

Supplementary materials

Table S1. Comparison of primary data of NCTs and small towns in 2016

Value Index	The average value of NCTs	The average value of the first batch of NCTs	The average of the second batch of NCTs	The average value of the small towns
Administrative area (hectares)	25,939.801	25,927.173	25,945.612	25,747.053
Permanent population (persons)	46,823	48,472	46,064	29,766
Practitioners (persons)	27,430	29,312	26,564	17,112
Non-agricultural employees (persons)	19,012	212,146	17,984	9356
Total industrial output value (ten thousand yuan)	692,138.42	831,985.73	628,329.76	197,465.35
Urban built-up area (hectares)	689.338	659.512	703.408	559.533
Permanent population of urban built-up area (persons)	19,754	20,921	19,204	11,442

Source: China County Statistical Yearbook in 2017 (County and City Volume).

Table S2. Types of expanding NCTs

Economic regions	Expanding NCTs	First batch of NCTs	Second batch of NCTs	Continuous expanding NCTs	Frequency expanding NCTs
NE	14	5	9	10	8
North	35	15	20	32	25
East	48	16	32	39	41
South	33	10	23	31	30
MYR	29	8	21	23	15
Central	24	7	17	24	6
SW	32	12	20	30	14
NW	18	4	14	15	10
CHINA	233	77	156	204	149