Central research questions

1. How are different groups of informal migrants affected by the inadequate health care system?
2. How do they react and what alternative informal channels and means do they use to buffer the insufficient state support?
3. What role do other stakeholders, such as administration, providers of health care and insurance agencies at the local, national and supra-national level play?
4. How far does the emergence of migration and urban villages contribute to a fragmentation of supply and demand aspects in Chinese megacities?
5. To what extent do the above alleged aspects influence the ecological, social and political sustainability in China?

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www.megacities-megachallenge.org

mega**cities**
mega**challenge**
**Informal Dynamics
of Global Change**

Informal Migrant Communities and Health Strategies in Urban Villages of Pearl River Delta, China

Project of Priority Programme 1233 of German Research Foundation (DFG)

Megacities – Megachallenge

Informal Dynamics of Global Change

Priority Programme "Megacities – Mega-challenge"

The Priority Programme "Megacities – Megachallenge: Informal Dynamics of Global Change" (SPP), funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG), combines a total of six projects in the Pearl River Delta, P.R. China, and three projects in Dhaka, Bangladesh. It aims at a deepened understanding of the connection between the highly complex and informal megaurban processes and the mutual forms and effects of global change as well as the reorganisation of spatial, social and institutional relationships in the megacities.

Framework of the project "Informal Migrant Communities and Health Strategies"

Closely bonded to the frame of the SPP, the project focuses on the interrelation between the dynamic flows of informal migration and megaurban health strategies. Thereby, underlying and influential formal and informal institutional and social structures are identified and their impact evaluated. The project is located at the Institute of East Asian Studies of the Free University of Berlin and the Department of Geography of the University of Cologne. Research is conducted in close collaboration with geographers and anthropologists of the Sun-Yat-sen University of Guangzhou.

"Waves of rural labour" and the emergence of urban villages

The Pearl River Delta (PRD) is one of the major urbanising corridors in China, where the development is considerably influenced by external forces and the influx of foreign direct investments. Following the high demand in work force, *mingong chao*, i.e. "waves of rural labour", have floated into the PRD cities. The most recent official census of 2000 counted 40 million inhabitants, out of which 10 to 20 million people are rural-urban migrants.

Due to a lack of housing provision many migrants in China find shelter in the so-called *chengzhongcun* meaning "village-in-the-city", which are former rural communities that have been surrounded by urban land use due to massive urban sprawl. They are characterised by high-density residential agglomeration, lack of infrastructure, im-

Photo:
"kissing-buildings" in
Xiatang Village,
Guangzhou

provable urban planning and limited state influence.

Informality and health in Chinese megacities

Informal processes and structures play a growing role in megacities in general and in particular in China. Dimensions of informality range from informal migration into Chinese cities to the emergence of an informal sector and, eventually – with regard to the field of health – to a growing proportion of informal or illegal health providers and possibly the development of informal support or health networks of migrants. Access to health services is becoming a major challenge especially for the socio-economically and legally underprivileged and excluded group of migrants.

Goals of the research project

The goals of the project are
- to explain the impact of global change on mega-urban migration flows and health issues;
- to understand the different individual and group-specific health strategies of different informal migrants in urban villages under new local and global influences;
- to explain the role of different stakeholders in shaping policies and providing infrastructure and services for socio-economic and health issues for informal migrants, including their different perceptions and attitudes, and
- to understand the informal socio-economic and health networks of the migrants and to identify health-relevant pathways linking urban migrants to their original communities.