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What factors induce differences in depopulation and ageing in similar geographical conditions? The case of Slovak former mining cities

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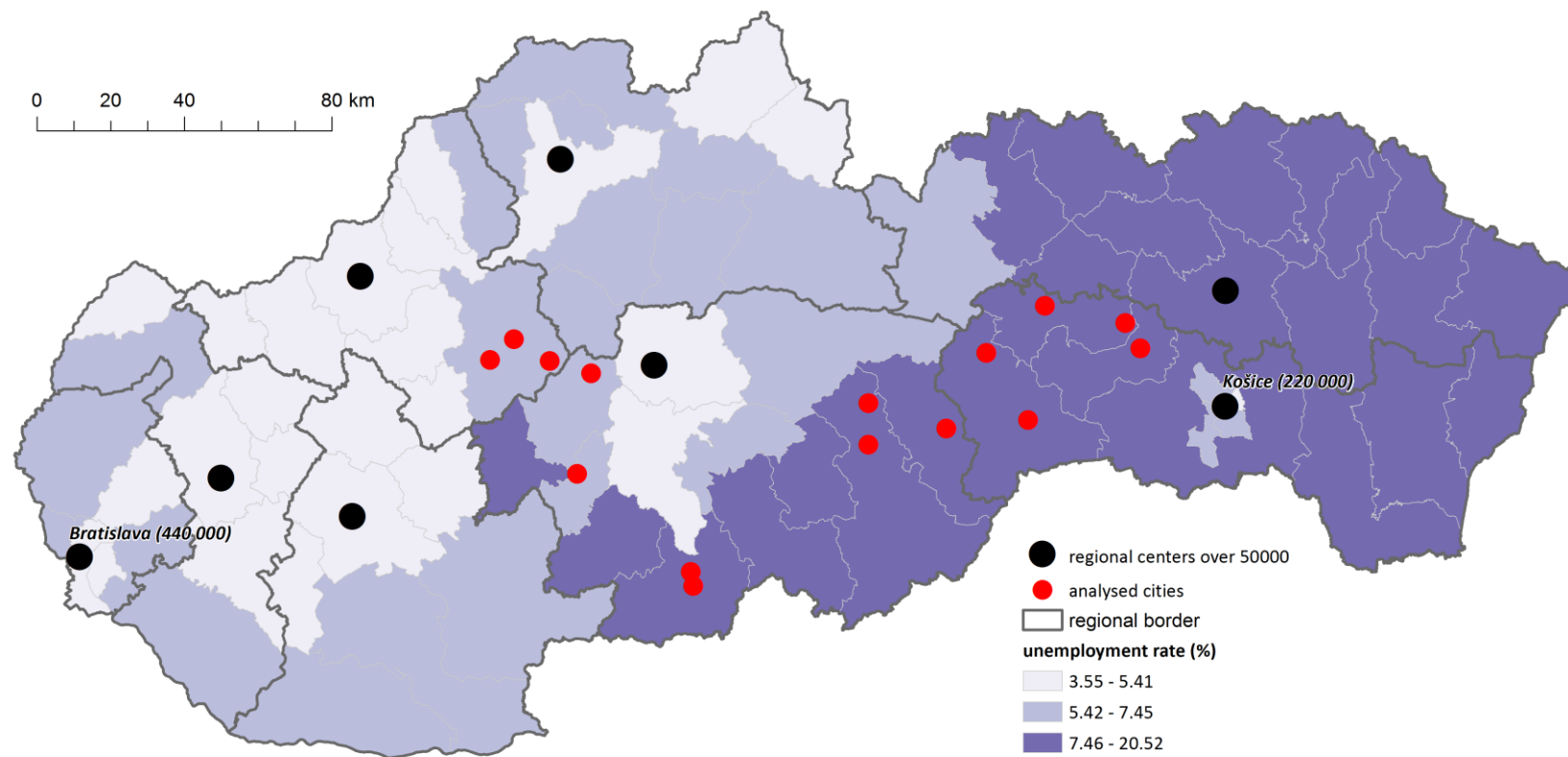


Research background



- focus on 15 former mining cities
- mining tradition – since medieval times - important source for medieval Hungary or Habsburg empire, or for such important mining and merchant families like Fuggers, later industrialization...
- selection - decline in mining occurred during the last decades of the socialist period and later - it could directly influence the demographic developments during the last quarter of a century
- geographical similarity - in mountain, more peripheral, less developed regions – mining was core of their local economy - depend
- two main clusters – coal mining cities (5 cities in two regions) and mining other minerals (two regions)
- size differences – small towns, as well as cities above 40 thousand inhabitants

Cities location with respect to regional disparities and bigger cities/regional centres (2021)



Research questions



- **is the decline of mining a "death sentence"** for these cities, especially in less developed regions
- is there any kind of response and effort to mitigate such development and **is it visible in demographic data?**
- **can local (and other level policies – central state, regional government, EU) change development trajectories and „defeat“ geography – local activity matters?**
- in this „indicative“ presentation – presented are trends, wider context and possible fields of action – responses
- we will analyse „factors“ later on, presented are preliminary comments, we will be progressing in forthcoming months

Factors assumed in the evaluation



macro-regional
„attractivity“
(„poor“ southeast/east vs
„rich“ west/northwest)

access to main
transit routes
(motorways, railways)

proximity to the bigger
urban centres
(min. 50 thousand)

administrative
and special/other functions

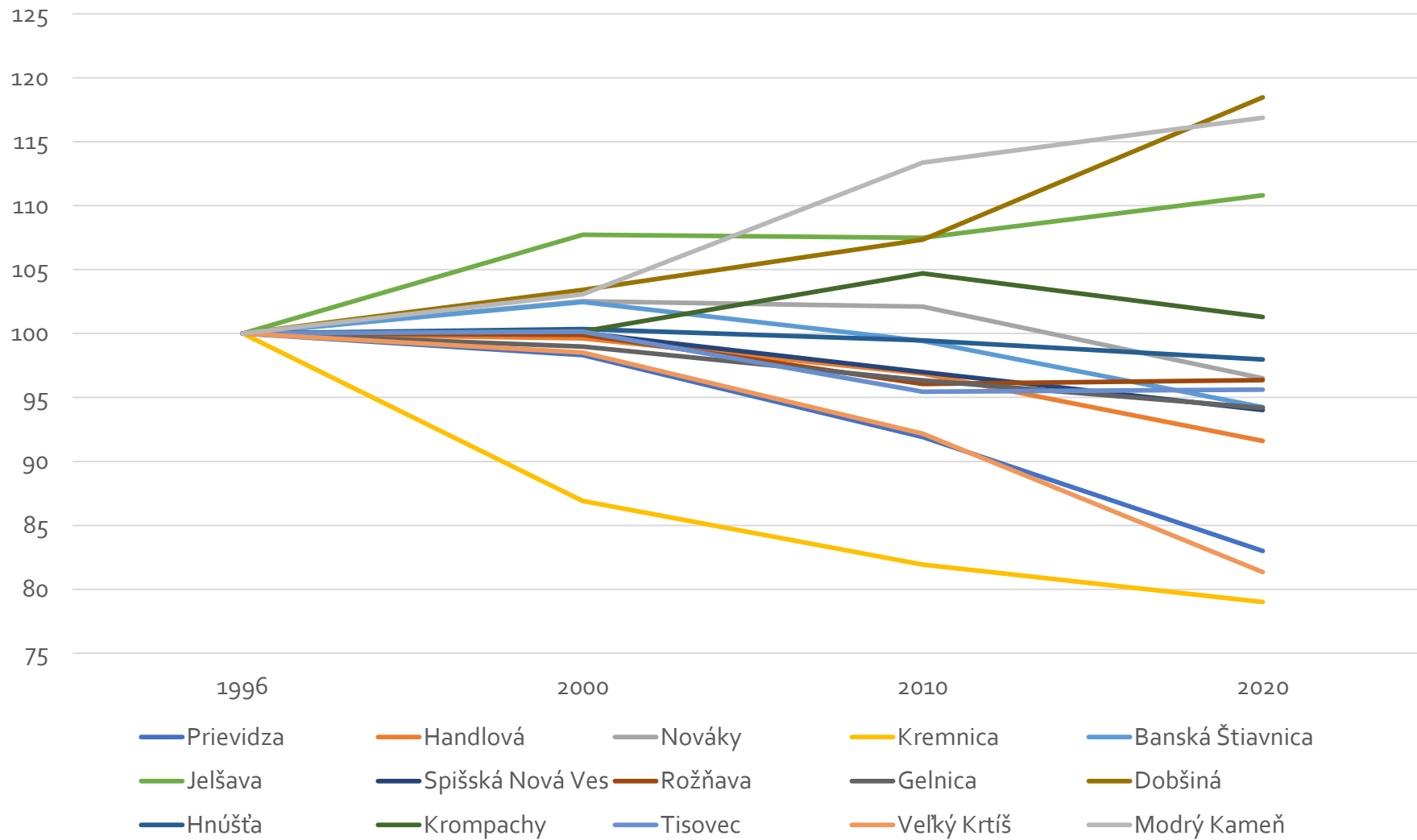
existence of segregated
(mainly Roma) communities
in the city or nearby

suburbanization
(slowly occurring also in
these poor regions)

decision making –
possibilities of governments
to stabilize their
development

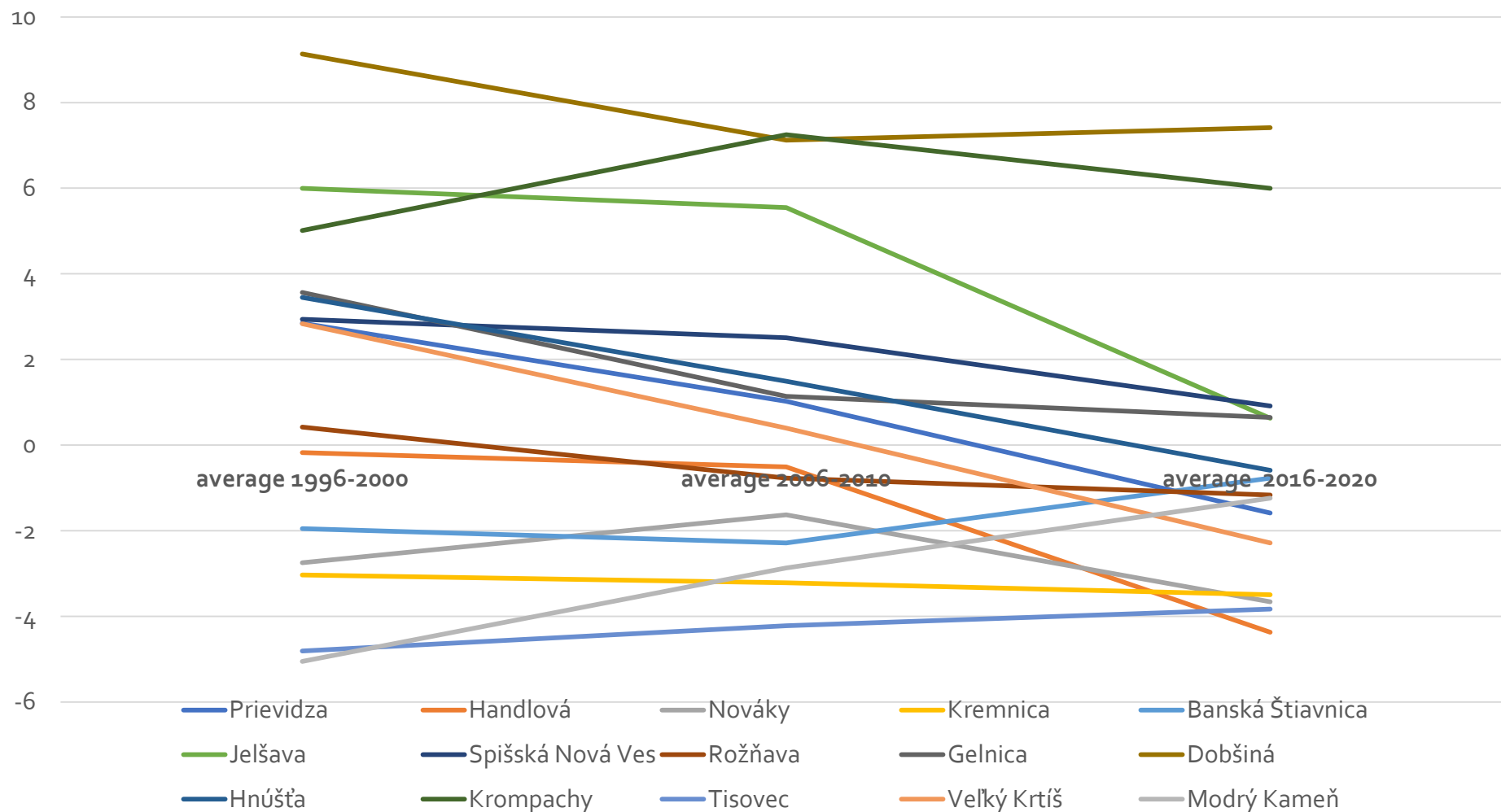
Other?
timing of mining closure,
local finance, planning
abilities, human capital

Population size - index of change (1996=100)



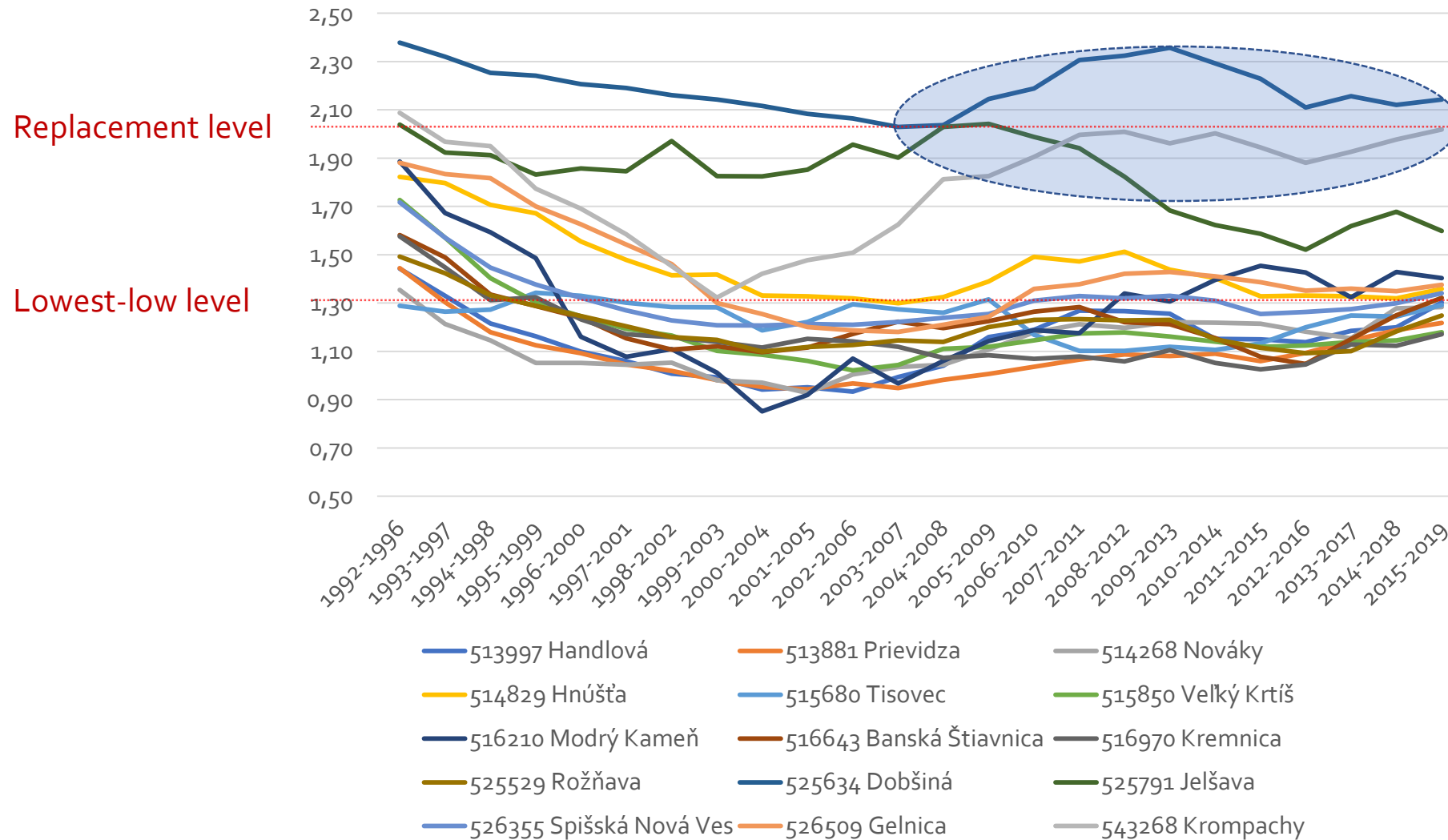
Source:
SO SR and own calculations

Natural increase (per thousand pop)



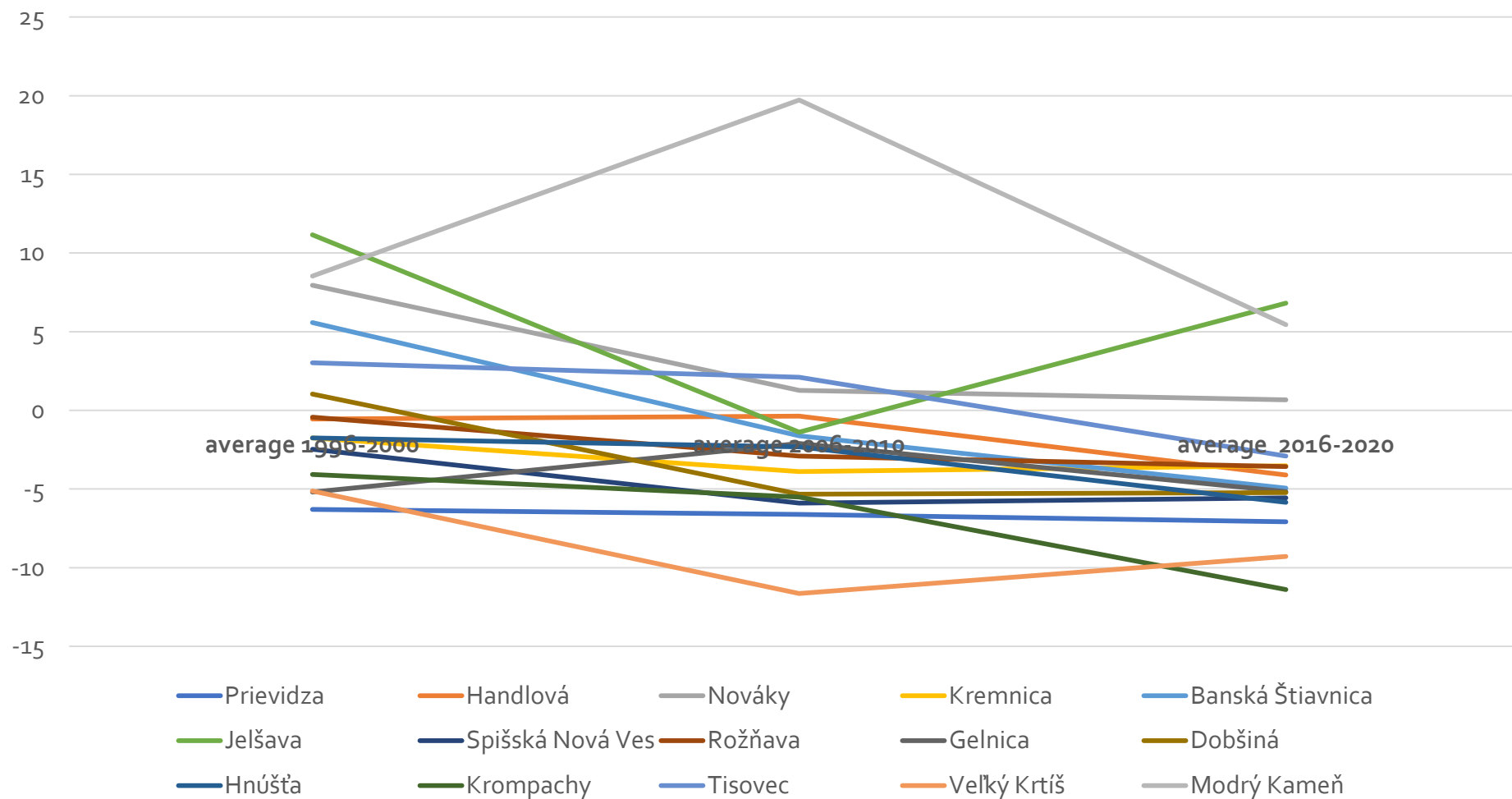
Source:
SO SR and own calculations

Total fertility rate



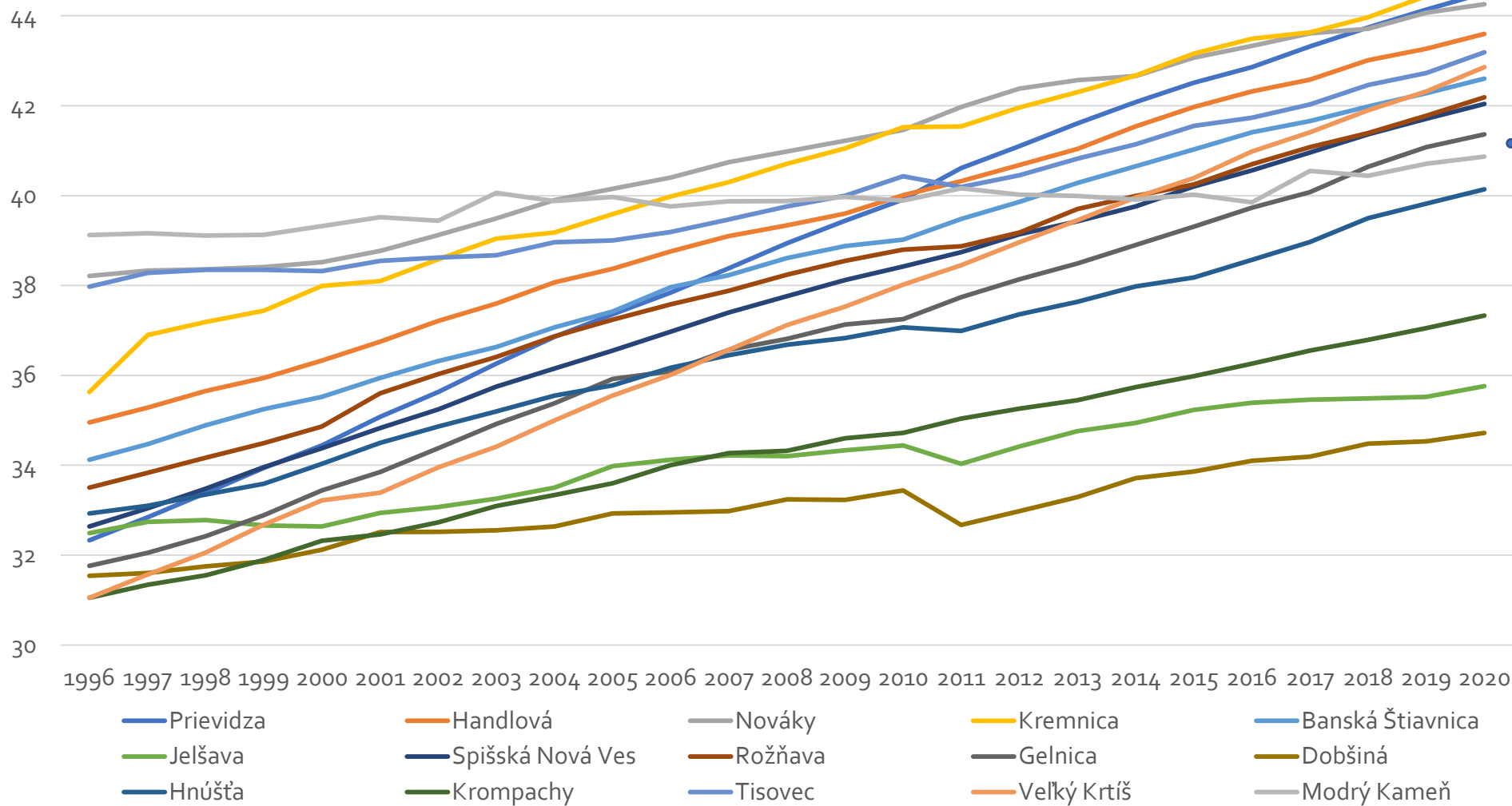
Source: SO SR,
Branislav Šprocha's calculations

Net migration (per thousand pop)



Source:
SO SR and own calculations

Mean age



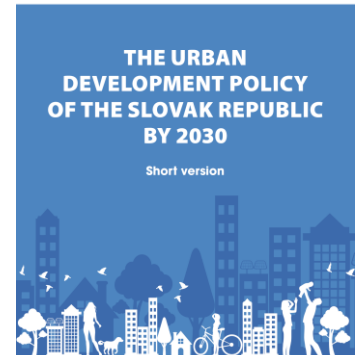
SK value 2021



Source:
SO SR and own calculations

Central state and EU involvement

- no explicit general urban policy, or specific policy addressing specific issues (like urban shrinkage) formulated in Slovakia (very general „Urban Development Policy“ 2019)
- **no specific policy addressing mining regions/cities**, only partial mitigation of phasing out (state aid)
- central state less interested in early stages of transition (liberal, privatization, weaker state)
- **general tools – less efficient - *Support for the least developed regions*** (Act 336/2015 as amended), ***Regional Investment Support*** (Ministry of Economy) available to business development and support
- individual support for cities with valuable historical heritage – Banská Štiavnica and Kremnica – limited effect
- **the role of EU multiplied within last decade – phasing-out of coal mining** – and its energy role – mines and related power plant closure until 2023 – with better planning a resources availability (primarily region Prievidza, Nováky, Handlová)



Local self-government – possible fields of action



- local self-government can act, they are responsible for various local services, some infrastructure, can be initiative (are quite autonomous)
- „**local capacities**“ in question - personally weak, underfinanced are especially small local self-governments
- depending on other levels of government initiatives and support schemes, resources

We already **identified possible fields of local action** with effect on population development:

- support of social housing,
- support of social enterprises/municipal,
- support of families „local family policy“ (facilities e.g. pre-school, financial support),
- local economic development effort – new workplaces/businesses - limited possibilities,
- quality of life – primarily environmental issues,
- improving planning – territorial (Master Plan), strategic planning, community social planning (social assistance system)

Conclusions and preliminary comments



- not easy to change population trends by available approaches and policy framework
- not enough focused support – only within general support schemes addressing less-developed, peripheral regions, with higher unemployment
- depending on importance/scale of particular field of mining (coal/energy more attention?)
- timing of mining closure impact – very limited/selective attention in early stages of transition
- minor role of local self-governments/local community – more powers and resources only after 2000-2005 reforms
- nevertheless chance for own initiative and use of available support increased,
- search for new „local equilibrium“ – population – economy – society - environment
- local activity matters? – can influence population development (numbers, structures)? – seems very limited – more adaptation, mitigation, stabilization - individual differences

Thank you
for attention



REALISTIC UTOPIA VELKÝ KRTIŠ (arttalk.cz)

(one showcase of local/external effort)