

## **Interim evaluation – progress report**

Ph.D. project working title:

Music, dance, and social structures in the tango argentino scene of North-Eastern Italy from the 1990s until today.

The reconsideration of tango argentino at the end of the 1980s led to an internationalization of the genre, and finally to a revival promoted by a growing number of local scenes with learning and dancing facilities that started in the early 1990s. In North-Eastern Italy, particularly the cities of Padua and Venice soon earned the status of “tango mecca” on the national level. Their influence is still observable in the surrounding area covering the provinces of Bologna towards the South, and Udine towards the North. Indeed, the local tango community network is more active and dense compared to the rest of Italy, and it is also a reference point for tangueros from the neighboring countries like Austria, Slovenia, and Croatia.

The aim of my Ph.D. project is to analyze how the scene of tango argentino develop from the revival of the genre in the 1990s to the present day, taking the tango communities in North-Eastern Italy as an example. In my first abstract, I referred to the tango scene as a triangular interrelation of music, dance, and social structures, planning to focus on each aspect equally. After my first research year I redefined this object of analysis: the main focus will be on social structures (the roles and interaction of involved people and institutions), including dance analysis as far as necessary to differentiate between various tango dancing styles (in particular, *tango de salón* and *estilo milonguero*) because they actively affect the scene’s network structure. To a lesser degree, music will be analyzed regarding its role within the scene; in recent years, the number of live music performances at tango events is growing and provides a contrast to professional DJs, considered indispensable so far.

In these first two semesters I have done literature research (gathering, among others, publications about tango history since the 1980s, tango ethnographies in other places, ethnochoreology, and social theory), I have been improving my dancing ability to facilitate further dance analysis and interaction with the communities, I analyzed preliminary interview material from tango events in 2018, and I began to build up my network of contacts. The latter resulted in a first fieldwork experience in May 2019. I had the chance to experience the tango scene in the cities of Modena, Bologna, Padua, Mestre, and Venice. I also interviewed organizers, dance teachers, and DJs who were the pioneers (and recognized as such) in their cities and are still active within the community. This yielded valuable information about the diachronic dimension of the tango argentino phenomenon, which can be divided into three phases: consolidation (~1990-2000), professionalization (~2000-2010), new developments (~2010-present).

My next step will include several fieldwork phases during which I intend to individuate and then interview other so-called “key figures” of the tango argentino scene in North-Eastern Italy, who were either active in the past, are still active or began to be active recently. These will include organizers, teachers, DJs, musicians, and other active community members. For pragmatic reasons, I won't consider all the teaching and dancing facilities in the proposed area but I will focus on the ones that were and/or are considered relevant by the community according to their engagement, historical importance, and activity.