

Read about Medellin. What are Medellin's answers to the problems of urbanisation?

Medellin

Medellin, Colombia's second city, used to have one of the highest crime rates in the world, but thanks to a variety of initiatives, crime has dropped by 80 percent. Surprisingly, one part of the solution is cable cars. Since 2004, the city has invested over \$60 million building a system of cable cars to connect the so-called 'barrios' to the centre of the city. The barrios – poorer residential areas – are located in the hills around Medellin and the cable cars, which are efficient and affordable, have reduced some journey times from two hours to seven minutes.

The radical thinking behind the cable cars is to integrate the poor into the city, rather than forcing them to the edge of it and thereby excluding them. Libraries and crèches have been built around the cable car stations, allowing mothers to leave their children close to home while they go to work in the city. The side effects of this project have been to reduce pollution and crime, and to turn what was previously a no-go area into a tourist destination.

The cable cars are, of course, not the only reason for Medellin's renaissance. New and impressive public buildings, designed by local architects, have restored a sense of pride in the city and even the poorest slum housing is now being supplied with water and electricity. Medellin still has challenges to overcome, but already it is being seen as an example to other cities around the world of how to cope with the problems of urbanisation.

Take turns to tell your partner about the city you have read about. Your partner listens and asks questions to find out more information.

- Which city, Songdo or Medellin, do you find most impressive? Why?
- Which model offers the best hope for the future?
- What solutions can you think of for the problems of the major cities in your country?