



TEMPORALITIES IN CRISIS: ANALYSING THE SACCHI V. ARGENTINA CASE AND CHILDREN'S RIGHTS IN THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY

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Children and youth occupy a particularly exposed temporal position: they confront immediate hazards and feel the strain of gradual environmental decline. By **analysing the Sacchi v. Argentina** case in-depth through a temporal lens, this article reveals why delay in climate action is a violation of children's rights and why legal institutions must adapt to the pace of the climate crisis.

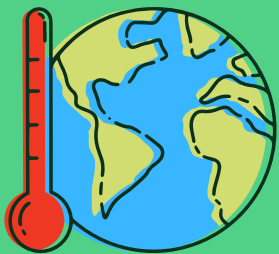
The study combines: 1) a doctrinal analysis of the CRC's decision; 2) a close reading of the written and oral testimonies submitted by the sixteen youth petitioners; 3) an analysis of recent scholarship on childhood studies, climate litigation and socio-legal conceptions of time.

What is "temporality" and why does it matter?

- Social theorists use temporality to describe the multiple, overlapping ways societies organise and perceive time. The article identifies three layers that structure children's encounter with the climate crisis:
 - 1. Urgency.** Rapid-onset hazards—heatwaves, megafires, flash floods—demand immediate protection and adaptation.
 - 2. Gradualness or "slow violence".** Sea-level rise, soil salinisation and biodiversity loss unfold imperceptibly until thresholds are crossed, silently undermining livelihoods and health.
 - 3. Intergenerational reach.** Greenhouse gases emitted today lock in warming for decades, shifting climate burdens toward those who will live longest with the consequences.
- Children live within all three clocks at once. Recognising those intertwined temporalities helps explain their insistence on swift, decisive action and frames climate mitigation as a matter of justice, not optional policy.

Children's narratives: time made visible

- Personal testimony transforms abstract climate statistics into lived temporal experience.
 - **Heightened immediacy.** David Ackley III, from the Marshall Islands, fears the next king tide that could breach protective seawalls.
 - **Psychological drag.** Carl Smith, a Yupiaq teenager from Alaska, describes cultural loss "inch by inch" as thinning river ice shortens the hunting season and undermines intergenerational knowledge.
 - **Moral foresight.** Greta Thunberg reminds policymakers that actions "right now will affect my entire life and the lives of my children or grandchildren".
- Together, these accounts expose how the climate crisis compresses temporal horizons: the future arrives prematurely, while legal and political systems remain slow to respond.



Children and young people and litigation



- The petitioners framed delay itself as a rights violation. They alleged that the respondent States breached four provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child by allowing avoidable emissions to continue, including **Article 6** (the Right to Life), **Article 25** (The Right to a Healthy Environment), **Article 30** (the Rights to Culture), and **Article 3** (Best Interest of the Child).
- Central to their claim is the **precautionary principle**: where credible scientific evidence points to serious or irreversible harm, States must act without waiting for complete certainty. Requiring these children to exhaust years of domestic litigation—while greenhouse-gas concentrations rise—would nullify the very rights the Convention is intended to protect. The article therefore characterises “slow justice” as an injustice in its own right.
- Although the Committee ultimately declined jurisdiction for procedural reasons, it accepted that **cross-border emissions can engage State responsibility**—an important doctrinal step that reinforces the temporal claim that harm is accumulating continuously, not in discrete national compartments.

Contribution to childhood studies


- Conventional developmental models treat children as “adults-in-waiting,” valued mainly for their future potential. The article’s analysis aligns with recent scholarship that contests this teleology. Children are present-day social actors whose life courses are already entwined with climate risk. By foregrounding temporality, the article shows how their agency arises precisely from their acute awareness of accelerating and overlapping time scales.



Policy and advocacy implications

- The temporal perspective advanced in the article leads to four practical recommendations:
 - 1. Treat delay as continuing harm.** Legislative and judicial bodies should recognise that every year of inadequate mitigation aggravates violations of children’s rights.
 - 2. Realign legal procedures with climatic time.** Sea-level rise, soil salinisation and biodiversity loss unfold imperceptibly until thresholds are crossed, silently undermining livelihoods and health.
 - 3. Institutionalise intergenerational equity.** Greenhouse gases emitted today lock in warming for decades, shifting climate burdens toward those who will live longest with the consequences.
 - 4. Guarantee meaningful participation.** Children and adolescents should have structured opportunities to influence climate policy, monitor implementation and seek redress.
- These measures are not accessory; they follow directly from the insight that law, too, is a producer of time—one that must now match the tempo of a warming planet.



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