“You are what you eat” is a familiar maxim that has been proven by recent microbiome studies. The findings of these studies revealed the importance of traditional foodstuffs for our microbial diversity by urging us to rethink food practices with respect to our "companion species" living within us. Drawing inspiration from these studies, this proposed research employs the notion of connected food to describe interdependent multispecies worlds of food while embracing the essential role of microbial agency in this connectivity. I believe, the notion of connected food provides us with a broader multispecies understanding of food as a medium which keeps us connected with other species.

This research project will focus on urban-rural linkages among relatives via informal food transfers, which are still widely practiced in the developing world. The foodstuffs which are transferred to the cities are either prepared with the help of relatives or through the direct involvement of its consumers, who are usually multi-sited and participate in the production process in their villages. Those foods are mainly prepared by fermentation in order to preserve them during the transfer and later to last for a longer period. In this spirit, the transferred foods encapsulate both the “microbial terroir” of places left behind and the hope of survival in the cities where they are headed. Yogurt, butter, cheese, pickled meat and vegetables, sourdough, wine, raki, and tarhana are some samples of the transferred products which are produced with a direct agency of microbial communities. Thus, the focus of this research will be on traditional fermentation practices which embody a vivid plot of multispecies interactions in intimate “contact zones”.

In this context, this research project seeks to contribute to the limited ethnographic studies on informal food transfers as a process of multispecies becomings by focusing on being and doing with, and learning from, traditional practitioners. In this ethnographic inquiry, sensory and multispecies approaches will be employed to understand how individuals perceive and interact with multispecies assemblages of food in case studies from Bulgaria and Turkey. Furthermore, this doctoral research will be an exploration of the hidden multispecies relations in informal food transfers with the main concern to reveal paths of collaborative survival with other species in the Anthropocene.