

**5** Question What is sold on the streets?

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**6** Question How do the locals use the Highway when closed?

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**10** Question What are the benefits to green spaces?

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**11** Question How does the scheme effect the environment?

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**12** Question How would increases green spaces in cities make them more sustainable?

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**9** Question In February, what did the local governing body announce?

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**TITLE OF ARTICLE: Greening São Paulo's 'Big Worm'** adapted from Written by Lottie Watters

Brief summary A central highway in Brazil's largest city is about to get a green makeover.

It's a lazy Sunday afternoon and the sun is shining down, providing city-dwellers and passers-by with a welcome 30°C heat. The sounds of dogs barking, skateboards rolling and clattering to the ground, runners panting, their footsteps padding, and even the jazz tunes of rehearsing saxophone players fill the open air.

But something is off. This is no ordinary public space – no park nor high street. This is the 3.5km-long express highway that runs through the centre of Latin America's largest city, São Paulo. The Minhocão – which literally translates as 'big worm' – has increasingly been closed to traffic since its construction four decades ago. Today, it closes every weekday evening from 8pm–7am and all weekend. It was built during Brazil's dictatorship in the 1960s and 1970s when the car industry here began to boom.

Some people view it as something magnificent. 'It's like you can sail through the high-rise buildings... it really gives you a beautiful sensation once you're in it,' says Nassralla. When the road is closed to traffic during the evenings and weekends, it suddenly transforms into an open and public space, one that has become an integral part of the local community. Street vendors sell coconuts and other delights; community events, parties and exhibitions spontaneously emerge; dance groups and musicians come to practice their arts; fitness enthusiasts use it to exercise; and overall people migrate to the tarmac to laze about at this alternative local hangout. 'I use it for sports, to run, but also for picnics,' said Nassralla. 'I threw a party there, a going away party for my friend. We took a few sound boxes and had a DJ... We have picnics and everybody brings baskets of food. It's kind of like a beach.'

For decades, there have been ongoing discussions about what to do with the Minhocão because of its disruptive impact on local residents.

In February of this year, São Paulo's local governing bodies announced that plans had been officially passed to permanently close the Minhocão to traffic and instead transform it into a public park and green space.

Green spaces can bring a wide range of benefits to local populations – improved air quality, dramatically improved physical and mental health (people use them to exercise and they are proven to reduce anxiety), and they act as carbon sinks, explains Kenneth Gould, co-author of *Green Gentrification: Urban Sustainability and the Struggle for Environmental Justice*.



When closed to traffic, the Sao Paulo residents turn the highway into a local community gathering spot

**7** Question What does the picture above show?

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**8** Question: Using the image above, think of a local road where you live. If the road was closed in the evenings, how would it effect your community?

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**1** Question What is the Minhocão?

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**2** Question When is the Minhocão closed?

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**3** Question Why was the Minhocão built?

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**4** Question Why does Nassralla like the highway being closed?

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