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**Some lead, some follow – Exploring the International *Tango Argentino* Performing Arts Scene through the Study of Key Individuals**

Abstract of the Paper Presented at the 43<sup>rd</sup> ICTM World Conference in Astana, Kazakhstan 2015

To study Tango Argentino, an international performing arts scene, is a complex task. Tango Argentino social dancing is practiced in virtually all cities throughout Europe, the Americas, Australia and some parts of Asia. Buenos Aires is considered to be the power center of Tango Argentino practice, yet most practitioners have never been there. Local scenes are complex structures in themselves, yet they are also strongly connected to a larger construct, which forms the cosmopolitan level of the formation (Turino 2003).

How does such a shattered, diverse, even fragmented cultural formation function as one? Looking at the structure from an inside perspective, one soon realizes that the formation is based on clear and strong hierarchies, both locally and on an international networking scale. This is in accordance with several sociological attempts to define the structure and decision making processes in a “scene” (e.g. Hitzler/Niederbacher 2010) or a “social network” (e.g. Scott 2000). Following these analyses, a cultural formation must have key individuals who have the authority of interpretation (“gatekeepers,” e.g. Barzilai-Nahon 2001) and therefore are most influential. Consequently, if one wants to understand certain trends and developments in a scene, it is most productive and even essential to work with these individuals.

Hence, in my ongoing study of Tango Argentino in particular in Europe, I have focused on key individuals in their function as gatekeepers. Members of this policy making tango elite can either be locally or internationally acclaimed tango dance teachers, musicians, tango DJs, or event organizers.

In this talk, by presenting examples from my fieldwork, I will reveal how working with individuals can lead to the understanding of the formation and development of a group, and in turn, of a genre.