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"Cosmoecological Sheep and the Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet"

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In recent decades, in the South of France some young people from urban backgrounds have chosen to become shepherds and to learn to reconnect with the herding practices that many livestock breeders had abandoned under the pressure of agricultural modernization policies. In some cases they have found themselves entrusted with sheep that are as naive about herding as they themselves were. Before their introduction to transhumance—seasonal movement between pastures—these animals were primarily confined and fed indoors or in small fenced areas. The shepherds had to learn how to lead, how to understand other modes of living, how to teach their sheep what is edible and what is not, and how to form a flock; the sheep had to learn how to "compose with" dogs and humans, to acquire new feeding habits, a new ethos, and moreover, new ways of living in an enlarged world. These practices cannot be reduced to a livestock economy: shepherds consider herding a work of transformation and ecological recuperation—of the land, of the sheep, of ways of being together. Learning the "arts of living on a damaged planet," as Anna Tsing has termed it, humans and animals are making their own contributions to a new cosmoecology, creating cosmoecological connections and contributing to what Ghassan Hage has called *alter-politics*. (Text from authors' abstract)

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