Indefinite determiners in Italo-Romance.
Preliminary remarks on variation and optionality
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The expression of indefiniteness presents a wide degree of variation across languages. In addition to indefinite quantifiers such as *alcuni* ‘some’ or pseudo-partitive constructions such as *un po’ di* “a bit of”, Italo-Romance varieties present at least five types of indefinite determiners that can combine with mass or plural nouns. Interestingly, more than one of these determiners may be available in one and the same variety, producing a certain degree of optionality and / or a fine-grained distinction in the semantics of indefiniteness.

In this paper, we concentrate on the most wide-spread forms of indefinite determiners, claiming that they are variants of one and the same syntactic structure, namely an indefinite operator in SpecDP, which may be either covert or realized by the uninflected form *di*, and a head D projecting the gender and number features of the nominal projection, which may also in turn be either covert or realized. These two dimensions of variation give rise to four different forms: the zero determiner, indefinite bare *di*, the so-called “partitive determiner” *di*+article, or the use of the definite article as indefinite determiner.

We first show that in Italian, optionality is in some cases apparent, giving rise to subtle semantic differences. In particular, we show that in Italian, overt *di*+art with singular mass nouns is restricted to narrow scope interpretation, unlike *di*+art with plural count nouns, which may have wide or narrow scope interpretation. We then focus on the lesser studied central Italian dialect of Ancona, which provides further evidence for the different scope properties of indefinite mass vs. plural count nouns.

The rest of the paper is devoted to a preliminary review of the cross-linguistic data reported by three AIS maps. Although AIS was mainly collected to report lexical choices, the three maps set two mass nouns “water” and “wine” and one count plural nouns “violets” in postverbal position, namely 1037 “if there was water”, 1343 “to go to the cellar to take wine”, and 637 “to go and look for violets”, which facilitate (although not univocally forcing) indefinite non-specific narrow scope. This will allow us to have a general picture of the realization of the core notion of indefiniteness in Italo-Romance varieties at the beginning of the century. The results of this preliminary study will make us raise questions on variation and optionality to be answered by future empirical work.

1. Six types of indefinite determiners in Italo-Romance

In many languages, the morphosyntactic ways to express indefiniteness sort singular count nouns apart from singular mass and plural count nouns. In this section, we provide an overview of the many indefinite determiners found in Italian and in Italo-Romance dialects, starting with indefinite singular individuals and proceeding with the multifaceted ways to express indefinite mass and indefinite pluralities.

1.1. Italian and its dialects have an indefinite determiner *un(o)/una* which occurs with singular count nouns as in (1a) (cf. AIS: 533 “a tree”; 181 “a handsome man”) and never appears with mass

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1 We have consulted the AIS maps thanks to Navigais, Tisato (2009).
nouns (1b):

(1)  a.  Ho raccolto una violettta.
    [I] have picked a violet
 b.  Ho raccolto (*un) fieno.
    [I] have harvested (*a) hey

The indefinite determiner un(o)/una is homophous to the numeral quantifier/adjective, from which it has grammaticalized.² Italo-Romance does not display the plural of uno/a (2a) unlike Spanish (2b) and partially unlike Romanian (2c), where the indefinite accusative determiner niște is uninflected and can only occur in direct case (accusative here); the same determiner in the dative is realized as un+dative plural features:

(2)  a.  *Ho raccolto une violettette.
    b.  He recogito unas violetas.
        [I] have picked one.f.pl violets
 c.  Le am dat niște violette unor fete.
        [I] cl.dat have given one.acc violets one.dat.pl girls

1.2. In Italian, as well as in many dialects in the North and the South of Italy, there is a zero determiner which occurs both with indefinite singular mass nouns such as “hey” and with indefinite plural count nouns such as “violets” in (3b), but never with indefinite singular count nouns (3a), which require the overt indefinite article as in (1a):

(3)  a.  *Ho raccolto violettetta.
    [I] have picked violet
 b.  Ho raccolto fiero, ho raccolto violette.
    [I] have harvested hey, [I] have picked violets

1.3. In Italian and in very many dialects all over the country, a definite article before singular mass and plural count nouns can be interpreted as indefinite (cf. Rohlf 1968:119; Renzi 1997:163). The sentences in (4b) can be completely synonymous to (3b), in which “hey” and “violets” are indefinite. They are of course ambiguous with the definite interpretation if the context allows for it. Singular count nouns as in (4a) can instead only have the interpretation that I picked a definite flower which has already been introduced in the discourse:

(4)  a.  Ho raccolto la violetta.  (only acceptable with definite interpretation)
    [I] have picked the violet
 b.  Ho raccolto il fiero, ho raccolto le violette.  (ambiguous)
    [I] have harvested the hey, [I] have picked the violets

² For reasons of space we will not substantiate here our view of the much richer structure of QPs, which we take to embed a DP in all cases. For this we refer the reader to Cardinaletti and Giusti (2006, forthcoming).
1.4. In some North-Western varieties (Piedmont), bare *di “of” may signal indefiniteness on singular mass nouns, such as “water”, and plural count nouns, such as “violets”. Indefinite singular count nouns are not reported in the literature to appear with bare *di, thus we suppose that they never do in any variety:

(5) a. sei fyse d’aqua (Piedmontese; Berruto 1974: 57);
   if there was Di water
b. anda sarkà d viulatte (AIS 637, 153 Giaveno (Turin))
   to-go to-pick Di violets

Bare *di with singular mass and plural count is also possible in Tuscany, provided the noun is modified by a prenominal adjective (6) (from Rohlfs 1968:117):

(6) a. di bon vino
   Di good wine
b. di belle patate
   Di nice potatoes

1.5. Italian and many dialects in the North of Italy, including Emilia and Northern Tuscany, have the so-called “partitive” determiner formed with *di combined with the definite article (which is the only available choice for French). This again apparently unifies singular mass and plural count nouns (7b) setting them apart from singular count nouns (7a):\(^1\)

(7) a. Ho raccolto una /*della violetta.
   [I] have picked a / di-art violet
b. Ho raccolto del fieho, ho raccolto delle violette.
   [I] have picked di-art hey, [I] have picked di-art violets

1.6. In standard Italian and in most dialects, the adjective “certain” can appear in indefinite expressions adding the meaning of “specific indefiniteness”. With singular count nouns, it must be preceded by the indefinite determiner, as in (8a). With singular mass and plural count nouns, it is in competition with indefinite *di+art (8b). This may suggest that it has grammaticalized into an indefinite determiner specialized for indefinite mass and plural. Alternatively, it could be analysed as an adjective in both (8a) and (8b), which can however only occur with a null determiner in case of mass and plural nouns (a null determiner is independently ungrammatical with singular count nouns, as shown in (3a)):

(8) a. *(un) certo ragazzo
   a certain boy
b. (*della) certa roba, (*dei) certi ragazzi
   certain stuff certain boys

Unlike (8b), in some southern Italian dialects, certolcerti with mass and plural nouns, as in (9), has

\(^1\) In the complex form del, the vowel [e] appears instead of [i] for reasons that are not relevant here.
the genuine meaning of an indefinite determiner with no additional semantic or pragmatic feature:

(9) a. s’era corcato mmiezo a ccerto fieno (Neapoletan; Rohlf 1968:118)
   [he] was lying on some hey
b. certi kundi (Avezzano; Giammarco 1979:141)
   some stories

The grammaticalized indefinite determiner certo is restricted to some parts of Southern Italy (also cf. Ledgeway 2009). Note that it is not reported at any point of the three AIS maps analyzed here.

2. The proposal
The data so far show that the expression of singular count indefinites is constant: the overt determiner derived from the numeral “one” is found throughout the Peninsula and never co-varies with any other determiner. Notably, unlike what is found in the plural, it does not co-vary with the definite article. In other words, the definite article in the singular is never ambiguous with indefinite interpretation.

Variation mainly regards singular mass and plural count nouns, which at first sight behave in parallel. On a par with un/uno, the form certo/certi in (9) can also be taken as the reanalysis of an indefinite quantifier into an indefinite determiner. As it is rather different from the other types, and not documented at all in AIS, we do not discuss it any further here.

In the rest of the paper, we concentrate on the most common indefinite determiners for mass and plural seen in 1.2–1.5 above, namely zero determiner, definite article, bare di, and di+art. We hypothesize that these four types are realizations of one and the same structure, where either the specifier or the head of the DP or both are realized, as in table (10):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(10)</th>
<th>Spec</th>
<th>Head</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>vino</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>il</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c.</td>
<td>di</td>
<td>di vino</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d.</td>
<td>di</td>
<td>del vino</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In (10a) and (10b), we suggest that the indefinite determiner is zero, and the nominal features in D

Another possible instance of a quantifier reanalyzed as an indefinite determiner is due (lit. ‘two’) occurring with morphologically plural “mass / collective” nouns, such as spinaci ‘spinach’, spaghetti ‘spaghetti’, fagioli ‘beans’, etc., as in (i):

(i) Mangiamo due spinaci.
    let’s eat two spinach

In this function, due does not display the typical behaviour of a quantifier but of a determiner. According to Cardinaletti and Giusti 2006, forthcoming), this can be tested by ne-extraction and co-occurrence with the partitive PP, which are possible with quantifiers but not with determiners. As shown in (ii), both properties are absent with indefinite due:

(ii) a. *Di spinaci, ne abbiamo mangiati due.
       of spinach [we] NE have eaten two
b. *Mi dia due di quegli spinaci.
       let me have two of those spinach

We analyze as an indefinite determiner the instance of due reported in AIS 637:

(iii) du viole bambele, 590 Porto S. Stefano (Grosseto)
may be covert or overt. This hypothesis is based on Giusti (2002, 2015), who analyses the definite article as a dummy that realizes the functional features associated with N (e.g., number and gender), generally void of semantic features. This explains why what is usually called the definite article is also possible in indefinite noun phrases.

The element *di* in (10c) and (10d) is homophonous to the genitive preposition *di* (and certainly diachronically derives from it, cf. Carlier and Lamiroy 2014, Luraghi and Kittilä 2014). According to Cardinaletti and Giusti (2015b, 2016), indefinite *del* in (10d) is composed of the indefinite determiner *di* in specDP and the realization of nominal features (e.g., gender and number) in D. They support this proposal showing that *del* displays the same morphosyntactic behavior as the distal demonstrative *quel* “that” and the prenominal adjective *bel* “nice”, which occur in specifier positions. We extend this analysis to (10c), by taking *di* as the indefinite determiner in SpecDP co-occurring with zero morphology in D. Thus, in (10c) and (10d), the features in D may also be covert or overt parallel to (10a) and (10b), respectively.

The existence of the four forms can be captured as the interaction of a micro-parameter and a nano-parameter in the sense of Biberauer and Roberts (2012). More precisely, the micro-parameter regards whether the head D must be realized or remain silent when combined with an indefinite determiner sitting in its specifier. The nano-parameter, instead, regards the lexical realization of the indefinite determiner as *di* or zero.

In what follows, we discuss how this structural proposal can provide an insight into the wide variation in the occurrence of the four forms in Italian and Italo-Romance dialects. We first discuss variation in Italian, we then turn to the analysis of Italo-Romance dialects.

### 3. Optionality or specialization for different indefinite meanings

In this section, we highlight how different coexisting forms may give rise to partial optionality and partial specialization for different nuances of indefiniteness. We first discuss the variation found in Italian. We then move on to a lesser studied central Italian dialect, namely the dialect of Ancona, which presents some differences but also confirms an observation that had undergone unnoted, namely that indefinite mass nouns introduced by *di*+art can only have narrow scope.

#### 3.1. Italian

As observed in section 2, Italian has three ways to express indefiniteness (apart from quantifiers): the zero determiner, the definite article with indefinite interpretation, and *di*+art, as exemplified in (11):

(11)  a. *Ho bevuto vino / Ho raccolto violette*  
      [I] have drunk wine / [I] have picked violets  
      zero determiner

b. *Ho bevuto il vino / Ho raccolto le violette*  
      [I] have drunk the wine / [I] have picked the violets  
      definite article

c. *Ho bevuto del vino / Ho raccolto delle violette*  
      [I] have drunk di-art wine / [I] have picked di-art violets  
      indefinite *di*+art

The choice among the options in (11) is not completely free: different subkinds of indefiniteness
interact with the aspect of the event. The zero determiner in (11a) is only compatible with a non-telic aspect of the event; the definite article as in (11b) is ambiguous between definite and indefinite meaning; \textit{di+art} as in (11c) triggers indefinite meaning with an added notion of small quantity.

We can exemplify the three different readings with the following narrative. Let’s assume we spent the day at Poveglia, an uninhabited island of the Venice lagoon where grass and blackberries grow wildly. The zero determiner in (12) is incompatible with a PP such as “in an hour” inducing telic interpretation of the event. The definite article in (13) is also ungrammatical with indefinite interpretation if the event has telic aspect (the sentence is grammatical in the irrelevant definite interpretation of the definite article - all the grass, or all the blackberries present in the island, as indicated by the symbol #). The indefinite interpretation of the definite article is only preserved in (13) with the PP “for an hour” (the definite reading is irrevently possible in this case, too). Finally, \textit{di+art} in (14) is compatible with telicity, in the sense that the event has the result of mowing an indefinite small quantity of grass or picking an indefinite number of blackberries. With the non-telic aspect of the event, this interpretation appears to be less acceptable, although not completely ungrammatical:

\begin{itemize}
  \item (12) a. Ho tagliato erba (*in un’ora) / (per un’ora)
    \vspace{0.2cm}
    [I] have mowed grass in an hour / for an hour
  b. Ho raccolto more (*in un’ora) / (per un’ora)
    \vspace{0.2cm}
    [I] have picked blackberries in an hour / for an hour
  \item (13) a. Ho tagliato l’erba (#in un’ora) / (per un’ora)
    \vspace{0.2cm}
    [I] have mowed the grass in an hour / for an hour
  b. Ho raccolto le more (#in un’ora) / (per un’ora)
    \vspace{0.2cm}
    [I] have picked the blackberries in an hour / for an hour
  \item (14) a. Ho tagliato dell’erba (in un’ora) / (??per un’ora)
    \vspace{0.2cm}
    [I] have mowed di-art grass in an hour / for an hour
  b. Ho raccolto delle more (in un’ora) / (??per un’ora)
    \vspace{0.2cm}
    [I] have picked di-art blackberries in an hour / for an hour
\end{itemize}

The data in (12)-(14) suggest that although the different forms tend to specialize for different interpretations, a certain area of overlap persists; namely, the indefinite interpretation of the zero determiner (12) and of the definite article in (13) in non-telic contexts. This overlap is present in a high, more standardized register. The optionality dissolves if we consider colloquial registers of Italian that are more subject to contact with the local dialect, as some preliminary inquiries suggest. For example, in the colloquial Italian spoken in the Center, in contact with dialects where bare nouns are ungrammatical (cf. 3.2 below), the definite article is strongly preferred. On the contrary, in the colloquial Italian spoken in Sicily, in contact with dialects where bare nouns are fully used (cf. 4.1 below), the zero determiner is strongly preferred.

It has already been noted that standard varieties manifest more grammatical options than local varieties. According to Egerland (2009), this may be captured in terms of coexisting grammars, in the sense of Kroch (1989). Native competence of a standard / prestigious / national language is the sum of the grammars of the different registers as well as local varieties of such language. The variation vs optionality discussed here goes in this direction, showing that in the presence of
competing forms, speakers’ preferences are more or less influenced, according to different registers, by contact with the local variety.

Another semantic difference among the three Italian options in (11) has to do with their scope properties. The three determiners all allow narrow scope with respect to negation, but they differ with respect to wide scope. Bare nouns only have narrow scope (15). This is also true of the indefinite interpretation of the definite article in (16), as wide scope with the definite article in (16b) forces definite interpretation (again signaled by the symbol #). Di+art has instead ambiguous scope (17);3 the indefinite interpretation is indeed maintained in (17b):

(15) a. Non ho invitato ragazzi alla festa ma solo ragazze. ¬∃
[I] did not invite boys at the party, but only girls
b. *Non ho invitato ragazzi alla festa perché erano antipatici. *∃ ¬
[I] did not invite boys at the party, because there were obnoxious

(16) a. Non ho invitato i ragazzi alla festa ma solo (delle / le) ragazze. ¬∃
[I] did not invite the boys at the party, but only (di-art / the) girls
b. #Non ho invitato i ragazzi perché erano antipatici. #∃ ¬
[I] did not invite the boys at the party, because there were obnoxious

(17) a. Non ho invitato dei ragazzi alla festa, ma solo (delle) ragazze. ¬∃
[I] did not invite di-art boys at the party, but only di-art girls
b. Non ho invitato dei ragazzi alla festa perché erano antipatici. ∃ ¬
[I] did not invite di-art boys at the party, because there were obnoxious

The Italian data thus show that the zero determiner and the definite article pattern most similarly and unlike di+art. This is expected in our proposal in (10), where the former have a zero indefinite determiner in specDP and only differ in morpho-syntactic terms, the definite article being overt concord for gender and number on D.6 And it is expected if in Italian, the indefinite determiner di in di+art specializes for the semantics of small quantity which makes di+art partially behave like the quantifier alcuni, cf. fn. 5.

The literature on indefinite expressions generally unifies singular mass and plural count and sets them apart from singular count nouns. (cf. Chierchia 1998, Delfitto and Schroten 2001, Storto 2003, Zamparelli 2008). A less known fact of Italian is that mass nouns introduced by di+art have

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3 In this respect, di+art differs from true quantifiers like alcuni ‘some’, which only allow for wide scope:

(i) a. *Non ho invitato alcuni ragazzi alla festa ma solo ragazze. *¬∃
[I] did not invite some boys at the party, but only girls
b. Non ho invitato alcuni ragazzi perché erano antipatici. ∃ ¬
[I] did not invite some boys at the party, because there were obnoxious

6 We leave the question open why exactly saliency should trigger feature realization in D. One may hypothesize that the overt features give some kind of discourse anaphoric flavor to the DP. Another possibility is that Italian has two indefinite zero determiners in SpecDP, the one endowed with saliency requiring feature realization in D. According to Cardinaletti and Giusti (2015a), the overt / covert realization of features in functional heads are related to morpho-syntactic properties not only of the lexical head N but also of the head of the modifiers, such as demonstratives or adjectives.

7 The fact that di in Italian always occurs with features in D should not be related to its meaning, but simply to its morpho-syntactic properties, cf. fn. 6 above.
different scope properties from plural count nouns introduced by \textit{di+art}. While plural can have either narrow or wide scope with respect to negation, as shown in \((17)\), singular mass nouns can only have narrow scope, as in \((18)\), as pointed out by Cardinaletti and Giusti (2016):

\begin{enumerate}
\item a. Non ho bevuto del vino ma (del) succo di frutta. \quad \neg \exists
\item b. *Non ho bevuto del vino perché era acido. \quad \exists \neg
\end{enumerate}

I did not drink di-art wine but (di-art) fruit juice
I did not drink di-art wine because it was sour

In section 3.2, we show that the different scope properties of mass vs plural are confirmed in the dialect of Ancona, crucially offering a key to understand a phenomenon which would at first sight appear surprising.

\subsection*{3.2. Variation in the dialect of Ancona}

For the Ancona point, the three AIS maps that display indefinite determiners (1037, 1343, and 637) only report the definite article for both singular mass and plural indefinites in. Our fieldwork confirms the lack of zero determiner and bare \textit{di} (or \textit{de}, which is the form of the uninflcted genitive preposition in this dialect):

\begin{enumerate}
\item a. Se ce fosse l’acqua / *acqua / *de acqua.
   if there was the water / water / di water
\item b. Vago a più ’l vi / *vì / *de vì.
   [I] go and take the wine / wine / di wine
\item c. ‘Ndam a cercà le viulet / *viulette / *de viulette
   let’s go and look for the violets / violets / di violets
\end{enumerate}

Furthermore, Cardinaletti and Giusti (2015b, 2016) observe that \textit{di+art} is not possible for singular mass nouns (20a-b), but it is possible for plural count nouns (20c):

\begin{enumerate}
\item a. Se ce fosse l’acqua / *de l’acqua
   if there was the water / di-art water
\item b. Vago a più ’l vi / *del vì
   [I] go and take the wine / di-art wine
\item c. ‘Ndam a cercà le viulet / de le viulette
   let’s go and look for the violets / di-art violets
\end{enumerate}

The different scope properties of mass and plural \textit{di+art} observed above allow us to note a further peculiar fact. Unlike Italian (17), plural \textit{dei} in Anconetano does not display narrow scope. Thus, \((21a)\) is ungrammatical, while \((21b)\), parallel to \((17b)\), is perfectly acceptable:

\begin{enumerate}
\item a. *Nun ho ‘nvitato dei fioli ala festa, ma solo dele fiole. \quad \neg \exists
   [I] did not invite di-art boys at the party, but only di-art girls
\item b. Nun ho ‘nvitato dei fioli ala festa perché erane ‘ntipatici. \quad \exists \neg
   [I] did not invite di-art boys at the party, because they were obnoxious
\end{enumerate}
In Anconetano, the only way to express narrow scope indefiniteness is with the definite article (note that *fioli* can also have a definite interpretation, which is irrelevant here):

(22) \[\text{Nun ho ‘nvitato i fioli ala festa, ma solo le fiole.} \downarrow \exists\]

[I did not invite the boys at the party, but only the girls]

Therefore, in the dialect of Ancona, there is no real optionality. Anconetano only has two forms for indefiniteness: one specialized for wide scope (*di+art*), one for narrow scope (definite article). The discussion so far allows us to treat the ungrammaticality of *di+art* in (20a) and (21a) in a unified way. If narrow scope interpretation of *di+art* is not allowed in Anconetano (21a), it is expected that in this dialect, *di+art* be incompatible with mass nouns, which only take narrow scope (similarly to (18b) above in Italian).

We can also understand why AIS does not report *di+art* in the Ancona area. Since the AIS map 637 only searches for plural indefinites with narrow scope interpretation, it cannot record the use of *di+art*, which only has wide scope interpretation.

4. Variation across dialects in three AIS maps
In the rest of the paper, we carefully consider the broad variation reported in the three AIS maps considered for Anconetano above. The contexts should make sure that the indefinites are interpreted as non-specific with narrow scope. The advantage of looking at a single context is that we expect to deal with semantically homogenous data across the dialects; the disadvantage is that these data do not allow us any further conjecture on the form of the indefinite determiner in the other types of indefinite interpretation that we have seen in Italian and in the dialect of Ancona.

We start with map 1037 “[if there was] water”, which displays an existential context and therefore most clearly induces a core non-specific indefiniteness with narrow scope interpretation without any further semantic feature such as saliency or small quantity, which will become relevant below. We will see how the four forms of the indefinite determiner distribute geographically and will show that our proposal in (10) can provide an explanation of why they do so.

We then review the data found on maps 1343 “[go to the cellar] to take wine”, which may induce the interpretation of the indefinite noun phrase “wine” as being salient in the context of going to the cellar, and 637 “[to look for] violets”, which may favor a small quantity interpretation of the indefinite noun phrase. These two maps display a higher degree of variation among possible indefinite forms, suggesting that not only in Italian but also in the dialects, different forms may coexist and specialize for different nuances of indefiniteness.

4.1. AIS map 1037 “if there was water”
In map 1037, we observe the following distribution:

- The zero determiner is present in the North (north-eastern Piedmont, northern Lombardy, the whole of Veneto, and the whole of Istria), in the South of Italy (southern Campania, southern Apulia, southern Calabria, Sicily), and in Sardinia. It is absent elsewhere.
- The definite article with indefinite interpretation is widespread. Three attestations are found in the province of Trento (330 Mortaso, 331 Stenico, 323 Predazzo). It builds a compact area in southern Lombardy reaching the border with Veneto (360 Albrisano (Verona)). It is
interrupted by a large area of di+art in Emilia Romagna, and continues in the rest of central and southern Italy, until the zero determiner starts again, as indicated above. Definite articles are also found spotlike in Sicily and Sardinia.

- Bare di is limited to Val d’Aosta and western Piedmont (from 122 Saint Marcel (Aosta) down to 182 Limone Piemonte (Cuneo)) with only two further attestations towards East: one in northern Lombardy (209 Isolaccia (Sondrio)) and one in central Veneto (354 Romano (Vicenza), where zero is also given as a second option), and one attestation in Sardinia (943 Macomer (Nuoro)).

- Di+art is present in the so-called Gallo-Italic varieties: from eastern Piedmont and Liguria down to the whole Emilia and Romagna, with two attestations in Northern Tuscany (520 Camaiore (Livorno), 532 Montespertoli (Firenze)) and one attestation in Sardinia (937 Nuoro, where the article is sa).

From the description above, we can infer that the four different forms seen in (10) distribute along two crossing axes. The North-South axis is defined by the distribution of the zero determiner at its extremes versus the definite article in its core part. The Northwest-Northeast axis is defined by the presence of di either by itself or combined with the definite article in the area where the two axes intersect.

Our proposal in (10) can provide an explanation of why these alternating forms distribute the way they do if we assume that the two axes represent different values for the two parameters suggested in section 2. The vertical axis is characterized by consistently covert indefinite determiner in SpecDP and variation in the realization of D, which is covert at the northern and southern extremes and overt in all the rest. The horizontal axis is characterized by a choice for overt realization of the indefinite determiner di in SpecDP. At the extreme West, D is covert (producing bare di). In the area of intersection with overt realization of D, di+art is found.

The diatopic distribution of the different values of the two parameters can be visualized as in (23):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>0+0</th>
<th>0+art</th>
<th>di+0</th>
<th>di+art</th>
<th>di/0+0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>di+0</td>
<td></td>
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<td>0+0</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Considering that Latin did not have any indefinite determiner or any overt free morpheme in the D head, we observe the typical pattern of lateral areas for the two different parameters. The zero determiner in the upper and lower extremes of the Italian territory is the lateral (conservative) area with respect to the innovation consisting in an overt free morpheme in D. The null SpecDP above and below di+art is lateral with respect to the innovation consisting in the realization of the indefinite determiner in SpecDP as di.

4.2. AIS map 1343 “[to go to the cellar] to take wine”

The distribution of the indefinite determiner in map 1343 is more varied. The definite article is much more widespread than what we found in 1037 above; in particular, it alternates with the zero determiner in the extreme North and South and in Sardinia, and it also alternates with di+art in the areas where this form was attested with “water”. This variation can be related to the higher saliency...
of the notion of “wine” in the context “go to the cellar to take some”, which might favor the definite article for indefinite interpretation over the two different forms for core indefiniteness, zero determiner or \( di+\)art. Note that saliency should not be reduced to definiteness because in Val d’Aosta and western Piedmont, the attestations consistently contain bare \( di \), as with “water”, while definite interpretation is expressed with the definite article.

A second difference in the realization of the indefinite determiner in map 1343 with respect to map 1037 is the fact that \( di+\)art is more widespread in the former than in the latter; for example, it is present in one place in Trentino (341 Tiarno di Sotto (Trento)) and resumes from south-eastern Veneto 373 Montebello (Vicenza), 372 Raldon (Verona), 393 Fratta Polesine (Rovigo) down to central Tuscany (550 Castagneto Carducci (Pisa), and 570 Elba (Livorno), where only the zero determiner was attested in map 1037. This can be related to another possible interpretation which may arise in the “take wine” context, namely the small quantity interpretation, which is less prominent in the existential context “if there was water”. To conclude, parallel to what we observed for Italian above, some areas seem to have more than one indefinite determiner specialized for different nuances of indefiniteness. This is however not the case of the dialects where \( di+\)art is predominant (e.g. in Emilia and Romagna, where very few instances of the definite article are found with “wine” (cf. (34a) and (35a) below), and \( di+\)art consistently appears with “water”).

4.3 AIS map 637 “[to go and look for] violets”

The third map containing an indefinite determiner presents an indefinite plural count noun. The context ensures a narrow scope interpretation of the plural indefinite; it is compatible with the saliency interpretation of violets (as they are one of the typical wild flower to be picked in certain seasons) and may favor the small quantity interpretation. If the different distribution of the determiners is due to their specialization for these different nuances of indefiniteness, we expect to find variation similar to what we found in the “wine” context. This is in fact the case.

- The zero determiner is more restricted than in 1037 “if there was water” and wider than in 1343 “take wine”; it is present in the whole Piedmont reaching Liguria down to one point in Tuscany, and one in Veneto, it spreads down to the border with Emilia. In the South, it spreads all over Sicily and Calabria and is attested in a couple of places in Campania and Apulia.
- Bare \( di \) has basically the same distribution as in 1037 “if there was water” displaying some isolated points: one in Veneto (325 Cencenighe (Belluno)), one in western Emilia (412 Carpaneta (Piacenza)), and one in Liguria at the border with western Emilia (179 Rovegno (Genova)).
- \( Di+\)art is more extended with count plural than with mass singular, especially in the horizontal axis where the plural is attested in two points in Lombardy (229 Sonico (Brescia), at the border with Trentino, and 278 Solferino (Mantova), at the border with southern Veneto); four points in Veneto: 345 Vas (Belluno), 374 Teolo (Padova), 381 Cerea (Verona) and 385 Cavarzere (Venezia)); and three points in Friuli: 326 Claut (Pordenone), 328 Tremonti di Sotto (Udine) and 367 Grado (Gorizia).

8 Note that the small quantity interpretation of “water” is not excluded in this context, since we find instances of pseudo-partitive constructions parallel to Italian un po’ d’acqua “a bit of water”, un bicchiere d’acqua “a glass of water” throughout map 1037.
• The definite article expressing indefiniteness is present all over the place, interspersed with all of the other three forms, as is the case with “take wine”.

To conclude, the context introduced by map 637 favors a small quantity interpretation which competes with the core notion of existential indefiniteness, which in turn may be salient or not. In areas in which more than one form is possible, the different realizations appear to distribute as in Italian, namely the core notion of indefiniteness is expressed by the zero determiner (syntactically realized as a zero determiner in SpecDP and covert features in D), the salient indefinite by the definite article (syntactically realized as a zero determiner in SpecDP and overt features in D), and the small quantity by \( di + art \) (syntactically realized as overt \( di \) in SpecDP and overt features in D). The areas which do not allow for more than one indefinite form confirm the distribution of bare \( di \) in the North-West, of \( di + art \) in Emilia and Romagna, of the zero determiner at the very further North and South, and of the definite determiner elsewhere.

5 Micro-variation

In section 3, we observed that Italian displayed three out of the four possible forms of the indefinite determiner. We have observed a degree of optionality between the zero determiner and the definite article, which probably disappears in the colloquial register due to contact with the local variety/dialect. In fact, we noted that at least as regards the dialect of Ancona, the two available forms specialize for wide vs narrow scope, basically reducing to one form for narrow scope,\(^9\) namely the definite article, and one form for wide scope, namely \( di + art \). In section 4, we observed that limited to the narrow scope interpretation provided by the three AIS maps considered here, the four forms have a distinct diatopic distribution that is most evident in AIS 1037 “if there was water”, which more clearly induces what we called core existential indefinite interpretation. In the other two maps, the different forms are interspersed with one another but still complying with the general tendencies. This was taken to be due to a specialization of the forms for different nuances of narrow scope indefinite meaning, namely saliency (more evident for AIS 1343 “go to the cellar to take wine”) and small quantity (more evident for AIS 637 “to look for violets”).

In this section, we analyze in some detail the distribution of different forms in specific points and in specific areas of the AIS maps. The picture that arises confirms the hypothesis that the different forms tend to specialize for different meanings but cannot exclude true optionality. Furthermore, it must be kept in mind that for the very nature of the survey carried through a questionnaire, the informants provide just one form for each entry even if more than one is available to them. This is indeed the case of AIS, which only very rarely gives two alternatives for the same place (see \( de \) akwa, akwa, 354 Romano (Vicenza); \( a \) prende del vin, a ciò l vin, 367 Grado (Gorizia); \( le \) vyole, de le vyole, 385 Cavarzere (Venezia)). It is therefore plausible that one or more forms are available in the same point, even if not reported by the maps.

5.1. Variation at specific points

We now discuss specific points of the three maps starting with areas where all four forms are available and continuing with areas where only three and two forms are present.

The four points in Piedmont reported in (24)-(25) display a consistent form for the two instances of singular mass (zero determiner in 107, bare \( di \) in 133, \( di + art \) in 147 and 175), and a different form

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\(^9\) Mind that the definite article with wide scope only has definite meaning and is irrelevant to our discussion here.
in the plural count (di+art in 107, the definite article in 147, the zero determiner in 133 and 175). We can interpret this variation along the lines sketched above. Trasquera 107 is in an area where the zero determiner is widespread with “water” and interspersed with the definite article with “wine”; the informant may have interpreted both “water” and “wine” as having the same core indefinite interpretation, while attributing the small quantity interpretation to the plural count, here expressed as di+art. Cavaglia 147 is in an area where all four possibilities are available with “wine”, while for “water” we only find three forms, with the exclusion of the definite article. The informant might have used di+art as the only available form in this point, or he/she might have used it to express small quantity in the singular; in the plural, the area presents all four forms, and the definite article has been used to convey saliency interpretation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(24)</th>
<th>107 Trasquera (Verbania)</th>
<th>147 Cavaglia (Biella)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AIS 1037</td>
<td>akwa</td>
<td>d l’eva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1343</td>
<td>a to vin</td>
<td>a gavà dal vin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>637</td>
<td>dal viol</td>
<td>i avyuletti</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Vicoforte 175, the two singular mass nouns may well have been interpreted as expressing small quantity. Note, however, that Vicoforte is at the border with the area displaying generalized di+art. Interestingly, this is the case of singular mass nouns while with plural count nouns, di+art is heavily interspersed with zero determiners (attested in (25)) and definite articles. Finally, in Vico Canavese 133, both mass nouns are introduced by bare di, which makes the zero determiner in the plural unexpected under a proposal that generalizes the singular and the plural indefinite:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(25)</th>
<th>175 Vicoforte (Cuneo)</th>
<th>133 Vico Canavese (Torino)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AIS 1037</td>
<td>d r eva</td>
<td>d ewa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1343</td>
<td>a pyé del vin</td>
<td>par piar d vin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>637</td>
<td>violúta</td>
<td>fyure vyulette</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note that in Vico Canavese, “violets” is expressed by a complex noun phrase containing a postnominal modifier, fyure vyulette “flowers violet”, which might favor the zero determiner for independent reasons. This is confirmed by the fact that in an area where the zero determiner is not easily found in map 637, other points showing complex noun phrases also display the zero determiner: cf. viole mammole, 124 Selvaggio (Vercelli); violeti mamuli, 126 Pianezza (Novara); fyor tsoppi, 129 Borgomanero (Novara).

The two points reported in (26) display three forms, namely the zero determiner for the existential context in map 1037, the salient interpretation of “wine” in map 1343 expressed by the definite article, and different forms for plural indefiniteness, reported in map 637. A possible way of capturing this difference is to assume that the informants have at their disposal more than one form for the indefinite determiner, as confirmed by the data in (32) below, and have randomly chosen a different nuance of the indefinite interpretation in the plural.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(26)</th>
<th>319 Cedarchis (Udine)</th>
<th>328 Tramonti di Sotto (Udine)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AIS 1037</td>
<td>age</td>
<td>aga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1343</td>
<td>a ċiòli l vin</td>
<td>a tweli l vin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>637</td>
<td>violes</td>
<td>da las violes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Let us now consider an area where speakers only have two forms at their disposal, namely the definite article and \( di + art \), as shown in (27). In Castagneto Carducci, we find singular mass with the definite article and plural count with \( di + art \); in Chiusdino, we find the same in the singular, while the plural is also expressed by the definite article. It is plausible to suppose that the two forms are available in both points though not reported in the map. As for Montespertoli, the \( di + art \) form is only found in map 1037, while the two other maps report the definite article. In this case, \( di + art \) might be the only available form in the singular, or it may express small quantity in the singular:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(27)</th>
<th>AIS 1037</th>
<th>550 Castagneto Carducci (Pisa)</th>
<th>551 Chiusdino (Pisa)</th>
<th>532 Montespertoli (Firenze)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>( ill ) akwa</td>
<td>( l ) akwa</td>
<td>( dell ) akwa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1343</td>
<td></td>
<td>( per piglià ) l vino</td>
<td>( per piglià ) l vino</td>
<td>( a pigliār ) il vino</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>637</td>
<td></td>
<td>( delle viole mammole )</td>
<td>( le vyoł ammmamole )</td>
<td>( le viol ammmamole )</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To sum up, even if the AIS data do not provide direct evidence to claim that competing forms are indeed available to the speaker in each point and in each map, a thorough analysis of the diatopic distribution of these forms in specific points of the maps leads us to hypothesize that they are. This is confirmed by a similar analysis of the diatopic variation found in specific areas.

5.2 Variation inside specific areas
In this section, we concentrate on different forms of the same maps attested in adjacent points. For example, the data in (28)-(30) report the results of five adjacent points in the three AIS maps. In map 1037, reported in (28), variation is more restricted than in the other two maps, showing that in this area, the definite article is not available for the core indefinite existential meaning:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(28)</th>
<th>124 Selveglio (Vercelli)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
<td>( awa )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td>( d\ ayvi ), 132 Ronco Canavese (Torino)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c.</td>
<td>( d\ éva ), 123 Brusson (Aosta)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d.</td>
<td>( d\ éve ), 122 Saint Marcel (Aosta)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e.</td>
<td>( d\ lawa ), 135 Pettinengo (Novara)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Maps 1343 and 637, in (29)-(30) respectively, show the definite article in two points Brusson (29c) and Ronco Canavese (30b) in different maps, while the same points have the more common bare \( di \) in the other case (29b) and (30c). It is plausible to assume that the salient interpretation realized with the definite article in both singular mass and plural count was chosen randomly by the informants for only one of the two entries of the questionnaire:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(29)</th>
<th>124 Selveglio (Vercelli)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
<td>( to vin )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td>( a gavar de vin ), 132 Ronco Canavese (Torino)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c.</td>
<td>( pè cercé o vin ), 123 Brusson (Aosta)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d.</td>
<td>( per ertsì de vén ), 122 Saint Marcel (Aosta)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e.</td>
<td>( per pyé dal vin ), 135 Pettinengo (Novara)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(30)</th>
<th>124 Selveglio (Vercelli)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
<td>( viole mammole ), 124 Selveglio (Vercelli)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td>( le violete ), 132 Ronco Canavese (Torino)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c.</td>
<td>( de violette ), 123 Brusson (Aosta)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is worth noting that Pettinengo is rather different from the other points in that it consistently displays *di+art* in the three maps (28e), (29e), and (30e). This may either suggest that Pettinengo is the north-western outpost of generalized *di+art* or that the informants have chosen the small quantity interpretation in all the three contexts. The AIS data do not allow us to decide between the two hypotheses. This is the kind of questions that can only be answered by field work.

Similar variation is found in the North-East with the difference that the bare *di* option is much more restricted in the North-East than in the North-West. For reasons of space, we provide one example of singular in the province of Trento (31) and one of plural in the province of Udine (32). In the six points mentioned in (31)-(32), map 1037 consistently presents a zero determiner:  

(31) a. per tor vim, 343 Volano (Trento)  
   b. a tœr el vin, 340 Roncone (Trento)  
   c. a tœr del vi, 341 Tiarno di Sotto (Trento)  

(32) a. violes, 319 Cedarchis (Udine)  
   b. la vyoles, 327 Forni di Sotto (Udine)  
   c. da las violas, 328 Tramonti di Sotto (Udine)  

We thus suppose that the three forms of the indefinite determiner are all available in the area and that the informants have chosen the salient interpretation and the small quantity interpretation in the two maps which most favors them.

In Emilia, this type of small-scale variation only concerns the definite article and *di+art* in maps 1343 and 637. Variation is not found in map 1037, according to the general tendency already noted:

(33) a. d l akwa, 456 Bologna  
   b. d l akwe, 446 Minerbio (Bologna)  

(34) a. a tor al ven, 456 Bologna  
   b. par tor dal ven, 446 Minerbio (Bologna)  

(35) a. al viol, 456 Bologna  
   b. dal viol, 446 Minerbio (Bologna)  

In this area, where *di+art* is the unmarked form of the indefinite determiner in all maps, it seems plausible to assume that *di+art* does not convey the small quantity interpretation; while the definite article conveys the salient interpretation, both in the singular (34a) and in the plural (35a). Once again the choice between the unmarked form and the salient interpretation is presumably random. Further North (36)-(38) and further South (39)-(41), the variation concerns the zero determiner and the definite article, with the interesting observation that in Mortaso (Trento), the definite article also

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10 In the North-East, bare *di* is totally absent with singular mass nouns; with plural count nouns, it is only present in one place: *de vyole*, 325 Cencenigh (Belluno), as reported above.
appears in map 1037, as in (36b), suggesting that in that particular point the zero determiner is not present or is dispreferred in all contexts:

(36) a. akwa, 333 Viarago (Trento)
    b. l akwa, 330 Mortaso (Trento)

(37) a. a tœr vin, 333 Viarago (Trento)
    b. a tœr al vin, 330 Mortaso (Trento)

(38) a. viole, 333 Viarago (Trento)
    b. le viole, 330 Mortaso (Trento)

The two Sicilian points in (39)-(41) confirm that variation specializes for different interpretation (40)-(41), while the core notion of existential indefiniteness can only be realized with the zero determiner (39):

(39) a. akwa, 821 Vita (Trapani)
    b. akwa, 824 Baucina (Palermo)

(40) a. pi ppigghiari vinu, 821 Vita (Trapani)
    b. pi pigghiari u vinu, 824 Baucina (Palermo)

(41) a. violi, 821 Vita (Trapani)
    b. i vyoli, 824 Baucina (Palermo)

To sum up, the analysis of the diatopic variation found in specific areas suggest that more than one form is available to the speakers of the dialects. One carries the unmarked value, while the other(s) convey some additional semantic flavors.

5.3 Lack of variation inside specific areas

There are three areas in which the three AIS maps do not report any variation:

- the extreme North especially the Grigioni area in Switzerland, which only displays the zero determiner;
- the extreme West of Val d’Aosta and Piedmont, which only displays bare *di*;
- the Center-South to northern Calabria and Apulia, which only displays the definite article.

There are two ways to interpret these facts: either there is only one form available to the speakers to express indefiniteness or the informants have randomly chosen the same interpretation for different entries of the questionnaire. The latter hypothesis is less plausible, given the consistent distribution of one and the same form in one and the same area. It is more interesting to suppose that the consistent use of the definite article for indefinite meaning is the “core” Italian innovation with respect to generalized bare nouns in Latin. The zero determiner in the North is probably a conservative feature preserved thanks to contact with Germanic. Bare *di* is a Gallic innovation which persists as such due to contact with Occitan.
Fieldwork is needed to confirm this apparent lack of variation, as we have seen with the example of Ancona there are specialized form that AIS did not detect at all. Consider also that variation may have developed in these areas in modern times due to contact with Italian.

6 Conclusions
In this paper, we have provided a broad overview of the possible forms of indefinite determiners in Italian and Italo-Romance dialects, excluding quantifiers and pseudo-partitive constructions such as un po ’ di “a bit of, a little of”. We have concentrated on the four most common forms, which we have analyzed in (10) as having a unified structure including an indefinite determiner in SpecDP and nominal features in D.

For Italian, we have shown that coexistent forms give rise to true optionality in some cases and to a specialization for different indefinite meanings (including scope properties) in other cases. For the dialect of Ancona, which we have analyzed in detail, we have suggested that true optionality between the two available forms does not really exist.

We have then addressed the issue of variation across the dialects of Italy studying three AIS maps which provide narrow scope interpretation of the indefinite noun phrases. We have observed that map 1037 “if there was water” gives a clearer picture of the distribution of the four forms. This allowed us to formulate the hypothesis that the overt/covert realization of the indefinite determiner in SpecDP and of the nominal features in D is related to two different parameters that interact diatopically.

The realization of features in D regards the whole Italian territory and displays covert D only at the very northern and southern extremes, while overt D is found elsewhere (from Lombardy to Calabria). The overt realization of the indefinite determiner in SpecDP characterizes Gallo-Italic dialects. It is found at the extreme North-West (Val d’Aosta, Piedmont, and partially Liguria) and spreads towards Emilia and Romagna. In the former area it combines with a covert D producing bare di, while in the latter it combines with overt D producing di+art.

The other two AIS maps (1343 and 637) show that it is usually the case that in the same area, more than one form is available. This raises the question of whether even in the narrow scope interpretation, different nuances of indefiniteness may be realized by different forms of the indefinite determiner. This has been confirmed by focusing on the variation in specific points for the three different maps, and by focusing on the variation in specific areas for each separate map. Especially designed fieldwork needs to be done to establish whether this is really the case and to uncover whether true optionality can also be found in dialects, especially those which display more than two forms for the indefinite determiner.

References:
Cardinaletti, A. and G. Giusti 2015a Cartography and optional feature realization in the nominal


