On Questions and Disjunctions in Italian Dialects:
On the Syntax of Alternative Questions

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In this talk we will describe the syntax of alternative questions where two opposite alternatives are expressed (ALTQVNs) in Italian and Italian dialects (1). We will compare this type of sentence with conditionals expressed by a disjunctive structure (of the type "whether...or not, ...") (2). While the two constructions have some similarities, like the presence of I-to-C movement and complementizers (3), they are crucially different concerning the structure of the two conjuncts: alternative questions do not tolerate a connective before the first conjunct and tolerate only the particle *o* as connective and not the item *sia* (derived from a verb form). We will argue that the peculiar syntax of alternative questions is a consequence of the interaction of two separate operators in their derivation. We will discuss our analysis in the light of the fact that in some Italian dialects interrogative particles derive historically from disjunctive connectives.

(1) La compri o non la compri?
it=buy.2sg or it=buy.2sg
'Are you buying it or not?'

(2) Che piova o che non piova, noi facciamo una passeggiata.
that rains or that not rains we make a walk
'Whether it rains or not we are going for a walk.'

(3) a. L'acheta-tu ou qu'tu l'achatte pa? (Rodoretto di Prali)
it=buy=you or that you=it=buy not
b. Piov-el o non piov-el,... (Castello)
rains=SCL or not rains=SCL
c. Che piove o che no piove, noialtri ndemo fora. (Cereda)
that rains or that not rains, we-other go out