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## Implicit discourse structure and meaning in indirect replies to questions in political interviews

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There is a long tradition of conversational analyses of political interviews with the goal to characterize their nature and how they differ from other forms of dialogue. Politicians are frequently accused by the public of being disingenuous and evasive, and – indeed – not committing to a specific position can be a creative and tactical move in a fast-changing political environment, it can mask a lack of knowledge and serve as self-protection. Complex typologies of politicians' failures to answer questions have been suggested, ranging from complete disregard, via refusals, counter-attacks, attempts to undermine the question's validity, incomplete answers, and, finally, replies that take up some keyword of the question in order to give the conversation a different direction. In this talk, I will approach the issue from the perspective of formal pragmatics and the theory of *questions under discussion*. First, whether a reply constitutes a direct answer – i.e. whether there is congruence between the question and the reply – can easily be checked using matching alternative sets. Congruent answers can either be complete or partial. A question like *Who will be your party's candidate?* can be fully answered by naming one person, whereas the question *What are your plans for the coming year?* in most situations cannot be answered with a single assertion, but may require a list of answers and some amount of elaboration. If a reply is not strictly congruent, it might still represent a partial answer. E.g., a reply to the overt question *Q1* in (1) is partly answered by the *sub-congruent* reply *A1.1*, or the *non-congruent* *A1.2*, which at least seems to implicate part of the requested information, while *A1.3* is a coherent *non-answer*, used to steer the attention away from *Q1*.

- (1) Q1: How much will ordinary people save from the tax cuts?  
> Q1.1: {How much will a middle class family save from the tax cuts?}  
>> A1.1: A middle class family will save up to 1,000 Euros per year.  
> Q1.2: {Who is our reform program aimed at?}  
>> A1.2: Our reform program is aimed at all hard-working citizens.  
> Q1.3: {What about tax cuts?}  
>> A1.3: Tax cuts are important for the future of our economy.

I explore how QUD theory can help bring more transparency into real-life interviews, by highlighting the discrepancy between overt implicit questions and, in the case of multi-utterance replies, whether the actual answer is hidden under a complex discourse structure.