreneurship is important to note, as many young entrepreneurs experience issues with being seen as ‘credible’ by private investors. Being ‘co-signed’ by an NGO is seen as a status symbol of being a ‘social business’, due to the lack of legal status for social enterprise and discussions surrounding greenwashing of business in Kosovo.

For Slovenian young entrepreneurs that discussed other supporting actors, the key ‘actor’ they mentioned was an initiative called the ‘Social Impact Award’, which is a large community of young social entrepreneurs from across over 25 countries around the world. Social Impact Award is co-funded by the European Union, and provides a series of local training opportunities as well as financial awards and competitions for young social impact entrepreneurs to participate in. One DSE highlighted how:

“we applied for Social Impact Award. We won and actually then we got a confirmation, it’s a good idea you need a name, so we got like €1500 so it’s like, it is something... then also like I got free offices, actually I don’t have to pay here in Social Impact Hub and actually that’s a lot of money if you start counting how much you would need to pay for a table, I have a free membership for one year... Like when you’re starting sometimes you can be lonely and with those programmes, you’re not alone. It’s like a nest and you have a lot of friends, co-workers from other, like small young companies. And actually, you can talk, and you can see you’re not

alone and all of them are facing similar challenges at the beginning” (Jerneja, Female, DSE, Slovenia).

The Social Impact Award was partnered with Impact Hub Ljubljana – a business incubator / youth-oriented NGO that provides training, networking, and co-working opportunities for young ‘impact entrepreneurs’ – and the initiative was funded by the EU. The provision of this level of ‘wrap-around’ support for the young entrepreneur was seen as outweighing the ‘smaller’ grant they received from winning the award – with the value being seen in the facilities being provided (such as office space and networking).

Alongside the Social Impact Award were discussions about the role of the ‘European Community’ in financing and co-financing projects with local NGOs. One DSE explained how:

“we are in many international programmes, involved into many international programmes, so also with that we have Norwegian Fund that can support your programme. And with Zavod Pina we are collaborating, they also offered that they also saw a great idea in my vision. So, they said, like you can come to us, we will mentor you to write a programme and you will apply to the European Solidarity Projects and you'll see how that goes. So, I think that just Europe gives a lot of opportunities for you to create your programme and your products on your own in your country. So yeah, we are relying on Europe a lot” (Ana, Female, DSE Slovenia).

This participant touches on the importance of Slovenia’s European integration for providing opportunities for young digital-social entrepreneurship, which conversely, highlights the disadvantage that Kosovan youth face due to their inability to ‘rely on Europe’ for support for these initiatives. Another DSE discussed the importance of European institutions for providing opportunities, by explaining how:

“we work with a couple of Pan-National European organizations, they're really useful for us because they study all of these proposals of laws, and then they share that knowledge with us. They organize trainings, and that can help us do our advocacy on our end, on national end with our MEPs, and so on. And that's helpful because we're still a small organization, and having someone like that, that follows all of that, kind of, you know, helps you do all the various stuff we do” (Irena, Female, DSE, Slovenia).

These opportunities, and the connectivity to European institutions, provides young entrepreneurs with extended opportunities to travel overseas (such as on the European Solidarity Projects – mid-term funded internships to work on projects), as well as access to training opportunities and networking events. This highlights both the presence of European-funded projects in Slovenia’s entrepreneurial ecosystem and the support this provides young DSEs, and the presence of UN funded programmes in Kosovo’s entrepreneurial ecosystem

and how this provides opportunities for young DSEs (Centre for Strategy and Evaluation, 2015; European Commission, 2013).

6.3.2. International Mobility and Exchanges

For many of the young people, going overseas provided them with a wealth of experience that they could not have gained in their home country. It provided them with the option to study subjects not available at home, expand their network and further develop their skills, as well as gain experience living and working in international markets. Participation in international mobility activities, such as semesters abroad, Erasmus+ programmes and other mobility programmes, is considered to increase entrepreneurial intentions and aspirations amongst young people (Roman and Paraschiv 2019; Denslow et al 2008). This is because international mobility opportunities provide cultural understanding and communication strategies which are an important competence for entrepreneurship (Jones and Oberst 2003). One DSE explained how their international education had equipped them for entrepreneurship due to the enhanced cultural understanding and 'soft skills' development it provided, discussing how:

"I grew up in Germany, studied and got a Bachelor of Engineering there, and then I worked for 4 and a half years in Detroit, Michigan in the automotive sector, and then, after 4 and a half years in the US, I came back to Kosovo. So, because of this time abroad, I had the basic skills of project management, clear communication, goal-oriented communication, etc. This was the one difference which I immediately recognized when collaborating with local teams" (Driton, Male, DSE, Kosovo).

For Slovenian participants, there was a recurring discussion about how international mobility aided young entrepreneurs in developing their entrepreneurial mindset, with one DSE explaining how:

"the biggest motivator here was actually my husband, because he didn't study in Slovenia, he studied in the US, and there's a completely different picture there, they're really motivating, they tell you, yeah, you can do anything, the American dream. So, he had this sort of drive and wish to do something on his own and then, you know, slowly I realized, yeah, OK. I don't want to work like within the system as well" (Danijela, Female, DSE, Slovenia).

This highlights the difference in mindset perceived by the participant, where the US is seen as fostering a more entrepreneurial culture whereas in Slovenia, there was a perception of entrepreneurship not being as encouraged due to it not being within the constraints of the

current 'system' (Dimovski & Znidarsic, 2004; Talić & Đukić, 2021). Many participants from Slovenia explained that this derived from a lack of entrepreneurial mindset or culture in Slovenia, deriving from Yugoslav times where entrepreneurship was frowned upon – in which this legacy was still embedded into the education systems today. Another DSE expressed how it was only due to international mobility that they decided to pursue entrepreneurship, highlighting how:

“before I started my business, I wasn't even that interested because to be honest, like when I was in schooling, I was like okay, I will finish at the faculty, and I will go find a job. So having my own company wasn't an option for me at the time, but then once I went abroad and was like, oh my God, I can actually start something myself, and then once we returned in 2020, we started searching for additional knowledge, and when you start searching, you can get a lot like how to pitch, how to create a business plan. So, going away was a very stimulative environment for me” (Jerneja, Female, DSE, Slovenia).

Additionally, international mobility provides young people with perspective about societal challenges outside of their home country, making them more socially conscious and aware of big global challenges – and thus, more likely to incorporate tackling these social challenges into their business ethos (Bodolica et al 2021). For example, one DSE discusses their engagement in an international mobility programme under Erasmus+, explaining that:

“I'm also like taking part a lot of in this youth exchanges, for example, like one week length and you can learn so much from it because they're like different topics and you can like find something that you're interested in, for example. On Friday, I'm leaving for Greece to go on a female entrepreneurship course and sustainability, and I'll speak to all these people from across Europe about what sustainability means to them and their issues” (Barbara, Female, DSE, Slovenia).

The ability to travel internationally to pursue these opportunities was not equal – with young people from Kosovo facing barriers to travel due to a lack of visa liberalisation, and the high cost of acquiring the visas in the first place. One supporting actor (a facilitator at an incubator) described this situation as:

“the first struggle, the visa, it is a lot of money up to €200, just for the visa, and it is a long process of waiting. Sometimes you miss out on the deadlines and everything because of the visa, or you cannot attend, you end up losing the money and not having the professional training that you want to attend. And in some of the cases, if you don't have a scholarship. and you want to go and study on your own finances. I know for Germany in my case, if I want you to go ahead, I had to have €10,000 so that I could just enter Germany. So, this is the first struggle it's hard

for the families in Kosovo to have €10,000 to support that their kids, imagine if they have 2 or 3 kids who want to study abroad, if you have to have plan €30,000” (Agnesa, Female, Incubator Staff, Kosovo).

The lack of visa liberalisation (which has since come in in January 2024, discussed further in Chapter 7) not only acted as a barrier for those seeking to study overseas, due to the high costs, but for those seeking to eventually migrate overseas for work – or travel for short-term projects and training activities. This results in many young people being ‘stuck’ in Kosovo, and only able to engage with supporting actors in the local entrepreneurial ecosystem, and only accessing local opportunities.

6.4. Incubators and Accelerators

6.4.1. Incubators

In both Kosovo and Slovenia, business incubators were highlighted as being the first point of call and most important supporting actor for their digital-social entrepreneurship. Business incubators act as support organisations for young entrepreneurs, where many of the young entrepreneurs highlighting the importance of incubators for training and learning, networking, accessing finance and understanding the regulatory framework (European Commission 2013). Business incubators are important for young entrepreneurs as they can provide them with the social capital to connect with fellow entrepreneurs and business actors, the human capital to develop their enterprise further, and the financial capital to fund their venture (Aernoudt 2004; Albort-Morant and Oghazi 2016). Incubators were seen as the most important actor in the entrepreneurial eco-system for young people, because they provided a direct point of contact to every other ‘actor’ in the eco-system – incubator staff facilitated access to government, private sector, and international finance opportunities.

In Kosovo, the main business incubators that participants had accessed or spoken about were Innovation Centre Kosovo (ICK), Venture Up (University of Prishtina) and ITP Prizren. In Slovenia, the main business incubators discussed were Impact Hub Ljubljana, University of Ljubljana Incubator and the PONI programme (available at two incubators – one in East Slovenia, one in West Slovenia). Most young entrepreneurs had positive experiences of engaging with business incubators, whilst stakeholders (including incubator staff) had mixed feelings about the support provided by business incubators, and their treatment of young entrepreneurs. Whilst most stakeholders highlighted the positive work being done by

incubators to develop the ecosystem and support young entrepreneurs, some felt that they had the potential to take advantage of young entrepreneurs naivety in terms of financing and grants. However, from the discussions with young entrepreneurs, business incubators were important for leveraging access to financial support, social capital, training and learning, and mentorship, which are the key areas that will be discussed in this section.

6.4.1.1. Financial Support

Traditionally, business incubators facilitate access to external financing and start-up grants and aid in connecting entrepreneurs to venture capital, as well as in supporting training and learning opportunities (Allen & Rahman, 1985; Aernoudt, 2004). In Kosovo, this was the case, and incubators were cited as the main access point for sourcing external financing and start-up grants – however, this was typically in the form of small grants. One young entrepreneur in Kosovo explained the value in the small grants they received, explaining how *“I know that the funding is not enough but a \$1000, \$2000 can really help you, it can push you a little bit, the funding incubators were a big part of our journey”* (Flamur, Male, Entrepreneur, Kosovo). Another Kosovan DSE explained the role of incubators and NGOs in the provision of grants, explaining that:

“The most important and famous one is just grants from either NGOs or institutions like ICK. I mean we got grants from ICK and it helped us to prototype a few ideas and even then, that's not large grants, it's small grants. Ironically, the larger grants are usually coming from the NGO sector” (Nora, Female, DSE, Kosovo).

From these discussions, it seems that many of the incubators in Kosovo provide smaller grants, to more people – as opposed to large grants to small amounts of start-up's. This is a way of incentivizing more people towards entrepreneurship, by offering small financial incentives to join Innovation Centre Kosovo (ICK) and receive small amounts of money to actualize business ideas. Whereas for the NGOs (who are typically financed by INGOs such as the UNDP), there is more competition for a smaller quantity of large grants – which leads incubators to being more accessible for starting finances, whilst NGOs provide greater capacity for scaling financing (discussed further in 6.4.2). However, whilst it could be seen as incentivizing entrepreneurship, one young entrepreneur described the continuous cycle of 'small grants' to young entrepreneurs as breeding dependency and stifling entrepreneurial spirit. The DSE explained that:

“on the other side, I can see a lot of startups and I talk with a lot of people that are startups and they are always looking for grants and always looking for incubators. And you know this cycle

is very bad because you will always look for small grants and for the next milestone. You're always in the same cycle and the incubators want you to be in the same cycle because they will win money from you, you know. They are benefiting more than you as a startup like I'm saying" (Zamir, Male, DSE, Kosovo).

This highlights both the idea that continuous small grants curb entrepreneurial resourcefulness (as they can just seek it out from the next grant round rather than trying to scale their business and be self-sufficient'), and that incubators can sometimes take advantage of young entrepreneurs lack of 'experience' running their own business.

This concern was echoed by one of the supporting actors (a facilitator at a business incubator), who highlighted concerns that other incubators were not transparent about the 'seed funding' they were providing to these young entrepreneurs and were taking advantage of their age in order to receive more funding to themselves. They explained that:

"That's something that we have just started seeing where as in the past, there was really no financial support to startups, but now these grants, they go through a huge system of other additional administrative costs and hindrances that once it gets to the startup, it gets reduced to just a couple of 100 euros. I have examples of that happening in Kosovo now, that even (business incubator), publicly they are offering like €10,000 per startup and people think that they're going to get like €10,000 euros for their idea and they join the incubator and then they only get like €1500 or €2000 because the rest of the grant gets invoiced as counselling fees and expertise from like experts and all sorts of stuff. I mean, it's not efficient in terms of support. They say that it's optional but try imagining that happening to an 18- or 19-year-old, so they probably just get whatever they are given, they will just go with the flow because they don't really have the courage to challenge the system" (Meriton, Male, Incubator Staff, Kosovo).

For many young entrepreneurs, the business incubator will be their main support network for their business – and from this quote, it highlights how young entrepreneurs will often feel pressured into going with what the incubator says due to fear of losing the support. If young entrepreneurs are being pressured into handing over a large sum of the 'start-up prize' they apply for, in a climate where there are limited other financial resources for them to access, the participant suggests that many of them will feel indebted to the incubator and like 'something is better than nothing' in regard to the support. The statement about not having 'the courage to challenge the system' further indicates to a significant power imbalance between incubator staff and young entrepreneur, and how lacking in transparency this situation appears to be.

In Slovenia, incubators were often financed by government funds (as opposed to private or NGO funds in Kosovo), and provide training, support, and grants to those engaged with them. One DSE discussed how *“a good-sized portion of my income, you know, comes indirectly from public funds, right?”* (Viljem, Male, DSE, Slovenia). Another participant discussed how:

“I actually went to ABC Acceleration, the program in Slovenia. So, I went there. I signed the contract, and I got, I think, €8,000 per year, I could spend for mentors, and that was 100% government money, and I got some really famous and good Slovenian businessmen for the mentors.” (Enej, Male, DSE, Slovenia)

The government facilitating the transfer of funds through incubator support such as that discussed by Enej provides participants with structured guidance and training in how to utilize this funding effectively, which is often a challenge for young entrepreneurs accessing finance for the first time (Anwar, et al., 2020). One DSE discussed the Slovenian Entrepreneurship Fund as a government-financed initiative to support entrepreneurs, explaining that:

“Slovenia has the what's it called the Slovenian Entrepreneurship Fund, or something like that, and they support startups, so you can apply for different either funds that you don't have to give back loans or good loans like you would get something in a bank or something? So, you can apply to those. You know, do your pitch. You do everything, so one thing is that you can get, I think, €54,000 of nonrefundable money.” (Danijela, Female, DSE, Slovenia)

The Slovenian Entrepreneurship Fund (discussed in Chapter 4's policy mapping) provides early-stage and scaling businesses with financial support and vouchers, which can be used towards incubation programmes and other training programmes (European Commission, 2023). The provision of government financial support to access incubation, in which companies can then access further funds, highlights the governments central role in supporting and financing young DSEs, in comparison to Kosovo, where private incubators and NGOs are the key source of financing.

6.4.1.2. Networking

In both countries, incubators were seen to provide networking opportunities for young DSEs, and engagement with incubators was perceived to boost social capital. Social capital is an important 'tool' in an entrepreneurs toolkit – providing the social status and network to get their ventures started, funded, and supported (Lajqi and Krasniqi 2017). In each context,

the business incubators offered co-working spaces for informal networking, formal networking activities and mentorship opportunities for those engaged in the incubation process and discounted or free access to large-scale industry events (Cope et al 2007). As discussed in Chapter 2, in post-socialist economies such as Kosovo and Slovenia, social capital is an important mechanism for facilitating entrepreneurship and circumventing institutional inefficiencies, such as weak institutional support (Arifi et al 2021; Demirguc-Kunt et al 2009). In Kosovo, one DSE explained how:

“networking is the biggest barrier, there's a lot of relationships between networks, and that's the problem. Usually, it goes through closed networks, so even if you want to participate somewhere, if you don't know anyone, and if they're not nice enough to invite you, you're out and there is nothing, no visibility in the media” (Majlinda, Female, DSE, Kosovo).

The networking opportunities that incubators in Kosovo provided were seen as one of the biggest benefits, as they provided the young entrepreneurs with visibility and credibility to society. Another DSE explained how:

“we also had a good support from ICK of course, they are a good support to us, I mean, they do not support us financially or with mentorship, or anything. They didn't do that for us, but they gave us, every time they had an event or something for networking, they invited us, and that gave us visibility in the beginning that helped us get more credibility and everything in the first month, you know” (Ilir, Male, DSE, Kosovo).

This credibility through visibility stems from the fact that Kosovo is a small country with strong community values, so approval in the broader ‘community’ – such as through these networking opportunities, signals societally that you are trustworthy as an entrepreneur to invest in. This was explained by another DSE (who had also worked as a facilitator at an incubator), that:

“I've played both roles as a supporter, as a mentor, I mean not only here, but I've also been for other startups as well. So basically, if you are part of the ecosystem, it's easier to know everyone, and if you work and network with these talented people, it's rather easy than if you don't, because you can have an idea, you can have a concept and you can have a great business, but if you don't have people who you can actually share it with or have the talent to do it, it's not that easy” (Flamur, Male, DSE, Kosovo).

A DSE explained the role that an incubator played in providing these opportunities, explaining that:

“for other investment opportunities, they are all about connections and partnerships and the people that want to do the thing that you are presenting, so it's always about the connections and international investors presentation until someone will believe what you do and if you are the right start up for them” (Zamir, Male, DSE, Kosovo).

This highlights how important building social capital is in Kosovo, both within ‘groups’ (bonding) and between ‘groups’, where young people draw from the experiences of their ‘within group’ and the resources from the ‘between groups’.

This was echoed in Slovenia, where the government funded ‘PONI’ programme (a incubation programme held in the east and west of the country) was repeatedly discussed as the strongest programme for building societal capital. One DSE explained how:

“I think more or less all the support that I ended up using or that I got throughout this time that I've been in entrepreneurship has one way or another been connected to PONI, this programme is absolutely golden. In this programme we had a lot of different lectures, talks, and different kinds of people from the industry we could connect with, that at the end of the day would say, yeah, if you need me, call me. So that's how I got a phone number to an accountant that said, sure, you know, I'll call you, I will not charge you, let's talk about this, let's talk about that, that's how I got closer. I mean through PONI, through me being in in this entrepreneur centre, let's call it, where the PONI programme was being run. I also met a guy that runs an incubator in the same building. So, I joined another incubator as well, that was more for business technical support” (Alfonz, Male, DSE, Slovenia).

Another DSE highlighted the importance of networking with fellow young entrepreneurs through the PONI programme, explaining how *“there's a lot of like, you need to know people first hand to know about some opportunities, or maybe just to finalise some business, or need a bit more contact than just going to meetings where you meet a lot of people, and sometimes you are left out when you don't have like this amazing social network” (Tadej, Male, Entrepreneur, Slovenia).* However, a DSE in Slovenia, who was part of an incubator programme in Ljubljana, expressed frustration at the ‘type’ of social capital being built at the incubator they were a part of, discussing how:

“I got a lot from my incubator, mostly what I think would be great is if there was more networking, so none of them are working on networking a lot. They're networking between the incubators and the ecosystems, but there's only a small amount of networking working with big corporations and investors, so to put you in contact with actual people doing this business, not just the ecosystem and the mentorships, but people who are actually involved in the industry, I

would really like to have this here, where we bring all these companies here, I know you're good for this, go and talk, I miss this kind of stuff. In Israel, it was only that was only meeting companies, meeting companies, meeting companies” (Mirko, Male, DSE, Slovenia).

Young entrepreneurs are likely to be connected with each other socially, prior to participation in incubation – due to having similar interests, but there are less likely to be connected to the ‘supporting actors’ required to facilitate their entrepreneurial activity. Many incubators place greater emphasis on building ‘in-house’ networking through bonding social capital, whereas many young entrepreneurs are more likely to benefit from greater emphasis on activities focused on building bridged social capital to those who hold key resources.

6.4.1.3. Training and Learning

Incubators facilitate access to additional training and learning activities not available in the formal education system – and these activities are usually designed by experienced entrepreneurs, meaning that the training is relevant to the market and context in which the young entrepreneurs are trying to enter. In both contexts, the training and learning opportunities provided by the incubators were highlighted as being strong drawing points to join the business incubator. However, it was repeatedly highlighted in the Slovenian context how important incubators were for providing training and learning on social and impact entrepreneurship – a point which was not discussed in the Kosovan context. For the Kosovan context, it was primarily traditional business training and learning – as social entrepreneurship was addressed by youth-oriented NGOs and international donors, as opposed to business incubators.

For young people in Kosovo, there was a sense of discontent with the amount of training and learning opportunities available from the business incubators, and a notion of a ‘plateau’ in the training opportunities being provided. One young entrepreneur explained how:

“there's lots of organizations like incubators that provide business support, but the business support is mostly advice or something like that, and lots of support is given there, but it is not enough to really grow a business to a certain pace, the international donors have focused more on that for” (Flamur, Male, DSE, Kosovo).

Another DSE discussed how *“I think there is a very good support group of people who support startups in every like industry, but I think they're not doing enough” (Bardhana, Female, DSE, Kosovo).* This idea that they are not ‘doing enough’ primarily linked into the provision of courses and what was on offer at the incubator, as some of the young entrepreneurs discussed how the training and learning opportunities were not specialist or relevant to what they needed

at their stage of development. One DSE described how the problem is that *“once you start your business, you're supposed to know a few things about finances and accounting. And these are important and again places like ICK offer these, but once you start the business, it's already too late to start learning the basics of finances and accounting, and that's a lot of what it is”* (Jetmir, Male, DSE, Kosovo). This was connected to the idea of a ‘plateau’, that training hadn’t developed in recent years – particularly in the direction of ‘social’ or ‘impact entrepreneurship’, where one stakeholder explained how:

“I think organizations like the Innovation Center Kosova helped a lot to get attention particular in this: field. But then there is a plateau, like nothing is happening at the moment. Nothing is going on at the moment. No real drive is there any longer because of multiple reasons, because of entrepreneurship, mostly being associated with the digital sector” (Driton, Male, DSE, Kosovo).

Whereas for many Slovenian young entrepreneurs, the incubator was where many of them first came to learn about social and impact entrepreneurship, before embedding them into their own entrepreneurial activity. In Slovenia, this was accredited to the Impact Hub Ljubljana and the PONI programme, where both incubator programmes strongly embed ‘social impact’ into all of the training and learning activities they provide. One DSE explained how:

“we've been in an incubator, and there were talks about like how to create a company, how to market a company and it was for startups. It was really helpful, and they helped us in person, I think in like just for us, it was not really a big group of people like in school and this helps us helped us a lot. But then when we went to apply for this Social Impact Award through the incubator, this was just a phenomenal thing because we got a so much help from them, we learned about this social impact and how we can really tune our financials and our company to be the most social impact oriented but still profitable for us” (Rihard, Male, DSE, Slovenia).

Where incubators are typically considered to be focused on the development of ‘traditional’ businesses, the fact that many of the incubation programmes are centred around social impact signals a positive societal change towards ‘impact entrepreneurship’ in the business community – especially as the incubators are not just centred in the capital, but in more rural parts of the country (Alter 2007; European Commission 2019). Another young entrepreneur explained that:

“at the beginning of developing or starting to get into business, I've actually attended the programme in Slovenia that's called PONI in Koran, so that's the Green Sky region of Slovenia. So, it's a full month, quite intense programme where young entrepreneurs come with their ideas to develop them, and within this programme they also do have some lessons that explain what social entrepreneurship is, what impact entrepreneurship is, and that's how I got to know more about it as well” (Alfonz, Male, DSE, Slovenia).

This means that access to and awareness of impact entrepreneurship is not contingent on being located in the capital city, ensuring more young entrepreneurs from across the country are aware of and attuned to creating social impact with their business. This either suggests a growing consciousness surrounding social impact, or the priorities of those financing these incubators – with many financed by external funds (such as the EU and INGO's), and social entrepreneurship being a 'hot topic', this could link into why incubators are overwhelmingly becoming more invested in impact entrepreneurship.

6.4.2. Accelerators

Once an entrepreneur has left a business incubator (usually after 1-2 years), they will typically enter a 'accelerator' programme in order to scale their business. Accelerator programmes are designed to help early-stage startups and emerging companies rapidly grow and scale their businesses. These programs provide a combination of resources, mentorship, education, and funding to help entrepreneurs and their ventures succeed. Accelerator programmes are an important part of the entrepreneurial eco-system, as many incubated businesses need additional support post-incubation, either due to a lack of confidence, experience, or knowledge to scale the business. Young entrepreneurs benefit from acceleration programmes due to the additional support they provide, particularly with access to resources (especially important for digital-social enterprises which struggle to acquire resources like a traditional enterprise would) and funding (particularly important due to perceived lack of experience in young entrepreneurs). However, across both contexts, a lack of acceleration support in-country was discussed by participants, where Kosovan young entrepreneurs experienced this issue more due to the lack of mobility opportunities for them to access acceleration overseas.

In Kosovo, young entrepreneurs highlighted the lack of support for scaling and accelerating the business, with one young entrepreneur explaining that *"there are so many incubation programs in Kosovo, but there has not been anything for scaling, and I think even if someone started something for the scaling, it would be focused only onto the tech sector, not as much into agriculture or sustainability"* (Sihana, Female, DSE, Kosovo). This was discussed by another young entrepreneur, who highlighted how:

"it's very important for us to support in scaling, not just in creating a startup. Here in Kosovo, there is support for just creating the businesses, but not supporting after they create. For example, they support their small business, but when a business grows, they just end the

support, and that's the bad thing that happens especially with donors here in Kosovo. There was the Boost program, it was meant to be just for businesses that have cash flow, but when they actually support, they only supported the startups that didn't even have a product, just an idea" (Ilir, Male, DSE, Kosovo).

A DSE in Kosovo highlighted the amount of support for young entrepreneurs drops off after a two-year mark, explaining how:

"for the first two years of a startup there is enough support, but that's where the support stops and then they expect after that that you have generated enough clientele and have worked enough so that you can yourself continue growing. That's what I usually see in every program, even when they themselves do not finance but give training, they do it for a period of one year. It would be long enough if maybe the support would be a bit higher" (Majlinda, Female, DSE, Kosovo).

Whilst at some point, a young entrepreneur needs to 'stand on their own two feet', the significant drop off point of support after two years does not help young entrepreneurs adjust to a weakening of the support system – meaning that the withdrawal of support comes as a shock, and due to a lack of acceleration programmes, there is nowhere else to turn for support.

For young entrepreneurs in Slovenia, the lack of access to scale-up support was highlighted as a significant obstacle, with one DSE discussing how *"the biggest obstacle I have is scaling the business, so it's really hard, you know, once have something going on to scale it on larger scale to not have just a small medium enterprise, but to grow it further. So yeah, I think that would be the biggest challenge that I'm facing right now"* (Bojan, Male, DSE, Slovenia). As many of the incubator programmes are donor-funded, there is often more of an emphasis on 'starting ventures' as opposed to 'scaling ventures' – due to the assumption that once an entrepreneur has got their venture off the ground, scaling it requires less external intervention and support. For young entrepreneurs, who may have less technical working and business experience, this is not the case – and many require additional support at the scale-up stage due to the lack of experience and a lack of confidence in their own ability, as well as limited access to resources. There was a presence of accelerators in Slovenia, but they were quite exclusive according to one DSE, where *"we have like accelerators and stuff like that, but it's very hard to get in there and there are a lot of like rules and stuff that you have to agree. So that really affects the company and the long term"* (Nina, Female, DSE, Slovenia).

However, for the Slovenian context, a young entrepreneur explained that the lack of in-country acceleration support is not a significant challenge due to the mobility opportunities available, where one DSE explained that:

“I think that there is more support for starting, but once you go to scaling, it's easier to go abroad, I think Croatia is the one that would be easier to get to, they have a fund that gives money for free, it's just like I think if you want to scale it, it's better to go abroad. Among my network, I know quite a lot of businesses that went further on to Zagreb” (Bojan, Male, DSE, Slovenia).

Proximity to nearby countries with strong acceleration support and the ability to move freely (due to EU membership) provided the young entrepreneurs in Slovenia with a significant advantage over the young entrepreneurs in Kosovo – who did not have as much freedom of movement, and therefore, acceleration was more of a struggle.

6.5. Conclusion

This chapter sought to address **RQ3** “what are the current support arrangements (e.g., training, mentorship, etc.) for developing youth DSEs in Kosovo and Slovenia, and how do they experience them?”.

It discussed how young DSE in both countries highlighted the inadequacies in the higher education system, where in Kosovo, the curriculum was perceived as outdated and too theoretical, whilst in Slovenia, the higher education system was perceived as ‘training for work’ as opposed to nurturing entrepreneurship.

It highlighted the role that NGOs do in ‘bridging’ the gap with support, including the importance of mobility programmes such as Erasmus+ in broadening young DSE’s horizons, providing them with international experience and assisting in developing their entrepreneurial competences.

It outlined the role of incubators and accelerators in the entrepreneurial ecosystems, and the differing levels of state support. In Kosovo, incubators and accelerators were primarily private funded (either through intergovernmental organizations such as UNDP, or through successful entrepreneurs re-investing). In Slovenia, the government were a strong funder of support, with

extensive incubation programmes funded with salaries for participants – levelling the playing field for many young DSE.

In Kosovo, NGOs played an important role in bridging the gap where the education system was failing, with most business support and financing opportunities stemming from NGOs and INGO funding (such as the UN, World Bank and USAID).

In Slovenia, young people highlighted the importance of incubators in facilitating training opportunities and providing them with the skills required for 'social' entrepreneurship, whereas in Kosovo, incubators were a key source of support in building social capital and enabling networking opportunities.

Chapter 7: “It’s A Small Place, And Everybody Knows Everybody, Right?”: Institutional Barriers, Entrepreneurial Ecosystem and Business Environment

7.1. Introduction

When thinking about entrepreneurship at the macro level, we think about how the institutional structures (such as the formal ‘rules of the game’ and informal ‘rules’ and ‘codes’) create an environment that is either conducive or constraining for entrepreneurship (North 1990). The institutional environment matters for shaping the entrepreneurial ecosystem within a country, as it creates the conditions that entrepreneurs must navigate, and generates critical entrepreneurial resources such as investment capital, rule of law, skilled workers, and a supportive environment for knowledge development. Spigel (2017) refers to entrepreneurial ecosystems as being supportive environments that foster innovation-based ventures, including culture, social networks, investments, universities, and economic policies.

This chapter explores the interview data, in order to address RQ1 “what is the current policy and business environment for encouraging digital and social entrepreneurship in post-socialist Kosovo and Slovenia?”. This chapter will explore the institutional arrangements for youth digital-social entrepreneurship, including reflections on the legacy of socialism, the development of the entrepreneurial ecosystem and the current business environment. It will review the influence that international actors have had on the development of entrepreneurship, particularly digital-social entrepreneurship, and how young DSE engage with the international community in order to create social impact.

7.2. Socialist Legacy

One of the key tools for the transition from socialism to market capitalism by most of the former socialist economies was the promotion of private entrepreneurship (Blanchard 1998; McMillan et al 2002). Private entrepreneurship was seen a vital way for stimulating economic growth, promoting innovation, and generating employment opportunities – after state employment measures were significantly reduced due to economic restructuring. However, what was assumed to be an easy process of adopting a more market capitalistic approach to economic management under the supervision of international actors (predominantly Western international actors), became much more challenging due to the

overarching legacy of Yugoslavia. Throughout many of the interviews conducted with both young entrepreneurs and key stakeholders, the legacy of Yugoslavia and its rippling impact on entrepreneurial activity and the broader entrepreneurial ecosystem and institutional structures of the country was repeatedly noted. This was dubbed across contexts as the ‘Yugoslav hangover’, where the formal and informal institutional arrangement of Yugoslavia were still embedded into the environment in which young entrepreneurs were navigating today, 32 years after its collapse (Kinsman, 2008; Nova & Fink-Hafner, 2019). Therefore, this section will discuss the impact of the ‘Yugoslav hangover’ on the development of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurialism in Kosovo and Slovenia, and the underpinning social arrangements (such as societal attitudes) that rule the development of and how young people experience the entrepreneurial eco-system.

7.2.1. Yugoslav Legacy and Cultural Attitudes to Entrepreneurship

The cultural legacy of Yugoslavia permeates in the attitudes towards entrepreneurship, from both a political and social perspective. Under Yugoslavia, employment was primarily with the state, and there was very little legacy of entrepreneurship. This was highlighted by one of the supporting actors in Slovenia, who explained how

“for a country like ours, coming out of Communism, we had very little tradition in entrepreneurship, simply because it was banned or severely limited during communism. I would say that it’s only in the past ten years, entrepreneurship both as a phenomenon and as a culture really took off, especially among younger people.” (Borut, Male, Policymaker, Slovenia).

As previously discussed in Chapter 3, formal entrepreneurship (as opposed to informal and grey economy entrepreneurship which is always present in some capacity) only began to emerge in Slovenia following its departure from Yugoslavia and its own independence, whilst in Kosovo, it emerged as a result of the oppressive campaigns of the final decade of Yugoslavia. The lack of cultural legacy and ‘normalization’ of formal entrepreneurship in the previous ‘generation’ means that the cultural attitudes to entrepreneurship differ significantly from that of more Western economies, where entrepreneurship has been ‘normalized’ for a much longer time.

In both Kosovo and Slovenia, there were recurring discussions surrounding the stigma of failure and how this derived from cultural attitudes in the Balkans. In previous studies, such as Ramadani et al (2023), Matić et al (2023) and Srđana et al (2022), one of the biggest challenges identified for the development of youth entrepreneurship in the Balkan region is

the stigma towards 'failing' and the subsequent fear of failure held by young entrepreneurs. In Slovenia, Borut continued to discuss how:

"I would say one underlying stigma, and this I think is very similar in all the Balkans or even broader Central and Eastern Europe, is that of failure. You know, in the US, failure is perceived as part of the process or part of the path to get the success. But in our part of the world, it's quite a strong stigma, you know, once you fail, if your company goes bankrupt.... This is deemed as something that really impacts your reputation, no matter how justified this would be." (Borut, Male, Policymaker, Slovenia)

This further supports the findings by Ramadani et al (2023), Matić et al.= (2023) and Srđana et al (2022) but places a comparative narrative between Slovenia and the US when highlighting the cultural differences surrounding 'failure' and the perceptions of what that means. This was echoed by another supporting actor from Kosovo, who drew a similar comparison between Kosovo and the US, explaining how:

"it's this acceptance of the notion of failure, if you fail with your startups here, I mean, you should be ashamed, you know what I mean? So, it's quite different from the US or Western perception of failure....for your business to fail here, it would be a black mark in your CV" (Besart, Male, Incubator Staff, Kosovo).

This perspective being highlighted by both policymakers (who can take a 'birds eye' view to the issue due to being further removed) and business incubator staff (who work more 'hands on' with the young DSE) highlights how deep the cultural stigma goes.

Where the supporting actors expressed how this stigma of failure in Balkan society led to a fear of failure amongst young people, this suggests that many young people are held back from entrepreneurship, or do not commit whole-heartedly to entrepreneurship, due to this. However, young DSE expressed how they are working to tackle this narrative, explaining how:

"everyone would judge you when you fail and that's why people are scared to fail, and they think more about [what] the other people think about them rather than what we define as failure for us. Because we were discussing with my colleague and my cofounder, and we were trying to define failure. What it is? And we concluded that failure is the moment that when you stop trying that thing" (Zamir, Male, DSE, Kosovo).

Where both supporting actors drawing the comparison between their own country and the USA, this emphasizes the 'gap' relating to cultural attitudes between the Balkans and 'Western' entrepreneurship. This subsequently highlights the importance of this study (where most entrepreneurship research is conducted in the 'Western' world, with differing cultural understandings and attitudes towards entrepreneurship).

For many supporting actors and young DSE, this 'risk aversion' causing the fear of failure was perceived to have stemmed from Yugoslav times. In Slovenia, culturally, a 9-5 public sector job was perceived as the optimum 'outcome', as it provided stability and security for the whole family, and there was a much larger public sector to employ people. This also ties into the discussion in Chapter 3 about the role of the state during Yugoslavia (in that employment was primarily with public organisations) and the effect of the 'transition pathway' undertaken on Slovenia's economic and cultural development. One Slovenian DSE explained how:

"most of my friends have steady jobs with the government or bigger companies. I think because of Yugoslavia, you know, still our parents and their parents, we grow up in this spirit and there is only one goal – public job, just for the stability...Most people did it, and most of the jobs were stable because there was no open market, and we were just there you know, so not many were losing a job or such things. The standard was low, but still a lot of people think that's okay, stability is good" (Damijan, Male, DSE, Slovenia).

This highlights how the legacy of public sector employment during Yugoslavia permeates into the aspirations and notions of 'success' that young people are raised to have now, particularly in Slovenia. However, as market capitalism was adopted and the nature of the labour market changed, the availability and attractiveness of 9-5 public sector jobs has also changed.

Young Slovenian DSE felt that this cultural 'risk aversion' impacted the level of encouragement or support that received from the older generations (such as their parents, grandparents, teachers and other 'adults' in their life). Another Slovenian DSE discussed how:

"it's way more challenging, this risk aversion, I would say, comes from our culture, because if I give you an example like, when we founded the company, my parents, they had a talk with me like are you sure or why are you doing this? What happens if you're not successful, what will happen with your maternity leave and blah blah blah and I'm not even pregnant and I'm not even having children in the next like three years, but they started thinking how they handled things when they were young and they actually put those things values on myself. So actually, at the beginning they weren't even happy that I started it because they saw, oh, my God, what if goes something wrong? This stressed me out so much and I didn't want to tell them anything" (Jerneja, Female, DSE, Slovenia).

Parents play an influential role on how young people develop their career – with the attitudes and support from parents often dictating how successful a young person will end up being. To have your 'support system' constantly putting doubt in your mind about the validity and stability of your business, at such a young age, may have a detrimental impact on a young person's entrepreneurial confidence. Jerneja continued to explain that this attitude came from:

“it’s more than just our parents. It’s like also like how we are taught in schools. Like you finish school and then you find a job, you go to a company, you find a job, we are not talking a lot about entrepreneurship and if we do, it’s not really positive” (Jerneja, Female, DSE, Slovenia).

This suggests that this cultural attitude towards entrepreneurship and risk aversion is not only embedded into personal support networks, but also into more formal systems such as the education system, which was discussed in Chapter 6.

Although Kosovo experienced a different transition pathway, and culturally, entrepreneurship is more ‘normalized’ due to the expulsion of Kosovar Albanians from public life in the 1980s and 1990s (discussed in Chapter 3) leading to a surge of necessity entrepreneurship, the cultural stigma of entrepreneurship was still perceived as prevalent. One of the supporting actors explained the cultural history of entrepreneurship in Kosovo, reflecting on how:

“I believe that we are quite entrepreneurial as a society because many of our older generations have lived under the occupation, and in the 90s we were pretty much kicked out completely from this institutional life. So, no Albanian was part of the government because there was a Serbian regime, which took over everything with the police and the government, so we were very much outside of institutional thing. So, the only way people could survive was through entrepreneurial effort.” (Abdyl, Male, Policymaker, Kosovo)

However, as discussed in Chapter 2, necessity entrepreneurship (as undertaken in Kosovo during occupation) and opportunity entrepreneurship are perceived differently – one out of necessity (with no other options available), and one out of ‘privilege’ of not wanting a ‘real job’. This perspective was discussed by one of the supporting actors in Kosovo, who explained cultural attitudes to entrepreneurship from the ‘older generation’ by highlighting how:

“in Kosovo, if a child would tell his parents that he wants to start a business, that they would tell him find a real job, forget about starting a new business. You can see what the difference is, right? Still, I mean, the perception and the social support for new entrepreneurs is quite harsh and difficult to control, meaning that, hey, why bother starting your business, when you can get a real job, get the salary, and start your life. Why go through the risk of starting new businesses and failing?” (Besart, Male, Incubator Staff, Kosovo).

This highlights how the history of the country impacts the attitudes to entrepreneurship – where in Slovenia, there was secure employment for most Slovenes, meaning entrepreneurship was not considered the ‘norm’, whereas in Kosovo, due to the exclusion of Albanians from

institutional life, it became the norm out of necessity. The 'newness' surrounding the legitimacy of opportunity entrepreneurship (as opposed to the necessity entrepreneurship enacted in Kosovo during Yugoslavia) also provides some explanation for both the lack of embeddedness of entrepreneurship into curriculum and the lack of committed support for young entrepreneurs from government institutions. It is only through the success of 'new entrepreneurs' setting up initiatives to support other young entrepreneurs in both countries (such as ICK in Kosovo and Impact Hub Ljubljana – both set up by entrepreneurs who reinvested in their communities) has there been a real emergence of support for entrepreneurship.

However, amongst the younger generations, there is a changing perception of entrepreneurs that breaks the tradition of scepticism towards entrepreneurs – newer generations are considered to view entrepreneurs more favourably. One DSE explained how:

“I think that, in many countries, especially the small ones like us, where people get to know each other, the circle, it's so small, so entrepreneurs are kind of looked in a way that they are in a higher social standard, that than everybody else, because people think that you might help them out someday and stuff like that, so I think that's why it's seen as a prestige to be an entrepreneur. It's considered the same also in countries that are similar to us, like, let's say, Albania, Macedonia, Slovenia, Croatia etc” (Luljeta, Female, DSE, Kosovo).

This is consistent with recent research into how young people perceive entrepreneurs, with some studies suggesting that young people see entrepreneurs as being superior to those working in more 'formal employment' opportunities (Ndungu and Anyieni 2019; Steenekamp et al 2011). This level of idealisation demonstrates a changing narrative about entrepreneurship amongst young people, however, this perceived 'prestige' of entrepreneurship could also put unnecessary pressure on young entrepreneurs – having a detrimental impact on their wellbeing. However, there was still a negative attitude to those who showcased their financial success, particularly in Slovenia, where one DSE, who upon earning a good enough income to buy a nice car, explained that:

“But on the other hand, we have a really low social acceptance for success. If you mentioned you had earned enough money and wanted to buy a Porsche, let's say, it would be frowned upon, so it wouldn't be like ohh yeah, he succeeded and he's able to now buy something nice, but it would be like, okay, they must have stolen something to gain this kind of wealth. So, it's not yet, I believe in societies mind that someone can like be successful through hard work in entrepreneurship” (Vilko, Male, DSE, Slovenia).

A Slovenian stakeholder (a policymaker and digital entrepreneur) explained the rationale behind this – explaining how *“I don't know about other countries, but whoever got rich in the 90s or 2000s was stigmatised as a crook, someone who profiteered from the chaos, from the transform economic transformation that was not extremely merit based.”* (Borut, Male, Policymaker, Slovenia). This ties into previous research, where negative attitudes towards entrepreneurship in post-socialist spaces were found to be derived from the stigma of the kleptocracy that occurred in the initial transition period in many post-socialist countries in Europe (Adam-Muller, et al., 2015; Runst, 2014). This highlights how there is still an overarching attitude in Slovenia that successful entrepreneurs are not successful by merit, and entrepreneurship is still perceived as a tarnished career pathway associated with the kleptocracy of the post-socialist period.

7.2.2. Attitudes to Digital-Social Entrepreneurship

Societal attitudes towards entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship are an important determinant for the development and encouragement of entrepreneurial activity, particularly amongst young people (Goel et al 2007). This is because young people are more likely to require support in actualizing their venture (such as accessing start-up capital, training, and mentorship), so a positive societal attitude towards entrepreneurs is more likely to foster such an environment. One young entrepreneur concisely summarised the societal attitude to entrepreneurship as being *“if I'm speaking about a profession, then entrepreneurship is not that often seen as a profession, you know so there is no kind of support”* (S3). Across both country contexts, there was a cultural stigma surrounding entrepreneurship – however, the extent of this stigma and the impact it has on young people differed vastly. This is because in the run up to, and the aftermath of the collapse of Yugoslavia, cultural perspectives on entrepreneurship varied based upon how each country was treated before, during and after the collapse. Whilst the legacy of these attitudes has been discussed in 7.2.1, participants in both Kosovo and Slovenia highlighted the role of attitudes towards digital and social entrepreneurship which effected the perceptions of digital-social entrepreneurs and their ability to pursue this type of entrepreneurship.

Across the interviews with young digital-social entrepreneurs, there was a recurring discussion about perceptions of social entrepreneurship, and very limited discussion surrounding the perception of digital entrepreneurship. For digital-social entrepreneurs, the 'social' component of the business is often more prominent than the 'digital'. This is due to many businesses now utilizing digital technologies and a limited understanding of what

differentiates digital entrepreneurship from traditional entrepreneurship – digital technologies in everyday life are more normalized. In both Kosovo and Slovenia, attitudes towards ‘social entrepreneurship’ were negative, but in Slovenia, this perception was seemingly changing according to participants. In Kosovo, attitudes towards social entrepreneurship carried the stigma of the behaviour of NGOs and INGO’s in the aftermath of the war. One supporting actor explained the ‘stigma’ of social enterprise as:

“there might be a bit of a stigma too when it comes to people who have pretended to be non-profit or just non-governmental organizations, you know, because some organizations that received a lot of donor money and international donors were not always coordinating in Kosova, especially after the war” (Arben, Male, Policymaker, Kosovo).

After the war, many NGOs were set up quickly in order to benefit from donor money and international support, but the money was not always spent on the ‘reconstruction efforts’ – leading to a broader distrust of social enterprises – who are ‘tarred’ with the same brush (Belloni and Strazzari 2014). There was no discussion amongst participants about how this was changing, and when participants spoke about institutional perspectives of issues tackled by social entrepreneurs (such as sustainability and social support), these were not considered to be a priority.

In Slovenia, supporting actors discussed a changing cultural attitude to social entrepreneurship, and to those trying to create more social value through for-profit business activities. Whilst one supporting actor highlighted a negative stereotype of ‘social entrepreneurs’ as:

“startups and NGOs, there's quite a lot of negative attitudes towards NGOs and social businesses from civil society. The perception is that people that work for them don't really do anything, they just get money from the government, and this is very prevalent” (Lidija, Female, NGO Staff, Slovenia).

This stigma surrounding ‘NGOs’ is because many young digital-social entrepreneurs have to register as NGOs due to the registration as a ‘social enterprise’ having strict requirements (regarding the hiring of disabled individuals) – so NGO fits their ‘status’ more than the traditional business (due to higher taxes levied on these businesses). However, another participant suggested that older generations held onto this ‘for-profit’ first attitude due to the quick transition from socialism to capitalism, whilst younger generations were more inclined

towards accepting social entrepreneurship due to their own 'social values' aligning this way (Kowske, et al., 2010; Hernandez-Arriaza, 2023). This DSE explained that:

“the big change in perception here was I think that people start to realise that some kind of an organisation that helps the planet doesn't necessarily mean just opening up an NGO but being able to open up a company that's for profit. You can make a for profit business make something good and I think people are getting more and more aware of this also because they are starting to use services that based on that” (Alfonz, Male, DSE, Slovenia).

This aligns with what another young entrepreneur discussed, how:

“I think the younger generations are much more aware that there is not just profit, you know, because for the older people, they saw this, you know, transition from socialist communistic regime to open economy capitalism, so, the view there was completely focused on profit alone.” (Bojan, Male, DSE, Slovenia).

This highlights how the attitude towards social entrepreneurship in Slovenia is also considered generational, where younger generations are more receptive to the idea of social entrepreneurship.

7.3. Policy Environment

The ability of youth to pursue entrepreneurial activity is highly dependent on the local 'regime' of policymaking – with young entrepreneurs facing higher barriers to entrepreneurship, they are more dependent upon a favourable policy environment (Pantea 2016). This is due to a perceived lack of social and financial capital to navigate unfavourable political conditions, such as weak rule of law or lack of government start-up support (Green 2013). Young entrepreneurs in both Kosovo and Slovenia felt let down by the policy environment, expressing disappointment at the lack of institutional support for young entrepreneurs – particularly for young entrepreneurs focusing on creating social impact, whether that be through social entrepreneurship or through other entrepreneurial means. In both countries, there is a lack of recognition of social entrepreneurship legally – in Slovenia, there is a formal registration for 'social enterprise' status, but it is very outdated and highly debated (Hojnik 2020), whilst in Kosovo, there has only been talk of one day implementing a 'social enterprise' status – this has not come to fruition yet. Young entrepreneurs expressed a frustration at the lack of government support in regard to policymaking, financial resources, and collaboration with young entrepreneurs (such as contracting services from young digital-

social entrepreneurs). Chapter 3 discussed the political environment of Kosovo and Slovenia; therefore, this section will discuss the perspectives of the young digital-social entrepreneurs and stakeholders on the receptiveness of the institutional environment to digital-social entrepreneurship.

7.3.1. Kosovo's Political Environment

Kosovo's political environment was discussed in Chapter 3, where the central points were the recurring instability of the government and embedded institutional corruption from former governments, which has led to a currently campaign of trying to tackle issues of corruption and weak rule of law. This was explained by one participant where *"up until now, we were mismanaged for many years after the war... But we've changed many governments and like, we couldn't even get one government plan to finish, and that left many projects unfinished"* (Agron, Male, DSE, Kosovo). The mismanagement of government projects and funds by the former government has led to increased distrust from both the international community and local entrepreneurs in the political stability of the country. Frequent changes in government create uncertainty in the business environment, leading to lower levels of investment and less consumer confidence – and also leading to entrepreneurs being more hesitant to invest in their businesses due to the instability. The economic challenges faced in Kosovo have led to resource constraints for the government, leading to an inability to effectively invest in the business environment, which amongst some participants, has been perceived as an anti-entrepreneurship government. In discussions with young entrepreneurs and stakeholders, the key issues discussed were the levels of bureaucracy, the rates of corruption, the distrust of entrepreneurs and the attitudes to entrepreneurship (particularly social entrepreneurship).

7.3.1.1. Bureaucracy and Corruption

When discussing the political environment in Kosovo, most young entrepreneurs shared stories of navigating bureaucracy when dealing with the government. Whether this be in the registration process of the business or working collaboratively with the government through contracts or other forms of collaboration, the bureaucratic nature of the government was a consistent theme. One young entrepreneur, who was working to embed their digital-social enterprise into the education sector, described how:

“regarding the collaboration it's not like we met, and they understood immediately how we can collaborate. But we met and they loved the idea, and even though they loved the idea, they still did not know how we are going to place this project now for us? How are we going to make this work. It was rather our job as the start-up to come up with ways of, hey, I think you should be doing this as a Ministry. It was us chasing them all the time... the public sector is not quite sure how to collaborate with us, it took us over one year to go back and forth, having several meetings and to keep on convincing them to even get to where we are now” (Driton, Male, DSE, Kosovo).

The young entrepreneur describes the burden of having to repeatedly chase the government, with them putting in the lion's share of effort into operationalizing the collaboration – which for a start-up, takes up a significant amount of time that many do not have. This frustration at the bureaucracy was expressed by another participant, who discussed how exhausted they were by trying to collaborate with the government by explaining that:

“we have tried three different governments: in the Municipality of Pristina, as that's where our main projects are, we have tried in Gjakova and we have tried in Prizren, and all of them have a different set of governance. We have to have a lot of conversations and it's exhausting for a startup company, where our main focus is building things and designing them and selling them. And it takes so long to have their trust that our work is implemented. We have to coordinate with their goals, with their politics, their policies. It takes time, it takes a strong emotional balance and it's exhausting to be honest” (Fatbard, Male, DSE, Kosovo).

This bureaucracy would have a negative effect on many young entrepreneurs, with many of them dropping communication with government altogether due to the lack of support in actualizing their 'collaborative' ideas.

Collaborating with the government was not only considered to be bureaucratic, but also corrupt, where one young entrepreneur highlighted their experience with corruption in government institutions after being rewarded a grant and being asked for bribes, explaining how:

“when I started this business, I went to the Ministry of Agriculture. There were some guys that said they wanted money to help me if I got a grant, they were from the Ministry of Agriculture, and I overcome it by promising them that I will give money to them. So, when I got projects, I managed to not give them the money at all, so they were disappointed and from that moment I saw a lack of energy at the Ministry of Agriculture to help me. So, in this way I don't want to make a co-operate with them” (Ilir, Male, DSE, Kosovo).

This participant highlights how the corruption they encountered undermined their trust in the government and their interest in doing cooperating with them further, which would potentially have underlying consequences this could have for the success of their business in the long term. This corruption issue was discussed by one of the supporting actors, who highlighted the issue but explained how it was now changing under the new government, discussing how:

“grants were previously given but the criteria were not always clear and designed with helping entrepreneurship in mind. It was more, you knew who was going to apply and who was going to get the grants... I think there was a lot of corruption and bribery involved. From now on, the situation has improved. It wasn't very easy to cancel all the calls and start with something new because you had to update the legislation” (Arben, Male, Policymaker, Kosovo).

With the new government's commitment to tackling corruption and upholding rule of law, this highlights that the corruption was an institutional issue, and corruption is an issue that disproportionately impacts young entrepreneurs in post-socialist spaces (Shaykhutdinova, et al., 2015; Arzeni & Mitra, 2012). Previous literature highlights how young entrepreneurs often lack the social capital to effectively navigate formal institutions, as social capital facilitates having the 'right' connections to circumvent many of these institutional voids (Yadolahi Farsi & Razavi, 2011; Hulsink & Koek, 2014).

7.3.1.2. Institutional Support for Digital-Social Entrepreneurship

Many participants felt that the government did not act in a way that supported or facilitated 'modern business', with one young entrepreneur explaining how:

“the Government does not understand what a modern business needed, or especially new government. The actual government that we have at the moment is more focused on the individuals than on businesses, and I think that that's a bad approach, because the best way to invest into individuals is by supporting businesses because we are bringing clients, and we are getting more clients, and we are paying our employees, and everything” (Elseid, Male, DSE, Kosovo).

This view was primarily prevalent amongst DSE who had worked or studied internationally, as they had lived experience of the support available to entrepreneurs in other countries. These countries were typically either the USA, UK, Germany, Netherlands or Switzerland, which are considered to be supportive of entrepreneurship. However, many DSEs did not grasp the challenges faced by their own government in regard to resource constraints and the political restructuring that was occurring, so expressed frustration at the current situation. A DSE who

had worked in the USA explained how *“the strategy of the government is completely wrong in our case, in our eyes basically, and we did not have any support from them”* (K29). This led to an interesting discussion surrounding the legacy of socialism, and whether young people support these socialist values, or go in the opposite direction and lean more towards a strong capitalistic economic structure (Adam-Muller, et al., 2015). However, most of the discussions surrounding government support seemed to stem from feelings of being ‘let-down’ due to a lack of business support, expressed by another DSE:

“let's say, on the Government side, usually governments in other countries try to help the small enterprises and the specialist startups. There has been a lack of that from our side at least, because for 2 years now we haven't had anything from the Government, and now we just don't rely on them at all” (Luljeta, Female, DSE, Kosovo).

This highlights the frustration at the current ‘situation’ for young entrepreneurs, and the perception of being let down by comparing the support available in other countries. Whilst the government is currently pushing initiatives, the institutional voids they are trying to overcome and resource constraints they are navigating limit the support available in comparison to Western economies. However, many of the DSE only made comparisons to Western economies – due to their lived experience working and studying there, which skewed perceptions of what is possible within the current Kosovan context.

For DSE in Kosovo, they felt that the support for ‘social’ oriented entrepreneurship was non-existent, as policymakers were perceived to have little interest in tackling the societal issues that these young entrepreneurs were trying to address. A young entrepreneur explained the lack of incentives for social entrepreneurship, discussing how *“there's no incentives, it's the same and that very literally hurts, like I'm trying my best not to pollute the city or the country, and I'm just paying the same thing that everybody else is doing, like the agency next door is doing”* (Bardhana, Female, DSE, Kosovo). However, this is because there is no legislation, law or experience with social entrepreneurship on the government side, which was discussed by one of the supporting actors as:

“social entrepreneurship, I'm sort of surprised that it hasn't been picked up so much. There's a law and I think we've adopted secondary legislation as well, and I think it's a labour component that covers social entrepreneurship. I feel like most people that go into business, you know, have good intentions but haven't been thinking so much about just being a social business, they're after profit. But then they use their profit, and they do a lot of good. I feel like there's lack of know-how and lack of encouragement to you know” (Arben, Male, Policymaker, Kosovo).

This highlights that the issue lies within the lack of experience with social entrepreneurship – and that whilst policymakers acknowledge the issue, there is limited follow-up due to a lack of capacity. This was discussed by a DSE, who explains how:

“to be honest, everything that you want to do, something social, that must agree with public organizations, with government, especially here and in the Balkans, it is really a problem too to gather all the people to do something for social impact. Because as I saw, a lot of organization don't want to see, for example, they don't want to solve the problem really, you know, because I had a lot of meetings with all the key organizations here and they never follow up with you afterwards” (Bardhyll, Male, DSE, Kosovo).

Another DSE highlighted the resource constraints experienced by the government and the consequences for social entrepreneurship – discussing how: *“usually almost all politicians are supportive of it, but they don't always have enough money to raise so that you can move a little faster...I mean, what is the government good for, what can the government do”* (Flamur, Male, DSE, Kosovo). Whilst governments naturally have their own sets of priorities and goals that may not align with that of the young digital-social entrepreneurs, the lack of support provided to these young digital-social entrepreneurs who are engaged with government is frustrating for young people. Whilst on paper, it would suggest there is support (in the form of strategy documents and proposed meetings with social entrepreneurs), the lack of actualization of these is representative of a lack of broader capacity from government for supporting social entrepreneurship.

7.3.2. Slovenia's Political Environment

Regular changes in Slovenia's government have led to significant shifts in economies policies and regulatory frameworks (discussed in Chapter 3) – creating an unstable environment for young entrepreneurs to start their business. This instability has led to lower levels of confidence in starting a business in Slovenia (Tominc & Božin, 2015), especially amongst young people, due to the everchanging regulatory frameworks and the costliness of keeping up with these. Conversations about the government in Slovenia primarily reflected on

the bureaucracy, the lack of transparency, and the attitude towards entrepreneurship and business – especially from the new government (Golob’s government³).

7.3.2.1. Transparency and Bureaucracy

A recurring discussion amongst young entrepreneurs was the level of bureaucracy and lack of transparency when dealing with the government – whether this be in the business registration process or navigating collaboration with the government. This could be accredited to the everchanging nature of the government not providing a stable foundation for young people to work with (discussed in Chapter 3) – however, many of the young entrepreneurs expressed a deep concern about the current government and their ‘anti-business’ policies. One supporting actor explained that:

“what we’re seeing right now is a very, I would say anti-business policies meaning not just rolling back the reforms that we enacted in various areas, but expanding the existing taxation, which is already among the highest and in some cases the highest in Europe... So, in a time when most other countries are trying to revive growth with subsidies, deregulation or let’s say, cutting the red tape, cutting some taxes, we’re turning in at opposite direction. I don’t think it will get us very far” (Borut, Male, Policymaker, Slovenia).

This highlights how the current business environment is perceived as hostile to young entrepreneurs due to everchanging anti-business policies and rolling back of reforms – which leads to increased regulatory changes and increased fines to young people unaware of these constant changes. Whilst some argue that regulation can promote innovation due to the beneficial constraints it may bring (Streeck 1997; Porter and van der Linde 1995), for the young DSE in Slovenia, they felt that the everchanging regulatory environment and ‘anti-business’ policies hindered their ability to operate their business. This was expressed by another young entrepreneur, that the constantly changing policies was even reflected in the knowledge of public sector workers – when they would check in for clarity on new policies, different public sector workers would say different things – so there was a real lack of transparency about what was and was not the new policy. The young entrepreneur explained that:

“the lack of information, or maybe even not the lack, but they were not the same when we were talking to different persons about this one topic, right, and having to balance this with every

³ Robert Golob is the Prime Minister of Slovenia, elected on the 24th of April 2022. He is the Leader of the ‘Freedom Movement’ party, a social-liberal political party in Slovenia founded in 2021 as a successor of the Party of Green Actions (Z.Dej) (Gibanje Svoboda, 2022)

other thing in the business and our personal lives, it's very stressful" (Katica, Female, DSE, Slovenia).

This was reflected in discussions about starting the business – for one young entrepreneur, who was trying to register the business as a 'social enterprise' status, explained how:

"when you are starting a business, even, I mean, especially if you are young, you know, as I am. You don't know everything, of course, in terms of how to do it correctly, how to do it legally, 100% like it should be. I would say our government is not very supportive in that way. I remember that it took us half a year, or even more than half a year, to get this process done, because it's also so untransparent to who you need to send it. Who can you call for help, and then they rejected it. But it's not clear why they rejected it, and then also they don't offer you the possibility to kind of fix the mistake you did. But you need to start the process from the beginning" (Irena, Female, DSE, Slovenia).

This bureaucracy and lack of transparency in registering the business was discussed by other young entrepreneurs, with many expressing similar stories of their registration being held up by government administrators not supporting applications – and there being no chance for 'amendments', just entire resubmissions. This holds up a young entrepreneurs ability to engage in business activity and receive financing – for this example, this would have potentially lost the young entrepreneur grants and financing due to 6 months of being unable to formally register as a business entity.

Even when financing is offered by the government to registered young entrepreneurs, there is little transparency and oftentimes administrative clumsiness in what the grant is made up of and how it is paid out – where young entrepreneurs would apply for a grant of €50,000 – expecting this to be a lump sum (and with no indication otherwise), and then finding out it is paid out 'in-parts'. This was explained by one young entrepreneur:

"There are some like slow parts that you need to wait and for example this €50,000, I thought it was in a lump sum and that's what it said, but you actually get it in three parts in two years, before it was three years. And if you're a startup, €50,000 for one year is actually nothing, it's just for one employee, so it's not really helping for the people who don't have money in the beginning and now they shorten it from three years to two years, and now it's cancelled so just when the government figured out how to help startups, the crisis came" (Mirko, Male, DSE, Slovenia).

This impacts how a young person can operate their business activity – receiving a grant of €50,000 and expecting it in one lump-sum would mean many young businesses would have planned to spend it straight away on significant capital investment – however, it is coming in interval payments delays or stops the initial spending plans – meaning the young entrepreneur does not benefit as much from the grant as they would have done.

When discussing the administrative clumsiness and lack of transparency, this also linked into discussions of corruption in the public procurement process, with one young entrepreneur discussing how:

“one thing I find completely nonsensical is this way of public procurement. So, for example, in Slovenia you have public procurement, organisations need to issue a public call, you know, and then they have to send the request for proposal to multiple vendors, right? And then they gather the offers, and they choose the best ones, right. But you know, in literally every case I've worked, all of this has been set up in advance, right? So, they make a deal, you know, we're going to work together and then they issue the call and then, you know, they say, OK, so can you find the two others, you know, vendors that could send the counter offer, which is more expensive than yours, you know? This is kind of this a public secret, you know, everybody knows that all of the public procurement is defined in advance, but still this system exists, right?”
(Viljem, Male, DSE, Slovenia).

The notion that corruption in public procurement is a 'public secret', especially amongst young people, highlights the overwhelmingly negative attitude towards government that prevails amongst young entrepreneurs – there is no trust that they are acting in young entrepreneurs favour, and often times, proactively work against them – which makes youth entrepreneurship even more difficult.

7.3.2.2. Institutional Support for Digital-Social Entrepreneurship

Whilst many participants expressed an anti-business sentiment in the new government, others highlighted that this was more an anti-small business sentiment – and that the government was more favourable to attracting large corporations as opposed to encouraging entrepreneurship. This highlights a tension between economic policy that is aimed at inward investment, or that is aimed at more outward investment - Slovenia's government were perceived as being more interested in inward investment and foreign investment. This was expressed by a DSE in Slovenia, who explained that:

“I think that the main focus is more directed into attracting big corporations into the country, like with big investments, and it feels like they can open a lot of doors for them, but for those small businesses, young entrepreneurs, it doesn't look as sexy, let's say on the news if the government helps someone to make €100,000 a year versus building a big factory for a corporation that is bringing investments etcetera” (Vilko, Male, DSE, Slovenia).

This was also reflected in the post-COVID response to young entrepreneurs, with many young entrepreneurs expressing disappointment in how they were treated during the pandemic in comparison to large corporations. One DSE explained that:

“I think they could have supported the young businesses and the young entrepreneurs more at this time, with this post COVID situation and during COVID everything was pretty unsupportive for young businesses compared to bigger corporations” (Nina, Female, DSE, Slovenia).

Many of the young entrepreneurs felt that the government weren't fulfilling their role in supporting start-ups, and that other supporting actors in the eco-system were playing a bigger role, explaining how *“I think that they are a little bit sleepy on this area and they're not doing as much as they should. I think actually the business associations or entrepreneurs that actually achieved something are doing more than the government itself” (Bojan, Male, DSE, Slovenia).* Highlighting the role of other actors in the eco-system suggests that young people have less confidence in the government to support them, which highlights a breakdown in institutional trust amongst young entrepreneurs.

When discussing specific support for social entrepreneurship, one of the supporting actors (a facilitator at a youth entrepreneurship organisation) explained the lack of incentive for operating a social enterprise, explaining that:

“for the normal entrepreneurship, there is some support because you get some help when you're opening a new business and so on in the first year and so on. But regarding social entrepreneurship? At least for now, the law itself, the regulations and so on are not very motivating, basically, it does not enable the company get any benefits. You know if you register your company as a social enterprise, you do not get any support, it's quite the opposite, you're actually limiting yourself. You start asking yourself why I would do that to myself?” (Lidija, Female, NGO Staff, Slovenia).

This is why many of the young digital-social entrepreneurs registered themselves as either traditional businesses or as NGOs, due to the limiting nature that operating as a social

enterprise enacted. Whilst another DSE explained that there has been change, and a new ministry targeting youth and social enterprise, they explained how:

“We have a new ministry that deals, you know with green transition and young people and so on. it's alright, it has very specific goals, you know, so you don't just chuck it into some other ministry and say, alright, never going to deal with it. So, the idea behind what they're trying to do is good, but everything moves too slow to even be able to do anything, even if the government exists now for two years already, I mean, the current one can't really say that they've done anything concrete. These kinds of bodies operate just way too slow to be able to make I think a big genuine difference” (Alfonz, Male, DSE, Slovenia).

Even when government efforts have been made, the confidence that young people have in them delivering on their goals is minimal – their interactions with the government and the broader entrepreneurial ecosystem are more reluctant and sceptical.

7.4. International Donor Community

International donors and actors, such as the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and United States Agency for International Development (USAID) played an important role in smoothing the transition from socialism to capitalism across both countries, facilitating the development of new institutions that would shape the political environment entrepreneurial eco-system as it is today. Even now, international actors such as the EU, World Bank and ILO play a key role in the entrepreneurial eco-system, whether this be through implementing policy initiatives, financing grants and projects to develop entrepreneurship or through facilitating dialogue with key stakeholders on how to better improve the eco-system (Bartlett, 2021; Pickering, 2010). Throughout these interviews, the role of international actors was enormous – they were seen to shape the development of the political environment and the entrepreneurial eco-system, as well as the direction of entrepreneurialism that young people are taking. However, the role of these international actors was debated, with discussions about whether they were a force for good or an outsider imposing their own views on nations that needed ‘something else’.

Slovenia has the benefit of being an EU member state, whilst Kosovo is currently in the application process of joining the EU – meaning each country's relationship with the EU differs, which is reflected in their political environment. Due to war and the reconstruction efforts post-war, as well as the ongoing Kosovo-Serbia negotiations, there is a large international actor presence in Kosovo today – particularly focusing on the economic

development of Kosovo (Bartlett, 2021). This comes in the form of actors such as the World Bank, the UNDP and USAID, who finance many youth start-up initiatives as well as provide financial support to business incubators and youth-oriented NGOs working in this domain.

For young entrepreneurs and stakeholders in Kosovo, there was an overarching idea that international organizations and donors were there to ‘push solutions’ in Kosovo, rather than to work collaboratively with the government. One DSE explained the role of international actors in his lifetime as:

“I’ve been in Kosovo since the end of war in 1999, I’m a war kid. So, I grew up during the war, and since then, you know, there’s various international organizations and donors that help push solutions, you know, and when you’re a war-torn country, it’s always, you’re always building communities first. After the emergency phase is done, then all the international donors and community want to help the youth, you know, contribute to economic growth, and help them find a job or find or start something new that will provide good jobs and opportunities for others as well” (Flamur, Male, DSE, Kosovo).

This notion of ‘pushing solutions’ was a recurring theme amongst Kosovan participants, where one young entrepreneur explained how these directives were influencing the government to ‘greenwash’ some of their calls in order to seem more sustainably minded in order to gain support from the EU or World Bank. This DSE explained how:

“when it comes to sustainable business, I would say especially coming from this field academically as well, I’ve noticed that as a developing country, when these terms come to Kosovo, they’re due to EU funds or, you know, some sort of World Bank funds or funds that if you say OK, I am sustainable, you get this money. So, I would say sometimes you can notice that there’s a kind of greenwashing move from the government, where they push forward practices that they think are sustainable, even if they’re not really” (Sihana, Female, DSE, Kosovo).

This sentiment was reflected in Slovenia, where many young entrepreneurs and stakeholders felt that directives from the European Commission and the European Union were being pushed on to them, particularly when it comes to issues surrounding sustainable and social entrepreneurship. This was both considered to be a good thing, as it was encouraging more socially responsible behaviour, but also failed to account for the lack of ‘buy in’ or knowledge from the state actors in these areas. One DSE, when speaking about their experience applying for a sustainable business grant from the government, expressed frustration that:

“this is somebody who has no clue about the topic, you know, and they are just forced to translate the directives from European Commission, because in calls that use the European

budgets, you know, of course you, you have to follow these constraints. You can see that a lot of things don't make sense and they do it because they kind of have to implement some stuff from European Commission, it's weird. What can I say? I think there's still a lot of capacity that needs to be built in the Slovenian ecosystem about this whole sustainability field is very young and people are just trying to find their way through it, and it can be a bit awkward as they don't really know what they're doing" (Viljem, Male, DSE, Slovenia).

This 'sustainability from above' perspective was expressed by another young entrepreneur, who discussed how:

"they are starting to jump on this train of social change and sustainability, and that's mainly because of the trends and European Union pushing us in into that direction. I'm not sure that we have this humanitarian or environmentalist idea written so high up in our value system that we would just do that. I mean, as a society we do those things just because they are right. But we are now doing it like as a society because we are in some part encouraged, or let's say, better to say, pushed into thinking about these aspects" (Vilko, Male, DSE, Slovenia).

This impacted young entrepreneurs because it heavily dictated the type of support available to them – where this support was often decided by the World Bank or EU without understanding the contextual complexities of starting or operating such businesses in Kosovo or Slovenia. This highlights the vulnerability of the 'ecosystem' of both countries, when donor priorities change, if it is donor funding that is propping up each ecosystem (as is currently the case), what might happen to the longevity of the ecosystem and the ongoing support for young digital-social entrepreneurs when governments in both countries are seen as not doing enough (Bartlett, 2023).

7.5. Business Environment

The business environment refers to *"the set of conditions outside a firm's control that have a significant influence on how businesses behave throughout their life cycle"* (Aterido et al 2011; p609). There is no academic consensus on what constitutes the business environment (discussed in Chapter 2), but Eifert et al (2005) believe it is a sum of factors, such as government policies, human capital, infrastructure and geographical environment which affect the operational efficiency of a business. The business environment is an important breeding ground for entrepreneurial activity, with a strong business environment leading to higher rates of innovative entrepreneurship (such as digital-social entrepreneurship), and a

higher uptake of innovative entrepreneurship amongst young people. The World Bank (2022; p1) outline three features of a 'strong' business environment:

1. it promotes economic growth through innovation and entrepreneurship;
2. it increases equality of opportunities among market participants;
3. it ensures the general sustainability of the economy in the long term

A strong business environment provides higher confidence for both the young entrepreneur, but also investors and customers interested in the products and services being sold by the young entrepreneur (Aterido et al 2011). For investors, a hostile business environment indicates a difficult place to 'invest', meaning that young entrepreneurs are left with restricted access to external financing (Ovaska & Sobel, 2005). For consumers, a weak business environment signals an overall weak economy, meaning that there is less demand for goods and services (outside of essentials) due to restricted incomes and consumer confidence (Lajqi & Krasniqi, 2017). For this section, discussions surrounding the business environment relate to business administration and access to finance, as these were the key areas discussed by DSE and supporting actors.

7.5.1. Business Administration (Registration and Taxation)

When discussing the business environment with DSE, the two topics that frequently recurred was the process of registering the business, and the process of paying tax. Most DSE in Kosovo had formally registered their business, however in Slovenia, this was not the case, due to complexities of being a student and an entrepreneur. However, in recent years, both Kosovo and Slovenia have made efforts to improve their business environment, with Kosovo recently digitalizing the entire business registration process and Slovenia simplifying the process too (OECD, 2022)

As discussed in Chapter 5, most DSE registered their businesses as traditional enterprises as opposed to social enterprises. In Kosovo, due to the recent digitalization of the registration processes, one of the DSEs highlighted the ease of registering, explaining how:

"I think it's easy to open a business in Kosovo, especially a startup, it's free, it's online. So, to open a business, I think it's easy. It's one of the easiest countries to open a business here. I registered a business in Estonia and it's a much harder procedure than here in Kosovo" (Bardhyll, Male, DSE, Kosovo).

Many DSE were grateful for the recent digitalization initiatives due to the inefficiencies of public sector staff in the business registration offices. When reflecting on the pre-digitalization registration process, another DSE highlighted how:

“I think in terms of starting a business and then maintaining it, it's an easy thing to do now. I think back when we registered the business in 2016, I think. It took about 3 days, and it was a bit tedious. Now I think you can do it online within one day. So, there's improvement in that, I think it's now easy” (Jetmir, Male, DSE, Kosovo).

The business registration process being digitalized makes it more accessible to young people, who may not have the time to register at the business registration office (nor to deal with the bureaucracy), and the process may be more clearly outlined online than it would be in-person.

Additionally, many Kosovan DSE expressed satisfaction at the concessions made to new businesses, with one DSE explaining how

“it's very easy to register a business. Also, there are many, many things that the government has made to us as new businesses. For example, we do not pay taxes if we don't get €30,000 per year cash flow, and so many good things” (Ilir, Male, DSE, Kosovo).

These concessions, such as no tax until over a certain amount of cash flow per year, support young people starting their own business – due to the low barriers to entry. However, as discussed in earlier in this Chapter, many DSE were dissatisfied with the lack of financial support (such as grants) available to entrepreneurs – which ties in to the lack of tax under €30,000 paid. This highlights how Kosovo's current set-up makes it easy to start the business (in terms of registering and operating), but more difficult when preparing to grow the business, due to a lack of public funds available to finance businesses.

Whilst alternatively, in Slovenia, you need a minimum of €7,500 in the bank account to register a business and are taxed regardless of cash flow (Slovenian Business Point 2022). Whilst this was perceived by DSE as creating a more difficult environment to operate their business, it did mean that there were much more public funds available to support entrepreneurs (highlighted in Chapter 6 by the availability of grants and public-funded incubators). However, DSE still expressed frustration at the high tax, with one DSE discussing how:

“it's not very complicated. I think for the new companies, tax is quite high because they don't lower the taxes or anything for the new companies, young companies, for startups and at the beginning it's like. You don't have a lot of money for you, because of the taxes and everything.” (Nina, Female, DSE, Slovenia).

This highlights how DSE in Slovenia perceive the environment as being unfriendly to entrepreneurship, despite the availability of grants and other public-funded support mechanisms in place for them – the tax burden they felt was higher. This frustration was particularly felt by DSE who had not yet received state support, with one DSE explaining how:

“for last year, for 2022 we paid €700 of taxes, right. And but the country, like the government doesn't give us anything in return, right? So, we paid the taxes because it's like the law that you should pay the exceptional amount of what you have right? But just because we were not making any extra cost, right. It's always said that we have to pay this amount. Yeah. And at the same time, like I said before, at the same time when you ask about anything the governmental institutions, they don't do much for you, right?” (Katica, Female, DSE, Slovenia).

The lack of perceived reciprocity for their taxes by the DSE highlights the perceived ‘unfairness’ of the tax system, particularly as taxes are required to be made even if no profit is made. However, this could also tie in to the previously discussed perception of Slovenia being anti-business amongst young DSE, where government priorities are focused on foreign investment. It also ties in to potential comparisons made by young Slovenian DSE with other countries, where they see more favourable tax conditions and business environments in other countries and perceive Slovenia as ‘anti-business’ in comparison.

7.5.2. Accessing Finance

Whilst the registration and taxation process are relatively easy for young entrepreneurs to navigate, the extent of the financial support available to young people varied drastically across contexts. For young people in Kosovo, accessing start-up financing was a significant challenge due to a lack of state funds (due to low taxes on SMEs), corruption in the grants and contracting processes and a lack of access to bank loans (due to a lack of collateral). For young people in Slovenia, there were significantly better opportunities to access state funds, such as the Slovenian Enterprise Fund, as well as easier access to capital and less perceived corruption in government grants.

Whilst accessing finance as a young entrepreneur is usually more challenging, in Kosovo, one young entrepreneur explained that there are concessions made in the 'point scoring' process of public funds for young entrepreneurs and women entrepreneurs, discussing how:

"I do think when it comes to their grant programs, they try to involve startups as much as possible. They give points to people founders that are younger. They give points to like more points, for example, when you apply for a grant or something, you get more points, if you are under 40, for example, or if you as a founder are women, so you get like some benefits to it. So, I would say they think about this. They don't like, ignore you. These are all processes that support us as well, even though they might look, you know, small, but they still are, you know, like positive things" (Sihana, Female, DSE, Kosovo).

The concessions made for young people and for women entrepreneurs in government funding highlights a growing awareness about the particular challenges that these two groups of entrepreneurs face in receiving financing (discussed in Chapter 5), and an effort from the government to mediate these barriers through additional support. However, when it comes to public entities paying out these grants, young entrepreneurs highlighted how difficult it was to receive funds they had been awarded, describing how:

"when I'm saying within Kosovo, I'm meaning most of the entities we are working with are in the manner of not paying the invoices and the due date and it creates a lot of barriers for us and for entrepreneurs to have a sustainable cash flow. Which on the other hand, also creates a lot of issues on the liquidity itself and when we know that it's not that we have a lot of stock, but we have our brains, all of our colleagues at the end of the month should be paid" (Afrim, Male, DSE, Kosovo).

So, whilst there are concerted efforts from government to prioritize young entrepreneurs and women entrepreneurs in the awarding of grants, the bureaucracy of the public entities makes it difficult to actually receive these funds on time – which impacts the ability of the business to develop.

However, whilst the government do give out some funds, many young entrepreneurs were unaware of this, with one young entrepreneur explain how:

"but you don't get a lot of financial help from the Government, all of the help that you get is from the institutions that are from EU or from other institutions, like everything right now, is basically from the EU. To my knowledge, there is no governmental institution that gives direct funding for startups" (Qendrim, Male, DSE, Kosovo).

This highlights either a lack of awareness about public funds for start-ups amongst young entrepreneurs (and a lack of communication of these from government), or a lack of transparency about where funding for projects coming from – as this participant highlighted how all funds come from the EU. For those that sought out private financing, many explained how they faced additional questioning due to their perceived lack of experience and the perceived instability of investing in ‘tech’ in Kosovo, in comparison to more stable sectors such as real estate. They discussed how:

“So it's not like we have a lot of start-ups, so every person that want to give you money, they will ask you a lot of questions and they will not understand your market because the technology is new and not everyone understands, and it's more convenient for them to invest in the real estate and this kind of stuff that they understand, what they see and they touch. But with technology they will not give you money and they will not support you because they don't know what to say, even if they're supported, the rate of failure is very high” (Zamir, Male, DSE, Kosovo).

Whilst the ‘extensive questioning’ could be perceived as a barrier to seeking external financing, it could also be for the purpose of tackling corruption in funds, which has been highlighted as a government priority (discussed in Chapter 3) and is also a priority amongst DSE themselves. However, considering the lack of angel investors and seed funding available in Kosovo due to the weak business environment, this makes it more difficult for DSE to access finance for their business. One of the policymakers explained the availability of ‘grants’ to businesses in specific sectors, discussing how:

“KIESA supports through some grant scheme instruments that we provide to production and production sectors. So, we financially support them to buy technological innovation which increases production. So that's not enough, but that that's a good instrument.” (Driton, Male, Policymaker, Kosovo)

They highlight how the grant is only available in the production sector, which is not one where DSEs involved in this study typically operate. They also acknowledge how the current financing options are ‘not enough’, which highlights how policymakers are aware of the weak financing opportunities from the government. They went on to discuss other ‘subsidies’ available from separate agencies, explaining how:

“But the Ministry of Agriculture provides subsidies, sorry, the Ministry of Regional Development. They provide a lot of grants, maybe not in a sophisticated way, or in a well designed way, but they give it to companies.” (Driton, Male, Policymaker, Kosovo)

They emphasize the poor design of current financial support from SMEs in general, which aligns with what the DSEs discussed in regard to financial support in Kosovo.

Young entrepreneurs in Slovenia discussed the role of the Slovenian Entrepreneurship Fund in providing loans and grants to start-up's, with one DSE highlighting how they were rejected for a grant but approved for a loan with the same 'bid'. They explained how:

"Slovenia has the what's it called the Slovenian Entrepreneurship Fund, or something like that, and they support startups, so you can apply for different either funds that you don't have to give back loans or good loans like you would get something in a bank or something? So, you can apply to those. You know, do your pitch. You do everything, so one thing is that you can get, I think, €54,000 of nonrefundable money. We applied to that one right after we launched, but we didn't get it because they said we weren't innovative enough. Then we applied for the next, let's say round, which is the convertible loan of €75,000 like maybe four months after the first one" (Danijela, Female, DSE, Slovenia).

However, even the ability to access a loan from the government is significant, as another DSE highlighted the challenges in receiving a loan from the bank to start their business, explaining how:

"the other stuff like financial stuff and. I started business with my own savings. But it's very hard to get money like from the bank or something like that. As a young entrepreneur with the young company, it's almost like impossible. I think that's because of the government, the government, because they don't support businesses, right?" (Nina, Female, DSE, Slovenia).

The expectation that the government provides support potentially derives from the level of taxes paid by SMEs, and the assumed reciprocity that that should entail for DSE. However, this does not acknowledge the reality that financing a business from savings was one of the most common forms of financing a SME. Whilst this lends itself to a discussion about privilege and who can be an entrepreneur, as outlined, there is extensive state support for start-ups in Slovenia, and DSE who are not on the receiving end of these funds felt higher levels of 'anti-business' sentiment from the government.

One young entrepreneur explained how they received investment from seed funds and private equity, and how this was more developed in Slovenia than in Croatia (a neighbouring, post-socialist country). They explained how:

"so, we are founded in Slovenia, and we actually got investments from private equity, and we got a grant from Slovenian government, I think around €50,000. And that was really actually"

really, really a good start. The ecosystem in Slovenia it was developing for last four years or five years, like really rapidly, I must say, and the support system was really good. I was born in Croatia and went to college in Slovenia, so I know how it is in Croatia too and I can see that Slovenia was like 4 years ahead of Croatia in some kind of stuff. And they had really good programmes to give direct financial injections to startups” (Mirko, Male, DSE, Slovenia).

However, Mirko went on to explain that these funds are not generous enough to be competitive on the international market, explaining how *“you don’t have a lot of money from Slovenian seed funds, so you cannot compete with the UK startups. So, you’ll only get like 400,000 and you cannot compete with them”* (Mirko, Male, DSE, Slovenia). Whilst the seed funds are enough to be competitive on the local market, competing a small country on the global scale also emphasized significant challenges for the young entrepreneurs.

7.5.3 Post-Conflict Business Environment

Kosovo has the double challenge of being both small and young, only declaring independence from Serbia in 2008, and also being the smallest country in the region. Slovenia has the challenge of bordering Austria, Italy and Croatia, much bigger and more powerful countries where many of the young people often migrate to (as well as Germany). Many of the DSE in Kosovo highlighted the challenges of being a very small (and young) country, as well as being a country that is primarily associated with its history of conflict. One DSE explained how this meant that *“we are still a very young country, and we are not yet consolidated and established on the economic sense. We are still trying to figure out like, what can we do and stuff like that”* (Agron, Male, DSE, Kosovo). This is reflected in the political and business environment, where institutions are still developing and post-conflict challenges such as corruption are still being addressed. Another DSE explained how:

“I think we’re still in transition. People tend to say that it’s been 20 years now already and we should have had that, I think, but I believe that the pace that we’ve gone through could have been faster because if some policies were appropriate and some level of levels of government wouldn’t misuse some budget” (Diellza, Female, DSE, Kosovo).

The commentary regarding the management of the country by the government was reflected by many of the DSE and supporting actors in Kosovo, who felt that the instability of the previous decades had led to economic mismanagement of the country. In particular, the weakness of the economy was discussed by a supporting actor (a policymaker), who explained how:

“we live in a trade deficit. We basically import everything. So if as an economist, if you think of that, you automatically believe that there is a lot of space to kind of develop businesses and create products that that can be sold within the country, but that limits the selling power, I would say, because Kosovo is pretty isolated and unless you're an IT or consultant that that you can sell your services outside Kosovo, Kosovo is really small market and a lot of people who want to do more, I think, they might tend to still leave the country, go somewhere where they're open borders for trade and, you know” (Arben, Male, Policymaker, Kosovo).

This economic mismanagement and the weak economic conditions have led to many of Kosovan youth leaving Kosovo, contributing to the significant ‘brain drain’ experienced across the Western Balkans (Gribben, 2018). Many young people are pessimistic about their chances of success in Kosovo, with one DSE explaining how:

“We just can't succeed in Kosovo, I think, because of the very low employment level, we have unhealthy unemployment here in Kosovo, people still live in big families, and they get supported from one person, let's say who's maybe more prone to build a business, and that person is keeping a job. And if that person wants to quit the job, start a business that costs the whole family and maybe the community” (Blerta, Female, DSE, Kosovo).

This highlights how the culture of ‘community-orientedness’ that is common in post-socialist countries (Berkowitz & DeJong, 2005) could hinder entrepreneurialism, as the weak economy and high unemployment means many young nascent entrepreneurs may be unable to take the risk towards entrepreneurship. Other young entrepreneurs were more optimistic about the business environment in Kosovo, with one highlighting the perceived instability as being a push point for entrepreneurship, explaining that *“entrepreneurship really blooms when the economy is not stable”* (Jetmir, Male, DSE, Kosovo). This relates back to the rise in entrepreneurialism in Kosovo during the 80s and 90s due to the expulsion of Albanians from public life and touches more on necessity entrepreneurship during times of political instability.

7.6. Conclusion

This chapter sought to address RQ1 *“what is the current policy and business environment for encouraging digital-social entrepreneurship in post-socialist Kosovo and Slovenia”*

The current policy environment for digital-social entrepreneurship in Kosovo and Slovenia is conducive to the ‘digital’ component, with favourable conditions and support for digital entrepreneurs due to the ongoing digitalization of public services in each country and subsequent normalisation of ‘digital’. However, in both countries, the support for social entrepreneurship was weak.

In Slovenia, there are frameworks in place for social entrepreneurship, including a special status. However, in practice this was not utilized by any of the DSE interviewed in this study, due to the lack of additional support it provided them and the bureaucracy in accessing it.

In Kosovo, there was limited support for social entrepreneurship, with a draft policy document 'floating around' but no real tangible effort towards putting anything in place. This meant that many of the DSE interviewed registered their businesses as NGOs in order to access support and opportunities that a social enterprise would typically be able to access elsewhere (such as grants and priorities in government tenders). The current situation in both countries meant that DSEs felt unsupported by their government, and drew on international comparisons to the USA, Israel, Netherlands, Germany and UK on how government could better support DSEs.

Additionally, the role of international donors was seen as highly influential on the policy and business environment, with Slovenia's EU membership and Kosovo's overdependence on international donor organisations such as the UN, USAID and UNICEF influencing the development of digital-social entrepreneurship.

The business environment in both countries was perceived as progressing.

In Kosovo, DSE were satisfied with the process of registering a business and paying tax, however, were unsatisfied with the lack of government support available to businesses. There was a disconnect between the low taxes businesses paid (no tax under €30,000) and the resource constraints experienced by the government in financing businesses. Additionally, the specific challenges of being a post-conflict society and the stigma associated to this, led to challenges in outsourcing work due to the perceived risk of re-entering conflict.

In Slovenia, DSE were satisfied with the process of registering a business but dissatisfied with the amount of tax paid. Many DSE were also students, so unable to register their business formally without losing student status – meaning many DSE's interviewed had not undergone the formal registration process and were thus unable to access government support.

Overall, there was more optimism in Slovenia than in Kosovo surrounding the development of entrepreneurship, which was tied into Slovenia's geographical position – the entrepreneurial ecosystems of neighbouring countries were considered to be developing quickly, which has a spillover effect into the support that young Slovenian digital-social entrepreneurs could access.

Chapter 8: Discussion

8.1. Introduction

This study focused on youth digital-social entrepreneurship due to a growing interest from entrepreneurs to embed digital technologies into socially meaningful ventures. This ties in to existing initiatives from international governmental organisations such as the European Commission's 'Digital Social Innovation for Europe (DSI4EU) program, highlighting the relevance of this topic. Young DSEs were chosen as a sub-section due to youth entrepreneurship being a policy priority across many international governmental organisations (such as the UN and the European Commission), and due to youth being a marginalizing characteristic in entrepreneurship due to the increased barriers to entry that they face (Green 2013).

The overarching research question for this study was "how do young (18-30 years old) DSEs perceive the way that they are supported and developed in the post-socialist environments of Kosovo and Slovenia?". This involved a series of subsidiary questions, which were:

RQ1. What is the current policy and business environment for encouraging digital and social entrepreneurship in post-socialist Kosovo and Slovenia?

RQ2. What are the drivers and barriers for young DSEs in Kosovo and Slovenia, particularly relating to gender, age, institutional environment and social capital?

RQ3. What are the current support arrangements (e.g., training, mentorship, etc.) for developing youth DSEs in Kosovo and Slovenia, and how do they experience them?

In addressing these questions, Chapters 5, 6 and 7 indicate quite strongly that young DSEs in Kosovo and Slovenia feel constrained by their environment, whether that be the social, political, institutional, or business environment. In this chapter, the discussion is focused on six central themes that have emerged in relation each sub-question and which signal the specific contributions by this thesis.

The focus of the discussion that follows is across the six themes. The first theme is the drivers of youth digital-social entrepreneurship in the post-socialist context, exploring the intrinsic and extrinsic factors which motivate young DSEs to pursue digital-social entrepreneurship. The second theme is the barriers to digital-social entrepreneurship, examining the key constraints that young DSEs face in their digital-social entrepreneurship

journey. The third theme explores the gendered differences of youth digital-social entrepreneurship, and how young women DSEs experience a double disadvantage relating to their age and gender when undertaking digital-social entrepreneurship. The fourth theme discusses the role of the formal education system in shaping and supporting youth digital-social entrepreneurship, outlining the weaknesses in the current systems in both countries. The fifth theme examines the role of incubator and accelerator programmes, how they support youth DSEs and what institutional arrangements for incubation and acceleration are most appropriate for supporting youth DSEs. The sixth theme explores the regulatory frameworks which are influenced by societal attitudes towards digital-social entrepreneurship, drawing on the contextual history of both countries and the impact this has had on the development of institutions and the support they provide.

8.2. Drivers and Barriers of Youth Digital-Social Entrepreneurship

The second research question for this study aimed to identify “*what are the drivers and barriers to digital-social entrepreneurship for young digital-social entrepreneurs in Kosovo and Slovenia?*”. This question was explored through the semi-structured interviews with young digital-social entrepreneurs and supporting actors. Digital-social entrepreneurship is a relatively new phenomena, in which there is very limited literature exploring this topic, meaning that there is a research gap relating to current understanding of the drivers and barriers of digital-social entrepreneurship. This lends itself to an additional research gap relating to the specific knowledge gap surrounding drivers and barriers of youth digital-social entrepreneurship, particularly within the post-socialist context which this study examined. Therefore, this section will discuss the current understanding of the drivers and barriers for entrepreneurship, before bridging the knowledge gap and outlining the findings from this study relating to the drivers and barriers of youth digital-social entrepreneurship in the post-socialist context. Additionally, it will highlight three prominent findings from the study – the impact of ‘international influence’ on the drivers for youth digital-social entrepreneurship and how this varied across context, the barriers facing young DSE, and the challenges faced by young women DSEs and the double disadvantage they faced due to age and gender.

Reflecting on the discussions surrounding the drivers of entrepreneurship in Chapter 2.3, the key factors that drive entrepreneurship are personal circumstances and characteristics, sociocultural and economic factors, and institutional support and policies. McClelland (1961) argues that individuals that are highly aspirational with a strong desire for achievement are more likely to pursue entrepreneurship, whilst Rotter (1966) argues that

those with higher levels of control of their own life (such as individual economic conditions) are more driven towards entrepreneurship. In the case of post-socialist and post-conflict societies, a desire for achievement and internal control are considered to be the key characteristics of entrepreneurs, as they reflect more 'individualistic' traits which are more aligned with entrepreneurship (Dopeke and Zilibotti 2014; Borozan and Pfeifer 2014; Demirgüc-Kunt et al 2011). For social entrepreneurs, there is a widely identified drive to create social value and tackle social problems (Dees 2001; Dorado 2006; Austin et al 2006), but they are considered to be just as opportunistic as traditional entrepreneurs (Tucker et al 2019; Zahra et al 2009). There is a strong relationship between the economy and entrepreneurship, where entrepreneurial activity is more prominent in countries with higher levels of income inequality (Reynolds et al 2001). Times of economic crisis and recession, such as the COVID19 pandemic and the 2008-2009 financial crash, breed entrepreneurship – however, this is typically necessity entrepreneurship (push-factor entrepreneurship) which is considered to be less productive than opportunity entrepreneurship (pull-factor entrepreneurship) (Verheul et al 2010; Weick 1995).

Current knowledge surrounding the barriers to traditional entrepreneurship identify fear of failure (and associated psychological factors), access to capital, access to support, legitimacy issues, entry regulations and the institutional environment as the key barriers for entrepreneurship. Bosma et al (2009) utilizes Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) data to demonstrate that fear of failure is the principal psychological barrier to entrepreneurship. For some startups, the 'liability of newness' and the legitimacy challenges that come with being a new venture (Pitelis 2009; Aldrich and Auster 1986), or a venture founded by a person of a marginalized identity (Kibler et al 2017) are significant barriers. This is a particular challenge for young entrepreneurs, who are perceived as being inexperienced and ill prepared for entrepreneurship (Schoof 2006). Inadequate access to financing and business support are barriers to entrepreneurship (Krasniqi 2007) and indicate a weak entrepreneurial ecosystem (Ács et al 2018). For digital entrepreneurs, lack of access to an entrepreneurial ecosystem is highlighted as a significant barrier, due to the high cost of starting and accelerating a 'tech' business and the heightened need for networking and investors as opposed to other forms of entrepreneurship which are less capital intensive (Zivae et al 2014). Weak entry regulations and high regulatory barriers impact the rate of start-up activity, and the growth of existing start-ups in the industry (Klapper et al 2004), whilst a weak institutional environment also poses a distinct barrier to entrepreneurship (Jain and Ali 2013).

8.2.1. Drivers of Digital-Social Entrepreneurship

There has been an emergent debate about whether young entrepreneurs are more intrinsically or extrinsically motivated to pursue entrepreneurship (Sulaiman et al 2021; Arshad et al 2019), which is also an ongoing debate in relation to women entrepreneurs (Arshad et al 2020; Eagley et al 2000) – the ongoing discussion about whether age or gender has an influencing role in the motivations towards entrepreneurship. Sulaiman et al (2021) concludes that young entrepreneurs are more intrinsically motivated towards entrepreneurship (although extrinsic motivation is still present), whilst Arshad et al (2020) and Eagly et al (2000) conclude that women are more intrinsically motivated towards entrepreneurship. Social entrepreneurship is considered to be driven by altruism and passion, which are primarily intrinsic motivators (Petrovskava and Mirakyan 2018; Brieger and DeClerq 2019). Therefore, where this study focused on youth digital-social entrepreneurship, the initial underlying assumption was that youth DSE are primarily intrinsically motivated – that is, motivated by a social purpose and autonomy. The extent to which an individual will seek entrepreneurship depends upon situational factors: whether they are pulled to entrepreneurship through opportunity or pushed to entrepreneurship out of necessity. Whilst previous thinking surrounding entrepreneurial motivation considered ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors as opposite ends of a spectrum (Dimov 2007; Shane et al 2003), other scholars, such as Elliot (2008), argue that push and pull factors work simultaneously – individuals can be both pushed and pulled into entrepreneurship through same set of circumstances.

In this study, young DSE in both Kosovo and Slovenia were primarily ‘pulled’ into digital-social entrepreneurship through opportunity – they had access to opportunities (such as business competitions, incubation support, etc.) which facilitated their entrepreneurial journey. This was more prominent in Slovenia, where young DSE typically were tackling wider societal challenges that often did not have a direct impact on their daily lives – they became DSEs through opportunity-recognition. They identified these wider societal challenges through frameworks such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and their ventures sought to tackle these challenges on a national or international level. Whereas in Kosovo, more young DSE appear to have been ‘pulled’ into digital-social entrepreneurship out of the necessity of tackling a local social challenge, such as air pollution. When discussing the antecedents of their entrepreneurship, they were more likely to discuss how they were tackling a local challenge out of frustration at it not being tackled by policymakers – therefore, they felt pulled out of necessity to address it due to political inaction.

Where the SDGs were a prominent point of conversation with DSE in Slovenia, this led to a mapping of SDG priorities amongst all participants, with the purpose of further analysing motivations and trends in motivation. The UN SDGs are a useful tool for mapping business priorities, as it provides an insight into the key ‘global challenges’ young people

perceive as being most important in their country (Sottini and Ciambotti 2021). Mapping and aligning business priorities with a universal framework such as the SDGs is important for young DSE, as it emphasizes the relevance of the work they are doing on a ‘larger’ scale and creates a business case for governments to better enable and support digital-social entrepreneurship. An ongoing challenge amongst governments around the world is mapping out effective strategies to tackle the SDGs, and there is a growing awareness about the importance of partnership for the goals (SDG17) and working with the private sector to enable innovative solutions (Grochová and Litzman 2021).

In the follow-up participatory analysis with young DSE, they were asked to map their business in relation to the relevant SDGs. For those who did not respond, this was mapped by the researcher based on the data they provided at the initial phase. This data includes website materials, marketing materials and other social media posts relating to their business. This highlighted the differences between young DSEs in Kosovo and Slovenia and the challenges that frustrated them (Figure 11).

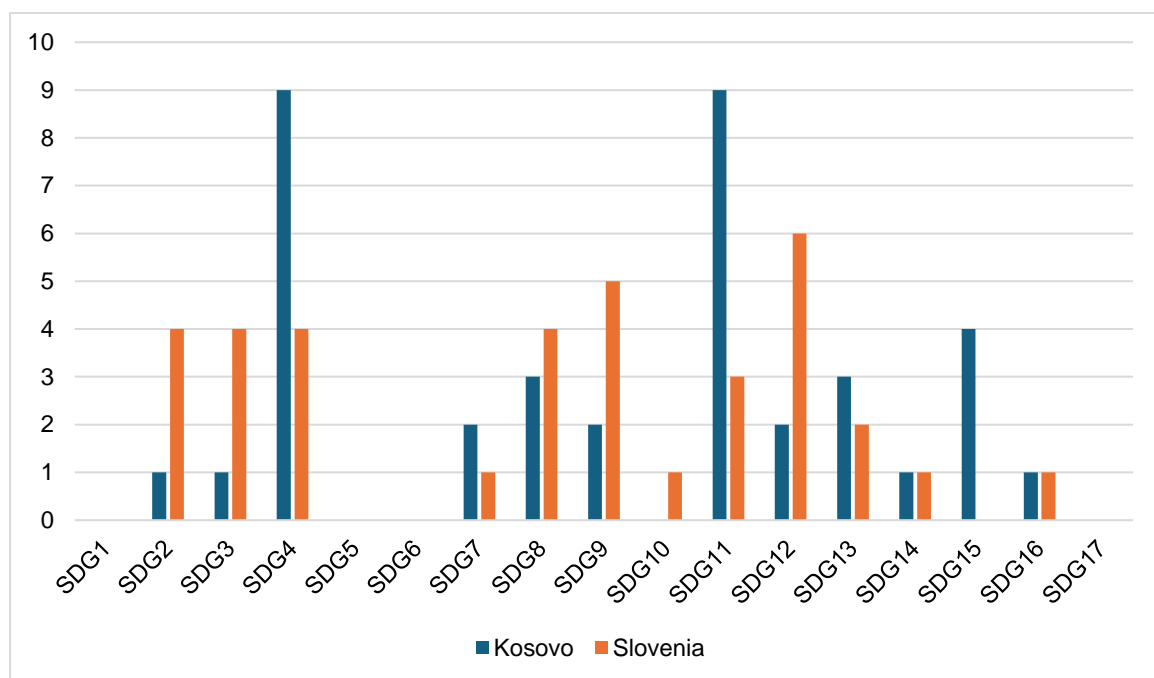


Figure 11: Mapping of Business Priorities and the UN SDGs

In Kosovo, the three most prominent SDGs prioritized by young people were SDG4 Quality Education, SDG11 Sustainable Cities and Communities, and SDG15 Life on Land. In Slovenia, the two most prominent SDGs prioritized by young people were SDG9 Industry,

Innovation, and Infrastructure and SDG12 Responsible Consumption and Production. In discussions with DSEs in Kosovo, this reflected current frustrations at the local situation in Kosovo – the education system was considered to be outdated and not fit for purpose, the level of air pollution in Prishtina is one of the highest in the world, and the government was seen as neglecting climate in their policy priorities. However, for DSEs in Slovenia, their concerns reflected the broader challenges facing Europe, such as making current business models ‘greener’ and reducing over-consumption (reflected in the European Green Deal) (European Commission 2020).

There is currently a research gap relating to antecedents of youth entrepreneurship in post-socialist countries, which this research addresses by highlighting how antecedents of youth DSE are dependent upon the influence of international actors and their priorities. For countries such as Slovenia which were integrated into the international community relatively quickly post-socialism, young DSEs are more engaged with international debates such as the UN SDGs and are pulled to DSE through alignment with these goals. For countries such as Kosovo, which is less integrated with the international community, young DSEs are more engaged with local challenges and frustrated with political inactivity, resulting in them being pushed into DSE out of necessity to tackle the specific, local challenges. These findings also align with existing theories about motivations of youth entrepreneurs and social entrepreneurs, in that they are primarily intrinsically motivated. This assumption holds true, that whilst there were some elements of extrinsic motivation amongst DSE, the primary motivations towards digital-social entrepreneurship were intrinsic, driven by the desire to tackle social challenges, gain autonomy and achieve a social purpose.

8.2.2. Barriers to Digital-Social Entrepreneurship

Young entrepreneurs face particular barriers to entrepreneurship, such as legitimacy issues (Avdullahi, et al., 2022), access to finance (Green, 2013) access to networks (Minola, et al., 2014), and lack of experience (Bignotti & Roux, 2020) being just a few. In both countries, youth faced similar challenges, which were broken down into four components: institutional environment, access to resources, social and human capital and issues of legitimacy and discrimination. Young people identified bureaucracy and the regulatory environment as limiting their ability to operate and scale their businesses. In both countries, the lack of concessions for ‘social’ businesses meant that they were competing on a level playing field with ‘traditional’ businesses, despite operating socially meaning that their operating costs are higher and profit margins slimmer. This left many of the young people disempowered and feeling unsupported

by the institutional environment. In Kosovo, access to resources (such as grants and loans) was heavily restricted, with many young DSEs relying on small donor grants or from savings or borrowing money from family and friends (Gribben, 2018). For those from lower-income backgrounds or less encouraging families, this meant they were heavily restricted on what they could do with their business. In Slovenia, many of the young people were able to access finance easier due to the strong venture capital system in the country and the availability of the EU funds. However, a few participants discussed crossing the border to Croatia, Austria, or Italy to access better financial support.

In both countries, participants highlighted how the lack of entrepreneurship education in the formal education system left them seeking training elsewhere (Anosike 2018; Baptista 2014), which is discussed further in Section 9.7. Particularly in Kosovo, the quality of the overall education system was questioned, where business school curricula were highlighted as being remnant of the socialist era, meaning that many young people's business acumen was acquired outside of the formal education system. A few DSEs in Kosovo were educated outside of Kosovo (such as Finland, Germany, and the USA), highlighting the vast difference in the quality of the education system and the subsequent skills and confidence it gave them when starting their business in comparison to their Kosovo-educated peers (Avdullahi et al 2022; Benedek 2010). This was a contributing factor to issues of legitimacy, where young people were seen as less experienced and incapable of running their own businesses – which impacted their ability to access support. For young women in Kosovo especially, this led to a double-disadvantage, where they faced discrimination based on both their gender and their age.

There is currently a research gap relating to the barriers for youth digital-social entrepreneurship, where previous discussion surrounding the barriers to entrepreneurship draws upon literature from the broader fields of youth entrepreneurship, social entrepreneurship, digital entrepreneurship and traditional entrepreneurship. Existing knowledge surrounding barriers relates to legitimacy, access to capital and support, institutional constraints, psychological factors and entry regulations. This study contributes to this knowledge by expanding on understanding surrounding legitimacy as a barrier to youth entrepreneurship (due to the lack of perceived ability and experience of young entrepreneurs), as well as highlighting issues of legitimacy as a barrier to youth digital-social entrepreneurship (due to the newness of the field and the previously discussed legitimacy concerns surrounding young entrepreneurs in general). Additionally, this study highlights the double disadvantage faced by young women entrepreneurs, in which there is currently limited research exploring the barriers faced by young women. Where it is widely acknowledged that women

entrepreneurs and young entrepreneurs face issues of legitimacy, there is limited scholarship that acknowledges the experiences of those at the intersection of these identities – young women.

8.2.3. Gendered Differences of Digital-Social Entrepreneurship

Historically, the entrepreneur has been assumed to be “*essentially more masculine than feminine, more heroic than cowardly*” (Collins & Moore, 1964, p. 5), with traditional notions of an ‘entrepreneurial prototype’ reflecting that of a man (Díaz García and Welter 2013; Essers and Benschop, 2009). This means that women entrepreneurs are not only challenging ‘the norm’ through creating something new, but by defying what society thinks an entrepreneur is, and what they look and act like. For young women, this is heightened – challenging age-based bias and gender-based biases that both stipulate that they are unexperienced and ill equipped for the job of entrepreneurship (Duncan and Loretto 2004). Young women DSEs are thus navigating spaces that are built around the ‘male’ prototype of an entrepreneur, with Kelan (2009) noting that women are just seen as an “other”, where masculinity is the default. In both countries, young women highlighted sexism and misogynistic culture as being significant barriers to their business development and growth – outlining both covert and overt sexism in their day-to-day operations. In Kosovo, sexism was more overt, where young women DSEs reported being denied meetings and opportunities due to their gender – and the perception that they were ‘incompetent’ to run their businesses. In Slovenia, sexism was more covert, with young women reporting more microaggressions – such as people only addressing their male co-founders and a ‘macho’ culture surrounding business negotiations that excluded them. The masculine culture of entrepreneurship has been discussed by many scholars, with its implications on young women highlighted as being detrimental to their ability to easily run their own businesses (Aggestam and Wigren-Kristoferson 2017; Modarresi and Arasti, 2021).

In Kosovo, this led to the formation of a ‘Women Entrepreneurs Network’, who have created political pressure for more support for women entrepreneurs in the country. This has resulted in positive discrimination in public calls, specific women-only training programs and a spotlight placed on highlighting the work of women entrepreneurs in the country. Supporting young women entrepreneurs in gaining legitimacy requires ‘cultural alignment’, where social actors (such as policy makers) enact various behaviours that give recognition to them as ‘comprehensible field members’. (Lounsbury and Glynn 2001; p546). This can be seen in the way government provides positive discrimination and highlights the work of women entrepreneurs – through women-led business only trade fairs held yearly. However, there is a fine line between legitimization and tokenism, and the way in which the current governments

actions are received appear to still be ‘othering’ young women entrepreneurs, rather than normalizing them as ‘legitimate entrepreneurs’ like their male counterparts (Cornelissen et al 2012). From the discussions with young women entrepreneurs, these government actions have not changed the way that they experience the business environment – with many still reporting overt discrimination when dealing with public and private organisations. In Slovenia, the discussions surrounding gender discrimination were more neutral, with those discussing it only highlighting covert sexism – which, still just as harmful, highlights the different ways in which young women in both countries deal with sexism.

Chapter 5 discussed the key drivers and barriers of youth digital-social entrepreneurship in both countries. Whilst the key drivers of youth digital-social entrepreneurship were similar to that found in previous studies exploring youth entrepreneurship more broadly (Avdullahi, et al., 2022; Gribben, 2018; Minola, et al., 2014), there was a clear gendered difference. Young women were more intrinsically motivated and community-oriented, in line with previous findings in other contexts (Arshad, et al., 2020; Eagly, et al., 2000). Particularly in Kosovo, young women were more focused on improving education – as highlighted by their emphasis on SDG4, whilst young men were more focused on sustainable infrastructural development, as highlighted by their emphasis on SDG11 (Figure 12). In both countries, young men were more motivated by being perceived as doing something good and making a difference, where digital-social entrepreneurship was perceived to enhance their social status. This is reflected in which SDG’s their activities aligned with – where creating impact in infrastructure is perceived as being more publicly visible than in improving education (in the case of Kosovo).

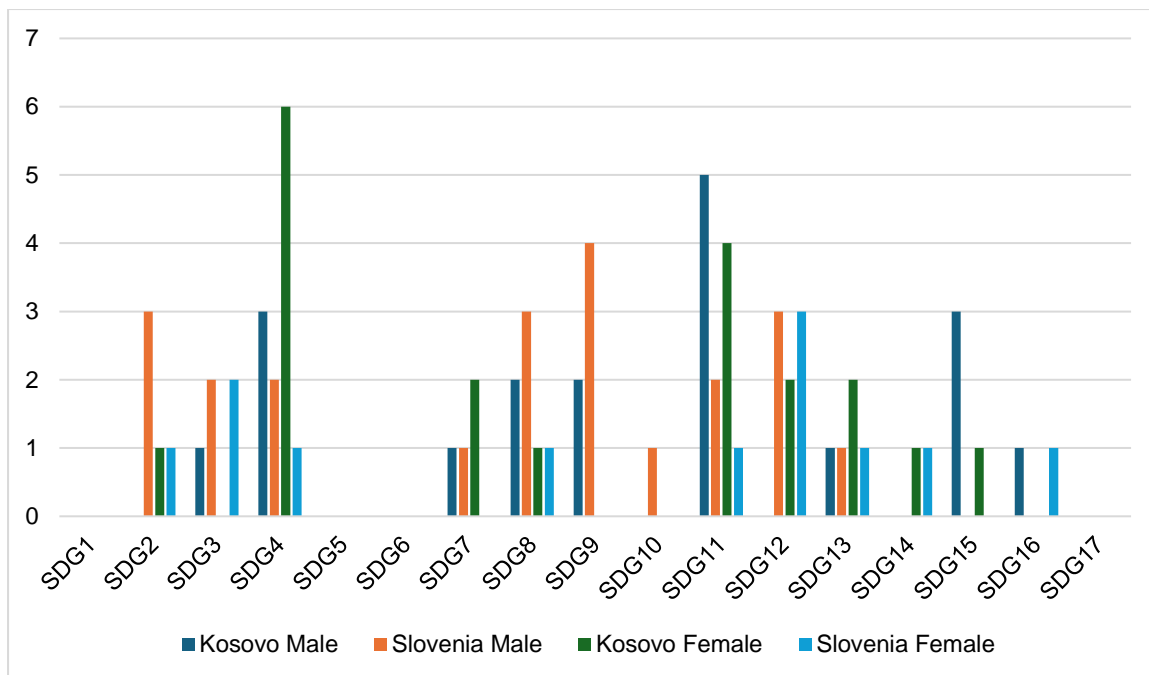


Figure 12: Mapping of Gender, Business Priorities, and the UN SDGs

Young DSEs in both countries experienced similar barriers, outlined in previous studies (Gribben, 2018; Arifi, et al., 2021). Access to finance was more difficult in Kosovo due to an underdevelopment in institutional support and a lack of venture capital, whereas in Slovenia, the lack of social support was a more prominent barrier. The education system in both countries was considered to be insufficient for their needs, however, in Kosovo, this was due to an entirely outdated curricula that derived from the Yugoslav period. Many of the young entrepreneurs in Slovenia reported the lack of familial support for their businesses – and the pressure to enter formal employment as opposed to entrepreneurship. This pressure was less apparent in Kosovo, potentially due to a universal consensus of the lack of employment opportunities for young people in Kosovo. In both countries, young DSEs experienced issues with legitimacy, but this was felt more heavily by young women, who experienced both age-based and gender-based discrimination. The way this was navigated was different, where there appeared to be less unification of young women entrepreneurs in Slovenia (perhaps due the covert nature of sexism), whereas in Kosovo, there was a strong presence of a Women’s Entrepreneur Network and a growing public discussion about how to better support women entrepreneurs. This was also reflected in public policy, highlighting how whilst a culture of misogyny in Kosovo’s was more overt, there were proactive steps being taken to address this by both policymakers and within the broader entrepreneurial eco-system.

Existing literature surrounding women's entrepreneurship was explored in Chapter 2, which highlights that globally women entrepreneurs still face a culture of misogyny when navigating the 'business world'. Whilst there are countries (such as Finland, Iceland) where women entrepreneurs face fewer barriers to entrepreneurship based on their gender, there are still microaggressions experienced when pursuing entrepreneurship, particularly when operating an international business. There is limited research that explores the intersection between women's entrepreneurship and youth entrepreneurship, to examine the intricacies of the experience of young women's entrepreneurship. This study contributes to knowledge in this area by identifying the double disadvantage of legitimacy experienced by young women entrepreneurs, as well as identifying two 'typographies' of resistance by young women entrepreneurs – organizing (such as in Kosovo) or ignoring (such as in Slovenia). In Kosovo, there are intergenerational networks such as the Womens Entrepreneur Network which organise to support young women navigating this environment, whilst in Slovenia, many of the young women discussed how they ignored the situation in the hopes it would improve by itself.

8.3. Importance of the Digital-Social Entrepreneurial Ecosystem

The third research question for this study aimed to determine “*what are the current support arrangements for developing young digital-social entrepreneurs and how do young digital-social entrepreneurs engage with them?*”. This question was examined through the mapping activity of the entrepreneurial ecosystem, and through the semi-structured interviews with young digital-social entrepreneurs and supporting actors. Where digital-social entrepreneurship is a relatively new phenomenon, there is limited research exploring what a 'digital-social entrepreneurial ecosystem' would comprise, therefore, this study examined the ecosystem through Isenberg's (2010) traditional entrepreneurial ecosystem model. According to Isenberg (2010), it comprises elements that can be grouped in six domains: (1) favourable culture; (2) facilitation of policies and leadership; (3) availability of specific finance; (4) relevant human capital; (5) markets favourable to products; and (6) a wide range of institutional and infrastructure support. This section will primarily focus on two components: (4) relevant human capital and (6) a wide range of institutional and infrastructure support, as these are the key areas discussed by young DSEs during the interview process. Discussions of (1) favourable culture and (2) facilitation of policies and leadership are discussed further in Section 8.4.

Andonova et al (2018) highlights how in countries that transitioned from socialism to capitalism (such as Kosovo and Slovenia), entrepreneurial ecosystems needed to be built 'from scratch' due to a lack of previous institutional framework facilitating and encouraging productive entrepreneurship. The notion of an ecosystem under development was reiterated by both DSEs and supporting actors and ties in with both the relatively newness of entrepreneurship to both countries, and the newness of digital-social entrepreneurship as an emergent form of entrepreneurship itself. There is a research gap currently surrounding digital-social entrepreneurial ecosystems which this study seeks to bridge, particularly relating to the development of human capital and the necessary supporting arrangements (such as incubators and accelerators) within a digital-social entrepreneurial ecosystem (and how this differs from a traditional entrepreneurial ecosystem).

8.3.1. Importance of Formal Education System

There is a substantial amount of literature that explores the returns to schooling on labour market outcomes, with higher levels of education being positively associated with higher earnings (Psacharopoulos, 1994), career progression (Harmon, et al., 2003) and job satisfaction (Webbink, 2005). This connects to broader discussions of human capital and its role for employment and entrepreneurship (Chapter 2), where individuals and organisations invest in human capital through formal and informal education in order to increase productivity (Hartog & Oosterbeek, 2007). In regard to entrepreneurship, Calvo and Wellisz (1980) found a positive relationship between educational attainment and probability of entrepreneurship, which is supported by Castro et al (2019) in Mexico, Kristová and Malach (2017) in Czechia and do Paço et al (2015) in England. Drucker (1985), famously states that "*the entrepreneurial mystique? It's not magic, it's not mysterious, and it has nothing to do with the genes. It's a discipline. And, like any discipline, it can be learned*", highlighting how education is a significant contributor to entrepreneurialism. From this study, two key findings emerged: public universities in Kosovo were perceived as outdated and did not provide sufficient support to young DSEs and young DSEs in both countries favoured a 'education for enterprise' approach to entrepreneurship education.

In the consent form and sociodemographic questionnaire participants completed before participating in an interview, they self-reported their highest level of educational attainment (Figure 13).

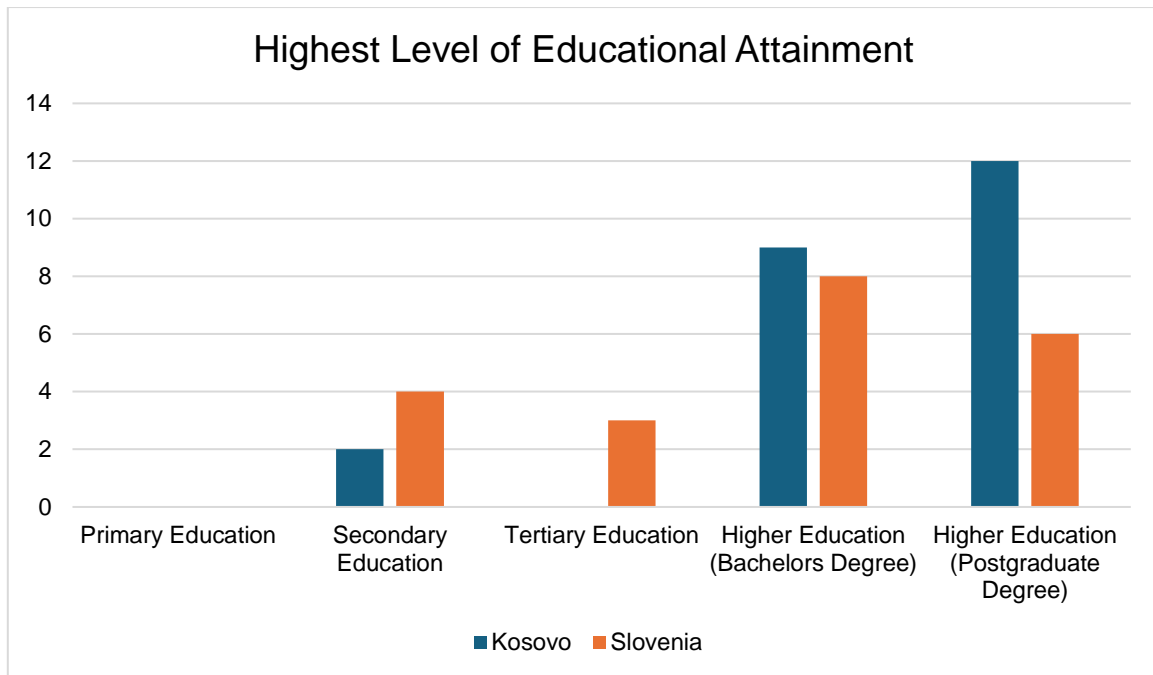


Figure 13: Level of Education Attainment of DSE

Every participant had completed secondary education, where in Slovenia, just under one fifth of participants (4 out of 21) highest level of education attainment was secondary education in comparison to less than one tenth of participants in Kosovo (2 out of 23). At the latter end of the scale, in Kosovo, over half of the DSE had completed a postgraduate degree, in comparison to Slovenia, where less than one third of DSE had completed a postgraduate degree. In both Kosovo and Slovenia, DSE's were more likely to have completed higher education (whether at Bachelor or Postgraduate level), which ties in with previous discussions surrounding the positive relationship between educational attainment and probability of entrepreneurship (Calvo and Wellisz 1980; do Paço et al 2015; Kristová and Malach 2017; Castro et al 2019). This also provides a contextual understanding of the level of experience DSEs had with the formal education system, which reflects on their perspectives and experiences of the education system.

When mapping the existing 'formal education' set up of each country, the presence and role of public and private universities was examined, and the environment for and availability of support for digital-social entrepreneurs within these institutions. Previous studies highlight impact of public and private university attendance on entrepreneurial intentions, with a majority view that private universities have a stronger influence on entrepreneurial intentions and activities than public universities (Lima et al 2014; Perim 2012; Silva and Teixeira 2013). This is due to the availability of resources at private universities (which typically have higher tuition fee costs), such as financial resources, connections with the private sector and

international partnerships and affiliations (Ouragini, et al., 2023). In Kosovo, there was a large presence of private universities identified (which were considered to be of varying quality due to lack of regulation) who provided business support, whereas only one public university was identified that provided business education and support – the University of Prishtina (VentureUP, an in-house business incubator and training centre). In Slovenia, there were fewer universities in general, but each university had a strong business school, and most universities had some form of entrepreneurship training or business incubator associated with it. Whilst no formal data was collected from participants about which higher education institution they attended, the frustrations expressed by Kosovan DSE were primarily about the public university system, in which the University of Prishtina (public university) was repeatedly named. In Slovenia, the underlying assumption is that most DSE were educated in the public university system, due to the lack of private universities in Slovenia.

In both countries, young DSEs felt that the formal education system did not provide them with the skills necessary for entrepreneurship – such as financial management, people management and project management. Extant literature highlights the importance of soft skills development for entrepreneurship and leadership, and the role of the education system in developing these soft skills (Bell 2009; Leroux and Lafleur 2006; Eisen et al 2005). The current education set-up in both countries was considered to be more theoretical than practical, with limited abilities to apply theory to practice and develop their knowledge outside of the conventional mechanisms of classroom assessment. In Kosovo, participants that attended private universities highlighted the importance of the work-based learning many of these institutions offered, including apprenticeships and internships which formed part of the assessment mechanisms in the institutions. In Slovenia, participants discussed enrolling in work placement years – where they took a year out of their degree to study overseas, and many participated in work-based learning activities overseas. Previous studies highlight the importance of work-based learning, and the ability to apply theory to practice, for the development of entrepreneurial skills and competences (Huq and Gilbert 2013; Hynes et al 2011). The lack of work-based learning opportunities in public universities highlights the lack of interest from educators in developing soft skills for entrepreneurship, which demonstrates the inadequacy of the education system to support and prepare young people for entrepreneurship.

The discussion about the education system and its role in facilitating young people's transition into the labour market (whether that be into employment, entrepreneurship, or a combination of both) is ongoing, with conflicting perspectives surrounding the purpose of higher education (discussed in Chapter 2). From the Kosovan DSE perspective, the current

system was a 'education about enterprise' approach, which according to Jamieson (1984), is an approach that focuses on building awareness about entrepreneurship and business creation. Additionally, the current education 'about enterprise' was perceived as outdated and in desperate need of modernisation, due to its reminiscence to business education during Yugoslav times. Kosovan DSE felt that higher education should be utilizing a 'education for enterprise' approach, which Jamieson (1984) discusses as education more specific to helping participants to set up their own business (centred around practical skills). They felt that the current method of entrepreneurship and business education was highly theoretical and did not provide them with the practical skills needed to engage in entrepreneurship in the current business environment. Slovenian DSE were less dissatisfied with the current education system, but this was due to curriculum being more modern and reflective of the 'education for enterprise' approach (albeit still more inclined towards pushing students to public sector employment), with the inclusion of work placements and internships more common across the public universities.

Existing studies surrounding young entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship education primarily focuses on the benefits of higher education and the role of entrepreneurship education in developing entrepreneurial intentions. There is a research gap relating to the specific needs of young DSEs from the formal education system, where digital-social entrepreneurship is an emerging phenomenon in itself. This study bridges this gap by identifying the 'education for enterprise' approach as most desirable amongst young DSEs, demonstrated by the demand for this amongst young Kosovan DSEs (who do not currently experience this approach), and the satisfaction surrounding this approach from young Slovenian DSEs (who do experience this approach). However, this approach to entrepreneurship education is conducted in parallel to conflicting societal beliefs in both countries surrounding entrepreneurship (discussed further in Chapter 7) – where entrepreneurship is not seen as societally desirable as full-time employment in the public sector (a legacy of Yugoslavia).

This discussion addresses RQ3 by examining young DSEs perception of the formal education system as a component of the 'support system', exploring the current approach to and critiques of entrepreneurship education and its role in supporting them as DSEs. Young DSEs in Kosovo perceive the formal higher education system as inadequate for facilitating entrepreneurship due to outdatedness and weak industry linkages, despite overwhelmingly engaging in higher education (where 21 out of 23 young DSEs had completed some form of higher education). Comparatively, in Slovenia, young DSEs were less frustrated with the current state of entrepreneurship education due to its primarily 'education for

entrepreneurship' approach and expressed more frustration at lingering societal attitudes to entrepreneurship in the education system as opposed to the structure of the education system itself.

8.3.2. Role of Incubators and Accelerators

Business incubators and accelerators are often discussed as one of the most prominent features of an entrepreneurial ecosystem. Albort-Morant and Oghazi (2016) identified that the biggest beneficiaries from business incubation are young entrepreneurs with a high level of formal education and family support. This is because they are most in need of the social capital that incubators can provide, and family support facilitates them utilizing that social capital, particularly in transition economies such as Kosovo and Slovenia where many opportunities are primarily shared informally across personal networks. From this study, three key findings surrounding the role of incubators and accelerators for young DSEs emerged: the importance of the structure of the incubation programme, the lack of sustainability in incubation programmes and the role of social capital in navigating incubation programmes.

In both countries, business incubator programs were the most commonly discussed support mechanism, with many young people accessing business incubation. In Slovenia, incubator programs were heavily supported by the government, which included programs such as PONI which provided incubated businesses with a salary during the 3-4 months they were enrolled in the program. The provision of a salary aided with the legitimisation of entrepreneurship as a career option – with participants highlighting how the fact it was 'salaried' aided their families in seeing their career path more favourably. Many entrepreneurs, particularly young entrepreneurs, struggle with incubation programmes due to high expense of accessing them and the lack of financial support (in the form of salaries) whilst incubating with them (Lalkaka, 2001). This was the case in Kosovo, where many of the young DSEs worked in the gig economy alongside incubating their business in order to sustain themselves, but this meant that many of them struggled to balance their business and working commitments. This also meant that the development of many of the young digital-social businesses in Kosovo appear to be slower than in Slovenia, due to the lack of designated, financially supported time to dedicate to developing and growing them. Existing research (Albort-Morant & Oghazi, 2016) surrounding business incubation and young entrepreneurs focused primarily on the benefits of incubation to young entrepreneurs, as opposed to the components of incubation that nurture entrepreneurship the most amongst young people. This thesis develops understanding of the latter and bridges this particular knowledge gap i.e. relating to the structure of incubation programmes for young entrepreneurs, identifying that

provision of income to incubating businesses (particularly youth-led businesses) aids in changing societal attitudes to entrepreneurship, and improves the wellbeing of the young entrepreneur as well as the speed at which they can 'start-up' their business. More generally, there is limited research relating to incubators and young DSE which this thesis addresses in its discussion of the role of business incubators for facilitating digital-social entrepreneurship.

The funding of incubation programmes in Slovenia as opposed to young DSE in Kosovo having to pay for incubation programmes reflects the institutional support for young DSEs in each country, and the institutional structure for entrepreneurship. In both countries, facilitators discussed the long-term sustainability of the current entrepreneurial ecosystem set-up, including discussions about broader government priorities and the changing needs of the young entrepreneurs. Cohen (2006) identifies the importance of building a sustainable entrepreneurial eco-system, one that is self-sufficient and self-nurturing. Current literature surrounding youth entrepreneurship highlight the importance of a stable institutional environment, and broader literature surrounding entrepreneurship in post-socialist countries highlights the impact of institutional voids in hindering entrepreneurship and entrepreneurialism (Krasniqi, 2007; Arandarenko & Brodmann, 2019) However, the majority of existing literature (Demirguc-Kunt, et al., 2009; Lajqi & Krasniqi, 2017; Smallbone & Welter, 2006) relating to post-socialist countries and institutional voids focuses broadly on established entrepreneurs and utilizes a quantitative approach to measuring the impact of institutional voids.

In Kosovo, the unsustainable nature of the entrepreneurial ecosystem was recurrently discussed, with an emphasis on the dependency on international donor funds to fund many young start-ups. This was discussed in Chapter 2 as being a key feature of the 'capitalism from below' transition pathway which Kosovo took, where the emergence of institutional voids due to a lack of initial centralized authority led to an overdependence on international governmental organisations. Organisations such as UNDP, UNICEF, and USAID fund a large amount of NGO and incubator training programs, in which the priorities of the donor agency shape the type of venture they seek to support (Gribben, 2018; Lajqi & Krasniqi, 2017). This was highlighted by a young DSE, who discussed how they often shaped their applications to meet the needs of the donor – and how time-consuming this was, as donor priorities appeared to change regularly. Hence, young entrepreneurs in these post-socialist countries encounter institutional voids in the entrepreneurial ecosystem, which identifies the unsustainable nature of an ecosystem built off donor funding, such as Kosovo. Where the priorities of international donors are conflicting and everchanging, young DSEs shape their ventures to meet current priorities in order to access support (due to a lack of government-funded support), which limits

their ability to focus on developing their digital-social business as they themselves envision. Young DSEs in Slovenia highlighted how government support and freedom of movement provides them with the ability to access support and build their venture as they see fit, whereas Kosovan young DSEs highlighted how they are shaping their business constantly to meet everchanging donor priorities.

In Kosovo, a recurring discussion amongst supporting actors was the bureaucracy of some of the leading incubators – where the opportunities promised publicly (such as significant grants) do not materialize privately (as they are billed by the incubator excessively). Young entrepreneurs are less likely to have the confidence to navigate and negotiate with key stakeholders in the eco-system, so are more likely to ‘play ball’ and pay the necessary cost to retain the support (Hickie, 2011). This is due to a lack of support mechanisms in the country, and an inability to access support outside the country. The supporting actors in Kosovo expressed concern for the regulation of the incubators – however, most business support available in Kosovo is private support – either funded by the international donor community, diaspora, or private organizations, meaning it is more difficult to regulate and challenge this bureaucracy. In developing countries, business incubator programs are a life line for young entrepreneurs due to the underdeveloped entrepreneurial ecosystems, meaning that they will often turn a blind eye to indiscretions such as those discussed by facilitators in order to retain support (Lalkaka, 2003). Additionally, as social capital and networks were emphasized as being highly important amongst Kosovan young DSEs, the risk to their reputation if they condemned this behaviour could be more detrimental to their business than the initial loss of money (Lajqi and Krasniqi 2017). This phenomenon was only discussed in the Kosovo context, as either Slovenia’s institutional set-up is more stable due to the divergence of transition pathways post-Yugoslavia, or young DSE in Slovenia had more options of incubators and support to access and thus did not need to ‘play ball’ as much as young DSEs in Kosovo. These findings support the previous findings of Krasniqi and Branch (2018) about the greater reliance on informal institutions in Kosovo’s ecosystem, and the prominence of corruption (through exploitation of young DSEs inexperience) within the ecosystem. The current system in Kosovo is reflective of the institutional voids that emerged post-socialism and post-war and highlights the overwhelming importance of social capital and ‘weak ties’ in circumventing this bureaucracy and corruption.

This discussion further addresses RQ3 by examining young DSEs experience of the support mechanisms available to them, in which incubators were the primary ‘support’ mechanism accessed across both case sites. Young DSE perceive incubator programmes as a vital component of the digital-social enterprise ecosystem due to their facilitation of access

to capital (whether that be financial or social), but the financing and management of these programmes can create barriers to engagement for the young DSE. Overdependency on international donors in the digital-social enterprise ecosystem leaves young DSEs vulnerable and less able to concentrate primarily on their business venture, whereas sufficient government funding of business incubators for young DSEs (such as the provision of salaries) is an effective mechanism for supporting young DSEs. This builds on what is currently known about young DSEs' perceptions of support mechanisms, the role of incubators for young DSE, and how institutional voids manifest in incubation programmes in post-socialist/post-conflict societies (in the case of Kosovo).

8.4. Institutional Constraints for Youth Digital-Social Entrepreneurship

RQ1 aimed to examine “*what is the current policy and business environment for encouraging digital and social entrepreneurship in post-socialist Kosovo and Slovenia?*”. This question was examined through the mapping activity of the policy environment, and through the semi-structured interviews with young digital-social entrepreneurs and supporting actors. Where digital-social entrepreneurship is a relatively new phenomenon, the literature drawn upon to explore post-socialist entrepreneurship in Chapter 2 was primarily related to traditional entrepreneurship. Therefore, findings in this section bridge the gap surrounding the particular institutional constraints for young DSEs, as well as contributing more broadly to institutional constraints on entrepreneurship in post-socialist spaces. Current understandings of the role played by institutions in post-socialist spaces identifies three transition pathways (discussed in more detail in Chapter 2), in which Kosovo experienced the ‘capitalism from below’ pathway and Slovenia experienced a hybrid of ‘capitalism from without’ and ‘capitalism from above’ (King and Szelenyi 2005). Slovenia’s government orchestrated swift economic reforms such as privatization and market liberalization, with heavy involvement from foreign investors in the privatisation of state firms, and a strong influence from international actors, such as the European Union (King 2002). Kosovo’s economic transition was relatively unique due to the combination of both transitioning to capitalism and recovering from violent conflict within a short-time period – this resulted in a lack of centralized authority (causing institutional voids) and an overreliance on international donor organizations (such as the UN agencies). These are reflected in both countries’ approaches to regulatory frameworks and the societal attitudes to entrepreneurship.

8.4.1. Regulatory Frameworks

As discussed in Chapter 2, in relation to the other former-Yugoslav countries, Slovenia's institutional environment is seen as strong, where legal and regulatory frameworks were established quickly and with heavy influence of external actors (such as the EU) (Mencinger 2001). This is reflected in Slovenia's adoption of the Social Entrepreneurship Act in 2011, its amendment in 2018, and the tying of many policy initiatives (such as the Slovenian Development Strategy) to international frameworks such as the UN SDGs. However, rather than social enterprise being its own organizational structure (such as CIC in the UK), 'social enterprise' is an additional status that a private company can apply for in order to certify themselves. It is not a 'legal form', but a recognition of an organization's 'compliance' with the values of social economy (European Commission, 2019). The current legal perception of social enterprise is that it is an organization that focuses on the employment of marginalized individuals (primarily disabled individuals (Kleindienst, 2019; Konda et al, 2016)). However, the current regulations for social enterprise are considered to be unreasonable and limiting, with Rogelja et al (2018) highlighting how many legal entities who fulfil the requirements for being a social enterprise, choose not to register, due to these limitations. Aligning with previous literature (Hojnik 2020), awareness of the benefits of social enterprise status amongst young DSEs were non-existent, which highlights the insufficiency of the Social Entrepreneurship Act. This was found amongst the young Slovenian DSEs, where most chose to either register as an NGO (in order to access grants), or as a traditional business – choosing not to pursue 'social enterprise status' due to the difficulties in applying and the limitations it brings. This contributes to the discussion surrounding social enterprise in Slovenia (Kleindienst 2019; Konda et al 2016; Rogelja et al 2018; Hojnik 2020) by identifying the inefficiencies in the current social enterprise status and the role of institutional constraints (such as bureaucracy in application and lack of transparency) on further developing 'social enterprise' in Slovenia.

In Kosovo, the Draft Law of Social Enterprises was adopted in 2017, which categorizes social enterprises into two categories: a) social enterprises engaged in the delivery of services which guarantees the inclusion of marginalized persons, and b) social enterprises which employ at least 30% of their workforce from vulnerable groups (Republika e Kosovës, 2018). Similar to Slovenia, the legal perception of social enterprise in Kosovo is that it relates to the employment and support of marginalized individuals (Kartallozi and Xhemajli 2017; Chichevaliev et al 2023). Due to the inadequate regulatory framework for social enterprises, many of the young DSEs in Kosovo registered themselves as traditional businesses, with only two of the young DSEs in Kosovo registering as an NGO. By registering as a traditional business, more of the young DSEs were able to access the start-up grants and support

available within the eco-system, whereas an NGO would be much more limited in terms of accessing finance. However, many of the young DSE expressed frustration at the lack of sufficient regulatory framework for social enterprise, as operating as traditional businesses whilst running as a social business meant they were often disadvantaged within their sector – and faced significant financial barriers to growing and scaling their business. This contributes to the current discussion surrounding social enterprise in Kosovo (European Commission 2019; Milovanović and Maksimović 2018; Kartallozi and Xhemajli 2017), specifically on how young DSE navigate the regulatory framework in Kosovo and identifying the specificities of the regulatory framework surrounding social enterprise as a significant barrier to the development of digital-social entrepreneurship in Kosovo.

8.4.2. Societal Attitudes to Digital-Social Entrepreneurship

In both countries, the ‘social’ component of digital-social entrepreneurship was perceived negatively due to the poor perception of social entrepreneurship societally, commonly either associated with the social scheme structures during the Yugoslav period (Chichevaliev et al 2023; Hojnik, 2020), or in the case of Kosovo, post-war NGOs operating in non-altruistic ways (Loku et al 2018). This poor perception of social entrepreneurship informs why both countries have been slow to adopt regulatory frameworks relating to social enterprise, and why implementation and follow-up of the current frameworks has been weak. Across both countries, the adoption of social enterprise regulatory frameworks was driven ‘from above’, with Slovenia adopting their Social Enterprise act in accordance with OECD recommendations (Kleindienst 2019), whilst Kosovo adopted theirs in accordance with EU accession guidance (Kartallozi and Xhemajli 2017). However, whilst the regulatory frameworks for social entrepreneurship were driven ‘from above’, whether motivations for social entrepreneurship were driven ‘from above’ varied across countries – with Kosovo’s youth pushing ‘from below’ for better social entrepreneurship frameworks and support, whilst Slovenia’s youth were more neutral to social entrepreneurship. This contributes to the existing discussions surrounding the development of social enterprise in the post-socialist context of the former Yugoslavia, where there is a research gap relating to the institutional constraints towards developing social enterprise. Additionally, it addresses RQ1 by mapping the current policy environment for DSE, and how the policy arrangements in both countries act to constrain the development of digital-social entrepreneurship, as opposed to encouraging DSE, due to the weakness in the ‘social enterprise’ regulations.

8.5. Conclusion

This chapter outlined seven thematic findings from this study which sought to address the research questions outlined in Section 8.1. It reflected on the findings and aligned these with previous discussions (Chapter 2) and current debates relating to the thematic findings, identifying the key contributions from each theme and how they address each research question. Where digital-social entrepreneurship is an emergent phenomenon, there are currently significant research gaps relating to each of the three research questions addressed (drivers and barriers, support arrangements, institutional arrangements) which this study seeks to address. Additionally, where this study specifically focuses on the post-socialist experience for young digital-social entrepreneurs, this contributes to research on young entrepreneurs in post-socialist countries, which is still a relatively underexplored area of entrepreneurship studies (as discussed in Chapter 2).

Firstly, RQ1 sought to develop understandings surrounding the current policy and business environment for digital-social entrepreneurship in both countries, identifying weaknesses and strengths that are constraining or supporting young digital-social entrepreneurs. Previous literature identifies the transition pathways that post-socialist countries take, and the impact this has on the development of the business environment and on entrepreneurship. However, there is a research gap relating to the particular transition pathways of Kosovo and Slovenia (and similar post-socialist countries like them), and the impact this has had on the development of digital-social entrepreneurship in each context. This study identifies how Slovenia's hybrid pathway of 'capitalism from without' and 'capitalism from above' resulted in the development of social enterprise regulatory frameworks (driven by the OECD) which are inefficient for the needs of Slovenia's digital-social entrepreneurs. This, tied in with government instability and inaction, has resulted in many young DSE unable to register as 'social enterprises', and being required to register as NGOs in order to access the benefits that many social enterprises in other European countries would access (such as grants). It also identifies how Kosovo's 'capitalism from below' transition pathway has resulted in Kosovo's youth pushing 'from below' for better social entrepreneurship frameworks, due to a lack of prioritization in implementing supportive framework from the Kosovan government. Where many of Kosovo's young DSE have to register as a traditional business in order to access government grants, the impact of institutional voids in creating a supportive policy environment for digital-social entrepreneurship is highlighted. This is further reflected in the underdevelopment of other facets of the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Kosovo – such as the education system and limited business incubation and acceleration opportunities, as well as the overreliance on donor funds to bridge this gap.

Secondly, RQ2 sought to develop understandings surrounding the *drivers and barriers* to digital-social entrepreneurship – exploring and contrasting the findings from the two case-sites, Kosovo, and Slovenia. Previous literature supposes that entrepreneurs are driven by personal circumstances and characteristics, sociocultural and economic factors, and institutional support and policies (Bosma et al 2009). This study contributes to knowledge surrounding the specific drivers of young DSEs, as opposed to the broader group of traditional entrepreneurs, and supports the premise that DSEs are driven by personal circumstance and sociocultural factors. However, as a whole, young DSEs were primarily driven by the desire to tackle key societal challenges – whether this was a local or global challenge was dependent upon the level of development of the country. Young DSEs in Kosovo (considered to be less economically developed) were driven by local challenges, which reflected the lack of government prioritizing ‘social’ challenges, meaning that young DSE felt they had to resolve these issues themselves. Young DSE in Slovenia (considered more economically developed and better integrated into the European community) were driven by global challenges (such as the UN SDGs), which reflected the influence of organisations such as the EU on young DSE. Young DSE in both countries faced similar barriers, such as the institutional environment and challenges relating to social capital, human capital, and access to resources. However, there was a gendered difference in both the drivers and barriers for digital-social entrepreneurship in both countries: young women DSE were more oriented towards tackling community-based challenges and less concerned about gaining social status (compared to their male counterparts) but faced a ‘double disadvantage’ in gaining ‘legitimacy’ as an entrepreneur due to being both young and female. This supported previous studies that highlighted the misogynistic culture in the business environment across the Western Balkans (Avdullahi et al 2022) but contributed an additional understanding surrounding how young women particularly experience this misogyny. Whilst there is action being taken in Kosovo to tackle the misogynistic culture (perhaps due to its overt nature), there was limited action being taken in Slovenia to tackle the more covert sexism many of the young women discussed.

Finally, RQ3 sought to develop understanding about how young digital-social entrepreneurs perceive and engage with the current support arrangements, utilizing an entrepreneurial ecosystems approach to examining the institutional arrangements for young digital-social entrepreneurs. The key ‘support arrangements’ for young DSE were formal education, incubators, and entrepreneurship-oriented NGOs (which acted as incubators). There is a wealth of literature that highlights the relationship between education and entrepreneurial intention (Hartog and Oosterbeek 2007; Pitelis 2009; Hickie 2011), which was supported by the self-reported levels of education amongst young DSE. All DSE had at least

a secondary level of education, however, the relationship between entrepreneurship and education was stronger in Kosovo, where 21/23 young DSEs interviewed reported having at least a bachelor's degree, in comparison to only 14/21 young DSEs in Slovenia. In Kosovo, the current approach to entrepreneurship education is 'education about enterprise', whereas in Slovenia, the current approach is more reflective of 'education for enterprise'. In both contexts, the 'education for enterprise' was highlighted as the preferred approach by both young DSEs and supporting actors. Critiques of the education system in Kosovo reflected its outdatedness and lack of industry relationships, unless attending a private university, whereas critiques of the education system in Slovenia reflected the lack of encouragement towards entrepreneurship. This supports existing understanding about the benefits of private universities for entrepreneurship (Ouragini et al 2023) and the impact of societal attitudes in on entrepreneurial intentions (Gribben 2018). Business incubators were the primary source of support for young DSEs, as they facilitated access to resources and supported the development of social capital, which was identified in both countries as being vital in the business environment. This aligned with current understanding that in post-socialist countries, the business environment operates more informally, in which opportunities are passed on through 'weak ties' and social capital is perceived as being one of the biggest barriers to success for entrepreneurs (Berkowitz and DeJong 2005; Ovaska and Sobel 2005; Kshetri 2009; Hashi and Krasniqi 2011). This study also identifies how Kosovo's overreliance on donor funds in the entrepreneurial ecosystem results in instability for young DSE, which addresses the poor understandings we currently have of entrepreneurial ecosystems in post-socialist/post-conflict countries (which could equally be applied to similar countries, such as Bosnia and Herzegovina).

This study loosely adopted a Schumpeterian approach to entrepreneurship, where entrepreneurs are innovators who apply inventions to make new combinations with the end game of progress, growth and higher standards of living (Schumpeter 1912). This study identifies youth digital-social entrepreneurs as innovators, where many are utilizing new inventions (such as new technologies) to create new combinations (such as introducing new goods or services which are more sustainable). The outcome of this process is to tackle societal challenges, such as environmental goals, in order to increase the standard of living (such as through reducing pollution, for example). Digital-social entrepreneurs are leveraging new tools to create unique solutions for societal challenges, disrupting traditional ways of doing things through innovative solutions – thus driving 'creative destruction'. They are transforming the current way of doing business – traditional business – by utilizing it as an engine for sustainable development, contributing to both economic growth and economic development.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

9.1. Introduction

This thesis has aimed to develop a better understanding of the antecedents and barriers to youth digital-social entrepreneurship in post-socialist countries through a case study of young DSEs in Kosovo and Slovenia. This chapter concludes the thesis by summarizing the key findings and addressing the research questions (Section 9.2). The chapter then discusses the contributions made to the literature by commenting on the limited research on youth digital-social entrepreneurship, post-socialist entrepreneurial ecosystems, and institutional voids in relation to youth entrepreneurship (Section 9.3). The chapter also suggests various ways to increase support for young DSEs, which can be a reference for policymakers and practitioners working to support and engage with young nascent entrepreneurs (Chapter 9.4). Finally, the chapter discusses the limitations of the study (Section 9.5) and recommendations for future directions of research for youth digital-social entrepreneurship and post-socialist entrepreneurial ecosystems (Section 9.6).

9.2. Research Questions

This thesis addresses the main research question: '**How do young people engage with and experience digital-social entrepreneurship in the contexts of Kosovo and Slovenia?**' and the four sub-questions below.

RQ1. What is the current policy and business environment for encouraging digital and social entrepreneurship in post-socialist Kosovo and Slovenia?

RQ2. What are the drivers and barriers for young DSEs in Kosovo and Slovenia, particularly relating to gender, age, institutional environment and social capital?

RQ3. What are the current support arrangements (e.g., training, mentorship, etc.) for developing youth DSEs in Kosovo and Slovenia, and how do they experience them?

In answering RQ1, the data suggest that the current policy environment for youth digital-social entrepreneurship in both countries is unsupportive, but emerging. There is policy

interest in both countries, highlighted in the policy documents discussed in Chapter 3.5.1 and 3.5.2, but this is currently underdeveloped and considered by participants (both young DSEs and supporting actors) to not be 'enough'. In regard to the current policy environment, the legal status of social enterprises in both countries is underdeveloped and does not go far enough to incentivise and support socially trading businesses. For example, whilst there is a legal status in Slovenia, this is primarily concerned with and perceived to be relating to the employment of disabled individuals and does not offer additional support to organisations seeking to tackle other social challenges, such as to do with environmental challenges. In the case of Kosovo, there is no formal status for a social enterprise, so many young DSEs operate as either NGOs (in order to access additional financial support) or traditional businesses, as there is no way for them to be legally recognised as socially trading businesses.

This means that for those companies operating with a social mission, they receive limited support to pursue this mission. This leads to them needing to compete with 'traditional' businesses who can be more cost-effective by not being as socially conscious as a digital-social business, making it harder for digital-social enterprises to thrive. Additionally, in both countries, there is a perceived stigma surrounding social entrepreneurship which extends to those engaging in digital-social entrepreneurship, that is rooted in both countries socialist histories and negative perceptions of NGOs either in general (in Slovenia) or post-war (in Kosovo). This highlights how the current policy and institutional environment is not conducive for young DSEs, due to the lack of support and incentives for operating one, and the societal stigma that accompanies it.

In addressing RQ2 and drivers, the data highlights how the young DSEs in this study were for the most part intrinsically motivated towards entrepreneurship, driven by personal fulfilment and achievement, a desire for independence and autonomy, and a wish to enact their own personal values and tackle societal challenges. This aligns with the Schumpeterian account of entrepreneurship, where the intrinsic motivation of making an 'impact' holds true for DSEs, where they are innovating to tackle societal challenges. In Kosovo, young DSEs overwhelmingly discussed their drive to change 'local' societal challenges, such as relating to education and climate, as these were considered the biggest challenges being faced locally. In Slovenia, young DSEs were more attuned to broader frameworks surrounding social impact, and many of them cited wanting to achieve one or more of the SDGs with their business. This highlights how young DSEs in Kosovo are driven by local challenges, whilst young DSEs in Slovenia are driven by global challenges. In both countries, young male DSEs also highlighted extrinsic motivation, discussing how the perceived social status of being an 'entrepreneur' was a motivational factor for themselves.

Further addressing RQ2 on barriers, there was four categories of barriers faced by young DSEs: issues of legitimacy and discrimination, access to finance and resources, social and human capital, and the institutional environment. In both countries, there were issues regarding the perception of their 'legitimacy' as an entrepreneur to their age, which for young women, was exacerbated by their gender – being a young woman entrepreneur was a double-disadvantage in regard to their perceived 'legitimacy' in society. For young DSEs in Kosovo, there were challenges faced when trying to expand outside of Kosovo due to the perception of Kosovo as a post-war country – it was considered to be more unstable than it is, meaning many young entrepreneurs from Kosovo felt like they were disadvantaged due to coming from Kosovo. In both countries, there was limited availability of finance for start-ups, however, this was felt more heavily in Kosovo, due to Slovenian young entrepreneurs being able to access EU funds more easily. In both countries, the business environment was seen as a case of 'who you know' and not 'what you know', highlighting the mediating role that social capital plays for young DSEs, and the importance of accessing the 'right' networks. The institutional environment in both countries was discussed as being a significant barrier, with both countries discussing the bureaucracy involved in registering and running a business, the lack of, or weak legal frameworks for social entrepreneurship, as well as the negative societal attitudes towards social entrepreneurship.

In addressing RQ3 on support arrangements, in both countries, the education system was, in particular, considered to be outdated and not conducive for developing and supporting young entrepreneurs – with Kosovo's education system criticised as not being modernised since Yugoslavia, and Slovenia's education system criticised for focussing on 'training for work' as opposed to other potential career outcomes. This led to debates about the role of the education system for developing entrepreneurship and was reflected in many of the young entrepreneurs in both countries founding companies that sought to improve education and make it more accessible (particularly hard skills such as programming) for all young people. In Slovenia, business incubators were identified as the most beneficial support mechanisms and the biggest actors within the entrepreneurial ecosystem, with most young DSEs discussing their engagement with these mechanisms. The incubators connected young people to financing opportunities, extensive training (such as acceleration programmes and international opportunities) and facilitated networking amongst the young DSEs. However, in Kosovo, many young DSEs highlighted the importance of NGOs in providing the skills training and access to small grants, particularly international INGO funded NGO programs, which were discussed as being volatile due to changing priorities. The lack of accelerator programs was

discussed extensively in Kosovo, with many young DSEs not knowing where to go past the 'scale-up' stage.

The central question to this study was *“how do young people engage with and experience digital-social entrepreneurship in the contexts of Kosovo and Slovenia?”*. Understanding how young DSE perceive digital-social entrepreneurship, and how supporting actors perceive digital-social entrepreneurship, contributes to current definitions of what digital-social entrepreneurship is, including two typologies of digital-social entrepreneurship (hybrid digital-social entrepreneurship and for-profit digital-social entrepreneurship). Identifying the drivers and barriers to digital-social entrepreneurship contributes to answering how young people experience digital-social entrepreneurship, in that they are primarily intrinsically motivated by it, and face barriers relating to institutions, support and resources. Mapping out the entrepreneurial ecosystem and exploring how young people engage with the support available to them (such as formal education, informal training, incubators and accelerators) contributes to answering how they engage with digital-social entrepreneurship. Outlining the broader political and business environment which young DSEs are navigating helps further contribute to understanding surrounding the experiences of digital-social entrepreneurship in the contexts of Kosovo and Slovenia, where both are post-socialist environments, whilst Kosovo is also a post-conflict environment.

9.3. Theory and Practice Implications

This study explores the experiences of young DSEs in two post-socialist countries: Kosovo and Slovenia, in order to increase understanding surrounding the factors that influence youth digital-social entrepreneurship within such contexts. It makes a specific contribution to the literature on post-socialist entrepreneurship, being one of the first identifiable accounts of youth digital-social entrepreneurship in post-socialist European countries. It provides a specific contribution to the digital-social entrepreneurship literature, where existing studies do not have a 'youth' lens surrounding their exploration of the antecedents and barriers faced by DSEs (Ghatak, et al., 2020). Youth entrepreneurs face particular barriers to entrepreneurship due to their age and perceived legitimacy and experience, which impacts how they engage in entrepreneurship (Green, 2013). Whilst there are studies that discuss the drivers and barriers of social entrepreneurs, traditional entrepreneurs, and young entrepreneurs, there is no study (at time of submission) that discusses this in the context of youth digital-social

entrepreneurship. Therefore, this study contributes new understandings with regard to the specific experiences of youth DSEs in pursuing this particular form of entrepreneurship.

This thesis adds a greater degree of understanding to the knowledge base surrounding youth entrepreneurship and digital-social entrepreneurship. A principal contribution is to provide insights for policymakers and practitioners, particularly those working within the domain of entrepreneurship policy or entrepreneurship development. Where digital-social entrepreneurship (Yáñez-Valdés, et al., 2023; Ibáñez, et al., 2022; Gregori & Holzmann, 2020; Ghatak, et al., 2020; Battisti, 2019;) and youth entrepreneurship are both growing areas of interest for policymakers (Senčar, 2021; Gribben, 2018; Hulsink & Koek, 2014; Geldhof, et al., 2014; Green, 2013), and young people are seen as more inclined towards digital-social entrepreneurship, understanding the motivational factors provides practitioners with an insight into how to further engage more young people in digital-social entrepreneurship. Additionally, understanding the barriers for young DSEs enables policymakers and practitioners to create a more supportive environment in order to enable youth digital-social entrepreneurship to flourish. By understanding what is constraining those young people currently engaged in DSEs, governments can create better, more inclusive policies to minimize these constraints.

Further, this thesis provides a comparative insight into the role of the institutional environment in the development of youth digital-social entrepreneurship. Whilst there are existing studies about the role of the institutional environment on traditional entrepreneurs and social entrepreneurs (Krasniqi & Branch, 2018; Williams & Vorley, 2017; Dorado & Ventresca, 2013; Rodrigues, 2013; Demirgüç-Kunt, et al., 2011; Welter & Smallbone, 2008;), at the time of submission, there are no existing studies that explore the influence of the institutional environment on digital-social entrepreneurship. The institutional environment is considered to 'make or break' entrepreneurship, with current literature discussing the role of institutional voids in post-socialist economies as constraining entrepreneurialism (Manolova, et al., 2019; Rodrigues, 2013). This study provides an insight into the perceptions of the institutional environment through the eyes of the young people starting digital-social businesses in these spaces. Theoretically, this contributes to current debates surrounding the impact of the institutional environment on entrepreneurship in post-socialist countries, bridging the gap surrounding youth digital-social entrepreneurship and institutional environments in post-socialist spaces. Practically, this study provides an insight into the institutional barriers to youth DSEs, providing policymakers with recommendations on how to make the institutional environment more conducive to digital-social entrepreneurship.

This study also adds to understanding surrounding the role of entrepreneurial ecosystems, exploring the factors which youth DSEs see as most vital to their journey. Current literature exploring entrepreneurial ecosystems primarily focuses on traditional businesses or 'tech businesses', and there is limited emphasis on the unique experiences that young people face when engaging with the entrepreneurial ecosystem (Audretsch & Belitski, 2017; Brown & Mason, 2017). The needs of young entrepreneurs differ from that of elder entrepreneurs due to the unique challenges faced by young entrepreneurs (such as that of legitimacy, lack of resources and weak social capital), which reflects in the way they experience support institutions (Gribben, 2018; Manolova, et al., 2019). Therefore, the theoretical contributions of this thesis extend current understanding surrounding the role of entrepreneurial ecosystems in facilitating youth digital-social entrepreneurship, and the extent in which each 'pillar' of the ecosystem are perceived by young DSEs. The practical contributions of this thesis provide practitioners with an insight into what support is missing for young DSEs, and how this is constraining their ability to grow their business further.

9.4. Policy Recommendations

9.4.1. Further and Higher Education

In Chapter 6.2, the role of the education system in developing entrepreneurialism and supporting DSEs was discussed, where in both Kosovo and Slovenia, the education system was seen as outdated and unfavourable towards entrepreneurship. In both countries, the education system was considered to be primarily for preparing students for 'formal employment' – which was seen by participants as detrimental to entrepreneurship in each country. There is a wealth of research that highlights the importance of a supportive education system for facilitating entrepreneurship amongst young people, discussing how it provides young people with both the hard and soft skills required for starting their own business (Hartog & Oosterbeek, 2007; Utami, 2017; Hickie, 2011). From the discussions by young DSEs and the key supporting actors, the following initiatives are proposed for further and higher education institutions that would better support current young DSEs and encourage more young people to engage in digital-social entrepreneurship:

- **Social Innovation Hubs**

- Establishing *Social Innovation Hubs* within university campuses, focused specifically on the promotion of and support for digital-social entrepreneurship. These hubs would serve as a bridge between students, faculty, and community organizations to co-create solutions for social challenges using digital tools.

- This is supported by Nicolopoulou et al (2017), who found that Social Innovation Hubs develop the human and social capital of nascent entrepreneurs engaging with them, which had a positive effect on future social impact intentions.
- **Impact-Driven Curriculum**
 - Integrate entrepreneurship courses that emphasize social impact metrics, sustainability, and digital transformation skills, with modules developed in collaboration with NGOs and industry partners.
 - This could be enhanced through collaborative projects with industry that utilize DSE skills or support businesses pivoting to DSE values, which could be provided through apprenticeships and internships.
 - This is highlighted by Hockerts (2018), that participation in social entrepreneurship training increases the intentions of student to social entrepreneurship.

9.4.2. Supporting Actors and Policymakers

Society, and the normalisation of entrepreneurship, plays an important role in enhancing positive attitudes towards entrepreneurship (Johannisson 2017). The normalisation of entrepreneurship comes from both formal and informal institutions, in which policymakers, civil society organisations and other public organisations play an important role in the promotion and support of entrepreneurship. In both countries, many participants discussed how lots of young people start digital-social businesses but fail to take them ‘off the ground’ due to a lack of ongoing support post start-up stage. Therefore, supporting actors and policymakers can improve the longevity of youth led digital-social businesses by:

- **Mainstreaming Female Entrepreneurship**
 - Current support in both countries does not go far enough to promote and normalize womens entrepreneurship. This currently looks like hosting “Women in...” business fayres (in Kosovo), which puts women-led businesses as “other” and decreases their perceived ‘validity’ as a business.
 - This would look like imposing gender quotas on all public venture financing, mandating gender quotas on private financing, minimum set-asides in public procurement spending for women-led businesses (Sultana & Ravanera, 2020), and minimum representation for women-led businesses in public representation (such as focus groups or trade fayres) (Orser, 2022).

- **Social Entrepreneur Fellowship Program**

- Launch a “Social Entrepreneur Fellowship” programme for young DSE in-country and from other countries, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, to set up and scale impact-driven ventures.
- This visa program could include tax benefits and access to regional entrepreneurship programs, designed to attract diverse talent and create cross-cultural collaborations.
- This would be similar to the Yunus & Youth Global Fellowship Program for Social Entrepreneurs or the Ashoka Fellowship Programme (Sen, 2007), except it would focus on the promotion of social entrepreneurship in-country and incentivize the development of local DSE.

9.5. Limitations

This section discusses the broader limitations of the study, which primarily relates to the focus on ‘active’ entrepreneurs and the use of only two countries for the comparative case study.

Firstly, this study focused on the experiences of ‘active’ and ‘committed’ entrepreneurs, recruiting participants to the study who were still actively engaged in digital-social entrepreneurship. Whilst this has provided a useful insight into the experiences of **current** digital-social entrepreneurs, those involved in this study are still considered ‘success stories’. The inclusion of individuals who had pursued digital-social entrepreneurship but closed down their venture would have been a useful group to include for comparison – this would have provided more detailed insight into the barriers to digital-social entrepreneurship and how this plays out for young DSE. However, the challenge in accomplishing this was linked to the societal stigma of failure in both countries and impact this would have on former-DSE self-selecting into the study. This study identified fear of failure as being a prominent cultural attribute discussed by DSE, with it associated stigma, a young person who had ‘failed’ at digital-social entrepreneurship would be hesitant to come forward due to this stigma. Additionally, recruiting participants would be practicably difficult due to the potential issues accessing their information if not visible and vocal online about their previous experience.

Secondly, this study uses two case sites – Kosovo and Slovenia, as a comparative case study, in which the rationale stemmed from examining the poorest and richest post-socialist countries of the former Yugoslavia. Whilst this provides a rich contrast for analysis, it could also be a limitation in that there is no ‘middle ground’ analysed – such as including another former

Yugoslav country that is middle ground, such as North Macedonia. The use of a middle ground country, such as North Macedonia, which is less integrated internationally than Slovenia but more economically developed than Kosovo, would have provided a useful point for comparison about some of the key challenges relating to political and business environment. Additionally, where Kosovo was also post-conflict, comparing another post-conflict former-Yugoslav country such as Bosnia and Herzegovina would have provided valuable insights – the underlying conditions of both countries (Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina) being more similar than that of Kosovo and Slovenia. Alternatively, comparing and contrasting to countries from another post-socialist environment, such as former Soviet countries, would have provided an insightful comparison surrounding the political underpinnings that lead to the development of digital-social entrepreneurship in each country.

Ultimately, this study has provided something of a unique insight into the experiences of young digital-social entrepreneurs in the post-socialist space, and future directions for research are outlined in Section 9.6.

9.6. Future Directions

This section recommends further areas to address, which might not have been sufficiently covered due to the time and resource limitations. There were three important areas identified in this study which highlighted current literature gaps that future research would benefit from addressing: the double disadvantage faced by young women entrepreneurs, the development of entrepreneurial skills and competences in the entrepreneurial ecosystem, and the experiences of young DSEs outside of the post-socialist environment.

In Section 5.4.1.2, the barriers uniquely faced by young women DSEs were discussed, which highlighted the combined impact of ageism and sexism for young women DSEs. There is a wealth of existing research that explores the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs (Avdullahi, et al., 2022; Noguera, et al., 2013; Shinnar, et al., 2017), but there is currently a lack of insight into the specific challenges faced by young women who face the double-disadvantage of age and gender. A similar study, but directly examining the experiences of young women entrepreneurs and exploring in-depth the particular barriers faced would add a valuable contribution to the literature.

In Section 8.4., the current state of entrepreneurship education and skills development relating to entrepreneurship was discussed, highlighting the lack of support for the development of

entrepreneurial skills and competences within the formal education system in both countries. These institutions are considered to be one of the most important factors for facilitating youth entrepreneurship (Hickie, 2011), yet in this study were identified as being one of the significant barriers experienced by young DSEs. However, this study was only able to collect information on how young DSEs engaged with support mechanisms, and it would have been insightful to understand what particular skills and competences – within formal education – they felt they needed to develop, and how supporting institutions facilitated the development of these. This would contribute to literature gap on the role of the entrepreneurial ecosystem on skills development for youth DSEs.

Finally, this study explored the unique experience of young DSEs in post-socialist spaces, wherein there is currently a literature gap surrounding young DSEs more broadly speaking. Future research would benefit from exploring the experiences of young DSEs in other post-socialist contexts, such as former Soviet countries, to determine whether the barriers and constraints faced by youth in these contexts are similar, and if not, why not. Additionally, developing knowledge on youth digital-social entrepreneurship in a non-Western perspective, such as exploring how youth in regions such as Sub-Saharan Africa or Latin America engage in, and experience youth digital-social entrepreneurship would aid in further developing understanding surrounding youth digital-social entrepreneurship.

Bibliography

A. Radhari, S. S. M. M., 2016. Achieving sustainability through Schumpeterian social entrepreneurship: The role of social enterprises. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, Volume 137, pp. 347-360.

Abu-Saifan, S., 2012. Social entrepreneurship: definition and boundaries.. *Technology innovation management review*, 2(2).

Acs, Z., Åstebro, T., Audretsch, D. & Robinson, D., 2016. Public policy to promote entrepreneurship: a call to arms.. *Small business economics*, Volume 47, pp. 35-51.

Acs, Z. J. & Amorós, J., 2008. Entrepreneurship and Competitiveness in Latin America.. *Small Business Economics*, 31(3), pp. 305-322.

Ács, Z. J., Szerb, L., Lafuente, E. & Lloyd, A., 2018. What Can We Do to Improve the Entrepreneurial Ecosystem?. In: *Global Entrepreneurship and Development Index 2018* . s.l.:Springer Briefs in Economics, pp. 55-63.

Adam-Muller, A., Andres, R., Block, J. & Fisch, C., 2015. Socialist heritage and the opinion on entrepreneurs: Micro-level evidence from Europe.. *Die Betriebswirtschaft*, Volume 5, pp. 1-44.

Aernoudt, R., 2004. Incubators: Tool for Entrepreneurship?. *Small Business Economics*, 23(1), pp. 127-135.

Aggestam, M. & Wigren-Kristoferson, C., 2017. How women entrepreneurs build embeddedness: a case study approach. *International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship*, 9(5), pp. 252-268.

Ajzen, I., 1991. The theory of planned behavior.. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 50(2), pp. 179-211.

Albort-Morant, G. & Oghazi, P., 2016. How useful are incubators for new entrepreneurs?. *Journal of Business Research*, 69(6), pp. 2125-2129.

Aldrich, H., 2014. The democratization of entrepreneurship? Hackers, makerspaces, and crowdfunding. In. *Annual meeting of the academy of management*, Volume 10, pp. 1-7.

Aldrich, H. & Auster, E. R., 1986. Even dwarfs started small: Liabilities of age and size and their strategic implications.. *Research in Organizational Behaviour*, Volume 8, pp. 165-198.

Aldrich, H. & Zimmer, C., 1986. Entrepreneurship through social networks. In: D. Sexton & R. Smilor, eds. *The Art and Science of Entrepreneurship* . New York: Ballinger, p. 3–23.

Allen, D. N. & Rahman, S., 1985. Small business incubators: A positive environment for entrepreneurship.. *Journal of Small Business Management*, 23(0000001), pp. 12-23.

Almobaireek, W. N. & Manolova, T. S., 2013. Entrepreneurial motivations among female university youth in Saudi Arabia,. *Journal of Business Economics and Management*, 14(1), pp. 56-75.

Alter, K., 2007. *Social enterprise typology*, s.l.: Virtue Ventures LLC.

- Alvarez, S. A. & Barney, J. B., 2007. Discovery and creation: alternative theories of entrepreneurial action. *Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal*, Volume 1, p. 11–26 .
- Alvarez, S. & Barney, J., 2013. Epistemology, opportunities, and entrepreneurship: Comments on Venkataraman et al.(2012) and Shane (2012).. *Academy of management Review*, 38(1), pp. 154-157.
- Amit, R. & Muller, E., 1995. “Push” and “pull” entrepreneurship.. *Journal of Small Business & Entrepreneurship*, 12(4), pp. 64-80.
- Amuomo, N., 2017. Absolute poverty and the desire to emancipate communities driving mobile communication for development (M4D) in Africa. *Journal of Information Systems and Technology Management*, 14(3), pp. 431-438.
- Andonova, V., Nikolova, M. S. & Dimitrov, D., 2018. The Creation and Development of the Ecosystem: The Role of ICT. In: V. Andonova, M. S. Nikolova & D. Dimitrov, eds. *Entrepreneurial Ecosystems in Unexpected Places*. Chicago: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 57-100.
- Angelidou, M. & Psaltoglou, A., 2017. An empirical investigation of social innovation initiatives for sustainable urban development.. *Sustainable cities and society*, Volume 33, pp. 113-125.
- Anosike, P., 2018. Entrepreneurship education as human capital: Implications for youth self-employment and conflict mitigation in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Industry and Higher Education*, 33(1), pp. 42-54.
- Antonci, B., Scarlat, C. & Erzetič, B. H., 2005. The Quality of Entrepreneurship Education and the Intention to Continue Education: Slovenia and Romania. *Managing Global Transition*, 3(2), p. 197–212.
- Antonizzi, J. & Smuts, H., 2020. The characteristics of digital entrepreneurship and digital transformation: A systematic literature review.. In: *Responsible Design, Implementation and Use of Information and Communication Technology*. Skukuza: Springer International Publishing, pp. 239-251.
- Anwar, M., Tajeddini, K. & Ullah, R., 2020. Entrepreneurial finance and new venture success - the moderating role of government support. *Business Strategy and Development*, 3(4), pp. 408-421.
- Arandarenko, M. & Brodmann, S., 2019. *Job Opportunities for Youth in Kosovo: Two Steps Forward, One Step Back?*, Washington DC: The World Bank Brookings Development Blog.
- Arena, M., Bengo, I., Calderini, M. & Chiodo, V., 2018. Unlocking finance for social tech start-ups: Is there a new opportunity space?. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 127(1), pp. 154-165.
- Arenius, P. & Minniti, M., 2005. Perceptual Variables and Nascent Entrepreneurship.. *Small Business Economics*, 24(1), pp. 233-247.
- Arifi, A., Fetai, B., Qirici, S. & Abduli, S., 2021. Labour market transition of youth in developing economies: the case of countries in South East and Eastern Europe. *International Journal of Public Sector Performance Management* , 7(4), pp. 450-460.
- Arin, K. P. et al., 2015. Revisiting the Determinants of Entrepreneurship: A Bayesian Approach. *Journal of Management* , 41(2), pp. 607-631.

Arshad, M., Farooq, M., Atif, M. & Farooq, O., 2020. A motivational theory perspective on entrepreneurial intentions: a gender comparative study. *Gender in Management*, 36(2), pp. 221-241.

Arshad, M., Farooq, O. & Farooq, M., 2019. The effect of intrinsic and extrinsic factors on entrepreneurial intentions: The moderating role of collectivist orientation. *Management Decision*, 57(3), pp. 649-668.

Arshad, M., Farooq, O. & Farooq, M., 2019. The effect of intrinsic and extrinsic factors on entrepreneurial intentions: The moderating role of collectivist orientation. *Management Decision*, 57(3), pp. 649-668.

Arshad, M., Farooq, O. & Farooq, M., 2019. The effect of intrinsic and extrinsic factors on entrepreneurial intentions: The moderating role of collectivist orientation.. *Management Decision*, 57(3), pp. 649-668.

Arzeni, S. & Mitra, J., 2012. From Unemployment to Entrepreneurship: Creating Conditions for Change for Young People in Central and Eastern European Countries. In: P. Blokker & B. Dallago, eds. *Youth entrepreneurship and local development in Central and Eastern Europe*. . Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, pp. 31-60.

Aterido, R., Hallward-Driemeier, M. & Pagés, C., 2011. Big Constraints to Small Firms' Growth? Business Environment and Employment Growth across Firms. *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, 59(3), p. 609–647.

Audretsch, D. B. & Belitski, M., 2017. Entrepreneurial ecosystems in cities: establishing the framework conditions.. *The Journal of Technology Transfer*, 42(5), pp. 1030-1051.

Austin, J., 2006. Three avenues for social entrepreneurship research. In: 1st, ed. *Social entrepreneurship*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK., pp. 22-33.

Austin, J., Stevenson, H. & Wei–Skillern, J., 2006. Social and commercial entrepreneurship: same, different, or both?.. *Entrepreneurship theory and practice*, 30(1), 30(1), pp. 1-22.

Autio, E. & Wennberg, K., 2010. *You think, therefore, I become: Social attitudes and the transition to entrepreneurship*. London, Opening Up Innovation: Strategy, Organization and Technology.

Avdullahi, A., Ademi, V. F., Salihu, B. & Krasniqi, A., 2022. Women and youth unemployment in Western Balkans. *Population and Economics*, 6(3), p. 35–58.

Avdullahi, A., Ademi, V. F., Salihu, B. & Krasniqi, A., 2022. Women and Youth Unemployment in Western Balkans with particular focus on Kosovo. *Population and Economics*, 6(3), pp. 35-58.

Azhar, M. & Akhtar, M., 2020. Social media: a catalyst for entrepreneurship and marketing.. *South Asian Journal of Marketing & Management Research*, 10(11), pp. 62-70.

Bağış, et al., 2023. Youth entrepreneurial intentions: a cross-cultural comparison.. *Journal of Enterprising Communities: People and Places in the Global Economy*.

Balassa, B. & Bertrand, T., 1970. Growth performance of Eastern European economies and comparable Western European countries.. *The American Economic Review*, 60(2), pp. 314-320.

- Barendsen, L. & Gardner, H., 2004. Is the social entrepreneur a new type of leader?. *Leader to leader*, Volume 34, p. 43.
- Barratt, M., Ferris, J. & Lenton, S., 2015. Hidden populations, online purposive sampling, and external validity: Taking off the blindfold.. *Field methods*, 27(1), pp. 3-21.
- Bartlett, W., 2021. International assistance, donor interests, and state capture in the Western Balkans.. *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, 29(2), pp. 184-200.
- Bartlett, W., 2023. The Drivers of EU Financial Assistance to the Western Balkans: Economic, Altruistic or Democracy Promotion Motives?. In: M. Uvalić, ed. *Integrating the Western Balkans into the EU: Overcoming Mutual Misperceptions*. London: Palgrave Macmillan Cham, pp. 25-54.
- Battisti, S., 2019. Digital social entrepreneurs as bridges in public–private partnerships.. *Journal of Social Entrepreneurship*, 10(2), pp. 135-158.
- Baumol, W., 1968. *Entrepreneurship in Economic Theory*. New York , Papers and Proceedings of the Eightist Annual Meeting of the American Economic Association.
- Baumol, W., 1983. Toward operational models of entrepreneurship. In: J. Ronen, ed. *Entrepreneurship*. London: Lexington Book, pp. 29-48.
- Baumol, W. J., 1990. Entrepreneurship: Productive, Unproductive and Destructive. *Journal of Political Economy*, 98(5), p. 892–921.
- Baumol, W., Litan, R. & Schramm, C., 2007. Sustaining entrepreneurial capitalism.. *Capitalism and Society*, 2(2).
- Baxter, A. et al., 2014. Youth entrepreneurship education and training for poverty alleviation: A review of international literature and local experiences.. *International educational innovation and public sector entrepreneurship*, pp. 33-58.
- Baxter, P. & Jack, S., 2008. Qualitative case study methodology: Study design and implementation for novice researchers.. *The qualitative report*, 13(4), pp. 544-559.
- Becker, G., 1962. Investment in human capital: A theoretical analysis.. *Journal of political economy*, 70(5), pp. 9-49.
- Bedi, H. & Yadav, N., 2019. Social entrepreneurship: A conceptual clarity.. *Social entrepreneurship: A conceptual clarity.*, 67(10), pp. 1006-1016.
- Bell, J. R., 2009. Designing an executive MBA around entrepreneurship: Changing a mindset and the creation of SMEs.. *Journal of Entrepreneurship Education*, Volume 12, pp. 1-12.
- Benedek, W., 2010. Impact of Higher Education and Human Capital on the Economic and Political Development in Kosovo. *Der Donauraum*, 50(1), pp. 7-32.
- Bennett, C., 1995. *Yugoslavia's bloody collapse: causes, course and consequences*.. New York: NYU Press..
- Berger, B., 1991. *The Culture of Entrepreneurship*, Sanfrancisco: ICS Press.

- Berger, E., Von Briel, F., Davidsson, P. & Kuckertz, A., 2021. Digital or not–The future of entrepreneurship and innovation: Introduction to the special issue.. *Journal of Business Research*, Volume 125, pp. 436-442.
- Bergman, M., 2011. The good, the bad, and the ugly in mixed methods research and design.. *Journal of mixed methods research*, 5(4), pp. 271-275.
- Berkowitz, D. & DeJong, D. N., 2005. Entrepreneurship and Post-socialist Growth. *Oxford Bulletin of Economics and Statistics*, 67(1), pp. 25-47.
- Bieber, F. & Daskalovski, Ž., 2003. *Understanding the war in Kosovo*.. s.l.:Psychology Press..
- Bignotti, A. & Roux, I. I., 2020. Which types of experience matter? The role of prior start-up experiences and work experience in fostering youth entrepreneurial intentions. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*, 26(6), pp. 1181-1198.
- Bird, B. & Jelinek, M., 1988. The operation of entrepreneurial intentions.. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 13(2), pp. 21-29.
- Birnholtz, J., Horn, D., Finholt, T. & Bae, S., 2004. The effects of cash, electronic, and paper gift certificates as respondent incentives for a Web-based survey of technologically sophisticated respondents. *Social Science Computer Review*, Volume 22, pp. 355-362.
- Bizzi, L., 2015. Social Capital in Organizations.. In: J. D. Wright, ed. *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*. Orlando: Elsevier, pp. 181-185.
- Blanchflower, D. & Oswald, A., 1998. *Entrepreneurship and the youth labour market problem: a report for the OECD*, Paris. : OECD.
- Blanchflower, D., Oswald, A. & Stutzer, A., 2001. Latent entrepreneurship across nations.. *European Economic Review*, 45(4-6), pp. 680-691.
- Bloor, M. & Wood, F., 2006. *Keywords in qualitative methods: A vocabulary of research concepts*., s.l.: s.n.
- Boddy, C., 2016. Sample size for qualitative research.. *Qualitative market research: An international journal*, 19(4), pp. 426-432.
- Bodolica, V., Spraggon, M. & Badi, H., 2021. Extracurricular activities and social entrepreneurial leadership of graduating youth in universities from the Middle East. *The International Journal of Management Education*, 19(2), pp. 1-12.
- Bogdan, R. & Taylor, S., 1990. Looking at the bright side: A positive approach to qualitative policy and evaluation research.. *Qualitative sociology*, 13(2), pp. 183-92.
- Borissenko, J. & Boschma, R., 2017. A critical review of entrepreneurial ecosystems research: towards a future research agenda.. *Papers in innovation studies*, Volume 3, pp. 1-25.
- Bornstein, D., 2007. *How to change the world: Social entrepreneurs and the power of ideas*.. USA: Oxford University Press.
- Borozan, D. & Pfeifer, S., 2014. Exploring Entrepreneurs' Motivation: Comparison of Croatia, European Post-socialist and Developed Countries. *The Journal of Entrepreneurship*, 23(2), pp. 263-287.

- Bosch, O. J., Revilla, M. & Paura, E., 2019. Do Millennials differ in terms of survey participation?. *International Journal of Market Research*, 61(4), pp. 359-365.
- Bosma, N. et al., 2009. *Global entrepreneurship monitor: 2008 executive report*. , Babson Park, MA: Global Entrepreneurship Research Consortium.
- Bourke, L., 2009. Reflections on doing participatory research in health: Participation, method and power.. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 12(5), pp. 457-474.
- Braguinsky, S., Klepper, S. & Ohyama, A., 2009. *Schumpeterian Entrepreneurship*, Pittsburgh: The Kauffman Foundation.
- Brainard, L. & Chollet, D., 2007. *Too poor for peace?: global poverty, conflict, and security in the 21st century*.. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield..
- Brieger, S. & De Clercq, D., 2019. Entrepreneurs' individual-level resources and social value creation goals: The moderating role of cultural context.. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*, 25(2), pp. 193-216.
- Brockhaus, R., 1980. The effect of job dissatisfaction on the decision to start a business. *Journal of Small Business Management*, 18(1), pp. 37-43.
- Brook, O., Miles, A., O'Brien, D. & Taylor, M., 2022. Social Mobility and 'Openness' in Creative Occupations since the 1970s. *Sociology*, 0(0).
- Brown, R. & Mason, C., 2017. Looking inside the spiky bits: a critical review and conceptualisation of entrepreneurial ecosystems.. *Small Business Economics*, 49(1), pp. 11-30.
- Brück, T. & Schindler, K., 2009. The Impact of Violent Conflicts on Households: What Do We Know and What Should We Know about War Widows?. *Oxford Development Studies*, 37 (3), pp. 289-309.
- Brundin, E. & Gustafsson, V., 2013. Entrepreneurs' decision making under different levels of uncertainty: the role of emotions.. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*, 19(6), pp. 568-591.
- Burg, E. v., Cornelissen, J., Stam, W. & Jack, S., 2022. Impact, Advancing Qualitative Entrepreneurship Research: Leveraging Methodological Plurality for Achieving Scholarly. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 46(1), pp. 1-27.
- Bygrave, W. & Minniti, M., 2000. The social dynamics of entrepreneurship.. *Entrepreneurship theory and practice*, 24(3), pp. 25-36.
- Campbell, S. et al., 2020. Purposive sampling: complex or simple? Research case examples.. *Journal of research in Nursing*, 25(8), pp. 652-661.
- Cannella, G. S. & Koro-Ljungberg, M., 2017. Neoliberalism in Higher Education: Can We Understand? Can We Resist and Survive? Can We Become Without Neoliberalism?. *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies*, 17(3), pp. 155-162.
- Caretta, M., 2016. Member checking: A feminist participatory analysis of the use of preliminary results pamphlets in cross-cultural, cross-language research.. *Qualitative Research*, 16(3), pp. 305-318.

- Casady, C. B. & Peci, F., 2021. The institutional challenges of public-private partnerships (PPPs) in transition economies: Lessons from Kosovo. *Economic Research / Ekonomska Istraživanja*, 34(1), pp. 1949-1965.
- Casson, M., 2003. *The Entrepreneur: An Economic Theory*. 1st ed. Northampton: Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Castro, M. P., Scheede, C. R. & Zermeño, M. G. G., 2019. The Impact of Higher Education on Entrepreneurship and the Innovation Ecosystem: A Case Study in Mexico. *Sustainability*, 11(20).
- Centre for Strategy and Evaluation, 2015. *Interim Evaluation of the Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs Pilot Project / Preparatory Action*, Birmingham: Centre for Strategy and Evaluation.
- Chankseliani, M. & Silova, I., 2018. *Reconfiguring education purposes, policies and practices during post-socialist transformations: Setting the stage..* Berlin: Symposium Books..
- Chian Tan, F., Pan, S. & Cui, L., 2014. *An information processing perspective of digital social innovation: insights from china's taobao villages..* Auckland, International Conference on Information Systems.
- Chichevaliev, S., Debarliev, S. & Iliev, A., 2023. How is Social Entrepreneurship Pursuing the Path of Development? Regional Perspectives in the Western Balkans. In: V. Ramadani, S. Kjosev & B. Sergi, eds. *Entrepreneurship Development in the Balkans: Perspective from Diverse Contexts (Lab for Entrepreneurship and Development)*, . Leeds: Emerald Publishing Limited, pp. 33-68.
- Chiles, T., Bluedorn, A. & Gupta, V., 2007. Beyond creative destruction and entrepreneurial discovery: A radical Austrian approach to entrepreneurship.. *Organization studies*, 28(4), pp. 467-493.
- Choudhry, M. T., Marelli, E. & Signorelli, M., 2012. Youth unemployment rate and impact of financial crises. *International Journal of Manpower*, 33(1), pp. 76-95.
- Ciešlik, J., 2017. Essence of entrepreneurship. In: J. Ciešlik, ed. *Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies: Enhancing its Contribution to Socio-Economic Development*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 13-39.
- Clark, H., 2000. *Civil resistance in Kosovo..* New York: Pluto Press..
- Coary, S. P., 2022. The Effect of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Entrepreneurship: Is the Local Entrepreneur the “New Normal” Workforce?. In: E. Gallitto, M. Massi & P. Harrison, eds. *Consumption, Production, and Entrepreneurship in the Time of Coronavirus* . Chicago: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 153-177.
- Cohen, B., 2006. Sustainable Valley Entrepreneurial Ecosystems.. *Business strategy and the Environment*, 15(1), pp. 1-14.
- Cohen, L. & Manion, L., 1994. *Research Methods in Education..* 4th ed. London: Routledge.
- Colombelli, A., Paolucci, E. & Ughetto, E., 2019. Hierarchical and relational governance and the life cycle of entrepreneurial ecosystems.. *Small Business Economics*, Volume 52, pp. 505-521.

- Commission, E., 2019. *10 Years of Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs*, Brussels: European Commission.
- Congregado, E., Golpe, A. & Carmona, M., 2010. Is it a good policy to promote self-employment for job creation? Evidence from Spain.. *Journal of Policy Modeling*, 32(6), pp. 828-842.
- Cook, C., Heath, F. & Thompson, R., 2000. A meta-analysis of response rates in Web- or Internet-based surveys. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, Volume 60, pp. 821-836.
- Cope, J., Jack, S. & Rose, M., 2007. Social Capital and Entrepreneurship: An Introduction. *International Small Business Journal*, 25(3), pp. 213-219.
- Couper, M. P., 2000. Web surveys – A review of issues and approaches. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Volume 62, pp. 464-494.
- Cranford, C., Vosko, L. & Zukewich, N., 2003. The gender of precarious employment in Canada.. *Relations industrielles*, 58(3), pp. 454-482.
- Crawford, G., Dimov, D. & McKelvey, B., 2016. Realism, empiricism, and fetishism in the study of entrepreneurship.. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 25(2), pp. 168-170.
- Creswell, J., Clark, V., Gutmann, M. & Hanson, W., 2003.. Advanced mixed-methods. In: *Handbook of mixed methods in social & behavioral research*. s.l.:s.n., pp. 209-240.
- Creswell, J. & Clark, V. P., 2007. *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* ,. 1st ed. Thousand Oaks: Sage .
- Crnobrnja, M., 1996. *The Yugoslav Drama*.. s.l.: McGill-Queen's Press-MQUP..
- Cumming, D. & Johan, S., 2010. The differential impact of the internet on spurring regional entrepreneurship.. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 34(5), pp. 857-884.
- Dana, L. & Ramadani, V., 2015. *Family businesses in transition economies*.. Geneva: : Springer International Publishing..
- Darnihamedani, P. & Hessels, J., 2016. Human capital as a driver of innovation among necessity-based entrepreneurs.. *International Review of Entrepreneurship*., 14(1).
- Davidson, E. & Vaast, E., 2010. *Digital entrepreneurship and its sociomaterial enactment*.. Hawaii, 2010 43rd Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences.
- Davidsson, P., 2004. A general theory of entrepreneurship: The individual-opportunity nexus.. *International Small Business Journal*, 22(2), pp. 206-219.
- Davis, S., Haltiwanger, J. & Schuh, S., 1996. Small business and job creation: Dissecting the myth and reassessing the facts.. *Small business economics*, 8(1), pp. 297-315.
- Dawson, C. & Henley, A., 2012. “Push” versus “pull” entrepreneurship: an ambiguous distinction?. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*, 18(6), pp. 697-719.
- de Bruin, A. & Ferrante, F., 2011. Bounded opportunity: A knowledge-based approach to opportunity recognition and development.. *Entrepreneurship Research Journal*, 1(4), pp. 201-224.

- Debarliev, S., Janeska-Iliev, A., Stripeikis, O. & Zupan, B., 2022. What can education bring to entrepreneurship? Formal versus non-formal education. *Journal of Small Business Management*, 60(1), pp. 219-252.
- Deci, E. L. & Ryan, R. M., 2012. Self-determination theory in health care and its relations to motivational interviewing: A few comments.. *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity*, 91(1), pp. 24-26.
- Dees, J. G., 1998. *The Meaning of Social Entrepreneurship*, Kansas City, MO : The Kauffman Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership.
- Delacroix, E., Parguel, B. & Benoit-Moreau, F., 2019. Digital subsistence entrepreneurs on Facebook. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, Volume 146, pp. 887-899.
- Delamont, S., 2004. Ethnography and participant observation.. *Qualitative research practice*., Volume 217, pp. 205-217.
- Demirguc-Kunt, A., L.F. Klapper, L. & Panos, A., 2009. *Entrepreneurship in Post-Conflict Transition: The Role of Informality and Access to Finance.*, Washington DC: Policy Research Working Paper 4935, The World Bank..
- Denslow, D. et al., 2008. Teaching International Entrepreneurship Through Student Exchange: Observations, Obstacles and Recommendations. *Journal of Entrepreneurship Education*, 11(1), pp. 99-115.
- Denzin, N. & Lincoln, Y., 2011. *The Sage handbook of qualitative research*.. London: Sage.
- Desai, S., Acs, Z. J. & Weitzel, U., 2013. A model of destructive entrepreneurship: Insight for conflict and postconflict recovery. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 57(1), pp. 20-40.
- DeSantis, L. & Ugarriza, D., 2000. The concept of theme as used in qualitative nursing research.. *Western journal of nursing research*, 22(32), pp. 351-372.
- Dimovski, V. & Znidarsic, J., 2004. Entrepreneurship: An Educational Perspective (The Case Of Slovenia-Compared To Developed Economies).. *International Business and Economics Research Journal*, 3(1), pp. 17-30.
- Dioneo-Adetayo, E. A., 2006. Factors Influencing Attitude of Youth Towards Entrepreneurship. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, 13(1-2), pp. 127-135.
- Djolai, M., 2021. Introduction: Fighting for Security from a Minor Perspective and Against Securitisation of Minorities in Europe.. *JEMIE*, Volume 20, pp. 1-14.
- do Paço, A., Ferreira, J. & Raposo, M., 2015. Entrepreneurial intentions: is education enough?. *International Entrepreneurship Management Journal*, Volume 11, pp. 57-74.
- Doepke, M. & Zilibotti, F., 2014. Culture, entrepreneurship, and growth.. In: M. Doepke & F. Zilibotti, eds. *Handbook of economic growth*. Amsterdam: Elsevier, pp. 1-48.
- Doherty, B., Haugh, H. & Lyon, F., 2014. Social enterprises as hybrid organizations: A review and research agenda.. *International Journal of Management Review*, 16(4), pp. 417-436.
- Dorado, S., 2006. Social entrepreneurial ventures: different values so different process of creation, no?.. *Journal of developmental entrepreneurship*, 11(4), pp. 319-343.

- Dorado, S. & Ventresca, M. J., 2013. Crescive entrepreneurship in complex social problems: Institutional conditions for entrepreneurial engagement. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 28(1), pp. 69-82.
- Dragovic-Soso, J., 2007. Why Did Yugoslavia Disintegrate? An Overview of Contending Explanations. In: L. Cohen & J. Dragovic-Soso, eds. *State Collapse in South-Eastern Europe*. West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, pp. 1-42.
- Duijzings, G., 2000. *Religion and the Politics of Identity in Kosovo*. New York: Columbia University Press..
- Dupain, W. et al., 2021. *The state of social enterprise in Europe - European social enterprise monitor 2020-2021..* [Online] Available at: <https://knowledgecentre.euclidnetwork.eu/download/european-social-enterprise-monitor-report-2020-2021/>. [Accessed 01 02 2024].
- Dwivedi, A. & Weerawardena, J., 2018. Conceptualizing and operationalizing the social entrepreneurship construct.. *Journal of Business Research*, Volume 86, pp. 32-40.
- E., P. M., 1998. Clusters and the new economics of competition. *Harvard Business Review*, 76(6), p. 77–90.
- Eagly, A., Wood, W. & Diekmann, A., 2000. Social role theory of sex differences and similarities: a current appraisal. *The Developmental Social Psychology of Gender*, pp. 123-174.
- Earley, P. C., 1997. *Face, Harmony, and Social Structure: An Analysis of Organizational Behavior Across Cultures*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Ebbinghaus, B., 2005. When Less is More: Selection Problems in Large- N and Small- N Cross-National Comparisons. *International Sociology*, 20(2), pp. 130-150.
- Edwards-Schachter, M. & Wallace, M., 2017. Shaken, but not stirred': Sixty years of defining social innovation.. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 119(1), pp. 64-79.
- Ekbia, H., 2009. Digital artifacts as quasi-objects: Qualification, mediation, and materiality.. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 60(12), pp. 2554-2566.
- Elkington, J. & Hartigan, P., 2008. *The power of unreasonable people: How social entrepreneurs create markets that change the world.* , s.l.: Harvard Business Press..
- Estrin, S. & Mickiewicz, T., 2013. Entrepreneurship in the transition economies of Central and Eastern Europe. . In: *Handbook of the economics and political economy of transition*. London: Routledge, pp. 263-274.
- European Commission, 2006. *Entrepreneurship education in Europe: fostering entrepreneurial mindsets through education and learning*, Oslo: Final Proceedings of the Conference on Entrepreneurship Education .
- European Commission, 2013. *Policy Brief on Recent Developments in Youth Entrepreneurship*, Strasbourg: European Commission.

European Commission, 2019. *Social enterprises and their ecosystems in Europe, Country Report*, , Strasbourg: European Commission.

European Commission, 2023. *YouthWiki Slovenian Youth Entrepreneurship Support*. [Online] Available at: <https://national-policies.eacea.ec.europa.eu/youthwiki/chapters/slovenia/39-start-up-funding-for-young-entrepreneurs> [Accessed 19 02 2024].

F.H. Stephen, D. U. a. S. V. H., 2005. The impact of institutions on entrepreneurial activity. *Managerial and Decision Economics*, 26(7), pp. 413-319.

Farber, H. S., 1999. Alternative and Part-time Employment Arrangements as a Response to Job Loss.. *Journal of Labor Economics*, 17(4), pp. 142-169.

Fink-Hafner, D., 2006. Slovenia: Between Bipolarity and Broad Coalition-Building. In: S. Jungerstam-Mulders, ed. *Post-Communist EU Member States*. London: Routledge, pp. 218-248.

Flick, U., 2004. Triangulation in Qualitative Research. In: U. Flick, E. v. Kardoff & I. Steinke, eds. *A Companion to Qualitative Research*. Cheltenham: SAGE, pp. 178-184.

Foroudi, P., Gupta, S., Nazarian, A. & Duda, M., 2017. Digital Technology and Marketing Management Capability: Achieving Growth in SMEs. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, 20(2), pp. 230-246.

Fošner, A. & Jeraj, M., 2018. Entrepreneurial intentions among students in Slovenia.. *Advances in business related scientific research journal*, 9(1), pp. 68-74.

Fritsch, M. & Wyrwich, M., 2014. The Long Persistence of Regional Levels of Entrepreneurship: Germany, 1925-2005. *Regional Studies*, 48(6), pp. 955-973.

Fuentelsaz, L., González, C., Maícas, J. & Montero, J., 2015. How different formal institutions affect opportunity and necessity entrepreneurship. *Business Research Quarterly*, 18(4), pp. 246-258.

Furman, J., Porter, M. & Stern, S., 2002. The determinants of national innovative capacity.. *Research policy*, 31(6), pp. 899-933.

Furnham, A., Kirkcaldy, B. & Lynn, R., 1994. National attitudes to competitiveness, money, and work among young people: first, second, and third world differences". *Human Relations*, 47(1), pp. 119-132.

Geldhof, G. J., Porter, T. & Weiner, M. B., 2014. Fostering youth entrepreneurship: Preliminary findings from the young entrepreneurs study.. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 24(3), p. 431–446..

George, G., Lakhani, K. & Puranam, P., 2020. What has changed? The impact of Covid pandemic on the technology and innovation management research agenda.. *Journal of Management Studies*., 57(8).

Gephart Jr, R., 2004. Qualitative research and the Academy of Management Journal.. *Academy of management journal*, 47(4), pp. 454-462.

Ghatak, A., Chatterjee, S. & Bhowmick, B., 2020. Intention Towards Digital Social Entrepreneurship: An Integrated Model. *Journal of Social Entrepreneurship*.

Ghauri, P., Fu, X. & Minayora, A., 2022. Digital technology-based entrepreneurial pursuit of the marginalised communities.. *Journal of International Management*, 28(2), pp. 109-123.

Gibanje Svoboda, 2022. 4. redni kongres stranke Gibanje Svoboda. [Online] Available at: <https://gibanjesvoboda.si/svoboda/4-redni-kongres-stranke-gibanje-svoboda/> [Accessed 01 02 2024].

Giddens, A., 1991. *Modernity and Self-Identity Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Gimenez-Jimenez, D., Edelman, L. F., Dawson, A. & Calabrò, A., 2022. Women entrepreneurs' progress in the venturing process: the impact of risk aversion and culture. *Small Business Economics* , 58(1), pp. 1091-1111.

Giones, F. & Brem, A., 2017. Digital technology entrepreneurship: A definition and research agenda.. *Technology innovation management review*, 7(5).

Gorodnichenko, Y. & Roland, G., 2012. Understanding the individualism-collectivism cleavage and its effects: lessons from cultural psychology. *Institutions and Comparative Economic Development*,, 32(1), pp. 213-236.

Graevenitz, G. v., Harhoff, D. & Weber, R., 2010. The effects of entrepreneurship education. *Journal of Economic Behaviour and Organization*, 76(1), pp. 90-112.

Granovetter, M., 1985. Economic action and social structure: The problem of embeddedness.. *American Journal of Sociology*, 91(3), pp. 481-510.

Granovetter, M. S., 1983. The strength of weak ties. A network theory revisited. In: R. Collins, ed. *Sociological Theory*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, pp. 201-233.

Green, F., 2013. *Youth Entrepreneurship*, Paris: Background paper for the OECD Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs and Local Development,.

Green, J. & Thorogood, N., 2004. *Qualitative methods for health research*. 2nd ed. London: Sage Publications..

Green, R., David, J. & Dent., M., 1996. The Russian Entrepreneur: A Study of Psychological Characteristics.. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour & Research*, 2(1), pp. 49-58.

Gregori, P. & Holzmann, P., 2020. Digital sustainable entrepreneurship: A business model perspective on embedding digital technologies for social and environmental value creation.. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, Volume 272, pp. 128-243..

Gribben, A., 2018. Tackling policy frustrations to youth entrepreneurship in the Western Balkans. *Small Enterprise Research*, 25(2), pp. 183-191 .

Grochová, L. I. & Litzman, M., 2021. The efficiency in meeting measurable sustainable development goals. *International Journal of Sustainable Development & World Ecology* , 28(8), pp. 709-719.

- Grzeslo, J., 2020. A generation of bricoleurs: digital entrepreneurship in Kenya.. *World Journal of Entrepreneurship, Management and Sustainable Development*, 16(4), pp. 403-412.
- Guba, E., 1990. The paradigm dialog.. In: *Alternative paradigms*. Indiana: Sage Publications, Inc..
- Guerra, G. & Patuelli, R., 2016. The role of job satisfaction in transitions into self–employment.. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 40(3), pp. 543-571.
- Guthrie, C., 2014. The digital factory: A hands-on learning project in digital entrepreneurship.. *Journal of Entrepreneurship Education*, 17(1), p. 115.
- Haftendorn, K. & Salzano, C., 2003. *Facilitating youth entrepreneurship. An analysis of awareness and promotion programmes in formal and non-formal education*, Geneva: International Labor Organization.
- Halliday, D., 2021. On the (mis)classification of paid labor: When should gig workers have employee status?. *Politics, Philosophy and Economics*, 20(3), pp. 229-250.
- Hammersley, M. & Foster, P., 2000. Case study method.. *Key issues, Key texts*, pp. 1-16.
- Hankiss, E., 1990. *East European alternatives*.. Oxford: Clarendon.
- Hansen, B., 2019. The digital revolution–digital entrepreneurship and transformation in Beijing.. *Small Enterprise Research*, 26(1), pp. 36-54.
- Harmon, C., Oosterbeek, H. & Walker, I., 2003. Returns to education: microeconomics.. *Journal of Economic Surveys*, Volume 17, p. 115–156.
- Harms, R., Luck, F., Kraus, S. & Walsh, S., 2014. On the motivational drivers of gray entrepreneurship: An exploratory study. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 89(1), pp. 358-365.
- Hartog, J. & Oosterbeek, H., 2007. What should you know about private returns to education?. In: J. Hartog & H. M. v. d. Brink, eds. *Human Capital: Moving the Frontier*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hashi, I. & Krasniqi, B., 2011. Entrepreneurship and SME growth: evidence from advanced and laggard transition economies. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*, 17(5), pp. 456-487.
- Hayek, F. A., 1937. Economics and Knowledge. In: M. Casson, ed. *Entrepreneurship*. London: Edward Elgar.
- Hayton, J. C., George, G. & Zahra, S. A., 2002. National culture and entrepreneurship : A review of behavioral research.. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 26(4), p. 33–52..
- Henrekson, M. & Sanandaji, T., 2014. Small Business Activity Does Not Measure Entrepreneurship.. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 111(5), p. 1760–1765.
- Hernandez-Arriaza, M. e. a., 2023. Gen-Z university students' attitudes toward current global trends: environment, globalisation, immigration, feminism and capitalism. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, p. 1–16.

- Hewlett, S., Sherbin, L. & Sumberg, K., 2009. How Gen Y and Boomers will reshape your agenda.. *Harvard business review*, 87(7-8), pp. 71-76..
- Hickie, J., 2011. The Development of Human Capital in Young Entrepreneurs. *Industry and Higher Education*, 25(6), pp. 469-481.
- Hidalgo, G., Monticelli, J. M. & Bortolaso, I. V., 2021. Social Capital as a Driver of Social Entrepreneurship. *Journal of Social Entrepreneurship*.
- Hockerts, K., 2018. The Effect of Experiential Social Entrepreneurship Education on Intention Formation in Students. *Journal of Social Entrepreneurship*, 9(3), pp. 234-256.
- Hojnik, B. B., 2020. Overview of Social Entrepreneurship Development in Slovenia. *Transylvanian Review of Administrative Sciences*, pp. 5-21.
- Holmgren, C. & From, J., 2005. Taylorism of the mind: entrepreneurship education from a perspective of educational research. *European Educational Research Journal*, 4(4), p. 382-90.
- Hopf, C., 2004. Qualitative Interviews: An Overview. In: U. Flick, E. v. Kardorff & I. Steinke, eds. *A Companion to Qualitative Research*. London: SAGE Publications, pp. 203-209.
- Howe, K., 1988. Against the quantitative-qualitative incompatibility thesis or dogmas die hard.. *Educational Researcher*, 17(8), pp. 10-16.
- Hughes, L. & Preski, S., 1997. Using key informant methods in organizational survey research: Assessing for informant bias. *Research in nursing & health*, 20(1), pp. 81-92.
- Hull, C. et al., 2007. Taking advantage of digital opportunities: a typology of digital entrepreneurship.. *International Journal of Networking and Virtual Organisations*, 4(3), pp. 290-303.
- Hulsink, W. & Koek, D., 2014. The young, the fast and the furious: a study about the triggers and impediments of youth entrepreneurship. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation Management*, 18(2-3), pp. 182-209.
- Hulsink, W. & Koek, D., 2014. The young, the fast and the furious: a study about the triggers and impediments of youth entrepreneurship. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation Management*, 18(2-3), pp. 182-209.
- Hu, X. et al., 2020. Understanding opportunities in social entrepreneurship: A critical realist abstraction.. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 44(5), pp. 1032-1056.
- Hynes, B., Costin, Y. & Birdthistle, N., 2011. Practice-based learning in entrepreneurship education: A means of connecting knowledge producers and users. *Higher Education, Skills and Work-Based Learning*, 1(1), pp. 16-28.
- Igor Stubelj, et al., 2017. Corporate purpose in a small post-transitional economy: the case of Slovenia. *Economic Research-Ekonomska Istraživanja*, 30(1), pp. 818-835.
- İlhan Ertuna, Z. & Gurel, E., 2011. The moderating role of higher education on entrepreneurship. *Education + Training*, 53(5), pp. 387-402.
- Inglehart, R., 2006. Mapping global values.. *Comparative sociology*, 5(2-3), pp. 115-136.

- International Labour Organization, 2010. *Women in labour markets: Measuring progress and identifying challenges*, Geneva: International Labour Organization.
- Israel, M. & Hay, I., 2006. *Research ethics for social scientists*.. London: Sage.
- Jackson, S., 2008. A participatory group process to analyze qualitative data.. *Progress in community health partnerships: research, education, and action*, , 2(2), pp. 161-170.
- Janson, M. & Wrycza, S., 1999. Information technology and entrepreneurship: three cases from Poland.. *International Journal of Information Management*, 19(5), pp. 351-367.
- Johansen, V., 2013. Entrepreneurship education and start-up activity: a gender perspective. *International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship*, pp. 216-231.
- Johnson, D., Bock, A. J. & George, G., 2019. Entrepreneurial dynamism and the built environment in the evolution of university entrepreneurial ecosystems.. *Industrial and Corporate Change*.
- Johnson, R., Chang, C. & Lord, R., 2006. Moving from cognition to behavior: What the research says.. *Psychological bulletin*, 132(3), pp. 381-290.
- Jolanta, S. & Skrzek-Lubasińska, M., 2018. Self-Employment and Entrepreneurship: A Theoretical Approach. *Journal of Management and Business Administration*, 26(2), pp. 89-120.
- Justo, R., Lepoutre, J. & Terjesen, S., 2010. Social Entrepreneurship.. In: N. Bosma & J. Levie, eds. *Global Entrepreneurship Monitor: 2009 Executive Report*. London: Global Entrepreneurship Monitor.
- Kalantaridis, C. & Labrianidis, L., 2004. Rural Entrepreneurs in Russia and the Ukraine: Origins, Motivations, and Institutional Change. *Journal of Economic Issues*, 38(3), pp. 659-681.
- Kalden, J. N., Cunningham, J. & Anderson, A. R., 2017. The social status of entrepreneurs: Contrasting German perspectives.. *The International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation*, 18(2), pp. 91-104.
- Kallinikos, J., Aaltonen, A. & Marton, A., 2013. The ambivalent ontology of digital artifacts.. *MIS quarterly*, pp. 357-370.
- Kamaludin, M., Xavier, J. & Amin, M., 2024. Social entrepreneurship and sustainability: A conceptual framework.. *Journal of Social Entrepreneurship*, 15(1), pp. 26-49.
- Karimi, S. et al., 2013. Understanding role Models and Gender Influences on Entrepreneurial Intentions Among College Students. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, Volume 94, pp. 204-213.
- Karlsson, P. S., 2019. *Comparative Cross-National Case Study Research: The "Stuff" Research Methods Books Don't Tell You*, Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Kartallozi, I. & Xhemajli, V., 2017. *The Rise of Future Leaders: Social Enterprise in Kosovo*, Prishtina: Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation.

- Kavada, A., 2018. Connective or collective?: The intersection between online crowds and social movements in contemporary activism.. In: *The Routledge companion to media and activism*. London: Routledge, pp. 108-116.
- Kelley, D. J. et al., 2017. *Global Entrepreneurship Monitor 2018/2017 Report on Women's Entrepreneurship*, Oxford: Babson College: Smith College and the Global Entrepreneurship Research Association.
- Kibler, E., Kautonen, T. & Fink, M., 2017. Regional Social Legitimacy of Entrepreneurship: Implications for Entrepreneurial Intention and Start-up Behaviour. In: D. S. Michael Fritsch, ed. *Entrepreneurship in a Regional Context*. London: Routledge, pp. 86-107.
- Kindsfaterienė, K. & Lukaševičius, K., 2008. The impact of the tax system on business environment.. *Engineering economics*, 57(2).
- King, L., 2002. Postcommunist divergence: a comparative analysis of the transition to capitalism in Poland and Russia.. *Studies in Comparative International Development*, 37(1), pp. 3-34.
- King, L. P. & Szelényi, I., 2005. Post-Communist Economic Systems. In: N. J. Smelser & R. Swedberg, eds. *The Handbook of Economic Sociology*. New York: Princeton University Press, pp. 205-232.
- Kinpaisby, M., 2008. Taking stock of participatory geographies: envisioning the communiversity.. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 33(3), pp. 292-299.
- Kinsman, J., 2008. Kosovo: after the party, the hangover. *OPTIONS POLITIQUES*, 01 03, pp. 46-50.
- Klapper, L., Laeven, L. & Rajan, R., 2004. *Barriers to Entrepreneurship*, Washington DC: World Bank.
- Kleindienst, P., 2019. Economic and social security in EU: Reforming Slovenian law on social entrepreneurship. *Research in Social Change*, 11(2), pp. 14-34.
- Kovač, O., 1995. Privatization in Yugoslavia and its institutional framework.. In: *Privatization in the Economies in Transition*. s.l.:s.n., pp. 321-332..
- Kowske, B., Rasch, R. & Wiley, J., 2010. Millennials' (Lack of) Attitude Problem: An Empirical Examination of Generational Effects on Work Attitudes. *Journal of Business Psychology*, Volume 25, pp. 265-279.
- Kozorog, M., 2021. Young entrepreneurs in modern-day Slovenia: Introduction to an emerging subject (Introduction to Thematic Section).. *Studia ethnologica Croatica*, 33(1), pp. 11-19.
- Kozubíková, L., Dvorský, J., Cepel, M. & Balcerzak, A. P., 2017. Important characteristics of an entrepreneur in relation to risk taking: Czech Republic case study. *Journal of International Studies*, 10(3), pp. 220-233.
- Krasniqi, B., 2007. Barriers to Entrepreneurship and SME Growth in Transition: The Case of Kosova. *Journal of Developmental Entrepreneurship*, 12(1), pp. 71-94.
- Krasniqi, B. & Branch, D., 2018. Institutions and firm growth in a transitional and post-conflict economy of Kosovo. *Journal of Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies*.

- Kraus, S., Roig-Tierno, N. & Bouncken, R., 2019. Digital innovation and venturing: an introduction into the digitalization of entrepreneurship.. *Review of Managerial Science*, 13(3), pp. 519-528.
- Krueger, N. F. & Day, M., 2010. Looking forward, looking backward: From entrepreneurial cognition to Neuroentrepreneurship. In: J. Acs & D. B. Audretsch, eds. *Handbook of entrepreneurship research*. New York: Springer, pp. 321-357.
- Kržan, M. & Birač, D., 2022. The restoration of capitalism in Slovenia and Croatia.. In: A. Gagyí & O. Slačálek, eds. *The Political Economy of Eastern Europe 30 years into the 'Transition' New Left Perspectives from the Region*. London: Springer, pp. 65-80..
- Kshetri, N., 2009. Entrepreneurship in post-socialist economies: A typology and institutional contexts for market entrepreneurship. *Journal of International Entrepreneurship* , 7(1), p. 236–259.
- Kshetri, N., 2009. Entrepreneurship in post-socialist economies: A typology and institutional contexts for market entrepreneurship. *Journal of International Entrepreneurship*, 7(3), pp. 236-259.
- Kuhn, T., 1970. *The nature of scientific revolutions*.. Chicago: : University of Chicago.
- Kuratko, D. F., 2020. *Entrepreneurship: Theory, process, practice*. 11th ed. London: Mason: Cengage publishers.
- Kwok, J., 2007. Changing the System. *Harvard International Review*, 29(2), pp. 40-44.
- Lajqi, S. & Krasniqi, B. A., 2017. Entrepreneurial growth aspirations in challenging environment: The role of institutional quality, human and social capital. *Special Issue: New Strategies for Innovative Performance, Part V*, 26(4), pp. 385-401.
- Lajqi, S., Shiroka-Pula, J. & Krasniqi, B., 2019. *Education and Entrepreneurship Career Choice in Kosovo*. Split, 44th International Scientific Conference on Economic and Social Development.
- Laki, M., 2003. Opportunities for Property Acquisition and some Characteristics of Big Entrepreneurs in Post-socialist Hungary. *Europe-Asia Studies*, 55(5), pp. 693-709.
- Lalkaka, R., 2001. *'Best Practices' in Business Incubation: Lessons (yet to be) Learned*. Brussels, International Conference on Business Centers: Actors for Economic & Social Development .
- Lalkaka, R., 2003. Business incubators in developing countries: characteristics and performance. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation Management*, 3(1-2), pp. 31-55.
- Lambovska, M., Sardinha, B. & Belas, J., 2021. Impact of the COVID19 Pandemic on Youth Unemployment in the European Union. *Ekonomicko-manazerske spektrum*, 9(1), pp. 55-63.
- Langowitz, N. & Minniti, M., 2007. The Entrepreneurial Propensity of Women. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 31(3), p. 341–364.

- Lans, T., Blok, V. & Gulikers, J., 2015. Show me your network and I'll tell you who you are: social competence and social capital of early-stage entrepreneurs. *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, 27(7-8), pp. 458-473.
- LeCompte, M., 2000. Analyzing qualitative data.. *Theory into practice*, 39(3), pp. 146-154.
- Leeman, J. & Sandelowski, M., 2012. Practice-based evidence and qualitative inquiry.. *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*, 44(2), pp. 171-179.
- Lendvai, P., 1991. Yugoslavia without Yugoslavs: The roots of the crisis.. *International Affairs*, 67(2), pp. 251-261.
- Lerner, J., 1994. Venture capitalists and the decision to go public.. *Journal of financial Economics*, 35(3), pp. 293-316.
- Lincoln, Y., 1995. Emerging criteria for quality in qualitative and interpretive research.. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 1(3), pp. 275-289.
- Lincoln, Y. S. & Guba, E. G., 1985. *Naturalistic Inquiry*. 1st ed. Cheltenham: SAGE.
- Littunen, H., 2000. Entrepreneurship and the Characteristics of the Entrepreneurial Personality. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour and Research*, 6(6), pp. 295-309.
- Liu, W., Xu, Y., Wu, C.-H. & Luo, Y., 2023. Fortune favors the experienced: entrepreneurs' Internet-Era Imprint, digital entrepreneurship and venture capital. *Information Processing & Management*, 60(4).
- Lock, I. & Seele, P., 2017. Theorizing stakeholders of sustainability in the digital age.. *Sustainability Science*, Volume 12, pp. 235-245.
- Loku, A., Gogiqi, F. & Qehaja, V., 2018. Social Enterprises like the Right Step for Economic Development for Kosovo.. *European Journal of Marketing and Economics*, 1(1), pp. 18-23.
- Loku, A. & Loku, N., 2020. Internal factors affecting the performance of Small and Medium Enterprises in Kosovo. *Technium Social Sciences Journal*, Volume 11, pp. 115-127.
- Luo, L. & Wildemuth, B., 2009. Semistructured interviews.. *Applications of social research methods to questions in information and library science*, , Volume 232..
- Luo, X. R. & Chung, C.-N., 2013. Filling or Abusing the Institutional Void? Ownership and Management Control of Public Family Businesses in an Emerging Market. *Organization Science*, 24(2), pp. 591-613.
- Mackey, A. & Gass, S., 2015. *Second language research: Methodology and Design*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge..
- Mair, J., Battilana, J. & Cardenas, J., 2012. Organizing for society: A typology of social entrepreneuring models.. *Journal of business ethics*, 11(1), pp. 353-373.
- Mair, J. & Marti, I., 2009. Entrepreneurship in and around institutional voids: A case study from Bangladesh. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 24(5), pp. 419-435.
- Mair, J. & Noboa, E., 2006. Social entrepreneurship: How intentions to create a social venture get formed. In: *Social Entrepreneurship*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, pp. 121-136.

- Malos, S., Lester, G. V. & Virick, M., 2018. Uber Drivers and Employment Status in the Gig Economy: Should Corporate Social Responsibility Tip the Scales?. *Employee Responsibilities and Rights Journal*, 30(1), pp. 239-251.
- Manolova, T. S., Edelman, L. F., Shirokova, G. & Tsukanova, T., 2019. Youth entrepreneurship in emerging economies: can family support help navigate institutional voids?. *Journal of East-West Business*, , pp. 363-395.
- Marangos, J., 2003. Alternative Politico-Economic Models of Transition. *Journal of Economic and Social Policy*, 8(1), pp. 1-20.
- Marshall, M. N., 1996. Sampling for Qualitative Research,. *Family Practice*, 13(6), p. 522–526.
- Martin, R. L. & Osberg, S., 2007. *Social Entrepreneurship: The Case for Definition*, Stanford: Stanford Social Innovation Review.
- Mason, C. & Brown, R., 2014. *Entrepreneurial Ecosystems and Growth Oriented Entrepreneurship*, Paris: Final Report to OECD.
- Masser, I., 1984. Cross-National Research: Some Methodological Considerations. *Environment and Planning B: Urban Analytics and City Science*, 11(2), pp. 131-140.
- McAdam, M., Crowley, C. & Harrison, R., 2019. To boldly go where no [man] has gone before"- institutional voids and the development of women's digital entrepreneurship.. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, Volume 146, pp. 912-922.
- McClelland, D., 1961. *The Achieving Society*. New York: Collier-Macmillan.
- McClelland, D., 1985. *Human Motivation*,. Glenview: Foresman.
- McClelland, D., 1987. Characteristics of Successful Entrepreneurs. *Journal of Creative Behaviour*, 21(1), pp. 219-233.
- McMillan, J. & Woodruff, C., 2001. Interfirm Relations and Informal Credit in Vietnam. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 114(1), pp. 1285-1320.
- McQueen, R. & Knussen, C., 2002. *Research methods for social science: A practical introduction*.. London: Pearson Education..
- Mencinger, J., 2001. Why is Transition in Slovenia Often Considered a Success Story. *Journal des Économistes et des Études Humaines*, 11(1), pp. 42-55.
- Mertens, D. M., 2005. Research and Evaluation in Education and-Psychology. In: *Integrating diversity with Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed Methods*. Thousand Oaks, London, : Sage press., pp. 88-189.
- Miloseska, S. P. V. D. E., 2021. Digital Perspectives of Social Entrepreneurship in Western Balkan Countries.. *Economic Development*, 23(1), pp. 5-13.
- Milovanović, D. & Maksimović, N., 2018. Could Social Enterprises Become (Another) Active Measure for Employment of Marginalized Groups in Kosovo?. In: M. Bashevska, ed. *Social Enterprise Developments in the Balkans*. Belgrade: Balkan Social Enterprise Research Network, pp. 99-118.

- Milwood, P. & Roehl, W., 2019. *Towards a measurement scale for digital social innovation: A responsibility-sustainability framework..* Nicosia, Information and Communication Technologies in Tourism.
- Minniti, M., 2010. Female Entrepreneurship and Economic Activity. *The European Journal of Development Research*, 22(3), pp. 294-312.
- Minniti, M. & Bygrave, W., 1999. The microfoundations of entrepreneurship.. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 23(4), pp. 41-52.
- Minola, T., Criaco, G. & Cassia, L., 2014. Are youth really different? New beliefs for old practices in entrepreneurship. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation Management*, Volume 18, p. 233–259.
- Mintz, B., 2021. Neoliberalism and the Crisis in Higher Education: The Cost of Ideology. *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, 80(1), pp. 79-112.
- Mitchell, R. K. et al., 2002. Are entrepreneurial cognitions universal? Assessing entrepreneurial cognitions across cultures. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 26(4), pp. 9-33.
- Modarresi, M. & Arasti, Z., 2021. Cultural Challenges of Women Entrepreneurs in Iran. In: S. Rezaei, et al. eds. *The Emerald Handbook of Women and Entrepreneurship in Developing Economies*. Bingley: Emerald Publishing Limited, pp. 229-245.
- Moreira, J., Marques, C., da Silva Braga, A. M. & Ratten, V., 2019. A systematic review of women's entrepreneurship and internationalization literature. *Thunderbird International Business Review*, 61(5).
- Morioka, S. & Carvalho, M., 2016. A systemic literature review towards a conceptual framework for integrating sustainability performance into business.. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 136(A), pp. 134-146.
- Morse, J. M., 1990. Strategies for Sampling. In: J. M. Morse, ed. *Qualitative Nursing Research: A Contemporary Dialogue*. Hoboken: SAGE, pp. 127-145.
- Murnieks, C., Mosakowski, E. & Cardon, M., 2014. Pathways of passion: Identity centrality, passion, and behavior among entrepreneurs.. *Journal of management*, 40(6), pp. 1583-1606.
- Murphy, P., Liao, J. & Welsch, H., 2006. A conceptual history of entrepreneurial thought.. *Journal of management history*, 12(1), pp. 12-35.
- Mustafa, M. & Krasniqi, B., 2018. Entrepreneurship in Kosovo. . In: R. D. L. R. V. Palalić, ed. *Entrepreneurship in Former Yugoslavia*. New York City: Springer, Cham, pp. 51-65.
- Naderi, I. & Steenburg, E. V., 2018. Me first, then the environment: young Millennials as green consumers. *Young Consumers Insight and Ideas for Responsible Marketers*, 19(95), pp. 280-295.
- Naudé, W., 2007. *Peace, prosperity and pro-growth entrepreneurship* , Helsinki: (No. 2007/02). WIDER Discussion Paper..

- Nicolopoulou, K., Karataş-Özkan, M., Vas, C. & Nouman, M., 2017. An incubation perspective on social innovation: the London Hub—a social incubator.. *R&D Management*, 47(3), pp. 368-384.
- Nind, M., 2011. Participatory data analysis: a step too far?.. *Qualitative Research*, 11(4), pp. 349-363.
- Nind, M., 2014. *What is inclusive research?*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing..
- Noguera, M., Álvarez, C. & Urbano, D., 2013. Socio-cultural factors and female entrepreneurship. *International Entrepreneurship Management Journal*, 9(2), pp. 183-198.
- Nooteboom, B., 2002. *Trust: Forms, foundations, functions, failures and figures*.. London: Edward Elgar Publishing..
- Norman, W. & MacDonald, C., 2004. Getting to the bottom of “triple bottom line”. *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 14(2), pp. 243-262.
- Nova, M. & Fink-Hafner, D., 2019. Slovenia: Interest group developments in a postsocialist-liberal democracy. *Journal of Public Affairs*, 19(2), pp. 1-13.
- OECD, 2022. *SME Policy Index: Western Balkans and Turkey*, Paris: OECD.
- Ojala, A., 2016. Business models and opportunity creation: How IT entrepreneurs create and develop business models under uncertainty.. *Information Systems Journal*, 26(5), pp. 451-476..
- Olsen, W., 2004. Triangulation in Social Research: Qualitative and Quantitative Methods Can Really Be Mixed. In: M. Holborn, ed. *Developments in Sociology*. Ormskirk: Causeway Press.
- Olssen, M. & Peters, M. A., 2005. Neoliberalism, higher education and the knowledge economy: from the free market to knowledge capitalism. *Journal of Education Policy*, 20(3), p. 313–345.
- Orser, B., 2022. Building back better through feminist entrepreneurship policy.. *International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship*, 14(4), pp. 468-488.
- Ouragini, I., Labidi, M. & Ben Hassine Louzir, A., 2023. The Role of Entrepreneurial Universities in Promoting Entrepreneurship Education: A Comparative Study Between Public and Private Technology Institutes. *Journal of the Knowledge Economy*.
- Outhwaite, W. & Turner, S., 2007. *The SAGE Handbook of Social Science Methodology*. California: SAGE Publishing.
- Ovaska, T. & Sobel, R., 2005. Entrepreneurship in Post-Socialist Economies. *Journal of Private Enterprise*, 11(1), pp. 8-30.
- P., C., M., G. U. & G., E., 1997. Regional innovation systems: Institutional and organisational dimensions. *Research Policy*, 26(4-5), p. 475–491.
- Packard, M., 2017. Where did interpretivism go in the theory of entrepreneurship?.. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 32(5), pp. 536-549.
- Palalić, R., Dana, L. P. & Ramadani, V., 2018. Entrepreneurship in Former Yugoslavia: An Introduction. In: R. Palalić, L. P. Dana & V. Ramadani, eds. *Entrepreneurship in Former*

Yugoslavia: Diversity, Institutional Constraints and Prospects. Geneva : Springer International Publishing, pp. 1-8.

Parida, V. & Wincent, J., 2019. Why and how to compete through sustainability: a review and outline of trends influencing firm and network-level transformation.. *International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal*, 15(1), pp. 1-19.

Parker, G., Van Alstyne, M. & Choudary, S., 2016. *Platform revolution: How networked markets are transforming the economy and how to make them work for you.*, New York: WW Norton & Company..

Parsons, T. & Smelser, N., 1956. A sociological model for economic development.. *Explorations in Economic History*, , 8(4), p. 181..

Pelucha, M., Kourilova, J. & Kveton, V., 2017. Barriers of social entrepreneurship development—a case study of the Czech Republic.. *Journal of Social Entrepreneurship*, 8(2), pp. 129-148.

Peris-Ortiz, M., Fuster-Estruch, V. & Devece-Carañana, C., 2014. *Entrepreneurship and innovation in a context of crisis*. 1st ed. London: Springer International Publishing..

Perri, M. J. S. S. K. a. S. A., 2018. Challenges associated with qualitative interviews: Perspectives of graduate students.. *International Journal of Nursing Student Scholarship*, Volume 5.

Pickering, P., 2010. Assessing international aid for local governance in the Western Balkans.. *Democratization*, 17(5), pp. 1024-1049.

Pigozne, T., Luka, I. & Surikova, S., 2019. Promoting Youth Entrepreneurship and Employability through Non-Formal and Informal Learning: The Latvia Case. *Center for Educational Policy Studies Journal*, 9(4), pp. 129-151.

Pinillos, M. J. & Reyes, L., 2011. Relationship between individualist–collectivist culture and entrepreneurial activity: Evidence from Global Entrepreneurship Monitor data. *Small Business Economics*, 37(1), pp. 23-27.

Pitelis, C., 2009. The sustainable competitive advantage and catching-up of nations: FDI, clusters and the liability (asset) of smallness.. *Management International Review*, Volume 49, pp. 95-120.

Porter, M. & Linde, C., 1995. Toward a new conception of the environment-competitiveness relationship.. *Journal of economic perspectives*, 9(4), pp. 97-118.

Presenza, A., Abbate, T., Cesaroni, F. & Appio, F., 2019. Enacting social crowdfunding business ecosystems: The case of the platform Meridonare.. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 143(1), pp. 190-201.

Psacharopoulos, G., 1994. Returns to investment in education: a global update.. *World Development*, Volume 22, p. 1325–1343.

Pšeničny, V., Jakopin, E., Vukčević, Z. & Čorić, G., 2014. Dynamic entrepreneurship – generator of sustainable economic growth and competitiveness. *Journal of Contemporary Management Issues*, 19(1), pp. 61-92.

- Purcell, K., 2000. Gendered employment insecurity?. In: *The insecure workforce*. London: Routledge, pp. 124-151.
- Radeljić, B., 2014. Official discrepancies: Kosovo independence and Western European rhetoric.. *Perspectives on European Politics and Society*, 15(4), pp. 431-444.
- Rae, D., 2015. *Opportunity-Centred Entrepreneurship*.. New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Ramadani, V., Jashari, F., Gërguri-Rashiti, S. & Palalić, R., 2021. Digital entrepreneurship intentions: evidence from Kosovo. *International Journal of Technology Transfer and Commercialisation*, 18(4), pp. 399-417.
- Ramadani, V., Kjosev, S. & Sergi, B., 2023. Entrepreneurship Development in the Balkans: Past, Present, and Future. In: V. Ramadani, S. Kjosev & B. Sergi, eds. *Entrepreneurship Development in the Balkans: Perspective from Diverse Contexts*. Leeds: Emerald Publishing Limited, pp. 1-14.
- Ramadani, V., Memili, E., Dana, L.-P. & Ramadani, V., 2020. Women's Entrepreneurship in North Macedonia. In: R. Palalić, E. Knezović & L. Dana, eds. *Women's Entrepreneurship in Former Yugoslavia: Historical Framework, Ecosystem, and Future Perspectives for the Region*. Switzerland: Springer Publishing, pp. 113-134.
- Ramadani, V. et al., 2015. A look at female entrepreneurship in Kosovo: an exploratory study. *Journal of Enterprising Communities: People and Places*, 9(3), pp. 277-294.
- Ramoglou, S. & Tsang, E., 2016. A realist perspective of entrepreneurship: Opportunities as propensities.. *Academy of management review*, 41(3), pp. 410-434.
- Reiss, S., 2012. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.. *Teaching of Psychology*, 39(2), pp. 152-156.
- Republika e Kosovës, 2018. *Kosovo Economic Reform Programme 2018-2020*, Prishtina: Republika e Kosovës.
- Reynolds, P. et al., 2001. *Global entrepreneurship monitor, 2001 executive report*, London: Babson College, Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation and London Business School..
- Ribeiro, G., Oliveira, K. & Souza, R., 2021. DSI strategy canvas: Modelling the digital social innovation strategy.. *Journal of Social Entrepreneurship*, pp. 1-29.
- Riinvest, 2020. *Employment and Labour Market Analysis: Kosovo*, Berlin: Riinvest.
- Rindova, V., Petkova, A. & Kotha, S., 2007. Standing out: How new firms in emerging markets build reputation.. *Strategic organization*, 5(1), pp. 31-70.
- Roberts, D. & Woods, C., 2005. Changing the world on a shoestring: The concept of social entrepreneurship.. *University of Auckland Business Review*, 7(1).
- Rodrigo, L. & Palacios, M., 2021. What antecedent attitudes motivate actors to commit to the ecosystem of digital social innovation?.. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, Volume 162, pp. 120-139.
- Rodrigues, S. B. “., 2013. *Understanding the Environments of Emerging Markets: The Social Costs of Institutional Voids*., Rotterdam: Farewell Address, Rotterdam School of Management,

- Rojec, M. et al., 2004. The rise and decline of gradualism in Slovenia.. *Post-Communist Economies*, 16(4), pp. 459-482.
- Roman, M. & Paraschiv, D., 2019. The Young Entrepreneurs of Europe and the Role of International Mobility. *Amfiteatru Economic*, 21(3), pp. 763-777.
- Rotter, J., 1966. Generalized expectations for internal versus external control of reinforcement. *Psychological Monographs: General and Applied*, 80(1), pp. 1-27.
- Rue, P., 2018. Make way, millennials, here comes Gen Z.. *About Campus*, 23(3), pp. 5-12.
- Runst, P., 2013. Post-Socialist Culture and Entrepreneurship. *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, 72(3), pp. 593-626.
- Runst, P., 2014. Popular Attitudes Toward Market Economic Principles and Institutional Reform in Transition Economies. *Review of Social Economy*, Volume 72, p. 83–115.
- Sadiku-Dushi, N., 2018. Survival or Willing? Informal Ethnic Entrepreneurship Among Ethnic Serbs in Kosovo. In: V. D. L. R. V. B. A. Ramadani, ed. *Informal Ethnic Entrepreneurship*. New York City: Springer, pp. 115-131.
- Sadiku-Dushi, N., Ramadani, V. & Dianne H. B. Welsh, 2020. Women's Entrepreneurship in Kosovo. In: R. Palalić, L. Dana & E. Knezović, eds. *Women's Entrepreneurship in Former Yugoslavia: Historical Framework, Ecosystem, and Future Perspectives for the Region*. Switzerland: Springer Publishing, pp. 61-82.
- Salihu, A., Terziqi, D. & Schaffer, E., 2019. *Kosovo Education in the 21st Century: A Challenging Future.*, Sofia: Bulgarian Comparative Education Society..
- Salkowitz, R., 2010. *Young world rising: How youth technology and entrepreneurship are changing the world from the bottom up*. 1st ed. London: John Wiley & Sons..
- Samuelsson, M. & Davidsson, P., 2009. Does Venture Opportunity Variation Matter? Investigating Systematic Process Differences between Innovative and Imitative New Ventures. *Small Business Economics* , 33(2), p. 229–255.
- Sapir, A., 1980. Economic Growth and Factor Substitution: What Happened to the Yugoslav Miracle?. *Economic Journal*, 90(385), pp. 294-313.
- Saqipi, B. & Rexhaj, X., 2020. Moving from survival to development: Experiences in Kosovo from developing academic identity in a transitional context.. *European Journal of Education*, 55(4), pp. 528-541.
- Sarason, Y., Dean, T. & Dillard, J., 2006. Entrepreneurship as the nexus of individual and opportunity: A structuration view.. *Journal of business venturing*, 21(3), pp. 286-305.
- Sarason, Y., Dillard, J. & Dean, T., 2010. How can we know the dancer from the dance?: Reply to "Entrepreneurship as the structuration of individual and opportunity: A response using a critical realist perspective. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 25(2), pp. 238-243.
- Sarasvathy, S. & Venkataraman, S., 2011. Entrepreneurship as method: Open questions for an entrepreneurial future. *Entrepreneurship theory and practice*, 35(1), pp. 113-135.
- Saunders, M. & Tosey, P., 2013. *The layers of research design*. , s.l.: Rapport, (Winter).

- Schmitt-Rodermund, E., 2007. The long way to entrepreneurship: Personality, parenting, early interests, and competencies as precursors for entrepreneurial activity among the 'Termites'. . In: R. K. Silbereisen & R. M. L. -, eds. *Approaches to positive youth development*. Berlin: SAGE Publications Ltd, pp. 205-224..
- Schoof, U., 2006. *Stimulating youth entrepreneurship : barriers and incentives to enterprise start-ups by young people*. ILO Working Papers , Geneva: International Labour Organization..
- Schröder, E. & Schmitt-Rodermund, E., 2007. Development of Entrepreneurial Interests, Attitudes and Behaviour. In: *Career development in childhood and adolescence*. s.l.:Brill., pp. 127-142.
- Seale, C., 2002. Quality issues in qualitative inquiry.. *Qualitative social work*, 1(1), pp. 97-110.
- Seelos, C., Mair, J., Battilana, J. & Tina Dacin, M., 2011. The Embeddedness of Social Entrepreneurship: Understanding Variation across Local Communities. In: C. Marquis, M. Lounsbury & R. Greenwood, eds. *Communities and Organizations: Research in the Sociology of Organizations*. Bingley: Emerald Group Publishing Limited, pp. 333-363.
- Selander, L. & Jarvenpaa, S., 2016. Digital action repertoires and transforming a social movement organization.. *MIS quarterly*, 40(2), pp. 331-352..
- Selenica, E., 2020. Education for whom? Engineering multiculturalism and liberal peace in post-conflict Kosovo. In: *International-Led Statebuilding and Local Resistance*. s.l.:Routledge, pp. 91-111.
- Senčar, T. B., 2021. Conceptualising Youth Entrepreneurship in EU Policy Discourse. *Studia ethnologica Croatica*, Volume 33, pp. 21-42.
- Sen, K. & Kirkpatrick, C., 2010. A diagnostics approach to economic growth and employment policy in low income economies: The case of Kosovo. *Journal of International Development*, 23(1), pp. 132-154.
- Shane, S., 2009. Why Encouraging More People to Become Entrepreneurs is Bad Public Policy.. *Small Business Economics*, 33(2), p. 141–149.
- Shane, S., Locke, E. & Collins, C., 2003. Entrepreneurial motivation. *Human Resource Management Review*, 13(2), pp. 257-279.
- Shane, S. & Venkataraman, S., 2000. The Promise of Entrepreneurship as a Field of Research. *Academy of Management Review*, 25(1), pp. 217-226.
- Shaw, E., 1999. A guide to the qualitative research process: evidence from a small firm study.. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, 2(2), pp. 59-70.
- Shaykhutdinova, G. et al., 2015. Actual problems of youth entrepreneurship at the modern stage.. *Journal of Advanced Research in Law and Economics*, 6(2), pp. 378-385.
- Shinnar, R., Hsu, D., Powell, B. & Zhou, H., 2017. Entrepreneurial intentions and start-ups: are women or men more likely to enact their intentions?. *International Small Business Journal*, 36(1), pp. 60-80.
- Short, J., Moss, T. & Lumpkin, G., 2009. Research in social entrepreneurship: Past contributions and future opportunities.. *Strategic entrepreneurship journal*, 3(2), pp. 161-194.

- Short, J., Moss, T. & Lumpkin, G., 2009. Research in Social Entrepreneurship: Past Contributions and Future Opportunities.. *Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal*, 3(1), pp. 161-194.
- Sieger, P., Zellweger, T., Nason, R. & Clinton, E., 2011. Portfolio entrepreneurship in family firms: a resource-based perspective.. *Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal*, 5(4), pp. 327-351.
- Simons, C. & Zanker, F., 2012. *Finding the Cases that Fit: Methodological Challenges in Peace Research* , Hamburg: GIGA Working Paper No 189.
- Sinclair, C. & Cook, E., 2021. *Building an inclusive innovation economy in Liverpool*, Liverpool: Heseltine Institute Policy Briefings.
- Slomczynski, K., Miller, J. & Kohn, M., 1981. Stratification, work, and values: A Polish-United States comparison.. *American Sociological Review*, pp. 720-744.
- Smallbone, D. & Welter, F., 2001. The distinctiveness of entrepreneurship in transition economies. *Small Business Economics*, 16(4), pp. 249-262.
- Smallbone, D. & Welter, F., 2006. Conceptualising entrepreneurship in a transition context.. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business*, 3(2), pp. 190-206.
- Sobel, R., Clark, J. & Lee, D., 2007. Freedom, Barriers to Entry, Entrepreneurship, and Economic Progress. *Review of Austrian Economics*, 20(1), pp. 221-236.
- Sotarauta, M., Beer, A. & Gibney, J., 2017. Making sense of leadership in urban and regional development. *Regional Studies*, 51(2), p. 187–193.
- Soto, H. D., 2000. *The mystery of capital: why capitalism triumphs in the West and fails everywhere else..* New York: Random House.
- Sottini, A. & Ciambotti, G., 2021. Social Entrepreneurship Toward a Sustainable Peacebuilding. In: W. L. Filho, et al. eds. *Encyclopedia of the UN Sustainable Development Goals*. s.l.:Springer, p. 841–851.
- Spigel, B., 2017. The relational organization of entrepreneurial ecosystems.. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 41(1), p. 49– 72.
- Spigel, B. & Harrison, R., 2018. Toward a process theory of entrepreneurial ecosystems.. *Strategic entrepreneurship journal*, 12(1), pp. 151-168.
- Srđana, T. et al., 2022. Effects of gender, age and education on entrepreneurial orientation and intentions among freelancers. *Journal of Engineering Management and Competitiveness*, 12(2), pp. 165-175.
- Stahl, N. & King, J., 2020. Expanding approaches for research: Understanding and using trustworthiness in qualitative research.. *Journal of developmental education*, , 44(1), pp. 26-28..
- Stam, E., 2015. Entrepreneurial ecosystems and regional policy: a sympathetic critique.. *European Planning Studies*, 23(9), p. 1759–1769.
- Stam, E. & van de Ven, A., 2021. Entrepreneurial ecosystem elements.. *Small Business Economics*, Volume 56, pp. 809-832.

- Stanojević, M., 2012. The rise and decline of Slovenian corporatism: Local and European factors.. *Europe-Asia Studies*, 64(5), pp. 857-877.
- Steininger, D., 2019. Linking information systems and entrepreneurship: A review and agenda for IT-associated and digital entrepreneurship research.. *Information Systems Journal*, 29(2), pp. 363-407.
- Stemler, S. E., 2015. Content Analysis. In: R. Scott & S. Kosslyn, eds. *Emerging Trends in the Social and Behavioral Sciences*. Hoboken: Wiley & Sons.
- Stenning, A., 2005. Out there and in here: studying Eastern Europe in the West.. *Area*, 37(4), pp. 378-383.
- Stephens, S. et al., 2022. Entrepreneurial ecosystems: Multiple domains, dimensions and relationships.. *Journal of Business Venturing Insights*, Volume 18.
- Sternberg, R. & Wennekers, S., 2005. Determinants and Effects of New Business Creation Using Global Entrepreneurship Monitor Data.. *Small Business Economics*, 24(1), pp. 193-203..
- Steyaert, C. & Hjorth, D., 2006. *Entrepreneurship as Social Change*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited.
- Steyaert, C. & Katz, J., 2004. Reclaiming the space of entrepreneurship in society: Geographical, discursive and social dimensions.. *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, 16(4), pp. 176-196.
- Stirzaker, R., Galloway, L., Muhonen, J. & Christopoulos, D., 2021. The drivers of social entrepreneurship: agency, context, compassion and opportunism.. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*, 27(6), pp. 1381-1402.
- Stoica, C. A., 2004. From good communists to even better capitalists? Entrepreneurial pathways in post-socialist Romania. *Eastern European Political Society*, 18(2), pp. 236-254.
- Streeck, W., 1997. Beneficial constraints: On the economic limits of rational voluntarism. In: J. R. Hollingsworth & R. Boyer, eds. *Contemporary capitalism: The embeddedness of institutions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 197-219.
- Stuermer, M., Abu-Tayeh, G. & Myrach, T., 2017. Digital sustainability: basic conditions for sustainable digital artifacts and their ecosystems.. *Sustainability Science*, Volume 12, pp. 247-262.
- Sulaiman, A. et al., 2021. The Role Of Motivation, Entrepreneurial Skills And University Environment In Determining University Students' Decision To Become Entrepreneurs. *International Journal of Human Potentials Management*, 3(1), pp. 44-56.
- Sultana, A. & Ravanera, C., 2020. *A feminist economic recovery plan for Canada: making the economy work for everyone*, Toronto: The Institute for Gender and the Economy (GATE) and YWCA,.
- Suri, H., 2011. Purposeful Sampling in Qualitative Research Synthesis. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 11(2), pp. 63-75.

- Talić, M. & Đukić, M., 2021. Comparative analysis of developmental concepts of social entrepreneurship in Europe and the USA.. *Facta Universitatis, Series: Economics and Organization*, Volume 1, pp. 385-396.
- Tan, B. C. & Lau, T.-C., 2010. Attitude towards the Environment and Green Products: Consumers' Perspective. *Management Science and Engineering* , 4(2), pp. 27-49.
- Tellis, W., 1997. Application of a case study methodology. *The qualitative report*, 3(3), pp. 1-19.
- Thomas, G., 2011. A typology for the case study in social science following a review of definition, discourse, and structure.. *Qualitative inquiry*, 17(6), pp. 511-521.
- Tiwana, A., Konsynski, B. & Bush, A., 2010. Research commentary—Platform evolution: Coevolution of platform architecture, governance, and environmental dynamics.. *Information systems research*, 21(4), pp. 675-687.
- Tominc, B. & Božin, A., 2015. Innovation confidence: Slovenia country case.. *Global Journal of Research in Social Sciences*, 2(1).
- Toska, A. et al., 2022. Family business successors' motivation and innovation capabilities: the case of Kosovo. *Journal of Family Business Management*, 2(4), pp. 1152-1166.
- Townsend, D. & Hart, T., 2008. Perceived institutional ambiguity and the choice of organizational form in social entrepreneurial ventures.. *Entrepreneurship theory and practice*, 32(4), pp. 685-700.
- Tracey, P. & Stott, N., 2017. Social Innovation: A Window on Alternative Ways of Organizing and Innovating. *Innovation*, 19(1), p. 51–60.
- Tremblay, M., 1957. The key informant technique: A nonethnographic application.. *American anthropologist*, 59(4), pp. 688-701.
- Turker, D. & Selcuk, S., 2009. Which factors affect entrepreneurial intention of university students?. *Journal of European industrial training*, 33(2), pp. 142-159.
- Unger, J., Rauch, A., Frese, M. & Rosenbusch, N., 2011. Human capital and entrepreneurial success: A meta-analytical review.. *Journal of business venturing*, 26(3), pp. 341-358.
- Urbano Pulido, D., Ferri Jiménez, E. & Noguera i Noguera, M., 2014. Female social entrepreneurship and socio-cultural context: an international analysis. *Revista de Estudios Empresariales. Segunda época*, 2, pp. 26-40.
- Urbano, D., Toledano, N. & Ribeiro-Soriano, D., 2011. Socio-cultural factors and transnational entrepreneurship: A multiple case study in Spain. *International Small Business Journal: Researching Entrepreneurship*, 29(2), pp. 119-134.
- Utami, C., 2017. Attitude, Subjective Norm, Perceived Behaviour, Entrepreneurship Education and Self Efficacy Toward Entrepreneurial Intention University Student In Indonesia. *European Research Studies Journal*, Volume 20, pp. 476-494.
- V. Simon-Moya, L. R.-T. R. F. G., 2014. Institutional and economic drivers of entrepreneurship: An international perspective. *Journal of Business Research*, 67(5), pp. 715-721.

- Vaismoradi, M., Turunen, H. & Bondas, T., 2013. Content analysis and thematic analysis: Implications for conducting a qualitative descriptive study.. *Nursing & health sciences*, 15(3), pp. 398-405.
- Verheul, I., Thurik, R., Grilo, I. & Van der Zwan, P., 2012. Explaining preferences and actual involvement in self-employment: Gender and the entrepreneurial personality.. *Journal of economic psychology*, 33(2), pp. 325-341.
- Veronica, S., Alexeis, G., Valentina, C. & Elisa, G., 2020. Do stakeholder capabilities promote sustainable business innovation in small and medium-sized enterprises? Evidence from Italy.. *Journal of Business Research*, 119(1), pp. 131-141.
- Visoka, G., 2019. Critique and alternativity in international relations.. *International Studies Review*, 21(4), pp. 678-704.
- Vujaninović, P., Lipenkova, S. & Orlando, E., 2018. *The role of social entrepreneurship as a key driver of the Agenda 2030*. , Vienna: Regional Academy on the United Nations.
- Wall, S., 2015. Dimensions of precariousness in an emerging sector of self-employment: a study of self-employed nurses.. *Gender, Work & Organization*, , 22(3), pp. 221-236.
- Walsh, K. & Stephens, S., 2022. The Side-Hustle: An Emergent Typology of Entrepreneurs as Employees. *International Review of Entrepreneurship*, 20(2), pp. 227-247.
- Walston, J., Lissitz, R. & Rudner, L., 2006. The influence of Web-based questionnaire presentation variations on survey cooperation and perceptions of survey quality. *Journal of Official Statistics*, Volume 22, pp. 271-291.
- Webber, M., 2009. The Kosovo war: a recapitulation. *International Affairs*, 85(3), pp. 447-459.
- Webbink, D., 2005. Causal effects in education.. *Journal of Economic Surveys* , 19(4), p. 535–560.
- Weick, K., 1995. *Sensemaking in organizations*. 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage publications..
- Welter, F. & Smallbone, D., 2008. Women's entrepreneurship from an institutional perspective: The case of Uzbekistan. *International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal*, 4(4), pp. 505-520.
- Wennekers, S. A., Stel, A. v., Thurik, R. & Reynolds, P., 2005. Nascent Entrepreneurship and the Level of Economic Development.. *Small Business Economics* , 24(3), pp. 293-309.
- Wennekers, S. & Thurik, R., 1999. Linking entrepreneurship and economic growth.. *Small business economics*, Volume 13, pp. 27-56.
- Williams, N. & Vorley, T., 2017. Fostering productive entrepreneurship in post-conflict economies: the importance of institutional alignment. *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development*, 29(5-6), pp. 444-466.
- Wolff, H. & Moser, K., 2009. Effects of networking on career success: a longitudinal study.. *Journal of applied psychology*, 94(1), pp. 196-212.

- Woodward, S., 1995. *Balkan tragedy: Chaos and dissolution after the Cold War*. New York: Brookings Institution Press..
- World Bank, 2022. *Concept Note: Business Enabling Environment*, Washington D.C: World Bank.
- Yadolahi Farsi, J. & Razavi, S., 2011. The role of human and social capital in youth entrepreneurship in Korbali rural areas.. *Human geography research*, 44(1), pp. 103-116.
- Yankson, P. & Owusu, G., 2016. Prospects and challenges of youth entrepreneurship in Nima-Maamobi, a low-income neighbourhood of Accra. In: K. V. Gough & T. Langevang, eds. *Young Entrepreneurs in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 94-109.
- Yin, R., 1981. The case study as a serious research strategy.. *Knowledge*, 3(1), pp. 97-114.
- Yitshaki, R. & Kropp, F., 2016. Motivations and opportunity recognition of social entrepreneurs.. *Journal of Small Business Management*, 54(2), pp. 546-565.
- Yujuico, E., 2008. Connecting the dots in social entrepreneurship through the capabilities approach.. *Socio-economic review*, 6(3), pp. 493-513.
- Zaheer, H., Breyer, Y. & Dumay, J., 2019. Digital entrepreneurship: An interdisciplinary structured literature review and research agenda.. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, Volume 148, p. 119735..
- Zahra, S. & Nambisan, S., 2011. *Entrepreneurship in global innovation ecosystems*, s.l.: AMS review.
- Zalkat, G., Barth, H. & Rashid, L., 2023. Refugee entrepreneurship motivations in Sweden and Germany: a comparative case study.. *Small Business Economics*.
- Zhao, F. & Collier, A., 2016. *Digital entrepreneurship: Research and practice*, s.l.: s.n.
- Zietlow, J., 2001. Social entrepreneurship: Managerial, finance and marketing aspects.. *Journal of Nonprofit & Public Sector Marketing*, 9(1-2), pp. 19-43.
- Ziyae, B., Sajadi, S. & Mobaraki, M., 2014. The deployment and internationalization speed of e-business in the digital entrepreneurship era.. *Journal of Global Entrepreneurship Research*, Volume 4, pp. 1-11.
- Zu, L., 2022. Ensuring No One Is Left Behind: The Case of Youth.. In: *Responsible and Sustainable Business: The Taoism's Perspective*. Cambridge: Springer International Publishing., pp. 277-300.
- Zulfiqar, S. et al., 2021. Opportunity Recognition Behavior and Readiness of Youth for Social Entrepreneurship. *Entrepreneurship Research Journal*, 11(4), pp. 2018-2033 .

List of Appendices

Appendix 1: Participant Recruitment Poster



Are you between the age of 18-30 and in the process of starting or running your own digital-social business in Kosovo or Slovenia, or do you work with young digital-social entrepreneurs in Kosovo or Slovenia?

Do you have a spare 2.5 hours between November 2022 and April 2023 to participate in a research study?

We are looking for young digital-social entrepreneurs in Kosovo and Slovenia, or individuals who work directly with young digital-social entrepreneurs, to interview for a study on the experience of youth digital-social entrepreneurship in Kosovo and Slovenia.

Participants will be asked to take part in the following:

- 10 Minute Pre-Interview Survey
- 1.5-2 Hour Interview (either Face-to-Face or virtual)
- 20 Minute (approximately) Interview Data Review

Are you eligible?

- 18-30 Years Old Digital-Social Entrepreneur in Kosovo or Slovenia
- Work with Young Digital-Social Entrepreneurs in Kosovo or Slovenia?

If you are interested in learning more, or taking part, please email for more information and to register your interest:

Geena Whiteman

WhitemanG@cardiff.ac.uk

Appendix 2: Participant Information Sheet (English)



Youth Digital- Entrepreneurship in Kosovo and Slovenia



Social
Economic
and Social
Research Council

Participant Information Sheet

Researcher: Georgina Whiteman (Cardiff University School of Social Sciences)

Supervisor: Dean Stroud (Cardiff University School of Social Sciences)

Dear Potential Participant,

We would like to invite you to participate in our research study on youth digital-social entrepreneurship in Kosovo and Slovenia. Before you decide, we would like you to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you.

What is the purpose of this research?

This study aims to bring a greater understanding to the experiences and challenges that young people face in their pursuit of digital-social entrepreneurship. Digital-social entrepreneurship is defined as an “entrepreneurial initiative with a social purpose, developed by incorporating digital technologies into the business model” (Ghatak et al 2020). The focus of this study is to determine the drivers and challenges of digital-social entrepreneurship in young people, and the role that institutions, education, non-formal training, and personal networks play in their digital-social entrepreneurial endeavours and activities.

What does your involvement include?

Involvement in this study will involve approximately 1.5-2.5 hours over a period of six months (November 2022 – April 2023) and **will include participation in a 1-1 interview, and an asynchronous follow-up analysis session**. Your involvement is hybrid, with the pre-interview survey and follow-up analysis conducted virtually, and the option of either a face-to-face interview or virtual interview if required.

Your involvement in this study includes two steps, outlined as follows:

1. **1-1 interview with researcher.**
This will be a semi-structured interview discussing your entrepreneurial journey so far and the role that institutions, education, non-formal training, and personal networks have played in your entrepreneurial process.
2. **Post-interview participatory transcription review.**
Following the interview, within 2-4 weeks, you will be sent a brief, 1–2-page review of the interview discussion for you to review to ensure your views and experiences have been accurately reflected. This gives you the opportunity to correct any misrepresentations and add any additional thoughts or comments missed in the initial interview.

Why have I been selected/identified?

You will have been selected or identified due to fitting one of the two following criteria:

1. You are a young digital-social entrepreneur (18-30 years old) in Kosovo or Slovenia.
2. You work with young digital-social entrepreneurs (18-30 years old) in Kosovo or Slovenia.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide to join the study. We will describe the study and go through this information sheet with you. If you agree to take part, we will then ask you to sign a consent form. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, without giving a reason.

What are the potential disadvantages and risks of your participation?

There are no foreseen disadvantages or risks of taking part in this study. Participation will take up approximately 2.5 hours of your time. The Cardiff University Research Ethics Committee has cleared this research.

What are the potential advantages and benefits of your participation?

There is no direct benefit to participation, in terms of remuneration or compensation for time – all participation is entirely voluntarily. The findings from your participation will contribute towards the researchers PhD research. It will also contribute, later on, to publications and presentations on youth entrepreneurship in both academic and policymaking environments. Many people enjoy participation in research, particularly expressing their views during in-depth interviews.

How will we manage and store your data?

All information gathered about you will be handled in total confidence. **All data will be stored on encrypted computers on the Cardiff University OneDrive and will be held for a period of five years post-submission of the PhD (in October 2024 – therefore, data will be held until October 2029) – and will only be held here.** Audio-recordings of the interview will be made, in which these interviews will be transcribed, coded and the results coded and anonymised. You will then be contacted with an outline of the analysis of your interview, in which you will work solely with the lead researcher to identify any further lines of inquiry or points you would like to address. Quotes from interviews may be used, but these will also be anonymous, any names and other identifying features will be removed.

What will happen if I no longer want to participate in this study?

You can withdraw from this study at any time without any questions asked. **Following your participation in the research process, you can request to withdraw your data and input within 3 months, without giving any reason nor with any questions asked.**

What will happen to the results of this study?

The main use of the results of this study are for use in the PhD Social Science Dissertation by the researcher. Results may also be publicised through the UKRI Wales DTP ESRC press, or in individual blog posts, as well as published in the scientific literature and presented at

national and international conferences. Your individual results will not be available, nor will you be identified as a participant.

Who is organising and funding this study?

This research forms the basis of a PhD project by Georgina Whiteman through Cardiff University. The study has been funded by the UK Research and Innovation Economic and Social Research Council (UKRI ESRC).

Who has reviewed this study?

The Cardiff University Research Ethics Committee has reviewed and approved this study.

What are the next steps?

Please contact the researcher for more information, and access to the pre-interview survey and interview scheduling.

Georgina Whiteman PhD Social Science (ESRC Wales DTP)

WhitemanG@cardiff.ac.uk

Appendix 3: Consent Form (English)



Youth Digital-Social Entrepreneurship in Kosovo and Slovenia



Economic
and Social
Research Council

Participant Consent Form

- I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.
- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.
- I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview within three months after the interview, in which case the material will be deleted with no questions asked and no consequences.
- I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.
- I understand that participation involves participation in an interview either conducted face-to-face or conducted through Zoom.
- I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.
- I agree to my interview being recorded.
- I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.
- I understand that in any report on the results of this research my identity will remain anonymous.
This will be done by changing my name and disguising any details of my interview which may reveal my identity or the identity of people I speak about.
- I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in the researcher's dissertation, conference presentations, blog posts and any published papers that stem from this research.
- I understand that if I inform the researcher that myself or someone else is at risk of harm they may have to report this to the relevant authorities - they will discuss this with me first but may be required to report with or without my permission.
- I understand that signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained in Cardiff's OneDrive cloud storage accessible only by the researcher and their supervisor.
- I understand that a transcript of my interview in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for five years following the submission of the PhD.
- I understand that under freedom of information legislation I am entitled to access the information I have provided at any time while it is in storage as specified above.
- I understand that I am free to contact any of the researchers involved in this project to seek further clarification and information.

Signature of Participant

Name:

Date: _____

Signature of Researcher (Georgina Whiteman)

I believe the participant is giving informed consent to participate in this study.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 4: Participant Debrief Form



Youth Digital-Social Entrepreneurship in Kosovo and Slovenia



Participant Debrief Form

Researcher: Georgina Whiteman (Cardiff University School of Social Sciences)

Supervisor: Dean Stroud (Cardiff University School of Social Sciences)

Dear Project Participant,

Firstly, I want to thank you for giving up your time to participate in this research. By you sharing your experience, you are contributing to the completion of this PhD, and through wider dissemination (through journal articles, blogposts, and conference presentations) of the digital-social entrepreneurship experience of young people in Kosovo and Slovenia, and potentially influencing policy within this area. I am eternally grateful for your participation in this study and would like to provide you with more information on the next steps for your data, and for this research project.

Aims of Study

This study aims to bring a greater understanding to the experiences and challenges that young people face in their pursuit of digital-social entrepreneurship. Digital-social entrepreneurship is defined as an “entrepreneurial initiative with a social purpose, developed by incorporating digital technologies into the business model” (Ghatak et al 2020). The focus of this study is to determine the drivers and challenges of digital-social entrepreneurship in young people, and the role that institutions, education, non-formal training, and personal networks play in their digital-social entrepreneurial endeavours and activities.

Next Stages

After our interview has concluded, I will review the recording and transcribe our interview – writing down word-for-word what was said. I will then begin to analyse these interviews, breaking up data into different categories and sub-categories, and highlighting some key findings from our discussion. This will then be emailed to you (within three months), in the hopes that you will review this data, and both add any additional comments or questions you think may have been missed in our interview or correct anything I have transcribed if needed. I want to make sure that I am completely and honestly representing your voice and your story, so if you feel like your words have been misrepresented at any point, or I am missing out on some key experiences or insights of yours, please bring this to my attention so I can correct myself. There will be a period of one month after this information has been sent to you, for it to be correct/added to. Once this has been done with all participant transcripts, transcripts will be analysed together, further categorized into thematic areas, and then written up as part of the doctoral thesis.

Confidentiality

The audio of our interview has been saved on a secure university server, with no identifying characteristics that could link it to you. Your data will be coded to ensure your anonymity in the interview process, so as to protect your identity. If you have any concerns regarding your anonymity at any point, please do not hesitate to contact me for further reassurance or information regarding data protection.

How is your data managed?

All information gathered about you will be handled in total confidence. All data will be stored on encrypted computers on the Cardiff University OneDrive. Audio-recordings of the interview will be made, in which these interviews will be transcribed, coded and the results coded and anonymised. You will then be contacted with an outline of the analysis of your interview, in which you will work solely with the lead researcher to identify any further lines of inquiry or points you would like to address. Quotes from interviews may be used, but these will also be anonymous, any names and other identifying features will be removed.

What will happen if I no longer want to participate in this study?

You can withdraw from this study at any time without any questions asked. Following your participation in the research process, you can request to withdraw your data and input at any time prior to the submission of the dissertation (09.09.2024) without giving any reason nor with any questions asked.

What will happen to the results of this study?

The main use of the results of this study are for use in the PhD Social Science Dissertation by the researcher. Results may also be publicised through the UKRI Wales DTP ESRC press, or in individual blog posts, as well as published in the scientific literature and presented at national and international conferences. Your individual results will not be available, nor will you be identified as a participant. If you want to be informed about any dissemination of this research, please do not hesitate to contact me, and I will keep you updated as and when things are published or presented, and provide you with copies if wanted.

Who is organising and funding this study?

This research forms the basis of a PhD project by Georgina Whiteman through Cardiff University. The study has been funded by the UK Research and Innovation Economic and Social Research Council (UKRI ESRC).

Who has reviewed this study?

The Cardiff University Research Ethics Committee has reviewed and approved this study.

Once again, thank you for your participation in this research – learning about your experiences has been incredibly insightful for me, and I am eternally grateful to you giving up your time to discuss this with me.

Georgina Whiteman PhD Social Science (ESRC Wales DTP)

WhitemanG@cardiff.ac.uk

Appendix 5: Interview Schedule for Young Digital-Social Entrepreneurs

This interview starts with formalities, brief introduction to research project, reiteration of consent procedure and recording of interview.

1. Introduction

- How would you define entrepreneurship?
- What does being an entrepreneur look like to you, and how do you engage in entrepreneurship?
- What does 'digital' and 'social value' mean to you, and how do you use them in your business?
- What has your experience of 'digital-social' entrepreneurship been like, so far?
 - What has inspired you to create social value through entrepreneurship?

2. Institutional and Business Environment

- What has the administrative environment been like for you whilst you've been starting a business (such as registering a business, paperwork, legal frameworks, etc)?
- What has your experience been like with the government, such as local government actors or national government policies, when it comes to running your business?
 - What is your perception of the government in general, when it comes to setting up a business?
- Do you feel like the economic environment of your country is conducive for running a business?
- What are social attitudes in your country like to entrepreneurship in general, and how do you think this has evolved over time?
 - What are social attitudes in your country like to digital-social entrepreneurship, and has this affected your entrepreneurial experience?

3. Access to Resources and Support

- What kind of support (such as training, financing, mentorship) have you accessed so far?
- What other types of support are available that you have not yet accessed, and why?
- What type of support do you need that is not currently available to you?
- What has your experience with formal education been like, and do you feel like it helped you with your entrepreneurship?
- Are you involved with any extracurricular activities/voluntary work/activism, or have you been in the past, and do you feel like it helped you with your entrepreneurship?

4. Barriers to Success

- Have you experienced any barriers to your progress so far?
 - What have those barriers been, and have you been able to overcome them?
 - Where do those barriers stem from? Are there any root sources to these barriers?

5. Future Prospects

- How do you think digital-social entrepreneurship, particularly in young people, will change in your country in the coming years?
- Do you think policymakers are working in the favour of young entrepreneurs, and do you think they will?

Conclusion

Thank you, quick summary of discussion, and next steps (consent and participatory transcript analysis)

Appendix 6: Interview Schedule for Supporting Actors

This interview starts with formalities, brief introduction to research project, reiteration of consent procedure and recording of interview.

1. Introduction

- What sort of work are you engaged in?
 - What led to you working in this area / how did you get here?
 - How does your work link in with youth entrepreneurship?
- What does entrepreneurship mean to you?
 - Has the role and nature of entrepreneurship in Kosovo changed over the last 5 years?
- What does digital-social entrepreneurship look like to you, in the context of your experience in Kosovo?
 - What does 'social value' mean to you?
 - What does 'digital' mean to you?

2. Institutional and Business Environment

- How do you perceive the administrative environment for setting up and running a business?
 - Is it easy for young people to navigate? How has it changed in recent years?
- How do you perceive the policy environment for young entrepreneurs?
 - How has it changed in the past ten years, and what has driven those changes?
- What is your perception of the government in general, when it comes to setting up a business?
 - What role does the government play, how has this role changed and how is it changing?
- Do you feel like the economic environment of your country is conducive for running a business?
 - What is the current economic situation in your country, and how has this affected young entrepreneurs?
 - What sort of business environment is in your view conducive to young entrepreneurs?
- What sort of barriers to institutional support do you think young people might face?
 - What groups of young people might face what kind of barriers when it comes to starting a business?
 - With regards to gender, do you think there are specific challenges that young women face that young men may not, and is this being addressed/how is it being addressed?
- Do you think the entrepreneurship policy environment is adapting to the technological advancements in your country?
 - What does digitalisation look like for Kosovo, how is it being adopted and what has this process been like?
- Do you think the entrepreneurship policy environment is adapting to the social needs in your country?
 - What work is the government doing to support businesses that are tackling social inequalities (social enterprises), and is this a policy priority?
- Do you feel there is much support for digital-social entrepreneurs specifically?

- What are social attitudes in your country like to entrepreneurship in general, and how do you think this has evolved over time?
 - What are social attitudes in your country like to digital-social entrepreneurship, or the idea of ‘tech for good’ – and is this changing?

3. Access to Resources and Support

- What sort of support is available for young entrepreneurs in Kosovo?
 - Is support typically offered domestically (i.e., through local, regional, or national providers) or are there many larger, international organisations also engaging in this work?
- How accessible is the support available for young entrepreneurs, particularly for women, and those from marginalized backgrounds (ethnic minority or disabled)?
- What would you identify as being the biggest barriers to support for young people in your country?
- How has the support available to young entrepreneurs changed over the years, and how do you see it changing in the future?
 - What sort of gaps in the provision of support are there, and how would you tackle that, given the resources?
 - What sort of support is more difficult to access, and are there any reasons for that you are aware of for this?
- What sort of support do you think is most beneficial for young digital-social entrepreneurs?

4. Barriers to Success

- What types of barriers to success do young entrepreneurs face in your country?
 - Where do those barriers stem from? Are there any root sources to these barriers?
 - Are any organisations or individuals working to help combat these barriers?
- What role does gender play as a barrier to success for young entrepreneurs?
 - Where do these barriers stem from?
 - What work is being done by policymakers, organisations, or individuals to combat these barriers?

5. Future Prospects

- How is government policy seeking to support young entrepreneurs in the coming five years?
- How do you feel about the future prospects of digital-social entrepreneurship in Kosovo?
 - How do you think digital-social entrepreneurship, particularly in young people, will change in your country in the next five years?
 - How do you see the digital-social enterprise ecosystem of your country changing in the next five years?