Cañari children, cows and milk production: Toward ch’ixi temporalities in the Andes

Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw
Western University, Canada

Cristina D Vintimilla
York University, Canada

Alex Berry
Western University, Canada

Abstract
This article considers the intersection of multiple and, at times, seemingly conflicting temporalities in Andean childhoods. We draw on Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui’s scholarship on Andean sociology and our ethnographic research with Cañari families to argue that Cañari families’ and children’s relations with cows and milk production are fueled by both capitalist and Andean temporalities that cannot be thought as opposites. These temporal relations do not create confusion or limiting binaries but are, we propose, itinerant. We show how Cañari children’s and cows’ collective lives are knitted within ch’ixi temporalities.

Keywords
earth beings, Ecuador, Global South, indigenous, temporality

This article considers the intersection of multiple and, at times, seemingly conflicting temporalities in Andean childhood-cow relations. We draw on Cusicanqui’s (2010, 2018) scholarship on Andean sociology and our ethnographic research with Cañari families to argue that Cañari children’s relations with cows and milk production are fueled by both
“exploitative capitalist” (Rowland, 2019: 2) and Andean relationalities that cannot be thought as opposites. These relations have become one of the primary means of subsistence for families in the Ecuadorian Andes. Rather than characterizing children’s relations with cows/milk production as ambivalent, we work with Cusicanqui’s ch’ixi epistemology/cosmology/ethos/subjectivity, avoiding Western binarism. Ch’ixi, Cusicanqui (2010) explains, is a “powerful image to think the coexistence of heterogeneous elements that do not aspire to be fused and that do not produce a fuller and more encompassing new term” (p. 7, translated by the authors). Ch’ixi refers to the Andean reality in which “multiple cultural differences coexist in parallel and do not fuse” (2010: 7), as they do in terms such as the “double-bind” mestizaje (having both Cañari and Spanish inheritances). Thinking with ch’ixi epistemology demands “inhabiting contradictions without succumbing to a schizophrenic collectivity” (2018: 31). The idea, Cusicanqui (2010) forcefully argues, is that a ch’ixi world both “antagonizes and complements” dual attributes (p. 7). We draw on the ch’ixi concept-metaphor because it resonates with how the families we collaborated with referred to themselves: as renacientes (someone who reinvents a life). The notion of renacientes evokes an existence that derives from an Indigenous onto-epistemology, yet it is an existence considered by the community as not Indigenous enough, not white enough, not modern enough and not traditional enough.

Cusicanqui’s work allows us to extend Ecuadorian childhood scholarship that depicts children as negotiating multiple temporal frameworks (Grace, 2020; Swanson, 2010). Instead of thinking of Cañari children’s relations with cows as in between two marked temporalities, we argue that the fact the children, families and cows we collaborated with move back and forth between capitalist and Indigenous temporal lifeworlds does not mean they are living in “rigidity” or “hybridity.” Alternatively, we conceptualize Cañari children’s relations with cows and their participation in daily milk production as knitted within ch’ixi temporalities. Yes, Cañari child-cow relations are marked by “dominant settler reckonings of time” (Rifkin, 2017: vii). Yes, Cañari child-cow relations are marked by Andean cosmo-onto-epistemologies. No, these two different temporal relations do not create confusion or a limiting binary. Instead they conjugate “without subduing one or the other”: they are itinerant (Cusicanqui, 2010: 146).

As non-Cañari scholars from Argentina, Ecuador and Canada now all living in the North, we take seriously our participation in creating scholarship in the North that is from and travels back to the South (Cusicanqui, 2010); we seek to avoid what Shotwell (2020) refers to as “epistemological extractivism.” Thus, rather than relying only on Western onto-epistemologies, we (imperfectly) attempt to carefully think with and learn from, avoiding appropriation, the children and families we met in Cañar, as well as scholars who have deep connections with the Andes and Andean people. For instance, as we noted above, Cusicanqui’s (2010) insights help us to elude Western hegemonic binaries and instead think of contemporary Andean practices as “traversing all kinds of borders (of countries, skills, traditions, languages, customs) within that incessant ‘coming and going’ in which the material thread of their daily life is constituted” (p. 7). Anthropologist Marisol de la Cadena’s ethnographic learnings with Andean communities are also important for our work. De la Cadena (2010) writes that the “deep, expansive, and simultaneous crisis of colonialism and neoliberalism—converging in its ecological, economic and political fronts” requires that we “adopt an intellectual attitude
that proposes and thus creates possibilities for new interpretations” (p. 336). She argues that a form of ethical response to current planetary conditions is to envision other kinds of ecological relations. We follow her invitation to create ontological openings by slowing down our analytical habits and suspending the power we grant to Western narratives as we meet with Cañari families.

Very early on in our ethnographic field work in a small Cañari village of about 9,000 people in the Andean Cañar province of Ecuador, we observed the entangled lives that children live with a multitude of human and more-than-human others. During our many conversations and drawing sessions with children, women joined in on the peripheries while they spun, knitted, crocheted and conversed together. During the 6 months of research, we were invited to join the families in their daily tasks with their companion animals, such as cows and cuyes (guinea pigs), visit their food gardens and participate in a limpia (a ritual that uses local herbs to cleanse the body and soul). The project, on the topic of climate futures with children, was inaugurated with a pamba mesa (an ancestral celebration with a communal meal) on the village’s sacred mountain. The elders in the community welcomed a project that, in their view, will emphasize the rhythms of the land so that children can work toward more sustainable futures in the midst of the fast-paced colonial and capitalist presents they are experiencing with migration and climate change. During our field work, the multiple temporalities the elders gestured toward became palpable at every turn.

We begin the article by situating Cañari childhoods within colonial, gendered, and migration contexts, particularly within the milieu of dairy production in Ecuador. Then, we turn to ethnographic narratives to discuss the temporalities in which Cañari children and their families exist in relation with cows and dairy production. Using field notes and thick descriptions (in italics) of key moments/events recorded during our fieldwork in 2016 and 2017, we first show how Cañari families and cows participate in capitalist temporalities and then flesh out how these capitalist temporalities are deeply entangled with Andean ancestral cosmologies. Through this discussion, we argue that Cañari children and cows live in and with ch’ixi temporalities as they participate in daily milking obligations and responsibilities. We conclude with a series of questions that we hope will guide our ongoing collaboration with Cañari children.

**Cows, milk production and the dairy industry in the Andes**

For hundreds of generations, Cañari people have lived in the Andean highlands and resisted colonization, first by the Inca empire, then in the late sixteenth century by Spanish settlers with their haciendas, and more recently by capitalist expansive economies (Cant, 2019). The hacienda, “an agricultural estate producing goods that could be traded on local and international markets,” not only allowed settlers to accumulate wealth but also ensured that Cañari depended on the hacendados (landowners) for their livelihoods (Cant, 2019: 326). Through an agrarian reform in the 1960s, small patches of land were returned to Indigenous peoples. However, this reform “required the adoption of modern technology” and considered Indigenous knowledge “as a barrier to development that had to be overcome” (Cant, 2019: 328). As De la Cadena (2010) explains, these reforms forced Indigenous peoples in the Andes to participate in the global market
economy. To be recognized as proper participants in nation building, they were forced to try to catch up with the “progress” the market demanded. The Cañari who were unable to keep up with these demands became second-class citizens. Yet, for Cusicanqui (2010), these reforms also provided the conditions for resistance and the development of anti-hegemonic strategies, as well as new languages and contemporary Indigenous projects, a point to which we return in the conclusion.

Many Cañari had to leave their lands to survive. They became the new workforce in the global agribusiness of banana and cacao plantations or migrated to North American cities, mainly New York, to participate as ‘illegal’ migrants in what is referred to as ‘invisible work’ to financially care for their families in the Global South (Pribilsky, 2007). As Pribilsky (2012: 327) writes, “between 1993 and 2006 alone, approximately 900,000 people left Ecuador without returning, a figure that represents almost 8 percent of the total population of the country and 20 percent of its economically active population according to the country’s 2001 census.” Following widespread dispossession, generations of indentured servitude, massive depopulation through emigration, and rampant deforestation and environmental degradation compounding drastic climate change, the Cañari today are a pastoral people. Traditionally their time was organized by the careful and extremely demanding work of preparing small patches of land to grow potatoes, ocas, mellucos, fava beans, quinoa, corn and cereals, and they tended a variety of highlands animals, including cuyes, llamas, alpacas and oxen. Today, families have shifted to a less labor-intensive and more financially profitable relation with dairy cows. They have traded the uncertainty that marks the cultivation of small crops for the perceived certainty of a fast monetary return through cattle. While still moving to the slow rhythms implicit in attending plants or spinning wool to weave cloth, they are now tied to routines of twice-daily milking.

Spaniards brought cows to South America in the 1500s and the animals quickly adapted to the rich landscape (Vizcarra et al., 2015). During the 20th century, Ecuador invested in highly technological milking infrastructure and breeding programs to improve milk and its production. By the turn of the 21st century, milk production had become one of Ecuador’s staple economies. Today it is dominated by a small number of national enterprises; while these are still supplied by regional producers, a limited number of businesses share the majority of the market (Vizcarra et al., 2015). As with other nation-state-building techniques, milk production has produced new forms of domination for Cañari women based on gender, race, ethnicity, class, and geography (Hernández et al., 2013). Cañari women, who are the main caretakers of young children due to the high exodus of men to the North (Pribilsky, 2012), are the small cattle breeders and producers who deliver approximately 10–15 L of milk per day to a broker (el lechero/a). Although the price of milk to the consumer is regulated by the state, there is no regulation of the producers, thus various options exist.

In the community where we conducted our research, the lechero belongs to a cooperative or association in which the women must become fee-paying members to ensure their milk is collected daily. These fees are considerable, and mean the small producer does not receive the full price for their milk; however, this system is less exploitative than delivering the milk to an independent piquero. Piqueros are individuals who directly deliver the milk to a processing plant; they do not charge producers for membership, but
they pay less for the milk, keeping a larger share for themselves. For Cañari producers, selling their milk to a lechero is the better option. The lechero faithfully picks up cantarillas of milk every morning around 7 a.m. from each household in the small community. The “white gold,” as many women consider the milk, is inspected and then carefully poured into a refrigerated container in the back of the lechero’s truck, where it gets mixed with the milk from other households, and is transported to a distribution center. Women are paid biweekly, but only if the milk they deliver passes the lechero’s initial bacteriological inspection at pickup. Once in the large distribution centers, the milk is added to a bigger flow of milk and continues its path into highly industrialized and sterilized containers that eventually reach the industrial shores of the profitable companies that either sell it within Ecuador or export it.

Through these milk flows, Cañari women and children in a small, isolated Andean community are deeply entangled in various levels of exploitation. Yet, according to the women—and the few men remaining in the community—participation in the milk industry is the best possible option if they want to remain on the land. Milk is indeed one of the only products that, since “dollarization” in the country, generates a relatively secure income for small producers (Hernández et al., 2013). Many of the village families struggle to survive on the money sent by family members in the North. In fact, many families are still repaying the debt they incurred to send their men to the North. Pribilsky (2012: 328) explains:

Smugglers (coyotes or pasadores) charge between $10,000 and $15,000 to safely deliver clients into the US, a fee that is usually mortgaged. For funding, migrants rely on a quasi-legal system of loan-making (chulco), for which immediate and extended families provide land and other forms of collateral (livestock, cars, and jewellery). Each loan carries an 8–10 percent interest rate compounded monthly and, once abroad, migrants must make regular payments to their chulqueros (moneylenders). If payments are missed, chulqueros frequently resort to violent intimidation directed at family members and will threaten to seize land and other property.

With these financial struggles, women are forced to depend on the meagre earnings from the milking of their two or three cows to sustain their families. This “petty cash (caja chica)” is nonetheless a “continuous and reliable income” (Stensrud, 2019: 78) that allows them to maintain their connection to the land. Herein lies the tension, as Cusicanqui (2010) argues, that needs to be thought of as ch’ixi space. It is through milk production that women, with their children and remaining family members (mothers, in-laws, young nieces and nephews), are pushed to both participate in highly capitalist temporalities and nourish their engagements with Andean rhythms and tempos.
bucket) filled with fresh milk and is waiting for the community lechero (dairy delivery person) to come by. Following her directions, we find Antonio at his house on top of the small hill. He looks at us incredulously: “You arrived!” As we enter his large courtyard, Antonio insists that we sit down. He wants to explain to us with great detail the milking routine his children follow. In rain, sun, hail, wind or cold, he tells us, they milk their cows twice every day. The lechero goes by at exactly 7 every morning to collect milk from each house in the community. Most families have now resorted to balanceado (commercial feed) to feed the cows (in addition to grass) for increased milk production.

Excited that Antonio and his two children, Gabriel and Daniel, have asked us if we want to help milk their cows, we walk across the muddy field, using our iPhone lights and two regular flashlights in the misty gloom. As we reach a group of three cows and a calf, we move closer to start the milking, trying to avoid the manure that seeps into water craters and down the mountain. The animals stand at a distance from each other, intentionally placed throughout the field and tied by ropes that are buried in the tall grass. Daniel stops us, informing us that we must wait until he gets to his third cow. The first one, Betti, and the next one in line only allow Antonio and his children to milk them. They have established a bond, a kind of kinship. Betti’s eyes—deep brown and lined with thick, curly lashes—are keenly attentive as we wait. A sliver of white emerges from one side of her eye as she watches us. We are close to her and her calf, who is tied several meters away. Betti has an active presence in this field: she determines what comes near; she participates in milking practices; she mitigates contradictory cow-human cohabitations in ways that call for her respect. Gabriel pours a little balanceado into a Rubbermaid bowl and ties Betti’s back legs with a rope. As he milks with speed and efficiency to meet the schedules of milk production, Betti’s milk comes quickly. Each squirt of milk makes a sharp sound as it hits the bottom of the plastic bucket. When her hungry calf bellows a high-pitched moan and scuffles at the end of his taut rope, Gabriel hushes him with a nurturing tone and continues milking. “Yes, I know. Your turn is next.”

This event was one of the first that highlighted for us the hold that capitalist temporalities have on Cañari children. Capitalist temporalities are peculiar and contradictory because they possess both creative and destructive logics (Sagan, 2019; Sewell, 2008). In fact, capitalism is structured, Sewell (2008) says, so that “certain aspects of its fundamental logic violate the irreversibility of time, and the very tumults that its constant expansion causes serve to reinforce and render apparently timeless its central mechanisms” (p. 533). Importantly, capitalist temporalities create inclusions and exclusions that are based on colonial logics. Sagan (2019) writes: “Capitalist time presents itself as the only authorized time for the contemporary economic order, and anything deviating from it shall be buried, situated as ‘backward’ while capitalist economies run ‘forward’ on a triumphant linear (short-termist and blind) temporality” (p. 149). At the same time that the linearity of capitalocentric times presents itself as inevitable, it results in devastating “destructions and alienations” of lifeworlds (Sagan, 2019: 144).

For Cañari children, milk production involves temporalities that are regular and predictable. Milk production functions almost as a temporal artefact that organizes and coordinates life at many levels. The temporal logic it introduced is characterized by a previously unknown time discipline: the logics of immediacy, functionality and efficiency now rule the lives of the families we worked with. Their time is organized to serve one main purpose: to regulate the flow of a punctual, secure and immediate profit by
collecting milk and delivering it into the river of its accumulation. They meet such demand with the astonishing speed and mastery of their hands. Twice every day they milk their cows, their hands rapidly squeezing and releasing synchronized jets of warm milk into the bucket. Immediately after collecting the milk, they hurry to meet the lechero, whom they must not miss. Their lives are rigidly organized by this daily milk collection. Every day, endlessly, families in the small village engage in the dairy industry’s exigencies and cycles.

Antonio described how, over the years, to effectively milk the cows, the people in the village had to renounce their traditional handwoven ponchos and pants “because they get in the way between the cow, the milk, the hands and the body.” To gain speed, they have had to embrace easy to zip up nylon jackets and Gore-Tex pants. In great detail, Antonio explained that although these new jackets are not breathable, they have water repellent capabilities that allow them to get the job done faster and more effectively. Gore-Tex and nylon—two versatile symbols of functionality and wearable technology that emerged during the synthetics industry boom—are not the only technologies Cañari have adapted to keep up with capitalist temporalities. The women tell us they miss the times when they walked or rode horseback up and down the mountains. Now we see women and children driving in sport ATVs (all terrain vehicles) to move their cows toward fresher grass or to collect the milk. As Sagan (2019: 144) says, these are capitalist advances that one “cannot not want” because they represent “forward movement or growth.”

Cow-Cañari relations juxtapose and interrupt practices of slow procedural attention that cultivating and harvesting a portion of land entail. Daily rhythms are driven by a cow that has been formed and genetically modified (see Vizcarra et al., 2015) for capital growth and triumph. Valued by how much milk they can produce, cows participate in reshaping Andean temporalities. Milking demands immediate, rapid labor that cannot be ignored or postponed, and its returns are quick but meagre. The efficiency and immediacy of the dairy industry produce material/subjective configurations that shape and structure the rhythms of Cañari daily life. Ironically, these capitalist temporalities that govern milk production are also expansive. For example, the women mentioned that they now have a lot of “free time” between milking sessions to do other jobs in a nearby town. What is relevant here is that, as Sagan (2019) describes, “each individual life is normatively envisioned as teleological, and its telos is conceived as a goal of production and reproduction—as (re)producing a specific economy of power that imagines itself as the only natural and valuable one” (p. 146).

Children actively participate in milk production and are deeply entangled in these neocapitalist temporalities that are constantly shaped and reshaped by “progress” in the Andes. Immediacy, speed and efficiency were the dominant narratives children expressed during our conversations. Like Gabriel and Daniel, other Cañari children repeatedly talked about how they are learning to become more effective in milk production to increase quick returns. Over the course of several drawing sessions, children traced stories of the ongoing life of milk once it leaves el campo (the field), emphasizing how the lechero takes it to la planta (the production plant), machines put the milk into bags, and then trucks drive it to the store where they can then purchase it back (see Figures 1 and 2).
Participating in Andean milking temporalities

In addition to capitalist temporalities, Cañari collective lives, both around and with cows in the process of daily milking, involve other temporalities that complicate those of the
dairy industry. These other temporalities relate to ancestral practices of tending animals (as we noted above). De la Cadena’s (2010) work can shed further light on this. Her proposition, drawing on Stengers (2015), to slow down our reasoning challenges us to appreciate Andean peoples’ notions of earth beings, which, she notes, afford a new kind of political logic. Unlike in Western onto-epistemologies, in the Andes, earth beings—in this case cows—are powerful and must be taken seriously because they require and demand respect from other beings, including humans. These earth beings disavow the separation between nature and humans (see also Cusicanqui, 2010) because they, as other beings, grant capacities, do things, make requests, impose, and demand relations that are to be nurtured by humans (De la Cadena, 2010, 2015). Certainly, Cañari do not see cows acting as humans, but as active beings that create worlds alongside humans.

Cañari-cow relations are co-constitutive and reciprocal. This is a relationship where both—Cañari and cows—emerge as entangled beings. When referring to relations with earth beings, De la Cadena (2015: 103) writes: “it makes them, they grow from it.” In other words, both Cañari and cow “take place” through their relations. Importantly, she clarifies, these relations with earth beings are not based in egalitarianism. They cannot be interpreted as romantic aspects of Andean life; “quite the contrary,” she says; “intra-caring follows the hierarchical sociocultural order; failure to act in accordance with in-ayllu [social group] hierarchies of respect and care has consequences” (p. 103).

These Andean relations with earth beings are evident when Daniel comments that the first two cows do not allow anyone but him and his family to touch them. The cows and the children are affecting each other as they learn to coexist in entangled worlds. They also appear in many of the children’s drawings depicting embodied connections with the cows and milk production. And, they are evident in the following excerpt from our field notes:

In the afternoon we met with Juan and several of his friends to talk about their collective experiences helping to support their households by milking the cows. Juan had drawn an elaborate account of sophisticated automatic milking systems on farms. We asked him whether this was how he milked the cows. “No,” he said, “we use our hands. We are very close to the cows and always take care of them. We need to take our time. We don’t want our cows to get sick or not to have food. They are our sisters.”

The children carefully related what it entails to care for the cows: naming them, giving them water and a handful of balanceado just before milking, rubbing their teats to warm them and remove any dirt, talking to them as they milk, and constantly moving them from field to field to ensure they always have fresh grass. Caring for cows also emerged when one child, Manuela, gestured toward respecting cows’ wishes; she spoke about ensuring that cows are not milked when they are not ready for it. Manuela said, “We leave the cows be when they decide to hide the milk in their teats. We don’t force them.” Another child noted that when a cow gives birth to a new calf, they share responsibility for its care with the cow.

We notice in children’s drawings and conversations that it seems Cañari children cannot separate themselves from the ties they have with cows and consequently from their mutual obligations. However, according to Cusicanqui (2010, 2018), it would be inadequate to conceptualize these Cañari rhythms as disjunctive in relation to the also-present
capitalist temporalities. Instead, she argues, these are ch’ixi ways of living. Cañari children and cows are inhabiting a ch’ixi world and live in two seemingly opposite temporalities—capito-colonial temporalities and Andean time cosmologies—that unite without fusing or losing their unique shapes.

Children consistently drew storylines of milk production that offered both capitalist and Cañari temporalities. For instance, several of the drawings included the lechero transporting milk to distant places alongside family members leaving their lands to go allá (away, or over there) in airplanes. The term allá, which the children used repeatedly when discussing their milk production drawings, possesses an ephemeral quality as both a physical and a virtual place for traveling milk and family. These drawings provoke attention to the ways in which ch’ixi temporalities are active in children’s fantasies. Not only do the children story capitalist processes of industrial milk production and the migration of family members to the cosmopolitan North, they also share symbols of past-present Cañari traditions in their lands that are irreducible to modern imaginaries of high-tech industrial factory spaces associated with las plantas. The children’s drawings of Cañari fields and towns storied ch’ixi temporalities and included details of airplanes soaring away with siblings, rural mountain roadways lined with skyscrapers, family members riding horses and wearing Cañari ponchos and hats, and various forms of milk extraction machines linking cow-bodies directly to factories with long funnels (see Figures 1 and 2). The drawings gesture toward the ch’ixi ways in which imaginaries of allá and capitalist future making are enlaced, and make visible the presences and absences of Cañari tradition in the pursuit of capitalist futures—which, though they are often imagined as coming from distant places, have a distinct tangibility in children’s land relations and world making.

Ch’ixi worlds and ways are both contradictory and interwoven. These cows, as strategically genetically modified animals, monetarily sustain the lives of Cañari children with the capitalist logics that drive these relations: The cow is an investment. At the same time, Cañari children are also responding to the care and respect cows demand in daily interactions. In the following narrative, Maria, Juan and Emilio’s entanglements with cows are enabling the closely knitted relations that coexist with the nation state and scripted market economies’ rhythms and temporalities. Again, cows have become crucial participants in world-making practices that confuse the linear narratives of progress children in the high Andes have come to perform. As Gan (2018) argues, along similar lines as Cusicanqui (2010), this calls attention to temporal coordinations that emerge from “heterogeneous trajectories” that “are not coincidental occurrences, or things that just happen to occur simultaneously” (p. 88, 90).

The next day, before sunset, we joined Juan, Emilio and their mothers on the small plot of land where Juan and his mother, Maria, keep their three cows. The plot is close enough to the main community road that we could hear motorcycles roaring by and community members calling out from their trucks to say hello. As Juan and Emilio ran and played around the cows, they kept an attentive ear in case Maria called them to help. Maria excitedly demonstrated every step of milking each cow for us. She shared that her and Juan’s lives revolve around the morning and late afternoon milking sessions, and that she is happy doing this rather than leaving the community. The years she spent working in New York City were the worst of her life, she told
Maria called Juan and Emilio, who quickly answered and approached the cow she had just milked. They carefully untangled the rope from her legs, then put balanceado in a plastic container and brought it to her. Juan poured the milk she had produced into the cantarilla the lechero would pick up the next morning. After moving the cow to a grassier area of the field, they repeated the whole process with the other two cows. Just before the sun set, the children and the women picked up the large bucket of milk and headed back across the field to their house. Maria held a bunch of grass she had cut to feed their cuyes. Juan and Emilio rode their bikes, Juan carrying the galvanized milk container wrapped on his back in the same way most Cañari women carry their babies.

When Daniel told us we needed to wait to milk their third cow because the first two would only stand to be milked by his immediate family, and when Juan casually announced that it is important to take the time to care for the cows because they are his sisters, we might be experiencing a different kind of onto-epistemology knitted with the efficiency of capitalist production: a ch’ixi relation of deep care and respect that, as De la Cadena (2015) wisely notes, we, as non-Cañari, might only partially connect to. These ch’ixi relations make and inhabit the children’s and cows’ lifeworlds. They “infiltrate and emerge in each other, shaping lives in ways that,” as De la Cadena (2015: 5) says, “confuse the division” between modern and nonmodern and “reveal the complex historicity that makes” this small village in the Andes. Acknowledging the ch’ixi temporalities Cañari children and cows exist in through their relations with dairy production gestures toward challenging subjectivities as closed and bounded—and even integrated from two schizophrenic ways of being, as Cusicanqui (2018) argues. In other words, children and cows are not living in the disjunctions between Cañari and capitalist temporalities. They are not living purely ancestral or purely capitalist temporal horizons. They live in both, but not in a fused manner. One is not privileged over the other. They live in ch’ixi temporalities.

**Toward Ch’ixi temporalities**

Inspired by Cusicanqui’s work, the conceptualization of children’s relations with cows and processes of milk production as inhabiting ch’ixi temporalities offers a generative way to explore what, at a first glance, might appear contradictory and thus lacking authenticity. Ch’ixi is a “becoming,” Cusicanqui (2010: 153) writes, that inhabits these contradictions without attempting to fuse them. Fusing them risks legitimizing and
privileging one over the other. For Cusicanqui, ch’ixi is a proposal to assume the impurities, the antagonisms, the tensions and from such opposites try “to search for their own episteme” (p. 154). This is what we found in our ethnographic work: Cañari families and children in their relations with cows are engaged in a search that has to do with establishing a dialogue between their ancestral memory and land, as well as rescuing such episteme from “the envelopments that are capitalistic, consumeristic and alienating and to which the history of capitalism has condemned them” (p. 148). Yet, it is important to clarify that these searchings are less about finding “equal status” within ch’ixi temporalities than about seeking “equivalences” that will allow to recognize the value and even necessity of each of the contradictory onto-epistemologies the world is made of. For Cusicanqui (2018: 56), ch’ixi worlds—that are in constant search for equivalence—“are possible horizons for emancipatory transformation” and for making other worlds possible.

It is in the transformative energy of ch’ixi temporalities (Cusicanqui, 2018) that we find hope for continuing our collaborations with Cañari children, families and cows in the Andes. We conclude this paper with questions that act as levers from which to collaboratively imagine becomings within ch’ixi temporalities: Might Cañari-ch’ixi worlds open up possibilities to explore and inscribe equivalences? What would this entail? What potential might chi’ixi, as a concept-metaphor, have for Cañari to reelaborate and resignify the multiple and inherited contradictions of their temporalities? What are the possibilities, within ch’ixi worlds, for reimagining onto-epistemological relations between the North and South? What conditions might be needed for Cañari children to revitalize the past within their experiences of the present while at the same time facing the uncertainties that mark a world in climate crisis?

Declaration of conflicting interests
The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding
The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: The authors received financial support for the research of this article from Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and Western University.

ORCID iD
Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9720-2175

Notes
1. We are considering the concept of renacientes as we continue to work with the community. Cañari use the term to denote ongoinness, following the agrarian reform and their ‘independence’ from the hacendados (landlords). Although the concept has potential for thinking cow-child relations, it is still not yet fully theorized. While ch’ixi promises complexity, renacientes denotes inferiority when used by community members.
2. We are grateful for the generous support received from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and from Western University.
References

Cant A (2019) Agrarian reform and development. In: Seligman LJ and Fine-Dare KS (eds) The Andean World. London and New York, NY: Routledge, pp.325–328.

Cusicanqui SR (2010) Ch’ixinakax utsiwa: Una reflexión sobre prácticas y discursos descolonizadores. Buenos Aires: Tinta Limón.

Cusicanqui SR (2018) Un mundo ch’ixi es posible: Ensayos desde un presente en crisis. Buenos Aires: Tinta Limón.

De la Cadena M (2010) Indigenous cosmopolitics in the Andes: Conceptual reflections beyond “politics.” Cultural Anthropology 25(2): 334–370.

De la Cadena M (2015) Earth Beings: Ecologies of Practice across Andean Worlds. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Gan E (2018) Timing rice: An inquiry into more-than-human temporalities of the Anthropocene. New Formations: A Journal of Culture/Theory/Politics 92: 87–101.

Grace SL (2020) Timing it right: Suspicious students, family bonds and becoming a woman in Quito, Ecuador. Children & Society 34(4): 320–334.

Hernández M, Mafla H and Proaño V (2013) Articulación del sector lácteos campesino ecuatoriano al mercado. In: Aubron C, Hernández M, Mafla H, et al. (eds) Producción campesina lechera en los países Andinos: Dinámicas de articulación a los mercados. Quito, Ecuador: Sistema de Investigación sobre la Problemática Agraria en el Ecuador, pp.129–162.

Pribilsky J (2007) La Chulla Vida: Gender, Migration, and the Family in Andean Ecuador and New York City. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press.

Pribilsky J (2012) Consumption dilemmas: Tracking masculinity, money, and transnational fatherhood between the Ecuadorian Andes and New York City. Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies 38(2): 323–343.

Rifkin M (2017) Beyond Settler Time: Temporal Sovereignty and Indigenous Self-Determination. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Rowland L (2019) Indigenous temporality and climate change in Alexis Wright’s Carpentaria (2006). Journal of Postcolonial Writing 55(4): 541–554.

Sagan C (2019) Capitalist temporalities as uchronia. Theory & Event 22(1): 143–174.

Sewell W (2008) The temporalities of capitalism. Socio-Economic Review 6(3): 517–537.

Shotwell A (2020) Education without extractivism: Settler practices for respecting Indigenous sovereignties in entangled worlds. Keynote presentation at “Responding to Ecological Challenges with/in Contemporary Childhoods international colloquium, Western University, London, ON, 1 February.

Stengers I (2015) In Catastrophic Times: Resisting the Coming Barbarism. London: Open Humanities Press.

Stensrud AB (2019) Safe milk and risky quinoa: The lottery and precarity of farming in Peru. Focaal 83: 72–84.

Swanson K (2010) Begging as a Path to Progress: Indigenous Women and Children and the Struggle for Ecuador’s Urban Space. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press.

Vizcarra R, Lasso R and Tapia D (2015) La leche del Ecuador. Historia de la lechería ecuatoriana. Quito, Ecuador: Centro de Industria Lactea CIL.