On Complexity of Interrogative Structures in Alpine Dialects

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In this talk I will analyze the syntax of root questions in three different italo-romance dialects of the Alps: the varieties spoken in Monno (in NE Lombardy), in Belluno (northern Veneto) and Mendrisio (Canton Ticino, in Switzerland). In all three cases, the observed pattern is different from that of the other, related, northern Italian dialects: Monnese displays a rare case of do-support in Romance, Bellunese has a peculiar distribution in the position of wh elements, and Mendrisiotto displays doubling of interrogative whs and a triple series of wh elements. I will show that these cases of "relative" linguistic complexity are different and that with an adequate theory of syntax it is possible to determine, at least tentatively, a scale of "absolute" syntactic complexity.