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The North American Urban System: The Limits to Continental Integration

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with the assistance of Larry Bourne and Irma Escamilla

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Abstract

The North American urban system, as defined here, includes the urban systems of Canada, Mexico, and the United States; with almost 400 urban areas, and more than 300 million people.

The paper explores the variations within and among the three urban systems, with respect to the spatial distribution, economic base, income per capita, cultural origins, and government; and then examines the relationships among cities through trade, migration, and airline passenger movement in an attempt to understand the patterns of population growth.

It is evident that this urban system is not fully integrated, nor is it closed to the rest of the world. The partial integration permits substantial variations among cities in the levels of income and sources of population growth, especially evident along the Mexican border.

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