Citizenship Knows No Age: Children’s Participatory Budget Council in Barra Mansa, Brazil

The Children’s Participatory Budget Council in Barra Mansa: towards urban management that integrates the participation and citizenship of children and young people

The Children’s Participatory Budget Council (CPBC) is an innovative approach with the aim of fostering citizenship among children and teenagers. It is based on the use of a small portion of the municipal budget for priorities decided upon by children and teenagers of between 9 and 15 years of age in the city of Barra Mansa, in western Rio de Janeiro state. The CPBC is a special project established in 1998 through a municipal law and implemented by Barra Mansa City Council under the direct responsibility of the Mayor’s Office.

The project is part of a broader action plan developed by Barra Mansa City Council in the area of basic policies for children and teenagers, based on voluntary activities by local people. This action plan aims to promote and institutionalise the effective participation of children, teenagers and youths, both to encourage their civic engagement, and to recognise their role and importance as both individuals and citizens. It is also supported by the Municipal Secretary of Education through school teachers and head teachers, neighbourhood residents’ associations, church groups, and delegates and councillors of the Adult Participatory Budget Council.

Participatory Management Councils are highlighted in the 1988 Brazilian Constitution as “one of the principal tools of public participation for the reorientation of public management”. Integrating public participation into municipal budgeting is a process that is being developed by a number of City Councils in Brazil which, like Barra Mansa, consider participatory budgets to be “a democratic way of administering public funds… [as] it is public money, the budget is made public, so the planning process should also be public”. The Participatory Budget Councils are seen as real fora for the practice of citizenship and public participation in defining and accompanying the implementation of public policies.

Working with public budgets enables a range of issues to be addressed that are extremely important for the development of children and teenagers as citizens who are both aware and capable of participating in the social, political and economic affairs of their city and country. Through the CPBC, Barra Mansa City Council affirms children’s and teenagers’ rightful status as ‘full citizens’ as established in the Children’s Statute. The experience of the Children’s Participatory Budget Council also shows that it is possible to carry out urban management with children, rather than for children.

Background to the City Consultation and CPBC in Barra Mansa

A new future for children is shaped to a great extent from changes to models of general and civic education. For a long time in Brazil, children and teenagers’ strength, sensitivity, creativity and potential for active participation in social and political processes were not taken seriously. Once more traditional forms of social organisation and mobilisation (such as associations, political parties, unions, rights to
strike and demonstrate) had been re-established following the 20-year authoritarian regime in Brazil, it was deemed necessary to work on processes of social organisation in a more inclusive and, above all, inter-generational way, in order to achieve more representative public management and policy at all levels (municipal, state and federal).

The participation of children and teenagers throughout Brazil in the long impeachment campaign of 1992 renewed awareness of the role of young people in society. People started to realise that young people were both aware of and had their own opinions about the political, economic and social realities of their country. They used their own media to express both their awareness and disagreement, such as face-painting, and posters and banners articulating their protests and demands in a fun and inoffensive way. These expressions showed that young people were increasingly aware that Brazil was undergoing important changes, and that they wanted to be a part of that process. Tired of violence, exclusion and of certain stigmas that still persist in Brazilian society, children took to the streets alongside adults in the fight for a better society.

Once the impeachment protests had ended, much of the children’s energy and creativity was neglected. Since then, a few isolated experiences have emerged that have attempted to create new working relationships based on specific activities with children and teenagers. Prior to the CPBC, associations and movements established by street children were joined by children who did not live on the streets but wanted to help their peers to escape from that situation. The CPBC continues this trend, and contributes in particular to the creation of new institutions and social relations at the local level.

In 1997, a municipal programme of activities ‘Citizenship Knows No Age’ initiated the process of citizenship for children and teenagers, and was the principal precursor of the CPBC. The programme set up a ‘Children’s Secretariat’ which aimed to engage the participation of one child or teenager in each of the municipal secretariats. Five boys and seven girls between eight and thirteen years were chosen as Child Secretaries from a competition in which they had to write a composition based on the theme of ‘how I see my city’. Other activities included:

- Barra Mansa Programme: under the slogan of “those who love the environment look after it!” this awareness campaign for environmental preservation and the regeneration of small waterways and forests involved around 750 students.
- Fiscal Receipt Contest: this competition aimed to inform children and teenagers and their families about consumer rights and the importance of the collection of taxes for the municipal budget. Ensuring the payment of indirect taxes through the issuance of sales receipts is essential to ensure that public policies are adequately funded is fundamental in countries like Brazil.
- Introduction to Public Budgets: this programme introduced the theme of public finance into curricula of municipal schools from third grade of primary school upwards.

The CPBC grew out of a relationship of convergence and collaboration, anchored by the Barra Mansa City Consultation. An initial partnership was formed through the meeting of the former Mayor of Barra Mansa, Ms Inês Pandeló, and the co-ordinator
of the Urban Management Program for Latin America and the Caribbean (UMP-LAC). This led to a UMP City Consultation being carried out in Barra Mansa, with the primary aim of improving the city’s policies, management and administration in the UMP thematic areas of poverty, environment and governance. The Barra Mansa City Consultation process centred on the theme of ‘participatory governance and children’s citizenship’, as Barra Mansa City Council had been developing activities based on public participation and implementing innovative policies in the area of children’s and young people’s rights. The City Consultation identified civic education as a key sub-theme that could be further developed, recognising that it is fundamental for producing citizens who are committed to and active in the development of democratic forms of local government. The process gave rise to a fruitful and innovative synthesis of local experiences, ideas and feedback from the UMP-LAC representatives and consultants on the one hand, and municipal experiences based on public participation, in particular that of children, on the other.

This partnership with the UMP-LAC developed and led to the conceptualisation and creation of the CPBC. In 1998, the UMP-LAC organised an exchange visit for representatives of Barra Mansa to visit some municipalities in France that had also established Children’s Secretariats. The trip to France was a key event because it reinforced and expanded initiatives that were already being developed under the ‘Citizenship Knows No Age’ programme, and this served to increase the credibility of the Barra Mansa initiative to work on the issue of citizenship for children. In the same year, the CPBC was inaugurated and the first set of Child Councillors selected.

After the municipal elections in November 2000, the Brazilian Socialist Party won control of Barra Mansa City Council, and a new Mayor, Mr Rossevelt Brasil Fonseca, was instated. Despite the strained relations between the former Council and the new Council, the issue of the continuity of the CPBC is now on the agenda, and Mayor Fonseca has expressed interest in continuing the project.

**Actors involved in the CPBC**

The City Consultation process helped to engage the key actors: the City Council, local NGOs and partner NGOs, UMP-LAC and consultants. The following are the principal local actors who have helped to implement and develop the experience:

- local children between the ages of 9 and 15 years;
- parents (support and sometimes participation);
- the City Council, including councillors, the Mayor’s office, the Municipal Secretary of Education and the Municipal Child Protection Councils;
- CPBC co-ordinators;
- CPBC facilitators;
- Encomen (local children’s NGO);
- public and private schools in Barra Mansa;
- neighbourhood residents’ associations;
- church leaders.

Among the local actors, the project facilitators deserve special mention. The facilitators are local people who both encourage others to participate and transfer their own skills to others, with training from the project co-ordinators. The engagement of support in the neighbourhoods and districts would have been almost impossible
without their tireless work, as they were the main actors responsible for setting up the assemblies. The consolidation of this group of ‘advisers’ and committed volunteers constitutes one of the challenges of continuing the project. The role and commitment of the CPBC co-ordinators should also be highlighted. The co-ordinators played a key role in the engagement, training and motivation of the facilitators and, above all, in the development of solid relationships built on mutual respect with the young people who participate in the project.

A local children’s NGO, Encomen, was engaged to strengthen the implementation process of the CPBC. The external actors, which are also the principal partners of Barra Mansa City Council for the CPBC, include the UMP-LAC in a co-ordinating and advisory role, and the Brazilian Institute of Municipal Administration (IBAM) and the Mexican NGO, COPEVI in advisory roles.

The development of the CPBC

The preparation of the CPBC in partnership with the UMP both constituted a challenge and marked a key point in defining the activities to be implemented to integrate the participation of children and teenagers in urban management processes. The City Consultation enabled the engagement of local actors, and the preparation and implementation of the CPBC, and mobilised technical and financial support to the project. The collaborative partnership with the UMP-LAC also enabled the preparation of educational and dissemination material, and engaged schools, neighbourhoods, residents’ associations and other local institutions in preparation for the implementation of the CPBC. Prior to implementation, the important task of awareness-raising, engagement and training of CPBC facilitators was initiated. The project has successfully built up a network of approximately 100 facilitators to date.

The CPBC is based on a participatory electoral approach, organised by the project co-ordinators and facilitators. In the first instance, children and teenagers participate in neighbourhood assemblies, at which they both engage in debate and elect their neighbourhood delegates. These delegates participate in district assemblies, and elect district delegates. Then follows a municipal assembly, at which the district delegates elect the 18 girls and 18 boys who become the 36 Child Councillors. All children between the ages of 9 and 15 years are able to participate, nominate candidates and vote at the assemblies, but only those who are attending school are eligible to be elected as Child Delegates or Councillors. Children younger than 9 and older than 15 years may also participate in the process, but they are not eligible to vote or to be elected.

The goals and objectives of the CPBC, as set out in its training manual, are as follows:

- to encourage children and teenagers to play an active citizenship role in order to enhance both their personal development and sense of belonging to their communities;
- to help to create a new model of leadership for participation and democracy;
- to value the contributions that young citizens can make to urban management and governance;
- to set up a Children’s Council to determine the application of a small portion of the municipal budget for public works and services, based on the opinions of children and teenagers who participate in the neighbourhood assemblies;
to promote, through the establishment of the Children’s Council, civic engagement of children and teenagers through a democratic and participatory process which involves discussion, election, and defining problems and priorities.

Issues related to budget management are addressed both directly and indirectly with the children participating in the CPBC, in order to enable them to:

- consider projects in terms of available financial, technical and material resources to execute them;
- prioritise activities or projects, which involves ranking different factors, such as need, importance and available resources, and also requires sensitivity and the ability to consider different opinions;
- putting together projects, defending ideas and perspectives;
- representing groups of children and being a spokesperson to convey ideas, requests and demands;
- gain an understanding of the concept of value (material and symbolic) of activities, projects and public assets;
- gain a realistic grasp of the concept of time, namely the time taken from the conception of an initial idea to its development into a project and then the execution of the project or public work;
- identify barriers and limitations related to the planning and execution of public works;
- gain an understanding of different laws related to public management, including public, tax and civil law, and the execution of public works (bidding, expropriation, release of resources, accounting, bye-laws, contracts etc.).

The ‘citizenship visits’ – excursions to other neighbourhoods organised by the project co-ordinators – are an important part of the Child Councillors’ training. The visits enable the children to acquire a better knowledge of the city and its diversity. In addition to the Child Councillors’ training, the fact that the project is allocated a small portion of the actual public budget enables the actions defined by the Children’s Council to be carried out, affirming the significance of children and teenagers’ civic engagement. The same stages of the project - production of materials, training of facilitators, holding neighbourhood, district and municipal assemblies, the inauguration of the Child Councillors, and the ‘citizenship visits’ - have been repeated every year since 1998.

**Discovering new horizons: our neighbourhood, other neighbourhoods, the city … and the world!**

Based on their experience of the realities of other neighbourhoods, the city, and its surrounding region, the Child Councillors are more able to consider and analyse the specific problems at different geographical levels. The following statements from the Child Councillors demonstrate the importance of the ‘citizenship visits’: “when we see other neighbourhoods, we feel less alienated”; “by going to other neighbourhoods, we could see that they need more than ours”; and “during the visit we even saw schools without water storage tanks”.

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When faced with the scale of urban problems and the nature of the challenge represented by the different guises of poverty in the poorest neighbourhoods of Barra Mansa, a Child Councillor expressed her feeling of impotence: “during the visits to the other neighbourhoods, we sometimes felt a bit helpless, thinking that there is no solution - but then we realised that we are the solution”. This feeling of helplessness was quickly overcome by the belief in the capacity of the small group to identify solutions: “I can play a role in changing some of those problems”. A mother of one of the Child Councillors notes: “the children had the opportunity to see the harsher reality of some of the other neighbourhoods, which made them realise that their own neighbourhood has positive aspects, and isn’t all that bad”. As a result of the discussions following the visits, the children were more able to identify priorities for the CPBC’s portion of the municipal budget.

The exchange visits between the Child Councillors of Barra Mansa and children of other Latin American countries gave them a wider vision of the world and of relations between different countries and cultures. These exchanges made some of the Child Councillors aware of the importance of learning other languages, in particular Spanish, although language was not a significant barrier during the exchange visits. As one Child Councillor commented: “language isn’t a problem when you share the same goal”.

Health, education, culture and leisure have attracted much interest by children in Barra Mansa, illustrated by the fact that most of their chosen projects incorporate these topics. Other important issues that could be addressed by the CPBC participants, together with other actors, are citizens’ rights and access to public infrastructure and services. The theme of environment has also emerged as an issue that could be addressed, as the children show great awareness of environmental issues, and Mayor Fonseca has also expressed an interest in this area.

**Results and achievements of the CPBC**

While the city consultation process in Barra Mansa was a key factor in the development of participatory management experiences, the implementation of the CPBC emphasised the role of children and teenagers in urban and municipal affairs. Convinced of the importance of children’s participation in municipal management, Mayor Pandeló engaged City Council staff and representatives of social organisations in the city to devise strategies and put arrangements in place to make this participation a reality.

The CPBC has produced positive results. The project has led to the participants being quite prepared to take on an active citizenship role, for instance, in meetings of the City Councillors and residents’ associations, and in cultural events in the city). In the words of one Child Councillor: “… we can’t imagine that only adults have a say in the running of our city”. Many are willing to further develop their activities in this area, through participation in discussions about integrating citizenship issues into the school curriculum. The project has so far created three Children’s Councils from the large number of children and teenagers from the municipality who have participated. Each year more than 6,000 young people have attended the assemblies.
Furthermore, discussing and determining the use of public funds has become an important and unique vehicle of citizen participation, through which investment in priorities can be determined and public resources can be better distributed. Experiences of participatory budgeting have proved to be an important tool for the control of public administration by citizens themselves. This has been the case with the Barra Mansa Children’s Council, as one boy confirms: “before, the Mayor decided how to spend the city’s money and the people had to accept it… now we want to know where the money goes”. Supporters of participatory budgets consider that participation, transparency and democracy make public spending more efficient and relevant to citizens.

As some of the participants of the CPBC state: “we learnt about citizenship through practice” and “in the CPBC we learnt how the money from the City Council is spent; before we didn’t know”. The CPBC project is still not perfect, but represents a collective effort, which the participants themselves support: “the CPBC was gradually improved with each year”; “each stage is very democratic, and we change anything that doesn’t work”. The role and collaboration of each participant is considered important. According to a former project co-ordinator, the issue of gender, which led to an equal representation of boys and girls on the Children’s Council, was introduced following its suggestion by the UMP team.

The Child Councillors take great pride in inaugurating the projects funded from the budget allocated to the CPBC. Although a very small financial investment is dedicated to these projects, they have become quite significant in the social context. This is the case with a new all-weather sports surface installed at the municipal school: “we used to do PE on the bare earth, and when it rained the teacher had to round up all the pupils into a corner where it was less muddy”. The new pitch has made a big difference to physical education at the school, and the leadership of two Child Councillors who attended this school was recognised and valued. Another important action that arose from the CPBC was the lighting of the Pombal Tunnel, located in one of the central neighbourhoods of Barra Mansa where children play in the evenings. The renovation of the health clinic in the neighbourhood of Mangueira to include a modern dentist’s surgery was one of the projects of which the Child Councillors were proudest. These examples illustrate that the children and teenagers involved in the CPBC view their participation both seriously and responsibly.

However, for some children, the process was not initially a serious undertaking. Wanessa da Silva, 15, tells how she got involved in the CPBC: “I started to participate in the Children’s Participatory Budget Council because I thought it was a game; but I ended up liking the game so much that I’m going to keep playing it forever. I’ll never forget this project!” Today all the children are aware that “it isn’t a game… it’s responsibility… we are dealing with a city, so we have to take it seriously”.

The good relationship between City Council staff and the project co-ordinators and facilitators puts the children more at ease and encourages them to speak freely and participate in the activities. They have shown signs of taking a more proactive role both at school and at home. Significant examples that illustrate the new dynamism unleashed by the CPBC include the establishment of new groups include the following:
Two Child Councillors, accompanied by representatives of their neighbourhoods’ residents’ association, regularly attend the meetings of the Barra Mansa City Councillors, and show a particular interest in the city’s political affairs. They have been shadowing the duties of the City Councillors, who have introduced them to the role of legislation and politics in city affairs;

Three Child Councillors, nominated by their colleagues, went to the City Hall to request a meeting with the new Mayor, Mr Fonseca, in order to ask him for the position of the new City Council towards the CPBC.

Some Child Councillors have participated in neighbourhood residents’ associations, illustrating both the children’s awareness of the possibility of a different nature of participation to that proposed by the CPBC and adults’ recognition of this;

Another group, led by a Child Councillor, set up a Young Residents’ Association in the neighbourhood of Nova Esperança, the first of its kind in Brazil;

One Child Councillor was invited by of his neighbourhood’s Residents’ Association to assist the management board in carrying out its duties. This led to the creation of the post of ‘Secretary of Priorities’, responsible for managing the community’s ambulance, which has now been filled by a Child Councillor. This thirteen year old boy authorises the use of the ambulance according to the association’s priorities and capacity. The Child Councillor considers his invitation to support the Residents’ Association management team as a recognition of his capability, responsibility and dedication.

These acts, although small, are significant if they are analysed both as outcomes of the CPBC experience and also within a wider context, as they are indicative of the direct and indirect impacts of the CPBC in the long term.

Furthermore, exceptional results have also been observed in the development of children who have participated in the CPBC, in particular among those who were or are currently Child Councillors. Particular mention should be made of:

- Participants’ understanding of public budgets and their importance. Teaching children about different types of budget starts with their own budget – their pocket money – and then considers the family budget, and moves up to the municipal budget, a small portion of which is allocated to the CPBC. The project also teaches the children how to set priorities, match needs with available resources and consider the technical limitations for undertaking projects and activities. The CPBC process enables children and teenagers to learn to see things in perspective, to weigh up different aspects or arguments, to establish priorities and also to defend ideas and proposals during the assemblies and within the Children’s Council;

- The Child Councillors’ greater understanding of both public institutions and urban management processes, as well as the value and role of taxes in municipal finances;

- A grasp by the Child Councillors of different geographical levels and social relations (household, neighbourhood, local area, district, city, urban core, rural areas, municipality, Rio de Janeiro state and other states, Brazil and other countries);

- A better notion among participants of socio-economic diversity within the municipality, disparities and social inequalities, including those relating to access to infrastructure and services;
• Broadening the children’s knowledge of citizenship issues through debates on related topics (voting, age of legal responsibility, Children’s Statute);
• Rebuilding or strengthening the children’s self-esteem and self-confidence, starting from the recognition of each child’s potential and capacity, and by promising mutual respect within the group. The respect and recognition of the value of different council members’ opinions and ideas, irrespective of race, sex, age or socio-economic background, constitutes a fundamental social and human right;
• The election process for Child Delegates (neighbourhood, district, municipal delegates and Child Councillors) represents a key learning experience of citizenship for both the children and teenagers who participate in the process and also for teachers, head teachers and the CPBC facilitators. The Delegates and Councillors elected recognise the value of the trust put in them by their peers and feel more responsible as a result. The recognition of the importance of children and teenagers’ participation in the neighbourhood, school and city is highlighted by the Child Councillors, who derive a great sense of pride and responsibility from their role;
• Other important aspects include the commitment to improving and developing the urban area and the notion that each person has a role, and that every person’s role is important;
• When working with the Child Councillors, the positive nature of the interaction and building of new relationships between children, teenagers and adults (including teachers and head teachers, City Council staff, parents, and leaders of residents’ associations) comes across. Significant changes in attitude have been observed among teachers and head teachers towards the personal development of pupils involved in the CPBC. The atmosphere of friendship and comradeship is without doubt the key factor for which former Child Councillors - who are now too old to participate directly in the CPBC - continue to attend CPBC meetings and activities.

The majority of the children in the CPBC feel that participating in the project “helps us to be more responsible not only at school but at home too”. Their increased sense of responsibility does not make them less playful, happy or give them any less desire to do the things they enjoy. The positive changes in the children are continually highlighted by parents, especially those who are more closely involved with the experience either as facilitators or simply as citizens who regularly participate in some of the activities.

With regard to the burden of the additional activities arising from their involvement in the CPBC, the young participants say that they always try to reconcile both responsibilities and try to avoid missing school activities, but that their teachers have been quite understanding when their attendance at a CPBC activity has clashed with a school activity. The fortnightly meetings of the Children’s Council take place in the morning on Saturdays, which is also a school day in Brazil. According to some parents and the majority of the CPBC participants, the children’s involvement in the CPBC has not negatively affected their school performance; in fact, the grades of the children and teenagers involved have actually generally improved.

While parents encourage their children to participate in the CPBC, the reverse is also true. The majority of the children found out about the CPBC at school, or because
their parents encouraged and allowed them to participate, thinking that the CPBC would help to boost their confidence. The CPBC has also captivated the interest of parents, some of whom have become more active citizens themselves. Some children managed to encourage and persuade their parents to participate in meetings or project launches, and even in the nomination and election of adult delegates and councillors in their neighbourhoods and districts. The words of one mother illustrate the benefits that the children’s participation can bring to the rest of the family: “I first participated in the CPBC activities with my daughter and attended some of the meetings at the city hall. Most people don’t realise that they can go to the city hall, but they can, as, after all, it belongs to the ordinary people too. Participating in the CPBC activities made me more aware and conscious of the city’s problems”.

Wider impacts of the City Consultation and the CPBC

A major challenge faced by Barra Mansa City Council was achieving the transition from children and teenagers’ experiences of protest to their participation in tangible projects based on active citizenship. In addition, the exchange activities undertaken within the framework of the City Consultation contributed not only to increasing transparency and to legitimising the project, but to advancing the debate on children’s and young people’s citizenship and rights, by expanding participatory processes and redefining the theme of local governance through the participation of young people.

In the current Brazilian context, the CPBC represents an innovative experience in the field of rights, citizenship and the creation of a new model of civic education. IBAM’s final report highlights the need to analyse the changes that the project has achieved in the local political culture, since more significant changes occur in the longer term, implying the need for continuity and consolidation of the project. IBAM staff consider the CPBC to be ‘a real school of citizenship’, which has even contributed to the process of civic engagement of families, teachers and society in general, who have previously had very little notion of citizenship. The innovative nature of the CPBC as a municipal initiative in children’s rights was recognised when it led to Barra Mansa City Council being awarded the Child-friendly Municipality Prize by the Abrinq Foundation in 1999.

In April 2000, Barra Mansa hosted the International Conference on Participatory Governance and Children’s Citizenship, which arose from the partnership between the UMP-LAC and Barra Mansa City Council. The event was attended by representatives of municipalities from five Latin American countries (including Ecuador, Mexico and Venezuela). It was clear from this conference that the theme had gained importance and legitimacy locally, and that it had started to attract interest from other municipalities both in Brazil and other Latin American countries.

The following impacts related directly and indirectly to the approach taken by the CPBC should be emphasised:

- The building of an important support base of adult citizens engaged in the CPBC, opening up the possibility for related activities in the area of citizen rights and participatory urban management beyond the scope of the current CPBC;
- Restructuring and innovation of civic education to involve the parents and teachers of the CPBC participants, local citizens and City Council staff. This
is based on participatory budgeting and the implementation of projects and public works in the common interest, and on themes including rights and obligations, taxes, municipal revenue and expenditure, role of the City Council, municipal legislation;

- Recognition of the importance and the value of children in the definition of all municipal policies, not only those that concern them directly;
- Inclusion of the issue of public budgets in the curricula of public primary schools from third grade upwards;
- Implementation of the Youth Participatory Budget Council as a result of the participation of children and teenagers in the CPBC.
- Awareness and interest of other municipalities in Brazil and Latin America about the Barra Mansa experience;

Problems, challenges and opportunities

The principal difficulties encountered during the course of the project were:

- The process of institutionalising the experience. The municipal law through which the CPBC was established was not comprehensive enough to guarantee the continuity and sustainability of the project. The challenge was therefore to secure its continuation without compromising its original goals or the methodology and educational methods that it has developed.
- The receipt of some negative, albeit valid, feedback arising from some participants’ frustration about two aspects: firstly, the very slow process of considering or implementing some of the projects proposed by the Child Councillors; and secondly, poorer school performance. Some young people thought that these negative aspects could cause some members of the community opposed to the project to try to disqualify them from participating.
- The dispersal of neighbourhood and district delegates after the elections made it difficult to keep them informed about the CPBC activities.

The main challenge now lies in the expansion and consolidation of the project co-ordination. Other present challenges concerning project management, which require an active and motivated project co-ordination team, include:

- Renegotiating, at the earliest opportunity, the partnership with the present Barra Mansa City Council, which appears to be favourable towards the CPBC.
- Following project preparation more closely, and forming stronger links with the departments of the City Council that are responsible for the execution of projects approved by the Child Councillors. For instance, more direct contact between the CPBC and the Municipal Secretary of Culture, Sport and Leisure could be established to create and promote cultural activities with the Child Councillors and Delegates. The Secretary could also participate in the production of tools for communication and information, with a view to expanding the participation of children and teenagers in Barra Mansa.
- In conjunction with the CPBC participants, production of mobilisation tools and information to reach a wider audience, in order to encourage the neighbourhood and district representatives to become involved with the project.
- Linking the CPBC with the Youth and Adult Participatory Budget Councils. Some themes and projects developed by the Child Councillors could be integrated into the agendas for discussion and action of the Youth or Adult
Participatory Budget Councils or the Secretaries of the City Council. This would require greater interaction between the Youth and Adult Participatory Budget Councils and the City Council.

- Management of the increasing demand for information about the CPBC. Several municipalities in Brazil and other Latin American countries, as well as international agencies, are expressing great interest in the experience of the CPBC in Barra Mansa. Responding to this challenge will comprise securing continuity and consolidation of the project, the production of educational materials for the replication of the experience, as well as a more systematic process both to support the local strategy as well as facilitate its dissemination. Both the CPBC facilitators and the Child Councillors have the necessary skills and experience to advise on citizenship projects.

- Working towards the sustainability and consolidation of the activities by broadening existing, and establishing new, partnerships that were initially envisaged for projects and activities with the CPBC. This has not yet been achieved with the CPBC, leaving a gap in this area.

- Securing more systematic external consultation to enable the project coordinating team to follow the development and consolidation of the experience, and to produce tools that both stimulate and monitor the development of the children who participate. This could involve redefining the consultancy process for the CPBC in order to incorporate the role of external mediator.

- Carrying out specific research on the socio-economic profiles of the Child Councillors and Delegates and their families. A more in-depth study of the reality of the education system for the children of the area, in particular of those who participate in the CPBC, would also be useful in order to investigate the reasons why children drop out of school.

- Undertaking a study the CPBC facilitators in order to ascertain their reasons for participating and the main benefits that they have derived.

- Training and strengthening the role of the CPBC facilitators and seeking to better integrate them into the management committee; and strengthening and expanding the project co-ordination team.

- Strengthening the role of Encomen in the CPBC, as well as links with the Municipal Child Protection Boards;

- Following and monitoring the activities of the Child Councillors and Delegates. The CPBC has demonstrated that relationships between teachers, head teachers, Child Councillors and Delegates all undergo significant changes, highlighting the need for closer monitoring and a more in-depth analysis of these relations;

- Investing in the training of the Child Councillors, and seeking to maintain contact with former councillors in order that they may participate in new ways;

- Investigating the establishment of partnerships with public and private organisations based on themes already broached by the Child Councillors (environment, education, health, culture, sport and leisure).

- Ensuring that the spirit of the project and the full participation of children, teenagers and adults are maintained through awareness-raising and engagement of the various actors.

Key opportunities for the CPBC are:
To explore the possibility of a broader agreement with the UMP-LAC. This could include collaboration, in particular with UNICEF and the Abrinq Foundation, to identify and map the different experiences developed in Brazil in the area of children’s citizenship. It could lead to the establishment of a core working group and a network of municipalities to work on participatory governance and children’s citizenship, inspired and based on the approach taken by Barra Mansa. External support would be necessary for this.

To explore the possibilities of other collaborative arrangements to both strengthen the CPBC experience and support its dissemination. For instance, a partnership could be formed with UNESCO (either under its Most Programme or similar) in order to build on the project’s experience.

To engage other Brazilian and Latin American NGOs to strengthen and support the citizenship initiatives.

To look to other sources of funding in order to secure the continuation of the CPBC as well as the Youth Participatory Budget Council. At present, the City Council’s financial resources are increasingly stretched, and not all the activities and projects prioritised by the Child Councillors can be implemented.

To look into the possibility of expanding the project to include environmental issues, linking this with both the CPBC and the Youth Participatory Budget Council, to lead to projects being developed jointly by children, teenagers and young people.

To enhance the debate over children’s rights, citizenship and the participation of children and teenagers in urban management based on the Barra Mansa experience.

To evaluate the importance of participatory approaches in municipal budgets in the light of experiences in other municipalities. This does not imply disregarding the many other diverse forms of participation in planning and management processes, but trying to see how planning, budgeting, shared management and participatory governance can be integrated, and how to enhance different actors’ understandings of these processes. In this way, a more in-depth analysis of the actors’ different notions and levels of participation in local management arrangements is needed to consolidate the experience and retain its original spirit.

The CPBC: an innovative project of the present and future

The fundamental role of the City Council, which included promoting and encouraging public participation of both adults and young people, was a decisive factor in the CPBC process. The project could not have been carried out without its support, as it involves a small portion of the municipal public budget, the planning and allocation of which fall under its responsibility, with approval needed from City Councillors. The personal commitment of the two Mayors of Barra Mansa to the project has also been crucial for its development and success.

An evaluation carried out by the NGOs and the UMP consultants was crucial for the implementation of the CPBC and their subsequent advice was also of great assistance. In addition to the material and human resources contributed by the different partners, the diversity of the partnership and the success of the experience have opened up possibilities for a wider collaborative arrangement. UMP-LAC is playing a crucial
role in this transitional phase of the project, which is considered necessary for its continuity.

The participation of education and research institutions, in particular Encomen and IBAM, has been beneficial for the project, in particular for carrying out research and making the CPBC process more systematic. Support for education and methodologies has been crucial, and has led to greater support for the participants and to the development of tools for information and training. Encomen played an important part in producing all the educational materials for the CPBC, and in supporting the project co-ordinators’ production of tools for stimulating and monitoring the development of the children and teenagers involved in the project.

The partnership built around the CPBC between local government and non-governmental actors and external agencies (Brazilian, international and multinational) gave rise to important exchanges that helped to consolidate the project. Although the initial contribution of Encomen and IBAM was essential, more effective and consistent support was greatly needed to secure both continuity and institutionalisation of the project by the new City Council. The role of Encomen as a local NGO alongside the project management committee does not appear to have been consolidated, although it did have significant input into the preparation and running of the conference. It is important to strengthen Encomen’s role in supporting the CPBC given its track record of working with children and teenagers in the city and its understanding and appropriation of the CPBC approach. Encomen considers the CPBC to be an exceptional experience, demonstrating its interest in continuing to participate in the project.

The Municipal Child Protection Councils are emerging as important mechanisms for the expansion of citizen participation in public policy and management for children and young people. Their role could be strengthened if they could be persuaded to take a more active role within the project management committee. The CPBC has drawn on the experience of these Councils and seeks to create its own framework, educational tools and approach in Barra Mansa. It should be stressed that the Barra Mansa experience was not based on a model brought in from elsewhere, but instead an effective exchange of successful experiences that prioritise public participation and the incorporation of children and young people in urban management.

Following the City Council elections in 2001, the change of Mayor and, as a result, the City Council staff, put the rebuilding of the partnership created for the CPBC, and the establishment of a new collaborative arrangement, on the agenda. Given the current changes within the City Council, it is likely that the collaborative arrangements on which the CPBC is based will be restructured. In March 2001, the project entered a transitional phase, in which various project meetings were held with former co-ordinators of the CPBC and relevant representatives of the City Council. The new City Council staff familiarised themselves with the previous project experience, and other actors involved in the process, including some who had just become involved. During the new Council’s process of readjustment, various local actors became familiar with and evaluated the CPBC, and emphasised the importance of this pioneering project.
The present Mayor of Barra Mansa, Mr Fonseca, has confirmed his decision to continue the CPBC, even accepting that the City Council should contribute towards at least part of the CPBC’s budget of R$ 180,000. However, he thinks that some changes or adaptations should be made to the CPBC and has expressed interest in expanding the terms of the city consultation to include environmental issues. The expansion of the partnership to include the theme of environment, to be linked to both the CPBC and the Youth Participatory Budget Council through projects and initiatives working with children, teenagers and youths, should also be explored when the new collaborative arrangements are negotiated.

Due to its extremely innovative nature, the CPBC certainly represents a project of the future. Without questioning the role and function of actors and institutions in the management and development of the city, the CPBC experience shows both that it is possible to integrate the participation of children and teenagers into the public management process, and that young people can and should play an active role in urban management. The results of the CPBC show that the importance and the value of children’s participation was recognised in the definition of municipal public actions in Barra Mansa, illustrating that ‘citizenship really knows no age’.

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1 Barra Mansa City Council allocated 150,000 Reais to the Children’s Participatory Budget Council in 1999, R$150,000 in 2000 and has committed R$180,000 for 2001.
4 See note 2.
5 See note 3.
6 The New Aurelio Portuguese Dictionary defines budgeting as: “calculation of the revenue that should be collected from a financial exercise and the expenses that should be made by the public administration, organised by definition by the government and submitted to the approval of the relevant legislative bodies”. To budget is defined as ‘to evaluate, estimate or calculate’.
7 Manual for the Children’s Participatory Budget Council in Barra Mansa.
9 See note 2.
10 See note 2, p. 28.
12 See note 2.
13 See note 2.
14 Letter received by UMP-LAC in February 2001.