



Faculty of Economic and Social Studies



Kingdom of the Netherlands

Urban Series Seminars – First Edition

Ingeborg Denissen

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Sharjah Hall - 11:00 AM

The challenges of rapid urbanization – a comparison between Mexico City and Khartoum

The world is urbanizing rapidly. Cities have absorbed almost two-thirds of the global population explosion since 1950 and are expected to account for virtually all future world population growth, particularly in Africa and Asia. Cities offer many opportunities: they are generally considered centres of economic growth and innovation. At the same time however, it is often challenging for governments to provide services to the rapidly growing urban populations. Whereas in most constitutions it is stipulated that citizens have the right to a roof above their heads, public services and work, in practice these basic livelihood features remain inaccessible for many in the city. In large parts of the globe, urbanization is characterized by informality. Many (new) urban poor do not have land titles or rental contracts; they live in improvised houses, obtain their electricity from private generators and earn their income in the informal economy. In this way, they gradually integrate into the social and economic fabric of the city. In her doctoral thesis, Ingeborg Denissen explores how the informal residents of Mexico City and Khartoum engage in claim-making over public services, work permits and security arrangements, in order to improve their livelihoods. She analyses how they interact with governments, NGOs, religious organizations and other authority bearers and concludes that in spite of the many differences between both cities, there are surprising similarities in the ways the poor negotiate their urban citizenship.

Ingeborg Denissen obtained her Master degree in Political Science (International Relations) from the University of Amsterdam and did a Minor in Socio-Historical Anthropology at the same university. She joined the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2003, where she worked for the civil society department and the research department. From 2008-2011 she was 1st Secretary at Embassy of the Netherlands in Khartoum. Currently she works as a senior policy advisor in the Strategy Advisory Unit in The Hague.

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