

# *Le meilleur promoteur dans quel sens ?*

## A closer look at French sluicing (with extra elements)

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### Abstract

This paper addresses French sluicing, focusing on constructions in which a wh-remnant co-occurs with a non-wh-element, collectively referred to as *Sweeping* (*Sluicing With Extra Elements Persist-ing*, Temmerman 2019). Building on prior work, it introduces a previously undescribed subtype: IWW-sluicing, involving the wh-phrase *dans quel sens* ('in what way'), and draws parallels with *comment*-sluicing (with the wh-phrase *comment* 'how'). I propose that these two types of *Sweeping* function as clarification requests targeting the interpretation of a repeated expression, namely the extra non-wh-remnant, which displays properties of a mixed-quoted expression. It is further argued that the explicit clarification request underlying these sluices takes on the form of a short cleft. The paper also brings a third type of *Sweeping*, *SpaCing* (*Sluicing with a Ça* 'that'), into the empirical picture, showing that only minimal wh-phrases such as *comment* can combine with *ça*, whereas complex wh-phrases like *dans quel sens* cannot. The findings challenge *in situ* deletion accounts and support a unified, ellipsis-based analysis of different types of French sluicing, including cases in which the sluice is accompanied by extra elements.

### 1. Introduction – setting the scene: Sluicing and Sweeping<sup>1</sup>

“Sluicing” refers to seemingly non-sentential questions, in which fragmentary wh-questions receive the same interpretation as their full verbal interrogative counterpart: they have “the same propositional content and assertoric force as utterances of what are uncontroversially fully sentential syntactic structures” (Merchant 2004:662). This is exemplified in (1)–(2) for French:<sup>2</sup> the sluice in (1) is synonymous with the corresponding full verbal interrogative counterpart in (2).

- (1) Johan a encadré quelqu'un, mais je ne sais pas *qui*.  
*Johan has supervised someone but I SM know not who*  
'Johan supervised someone, but I don't know who.'
- (2) Johan a encadré quelqu'un, mais je ne sais pas *qui* il a encadré.  
*Johan has supervised someone but I SM know not who he has supervised*  
'Johan supervised someone, but I don't know who he supervised.'

As is clear from (1), sluices in French can be embedded. They can also appear as dialogue fragments, as shown in (3), based on Dagnac's (2018:790) example (18). Dagnac (2018:790) refers to the former as “embedded sluices” and the latter as “root sluices”.

- (3) A: Johan doit parler avec quelqu'un. B: *Avec qui ?*  
*Johan must talk with someone with who*  
'A: Johan has to talk with someone. B: With whom?'

It has been observed that a non-wh-element may occur alongside a sluice. In a study focusing on Dutch, this phenomenon was labelled *Sweeping* by Temmerman (2019), designating *Sluicing With Extra Elements Persist-ing*. In the relevant examples that follow, the wh-remnant is italicized, and the non-wh-element is underlined.

<sup>1</sup> Unless indicated otherwise, all examples in this paper are French examples.

<sup>2</sup> Following Kayne (1984) and Dagnac (2018), I gloss *ne* as SM (scope marker), with *pas* as the sole negative element.

For instance, Hoekstra (1993), Van Craenenbroeck (2004; 2010a), Dagnac (2018), Lefeuvre (2018; 2020), and Smirnova and Abeillé (2021) notice that in French the *wh*-remnant may be followed by *ça* ‘that’. I will refer to this construction as *SpaCing: Sluicing plus a Ça*.<sup>3</sup>

- (4) A: J’ai vu quelqu’un. B: Qui ça ?  
*I=have seen someone who that*  
 ‘A: I saw someone. B: Who?’ (Van Craenenbroeck 2010a:103, (1b))

Furthermore, Dagnac (2018:791) also draws attention to what she calls “*comment*-sluices” (see also Moline 2009; 2013): in *comment*-sluicing, a non-*wh*-element precedes the *wh*-word *comment* ‘how’. An example, found in the frTenTen23<sup>4</sup> corpus, is given in (5):

- (5) ... je découvrais que j’étais différent des autres. Mais différent comment ?  
*I discovered that I=was different from.the others but différent how*  
 ‘I was discovering that I was different from the others. But different how?’ (cf. frTenTen23)

Moreover, Smirnova and Abeillé (2021:244) introduce a (for French) new construction that they refer to as “*wh-stripping*”, “since it resembles what Merchant (2012) called *why-stripping*, when the *wh*-word is followed by a previously mentioned segment: *He left to Rome – Why Rome?*”.<sup>5</sup> Smirnova and Abeillé (2021) opt for the more general term “*wh-stripping*” given that *wh*-words other than *pourquoi* ‘why’ are possible in this construction in French, *comment* ‘how’ also being one of these:

- (6) A: Le dessin ci-dessus est obsédant.  
*the drawing here-above is captivating*  
 ‘The drawing above is captivating.’  
 B: Comment obsédant ?  
*how captivating*  
 ‘Captivating how?’ (cf. frTenTen23)

This paper introduces another type of Sweeping in French: *dans quel sens*-sluicing, exemplified in (7): seemingly non-sentential questions involving the combination of a non-*wh*-element (*étrange* ‘strange’ in (7)) and the *wh*-phrase *dans quel sens* (‘in what way’). Henceforth, and following Temmerman (2023), who studies a similar phenomenon in Dutch, this construction will be referred to as **IWW**-sluicing. In IWW-sluicing, like in *wh-stripping* and *comment*-sluicing, the non-*wh*-remnant is ‘repeated from’ the antecedent clause (i.e. identical to its correlate in the antecedent).

- (7) A: Toute cette histoire est étrange depuis le début.  
*all this story is strange since the beginning*  
 ‘This whole story has been strange since the beginning.’  
 B: Étrange dans quel sens ?  
*strange in which sense*  
 ‘Strange in what way?’ (cf. frTenTen23)

<sup>3</sup> I prefer not to use the term “*wh-ça*” introduced by Smirnova and Abeillé (2021), because they also use this term in non-elliptical contexts. The term *SpaCing* is a nod to Van Craenenbroeck (2004, 2010a), who studies a superficially seemingly similar construction in Dutch, and calls it *Spading: Sluicing Plus A Demonstrative In Non-insular Germanic*. However, firstly, French is not a Germanic language, and secondly, the *ça* in French constructions like (4) is arguably not a demonstrative (cf. Lefeuvre 2018, 2020 and Smirnova and Abeillé 2021, cf. also section 4). Also, Van Craenenbroeck discusses problems that arise when trying to extend his analysis for (dialectal) Dutch to French. I refer the reader to Van Craenenbroeck (2004, 2010a) to discover the specifics of the construction in Germanic languages.

<sup>4</sup> For more information on the corpus: <https://www.sketchengine.eu/frtnten-french-corpus/> (last accessed 10 April 2026).

<sup>5</sup> Cf. also DeVilliers (1991; 1996), Merchant (2006), Weir (2014), Ortega-Santos et al. (2014), Yoshida et al. (2015), and Kim and Abeillé (2019) for *why-stripping* in English and Spanish.

The main goal of this paper is to compare IWW-slucing to cases of Sweeping with *comment* in French, and to present a unified analysis. A supplementary objective, building on Abeillé and Smirnova (2021), is to briefly examine the interaction of these two cases of Sweeping with SpaCing.

This paper is organized as follows. In section 2, IWW-slucing in French is introduced, and it is shown that it exhibits properties very similar to *comment*-slucing in French. The non-wh-remnant in these two cases of Sweeping shows the characteristics of a mixed-quoted expression. Section three presents the analysis of IWW-slucing and *comment*-slucing. Section 3.1 gives some background on analyzing slucing and Sweeping. First, it sets out why this paper adopts as a foundational assumption the silent structure analysis of slucing, and secondly, it shows that an analysis based on *in situ* questions is not on the right track for the French cases under scrutiny. In section 3.2, I propose that IWW-slucing and *comment*-slucing in French are instances of reprise slucing, and that an explicit clarification request is the underlying structure of these instances of Sweeping. More specifically, I argue in favor of a short cleft analysis of these underlying structures. Section 4 brings SpaCing into the picture. This section investigates if *ça* ‘that’ can combine with *comment* ‘how’ and *dans quel sens* ‘in what way’. It is shown that, unlike *dans quel sens*-SpaCing, *comment*-SpaCing, is available, also allowing for an extra non-wh-element, next to the wh-word and *ça*. I argue that this pattern can be accounted for given that minimal wh-phrases are perfectly fine in SpaCing, while complex wh-phrases are excluded in SpaCing. Finally, section 5 concludes.

## 2. Introducing French IWW-slucing, and its similarities to *comment*-slucing

As mentioned in the introduction, *dans quel sens*-slucing represents a type of Sweeping that has until now gone undiscussed for French. Van Craenenbroeck and Temmerman (2019) noted that *comment*-sweeping in French seems very similar to *in what way*-slucing in English and Dutch. Here, we would like to extend this observation to French IWW-slucing, with the wh-remnant *dans quel sens*.

First of all, if you consider the interpretation of an example like (8), this is very much an interpretation like the one we see in (9).<sup>6</sup> That is, these are not information questions (asking about manner or reason, for instance), but clarification questions (‘In what way do you mean X?’, ‘How do you mean X?’).<sup>7</sup> As such, these are instances of what Ginzburg and Sag (2000) called “reprise sluices”. We will come back to this later on, in section 3.2. The example in (10) also clearly shows the very similar interpretation of *comment* ‘how’ and *dans quel sens* ‘in what way’ in a slucing environment. That is, in this example, *dans quel sens* is used to indicate which interpretation of *comment* the speaker is aiming at, i.e. the clarification reading.

- (8) A: Mes parents ont décidé que cette fois j’étais allée trop loin.  
*my parents have decided that this time I=was gone too far*  
 ‘My parents have decided that, this time, I had gone too far.’
- B: Trop loin comment ?  
*too far how*  
 ‘Too far how?’ (cf. frTenTen23)
- (9) ... jusqu’à ce que les choses aillent trop loin. Mais trop loin dans quel sens ?  
*until that the things go.SUBJ too far but too far in which sense*  
 ‘... until things go too far. But too far in what way?’ (frTenTen23)

<sup>6</sup> This paper will not focus on ‘true degree’ readings of *comment*-slucing (Moline 2009, 2013, Dagnac 2018). A relevant example is given in (i):

- (i) On m’a dit qu’il était grand, mais je ne sais pas grand comment.  
*one me=has told that=he was tall but I SM know not tall how*  
 ‘I was told that he was tall, but I don’t remember how tall.’ (Dagnac 2018:792)

<sup>7</sup> See also Smirnova and Abeillé (2021) on the reprise/clarification interpretation of certain sluices with *comment* ‘how’.

- (10) Le lobby vert américain est puissant ...  
*the lobby green American is powerful*  
 ... – mais puissant comment ? dans quel sens ?  
*but powerful how in which sense*  
 ‘The American green lobby is powerful – but powerful how? in what way?’ (frTenTen23)

Secondly, both *comment*-sluicing and IWW-slucicing in French allow the word order with the non-wh-remnant preceding the wh-remnant (cf. the previous examples) as well as the reverse word order, with the wh-remnant preceding the non-wh-remnant. Compare examples (5) and (7) with (11) and (12), respectively:

- (11) A: Il était différent.  
*he was différent*  
 ‘He was different.’  
 B: Je sais, mais comment différent ?<sup>8</sup>  
*I know but how différent*  
 ‘I know, but different how?’
- (12) A: Gaulthérie peut paraître un choix étrange.  
*Gaultheria might seem a choice strange*  
 ‘Gaultheria might seem like a strange choice.’  
 B: Dans quel sens étrange ?<sup>9</sup>  
*in which sense strange*  
 ‘Strange in what way?’

Thirdly, as can be seen in the examples above, both in *comment*-sluicing and in IWW-slucicing, the non-wh-remnant is repeated from the antecedent clause. Interestingly, both *comment*-sluicing and IWW-slucicing can host (as the non-wh-remnants) elements of any category. In (13), we see an example of an NP without an article in *comment*-sluicing: the indefinite plural article *des* ‘the’ in (13A) is dropped in the *comment*-sluice in (13B). (14) shows an example of a finite verb in IWW-slucicing.<sup>10</sup>

- (13) A: Ce sont des moyens de se cultiver ?  
*it are some means of SE educate*  
 ‘Are they means of educating oneself?’  
 B: % *Comment* moyens de se cultiver ?  
*how means of SE educate*  
 ‘Means of educating oneself, how?’ (based on Moline 2013:96)

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.wattpad.com/amp/555664488>. Last accessed 10 April 2026.

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Aromatherapieprecise/posts/10155755882651721/>. Last accessed 10 April 2026.

<sup>10</sup> A reviewer points out acceptability issues for examples (13) and (14). Given that (13) is an example from the published literature, and (14) is an attested example, with similar examples to be found in the frTenTen23 corpus (cf. (i)), I have chosen to maintain the examples in (13) and (14), with % indicating speaker variation.

- (i) a. “Doivent” dans quel sens ?      b. Comment disparaissent ?  
*must.3PL in which sense*                      how disappear. 3PL  
 ‘“Must” in what way?’                      ‘Disappear, how?’ (cf. frTenTen23)

- (14) A: Je peux devenir violent sur un sujet comme celui-ci.<sup>11</sup>  
*I can.ISG become violent on a subject like this-here*  
 ‘I can become violent over a topic like this one.’
- B: % “Peux” dans quel sens ?  
*can.ISG in which sense*  
 “Can” in what way?’

As noticed by Van Craenenbroeck and Temmerman (2019), IWW-slucing in Dutch and English has the hallmark characteristics of mixed quotation (Davidson 1979, Maier 2014a). This can be extended to both IWW-slucing and *comment*-slucing in French. Maier (2014a) defines the phenomenon of mixed quotation, exemplified in (15a), as exhibiting signs of both (i) the opacity of pure quotation and (ii) the transparency of regular language use. Pure quotation, an example of which is given in (15b), is a linguistic device referring to linguistic expressions (Maier 2014b). Pure quotation is opaque in the sense that changes to the original are not permitted (Maier 2014a:2). The same goes for mixed quotation, which involves verbatim reproduction of (part of) the preceding utterance. On the other hand, mixed quotation also shares a number of characteristics with regular, quotation-less language use (Maier 2014a:9). To give but one example, Maier (2014a) shows that indexical pronouns are altered in mixed quotation, as is the case in (15a). In (15a), we see that the original pronoun *your* has been adjusted (to *my*) to align with the perspective of the speaker.

- (15) a. And then they told me to “stick a lamp up my ass”. (Maier 2014a:13, (20c))  
 b. The word ‘anomalous’ has nine letters. (Maier 2014a:2, (1a))

We first consider (i) the opacity of the non-wh-element in IWW-slucing and *comment*-slucing. An immediate consequence of the verbatim requirement is blocking substitution of coreferential terms (Maier 2014a:6). In example (16), it is shown that synonyms cannot be substituted for one another in IWW-slucing and *comment*-slucing.<sup>12</sup>

- (16) A: Toute cette histoire est étrange depuis le début.  
*all this story is strange since the beginning*  
 ‘This whole story has been strange from the beginning.’
- B: a. Étrange dans quel sens / comment ?  
*strange in which sense how*  
 ‘Strange in what way / how?’
- b. #Bizarre / curieuse / singulière / mystérieuse *dans quel sens / comment ?*

Moreover, the speaker’s idiolect (including “speech disfluencies, typos, grammar and spelling errors, sociolect, even a completely different language”) can be reproduced by the reporter “without herself being associated with these linguistic peculiarities” (Maier 2014a:8), as shown in (17) and (18). In (17), we see *spé*, short for *spécial*, which is familiar/informal spoken French. In (18), *verlan* is used, a type of French slang in which parts of a word are reversed to create a new word, with *louche* becoming *chelou*.<sup>13</sup>

- (17) A: !J’ai un pote qui fait un truc un peu spé.  
*I=have a friend who does a thing a bit special*  
 ‘I’ve got a buddy who does something kinda special.’
- B: “Spé” comment / dans quel sens ?  
*special how in which sense*  
 ‘Special how / in what way?’

<sup>11</sup> <https://zestedesavoir.com/forums/sujet/4337/petit-souci-de-vocabulaire/>. Last accessed 10 April 2026.

<sup>12</sup> For the examples in (16) and (18), the attested examples in the frTenTen23 corpus are the versions with *dans quel sens*. For (17), the attested corpus example is the version with *comment*.

<sup>13</sup> I use ! to indicate (non-standard) colloquial French, following the *Grand Grammaire du Français 2021*.

- (18) A: !J'trouve ça chelou.  
*I=find that sketchy*  
 'I find that sketchy.'
- B: Chelou dans quel sens / comment ?  
*sketchy in which sense how*  
 'Sketchy in what way / how?'

Let us now consider (ii) the transparency of the non-wh-element in IWW-slucing and *comment*-slucing: this element is not only opaque, but also transparent, in the sense that "it allows various adjustments to the quoted original to better integrate it into the new reporting construction" (Maier 2014a:14). For instance, grammatical gender and number can be adjusted, as well as the shape of indexical elements. In (19), while the adjectival correlate in the antecedent takes the third singular feminine form, the non-wh-element in the sluice takes the masculine (or default/base) form. In (20), while there is a plural indefinite article and a plural noun in the antecedent, the non-wh-element in the *comment*-sluice and IWW-slucice appears in the singular form (with the singular indefinite article and the singular form of the noun). In (21), we see that the original indexical pronoun *toi* 'you' is adjusted, resulting in a sluice with *moi* 'me'. And in (22), the reflexive pronoun is altered from second to first person singular (*te* 'yourself' > *me* 'myself').<sup>14</sup>

- (19) A: L'énergie solaire est-elle suffisante ?  
*the=energy solar is-she sufficient.3SG.F*  
 'Is solar energy sufficient?'
- B: Suffisant dans quel sens / comment ?  
*sufficient.3SG.M in which sense how*  
 'Sufficient in what way / how?'
- (20) Ainsi il y avait des classements. ...  
*thus it there had some.PL rankings*  
 ... Mais un classement comment / dans quel sens ?  
*but a.SG.M ranking how in which sense*  
 'So there were rankings. But a ranking how / in what way?'
- (21) A: Il est plus comme toi.  
*he is more like you*  
 'He is more like you.'
- B: Comme moi comment / dans quel sens ?  
*like me how in which sense*  
 'Like me how / in what way?'
- (22) A: Est-ce qu'il y a une candidate dont tu penses que  
*is-it that=it there has a candidate from.whom you think that*  
 tu devrais te méfier ?  
*you should yourself beware*  
 'Is there a candidate of whom you think you should be suspicious?'
- B: Me méfier dans quel sens / comment ?  
*myself beware in which sense how*  
 'Be suspicious in what way / how?'

As such, we can conclude that the non-wh-remnant in IWW-slucing and *comment*-slucing in French shows the characteristics of a mixed-quoted expression.

<sup>14</sup> For the examples in (19) and (22), the attested corpus examples are the versions with *dans quel sens*. For (20) and (21), the attested corpus examples are the versions with *comment*.

### 3. French IWW-sluiting and *comment*-sluiting: The analysis

#### 3.1 *Setting the scene: Context for analyzing Sluiting and Sweeping*

Given that a sluice receives the same interpretation as its full verbal interrogative counterpart (cf. examples (1)–(2), repeated here for convenience as (23)), it is often proposed that sluiting should be analyzed as a sentential ellipsis phenomenon, in which the sentential portion of a constituent question is elided, leaving only a wh-phrase remnant (Ross 1969, Merchant 2001; 2003, Vicente 2018, amongst many others).

- (23) Johan a encadré quelqu'un, mais je ne sais pas *qui* (il a encadré).  
*Johan has supervised someone but I SM know not who he has supervised*  
 'Johan supervised someone, but I don't know who he supervised.'

This is illustrated in (24), in which the angled brackets indicate the clausal ellipsis site, and strikethrough the process of ellipsis (however one wants to implement it technically). The wh-remnant underwent A'-movement to a position higher than the ellipsis site prior to ellipsis of the to-be-elided clausal structure. As such, the sluited wh-phrase was extracted out of the ellipsis site, and the elided clausal structure hosts the trace of this movement operation.

- (24) Johan a encadré quelqu'un, mais je ne sais pas *qui* < ~~il a encadré t~~ >.

One of the main arguments for the incorporation of ellipsis in the analysis of sluiting is the observation that sluited wh-phrases show various connectivity effects, i.e. they exhibit the same grammatical dependencies as their correlates in the corresponding full verbal counterpart (cf. for instance, Ross 1969, Merchant 2001, Van Craenenbroeck and Merchant 2013). To give but one example for French, let us look at the interaction of sluiting and anaphor resolution. Ott and Therrien (2020) show that sluiting in French can license a reflexive anaphor. Example (25) has a binding dependency between the reflexive *lui-même* 'itself' and its antecedent *le comité* 'the committee'. The fact that the reflexive is grammatical in (25) suggests that sluiting involves a structure in which the antecedent c-commands the reflexive, as such satisfying Principle A of the Binding Theory. If sluiting is the result of an ellipsis process applying to a full clausal syntactic structure, it follows straightforwardly that the distribution of the remnant has to be parallel to that of its equivalent in the non-elliptical sentence (given that the mechanisms and constraints that regulate the distribution of DPs and pronominal elements are identical in 'regular' full syntactic structures and their elliptical counterparts).

- (25) Le comité<sub>i</sub> a publié des articles sur lui-même<sub>i</sub>, mais je ne sais  
*the committee has published some articles about itself but I SM know*  
 pas combien d'articles sur lui-même<sub>i</sub> < ~~qu'il a publié t~~ >.  
*not how-many of-articles about itself that-it has published*  
 'The committee published some articles about itself, but I don't know how many articles about  
 itself.' (cf. Ott and Therrien 2020: (16))

So far, we have only looked at the wh-phrase in sluiting. Turning now to cases of Sweeping, it should be noted that there are accounts that propose that not only the wh-phrase, but the non-wh-element as well, has undergone movement out of the ellipsis site.<sup>15</sup> For instance, for cases of *why-stripping* in English (mentioned in the introduction and exemplified in (26)), Ortega-Santos et al. (2014) and Yoshida et al. (2015) propose that the non-wh-element undergoes focus-driven movement (separately from the wh-phrase), as shown in (27):

- (26) A: John was eating natto.  
 B: Why/How come NATTO? (cf. Yoshida et al. 2015:364, (76))

- (27) [CP<sub>1</sub> Why/How come [CP<sub>2</sub> NATTO < ~~TP he was eating t~~ > ] ] (cf. Yoshida et al. 2015:364, (76))

<sup>15</sup> Kim and Abeillé (2019) present an alternative analysis for *why-stripping*, which does not involve movement or even ellipsis. Cf. section 3.2 for more on this.

However, IWW-slucing and *comment*-slucing in French share the following property: French allows elements as Sweeping remnants that must remain *in situ* in non-elliptical clauses. As pointed out by Dagnac (2018:792), this appears to challenge analyses relying on the deletion of a clausal constituent after leftward A'-movement of the remnants. For cases like (5) and (7), repeated here for convenience, the non-elliptical counterparts given in (28) are ill-formed.<sup>16</sup>

- (5) ... je découvrais que j'étais différent des autres. Mais différent comment ?  
*I discovered that I=was different from.the others but different how*  
 'I was discovering that I was different from the others. But different how?' (cf. frTenTen23)
- (7) A: Toute cette histoire est étrange depuis le début.  
*all this story is strange since the beginning*  
 'This whole story has been strange since the beginning.'  
 B: Étrange dans quel sens ?  
*strange in which sense*  
 'Strange in what way?' (cf. frTenTen23)
- (28) a. \*Différent comment étais-je ?  
*different how was-I*  
 b. \*Étrange dans quel sens est toute cette histoire ?  
*strange in which sense is all this story*

The examples in (29) are possible in French, though:

- (29) a. J'étais différent comment ?  
*I=was different how*  
 'How was I different?'  
 b. Toute cette histoire est étrange dans quel sens ?  
*all this story is strange in which sense*  
 'In what way is this whole story strange?'

As such, it could be argued that the grammatical sentences in (29), which do not seem to involve any leftward A'-movement of the *wh*-phrase or the non-*wh*-element, are the non-elliptical counterparts of the examples in (5) and (7). This observation would render plausible an analysis of these cases of Sweeping (and maybe slucing in general) as non-constituent deletion of all but the focus-marked material in the clause (in line with recent ellipsis literature, cf. e.g. by Abe 2015, Ott 2018, Ott and Struckmeier 2018, Griffiths 2019, Ott and Therrien 2020, Griffiths et al. 2022; 2023): "Ellipsis applies selectively in the elliptical clause. Focus-marked phrases (and some particles) are not elided" (Griffiths et al. 2022:12). Importantly, then, slucing "does *not* require *wh*-movement, [and] can "delete around" *wh*-phrases and other remnants *in situ*" (Ott 2018:1). For the Sweeping examples in (5) and (7) then, the analysis would be something like:

- (30) a. ~~J'étais~~ différent comment ?  
 b. ~~Toute cette histoire est~~ étranger dans quel sens ?

In this paper, this line of analysis will not be pursued, however. The main argument to explore an alternative account is related to the embeddability of Sweeping.

If cases of Sweeping are to be derived from *in situ* questions, we expect restrictions found on these *in situ* non-elliptical clauses to carry over to their elliptical Sweeping counterparts. However, as Dagnac (2018:795 fn. 14) points out: "French does not allow embedded *in situ* questions, so embedded sluices

<sup>16</sup> At this point, it does not really matter if the *wh*-phrase and the non-*wh*-element end up separately in the left periphery (as proposed by Yoshida et al. 2015, cf. supra), or if they undergo A'-movement together as one constituent. What is important is that the sentences given in (28) are ungrammatical, so they cannot be the non-elliptical counterparts of the examples given in (5) and (7).

would remain unexplained.” Indeed, as illustrated in (31), *in situ* questions are disallowed in embedded clauses: wh-movement is obligatory in embedded interrogatives.<sup>17</sup> The *in situ* analysis would then predict embedded Sweeping to be equally ill-formed, which is not the case. The examples in (32) show that Sweeping in the same embedded contexts is perfectly fine.

- (31) a. (!Je ne sais pas encore) ils sont très proches comment.  
*I SM know not yet they are very close how*  
 b. (!Il devrait préciser) c’est classique dans quel sens.  
*he should specify it=is classic in which sense*
- (32) a. A: Bon pour le lien, tu les vois proches ? Très proches ?  
*right for the link you them see close very close*  
 Ou bien de simples amis ?  
*or well some simple friends*  
 ‘Right, for the link — do you see them as close? Very close? Or just friends?’  
 B: Moi, je les verrais très proches. Je ne sais pas encore  
*me I them would.see very close I SM know not yet*  
très proches comment.  
*very close how*  
 ‘I’d say they are very close. I don’t know yet in what way.’ (cf. frTenTen23)
- b. Les classiques de ces 5 dernières années selon vous.  
*the classics of these 5 last years according.to you*  
 Le créateur du topic devrait préciser “classique” dans quel sens.  
*the creator of.the topic should specify classic in which sense*  
 ‘The classics of the last 5 years according to you.  
 The creator of the topic should specify “classic” in what way.’ (cf. frTenTen23)

Given this observation, an alternative line of analysis will be developed in this paper for the cases under scrutiny.

### 3.2 The analysis: Reprise sluicing and short sources

We have concluded in section 2 that the non-wh-remnants in IWW-sluicing and *comment*-sluicing show the characteristics of a mixed-quoted expression. To deal with the data under study, it is relevant to distinguish – following Ginzburg and Sag (2000), Ginzburg and Cooper (2001; 2004), and Smirnova and Abeillé (2021) – between direct sluices (33a), which are information questions (‘Who came?’), and reprise sluices (33b), which are clarification questions (‘Who do you mean by Jo?’). Reprise fragments (cf. Bolinger 1978, Ginzburg and Cooper 2001; 2004, Ginzburg 2012, Griffiths et al. 2022; 2023) such as (34) involve the repetition of an element from the most recent utterance in a discourse and are clarification questions as well (‘Who is Bo?’ / ‘What does it mean to finagle?’). According to Ginzburg and Cooper (2001:1), the main function of reprise/clarification ellipsis – as in (33b) and (34) – is “to elicit an alternative description or ostension to the content (referent or predicate etc.) intended by the original speaker of the reprised sub-utterance.” Griffiths et al. (2023:157) add that a reprise utterance is used “whenever the requestor is not confident that they have complete knowledge of the content, form, phonology, register, or discursive impact (etc.) of the preceding utterance.”

- (33) a. Someone came. – Who?  
 b. Jo phoned. – WHO? (Ginzburg and Sag 2000:334)
- (34) Did Bo finagle a raise? – (i) BO? / (ii) FINAGLE? (Ginzburg and Cooper 2001:1)

<sup>17</sup> A reviewer points out that embedded *in situ* questions are possible in (non-standard) colloquial French. That’s why I use ! (instead of \*), following the *Grand Grammaire du Français 2021*.

As noted by Ginzburg (2012:148) and Griffiths et al. (2023:157), so-called explicit clarification requests (ECRs) such as the example in (35) are also available, with the same reading in which the requestor is not confident about something in the preceding utterance:

(35) Did Bo finagle a raise? – What’s ‘FINAGLE’?

As noted by Griffiths et al. (2023:157) “ECRs represent a viable reprise source for clausal ellipsis” and “nothing prevents clausal ellipsis from being licensed in [ECRs]” (Griffiths et al. 2022:21). In other words, it is feasible that a reprise fragment such as (34ii) could underlyingly be the ECR in (35) and as such, the underlying source for the reprise fragment is a non-isomorphic clarification-seeking question.

Like reprise sluices and reprise fragments, IWW-sluices and *comment*-sluices question the form that has just been used.<sup>18,19</sup> That is, in the example in (36), the speaker is asking: ‘how or in what way are you using / do you mean the word *curieux* (curious)’?

(36) “C’était curieux.” [...] Sentant qu’elle avait besoin de parler, je lui ai  
*it=was curious sensing that=she had need of talk I her have*  
 demandé : curieux comment ? [...] Curieux drôle, ou curieux un peu inquiétant.  
*asked curious how curious funny or curious a bit unsettling*  
 “It was curious.” Sensing that she needed to talk, I asked: curious how? [...] The funny kind of  
 curious, or the slightly unsettling kind? (cf. frTenTen23)

Following the line of reasoning developed by Griffiths et al. (2022; 2023), let us now consider the question which ECR could be the underlying source for IWW-sluices and *comment*-sluices in French. I would like to propose that IWW-sluices and *comment*-sluices are derived from underlying short clefts (cf. Rodrigues et al. 2009, Van Craenenbroeck 2010b, Gotowski 2022 for regular sluicing). The short cleft is an ECR, asking clarification about the mixed-quoted expression. As such, the underlying structure of the IWW-sluice and *comment*-sluice in (18), repeated here as (37) for convenience, would be as in (38).<sup>20</sup> Indeed, Gotowski (2022:8) notes that “French questions may also be formed with *est-ce* (an inverted cleft)” and according to Rodrigues et al. (2009:24), French “offers overt evidence of a cleft possibility” and also allows an overt copula.” Rodrigues et al. (2009:24) give examples of the use of *c’était* ‘it was’. In the context of (38), the use of *c’est* ‘it is’ seems more fitting.

(37) A: !J’trouve ça chelou.  
*I=find that sketchy*  
 ‘I find that sketchy.’  
 B: Chelou dans quel sens / comment ?  
*sketchy in which sense how*  
 ‘Sketchy in what way / how?’

<sup>18</sup> This was also noted by Smirnova and Abeillé (2021:252) in the context of *wh-ça*. We will come back to this in section 4.

<sup>19</sup> To be precise, Smirnova and Abeillé (2021:263–4) show that *comment* also has other uses in sluicing: question about manner/identity, speech act (*pardon?*), and reason (how come?). However, in the cases under scrutiny here, i.e. Sweeping with *comment* (*comment* combining with a non-wh-element), only the reprise reading is relevant.

<sup>20</sup> For regular sluicing, the cleft-based analysis (Rodrigues et al. 2009, Van Craenenbroeck 2010b, Gotowski 2022) is disputed in French (cf. Dagnac 2018, Hassen 2025, Hassen and Abeillé 2025). The argumentation against a cleft source mainly has to do with certain types of wh-remnants that are available in regular sluicing, but that cannot occur in clefts. However, Sweeping is arguably different from regular sluicing, involving a very specific non-wh-remnant (i.e. a mixed-quoted expression), and having a reprise/clarification reading.

- (38) *Chelou dans quel sens / comment <est-ce> ?<sup>21</sup>*  
*sketchy in which sense how is-it*

Recall that embedded Sweeping is possible. Given the argumentation built up in the previous section, we predict embedded short clefts to be available as well. Although there seem to be differing grammaticality judgments (indicated with %), cleft continuations are possible for some speakers in embedded clauses, cf. example (39), and clefting thus seems like a possible underlying strategy.

- (39) a. %Je ne sais pas curieux comment c'était.  
*I SM know not curious how it=was*  
 'I don't know how it was curious.'
- b. %Il faut préciser "classique" dans quel sens c'est.<sup>22</sup>  
*it must specify classic in which sense it=is*  
 'It is necessary to specify in what way it is classic.'

Finally, for the reverse word order in IWW-sluiques and *comment*-sluiques, i.e. with the *wh*-remnant preceding the non-*wh*-remnant, the underlying structure would be as in (40) (cf. Temmerman 2023 for a similar proposal for Dutch IWW-sluiques). I opt to use the colon here, given that most often, in the frTenTen23 corpus, examples of IWW-sluiques and *comment*-sluiques with the reverse word order are written with a comma or colon, exemplified again in (41) (see also the examples of *wh*-stripping in Abeillé and Smirnova 2021, most often written with a comma).

- (40) *Dans quel sens / comment <est-ce> : chelou ?*  
*in which sense how is-it sketchy*
- (41) *Dans quel sens / comment, chelou ?*  
*in which sense how sketchy*

The reader might wonder why this paper gives preference to an analysis of IWW-sluiques and *comment*-sluiques in French in terms of a short cleft underlying source instead of to a Direct Interpretation Approach (Ginzburg and Sag 2000, Culicover and Jackendoff 2005, Poppels 2022), given that Kim and Abeillé (2019), Smirnova and Abeillé (2021), Hassen and Abeillé (2025) and Hassen (2025) propose a Direct Interpretation Approach for similar constructions in English and in French. Under Direct Interpretation Approaches to ellipsis, cases of sluicing and Sweeping are not derived from a full verbal interrogative counterpart. No syntactic structure for the unpronounced material (i.e. at the ellipsis site) is posited. That is, for an example like (1), repeated here for convenience as (1'), the structure would be as follows:

- (1') *Johan a encadré quelqu'un, mais je ne sais pas [[qui]<sub>NP/DP</sub>]<sub>S/CP</sub>.*  
*Johan has supervised someone but I SM know not who*  
 'Johan supervised someone, but I don't know who.'

The content of the sluice is inferred from the content of the antecedent clause. A *wh*-phrase in sluicing inherits its syntactic and semantic properties from a contextual correlate.

<sup>21</sup> Admittedly, it is not easy to find non-elliptical short cleft examples like (38) in the frTenTen23 corpus (see also Smirnova and Abeillé 2021 on ellipsis being the main use of certain types of reprise questions). An attested example is the following:

- (i) *Impressionnant comment était-ce ?*  
*impressionnant how was-it* (cf. frTenTen23)

It is important to note here that in the context of this example, this is a question asking for clarification of the use of *impressionnant* 'impressive', not a question with a degree reading ('how impressive').

<sup>22</sup> The attested example here was with *sexiste dans quel sens* 'sexist in what way', but I prefer to give the example with *classique* 'classic', to bring it more in line with (32b).

Given that there are reasons to assume that regular sluicing in French is the result of an ellipsis process applying to a full clausal syntactic structure (cf. section 3.1), one would need to argue that French uses ellipsis in regular sluicing, but not in IWW-sluicing and *comment*-sluicing. In the latter cases, the content of the Sweeping remnants would be directly interpreted based on the context. This would result in a mixed approach to sluices, according to which regular sluices are remnants of clausal ellipsis, yet other types of sluices are genuine non-sentential utterances. Here, I follow the point made by Ott and Therrien (2020:7): “Such a suggestion strikes us as not only theoretically inelegant, but also as [...] implausible, if only because it is inconceivable that the learner could decide on one of these radically different strategies on the basis of what little evidence is in fact available to them”. In a similar line of reasoning, Griffiths et al. (2023:185–6) state that “this claim is conceptually unsatisfying”, and that conceptual redundancy should be avoided. As such, I continue adopting as a foundational assumption the silent structure analysis of sluicing (and its variants).

#### 4. A brief look at SpaCing, and its interaction with *comment*-sluicing and IWW-sluicing

As already briefly mentioned in the introduction, French exhibits SpaCing, a construction in which a wh-word is followed by *ça* ‘that’, as shown in (4), repeated here. This section briefly examines the interaction of *comment*-sluicing and IWW-sluicing with SpaCing.

- (4) A: J’ai vu quelqu’un. B: Qui ça ?  
*I=have seen someone who that*  
 ‘A: I saw someone. B: Who?’ (Van Craenenbroeck 2010a:103, (1b))

Building on Lefevre (2018; 2020) and Reinhardt (2019), Smirnova and Abeillé (2021) present a corpus study of what they refer to as “*wh-ça*” (both in non-elliptical and elliptical clauses, the latter thus being cases of what I call SpaCing). In a corpus study in 2018, Lefevre found 780 occurrences of elliptical *wh-ça*. The 6 wh-words attested in this corpus were: *où* ‘where’ (32.3%) *comment* ‘how’ (22.4%), *qui* ‘who’ (20.5%), *pourquoi* ‘why’ (19.4%), *quand* ‘when’ (4.2%), and *quoi* ‘what’ (1.2%). In Reinhardt’s (2019) corpus study, 49 cases of *wh-ça*, all elliptical, were found, with the following 4 wh-words: *comment* (46.9%), *qui* (28.6%), *où* (16.3%), and *pourquoi* (8.2%). In their 2021 corpus study, Smirnova and Abeillé search for 7 wh-words, 6 of which are found in elliptical *wh-ça* (in total 329 occurrences): *comment* (31.3%), *où* (29.8%), *qui* (27.7%), *pourquoi* (6.7%), *quand* (3.6%), and *quoi* (0.9%). In the context of this article, we limit ourselves mostly to cases of SpaCing with *comment ça*. An example from the frTenTen23 corpus is given in (42):

- (42) ... il est précisé que les noms et adresses des personnes ont été  
*it is specified that the names and addresses of.the persons have been*  
 changés, mais *comment ça* ?  
*changed but how ça*  
 ‘... it is specified that the names and addresses of the people have been changed, but how?’  
 (frTenTen23)

Importantly, Lefevre (2018), Reinhardt (2019) and Smirnova and Abeillé (2021) also found instances of *wh-ça* “followed by a previously mentioned segment” (Smirnova and Abeillé 2021:243):

- (43) *Comment ça, pas dans une rue?*  
*how ça not in a street*  
 ‘How come not in the street?’ (Smirnova and Abeillé 2021:245, (12b), from Reinhardt 2019)

Smirnova and Abeillé (2021:247) found 105 such cases, and call examples like these “*wh-stripping*” (cf. section 1): most often with *comment* (62%), but also with *qui* (25%), *où* (11%), *pourquoi* (1%), and *quand*

(1%). To their observations, I would like to add that the previously mentioned non-wh-element can also precede *wh-ça*, as shown in (44).<sup>23</sup>

- (44) Nos deux dernières séries auront un rythme de sortie inconnu.  
*our two last series will.have a rhythm of release unknown*  
Inconnu, comment ça ?  
*unknown how ça*  
 ‘Our last two series will have an unknown release schedule. Unknown how?’ (cf. frTenTen23)

Smirnova and Abeillé (2021) notice quotation properties with (what they call) *wh-stripping* just like the ones observed in this paper in the context of IWW-sluicing and *comment*-sluicing (cf. section 2). On the one hand, there is verbatim reproduction of (part of) the preceding utterance: for example, the non-wh-element can be of any category (like an imperative verb in (45)). On the other hand, we see the transparency of regular language use: notice the indefinite change in (46), for instance.

- (45) Laisse, dis-je. – Comment ça, laisse?  
*leave said-I how ça leave?*  
 ‘Let it go, I said. – Let it go, how?’ (cf. Smirnova and Abeillé 2021:252, (26b))
- (46) Elles ont emporté un certain nombre de caisses.  
*they have taken a certain number of boxes*  
 Quoi! Comment ça, des caisses ?  
*what how ça INDF boxes*  
 ‘They took a certain number of boxes. – What! Boxes, how?’  
 (cf. Smirnova and Abeillé 2021:253, (27c))

As such, it is clear that SpaCing and *comment*-sluicing can be combined. Searching for (elliptical) *dans quel sens + ça* in the frTenTen23 corpus, and on Google, did not result in any hits, however. The question now arises how to account for this observation: why does *comment*-sluicing allow the combination with SpaCing, but IWW-sluicing does not?

This pattern actually corresponds to a property of the Dutch counterpart of this construction (in which a wh-phrase is followed by the demonstrative *dat* ‘that’, referred to as Spading, cf. also section 1), first observed by Hoekstra (1993), and also observed for dialectal Dutch and French in Van Craenenbroeck (2004; 2010a): “not all types of sluiced wh-phrases can be followed by [*that*]. More specifically, only [minimal wh-phrases] can partake in Spading. Complex wh-phrases cannot” (Van Craenenbroeck 2010a:17). That is, minimal wh-phrases are perfectly fine in French SpaCing, as was already shown in (4), with the minimal wh-phrase ‘who’ (see also Smirnova and Abeillé 2021 for this observation). On the other hand, complex wh-phrases are degraded in French SpaCing. For Van Craenenbroeck (2004; 2010a), this was crystal clear in the dialectal Dutch counterpart of this construction, cf. the contrast in (47), but a bit less so in French: “the dialogue in [(48b)] illustrates that complex wh-phrases are degraded when combined with [*that*] (although the judgments appear to be slightly less strong than in dialect Dutch or Frisian)” (Van Craenenbroeck 2010a:103). Smirnova and Abeillé (2021), however, confirm the Dutch pattern for French: they also have an asterisk for *\*quel homme ça* ‘which man *ça*’? Furthermore, a reviewer points out that no such cases were found in several large corpora of written French (Frantext, Reinhardt 2019, etc.).

<sup>23</sup> For completeness’ sake, it should be added that *ça* always has to immediately follow the wh-element. That is, the following examples are ungrammatical:

- (i) \*Inconnu ça comment ?  
 (ii) \*Comment impossible ça ?

- (47) a. *Wui (da)?*  
*where that.DEM*  
 ‘Where?’
- b. *Welken boek (\*da)?*  
*which book that.DEM*  
 ‘Which book?’ (Wambeek Dutch, cf. Van Craenenbroeck 2010a:17)
- (48) a. A: *Je vais à Londres.* B: *Quand (ça)?*  
*I go to London when ça*  
 ‘A: I’m going to London. B: When?’
- b. A: *Marie est en train de lire un livre.*  
*Mary is in train of read a book*  
 B: *\*Quel livre (ça)?*  
*which book ça*  
 ‘A: Mary is reading a book. B: Which book?’ (cf. Van Craenenbroeck 2010a:103)

The availability of *comment* ‘how’, a minimal wh-phrase, in French SpaCing on the one hand, and the unavailability of *dans quel sens* ‘in what way’, a complex wh-phrase, in French SpaCing on the other hand, completely corresponds to the initial observations made by Hoekstra (1993) and Van Craenenbroeck (2004; 2010a) for Frisian and dialectal Dutch, i.e. while minimal wh-phrases are perfectly fine, complex wh-phrases are degraded in French SpaCing. Along the same lines, Smirnova and Abeillé (2021) observe, for instance, that *ça* cannot occur with *combien* ‘how many’, or with a wh-word preceded by a preposition.

So, why does SpaCing only allow for minimal wh-phrases? Obenauer (1976), Cheng and Rooryck (2001), and Van Craenenbroeck (2004; 2010a) already observed that the combination of a wh-word and *ça* occurs in non-elliptical wh-questions as well:

- (49) *Tu as vu qui ça à Paris?*  
*you have seen who ça in Paris*  
 ‘Who have you seen in Paris?’  
 (cf. Smirnova and Abeillé 2010:240, cf. also Cheng and Rooryck 2001:16)

As Van Craenenbroeck (2010a:104) notes: “In this example, the string *qui ça* ‘who that’ seems to function as a single wh-phrase. [...] [T]his might be taken as an indication that the combination of wh-phrase + [*ça*] has grammaticalized into a single phrase in French. Smirnova and Abeillé (2021) also consider *ça* to be attached to the wh-phrase. To illustrate this, they contrast a grammatical example like (49) with an ungrammatical one like the following one, in which it is shown that the wh-word *qui* and *ça* cannot be separated from one another (here by a prepositional phrase):

- (50) *\*Tu as vu qui à Paris ça?*  
*you have seen who in Paris ça*  
 ‘Who have you seen in Paris?’ (cf. Smirnova and Abeillé 2010:240, (3c))

Smirnova and Abeillé (2021:240) observe that *ça* seems to denote ignorance questions, and is not felicitous with resolved questions, as exemplified with the contrast in (51). According to Lefevre (2018), the main role of *ça* is to recall an element of the preceding clause and to request information about this element, as shown in (52).

- (51) a. *Quelqu’un est venu, je me demande qui (ça).*  
*someone is come I REFL ask who ça*  
 ‘Someone came, I wonder who.’
- b. *Quelqu’un est venu et je sais bien qui (#ça).*  
*someone is come and I know well who ça*  
 ‘Someone came and I know who.’ (cf. Smirnova and Abeillé 2010:240, (2))

- (52) Il était là, l'autre? – Qu... qui ça? – Le cuisinier...  
*he was there the-other WH who ça the cook*  
 'Was the other one there? – Who...who? – The cook...' (cf. Lefeuve 2018)

Smirnova and Abeillé (2021:244–5) argue that *ça* in *wh-ça* is not a pronoun (pace Lefeuve 2020), but rather a discourse particle, which plays a role in discourse cohesion. It is “attached to the *wh*-word, like *the hell* in English” (p. 240). Moreover, according to Smirnova and Abeillé (2021), pace Obenauer (1976) and Cheng and Rooryck (2001), *wh-ça* is possible both in *in situ* and in fronted position. The fact that the string *wh-ça* can occur in fronted position, as shown in (53), can also be taken as evidence for the analysis that it forms a single constituent.

- (53) a. Et pourquoi ça vous feriez pendre mon papa, monsieur le duc?  
*and why ça you do.COND hang my dad sir the duke*  
 'And why would you hang my dad, Mr. Duke?'  
 b. Comment ça, s'il te plait, que je ne pourrais pas le savoir?  
*how ça please that I SM can.COND not it know*  
 'Excuse me, how could I not know it?' (Smirnova and Abeillé 2021:247–8, (15bc))

That would imply, then, that only a limited number of *wh*-phrases have undergone this process of grammaticalization. According to the corpus studies presented above (Lefeuve 2018; 2020, Reinhardt 2019, Smirnova and Abeillé 2021), that would be the following *wh*-phrases: *où* 'where', *comment* 'how', *qui* 'who', *pourquoi* 'why', *quand* 'when', and *quoi* 'what'. Complex *wh*-phrases did not partake in this grammaticalization process.

That leaves us with examples like the ones in (43) and (44), combining *SpaCing* with *comment*-sluicing, repeated here for convenience.

- (43) *Comment ça, pas dans une rue?*  
*how ça not in a street*  
 'How come not in the street?' (Smirnova and Abeillé 2021:245, (12b), from Reinhardt 2019)  
 (44) Nos deux dernières séries auront un rythme de sortie inconnu.  
*our two last series will.have a rhythm of release unknown*  
Inconnu, comment ça?  
*unknown how ça*  
 'Our last two series will have an unknown release schedule. Unknown how?' (cf. frTenTen23)

In section 3.2, I proposed that *comment*-sluicing involves an underlying short cleft. If *comment ça* is a single phrase indeed, we could argue that *comment ça* takes the place of *comment* in *comment*-sluicing:

- (54) a. % *Comment ça* ~~(est-ee)~~, pas dans une rue?  
*how ça is-it not in a street*  
 b. % Inconnu, *comment ça* ~~(est-ee)~~?  
*unknown how ça is-that*

I leave the details of this specific cleft construction, including the considerable variation in speakers' grammaticality judgments, to be worked out in future research.

## 5. Conclusion

In this contribution, we discussed several cases of Sweeping (*Sluicing With Extra Elements Persist-ing*) in French. A well-known instantiation of Sweeping in French is *comment*-sluicing, with the *wh*-word *comment* 'how' combining with a non-*wh*-element. This article introduced a new type of Sweeping in French: IWW-slucing, i.e. seemingly non-sentential questions involving the combination of a non-*wh*-element (*le meilleur* 'the best' in (55)) and the *wh*-phrase *dans quel sens* 'in what way'.

- (55) A: Tout le monde dit que Johan est le meilleur promoteur !  
*all the world says that Johan is the best supervisor*  
 ‘Everyone says that Johan is the best supervisor!’
- B: Le meilleur promoteur dans quel sens ?  
*the best supervisor in which sense*  
 ‘The best supervisor in what way?’

It was shown how this type of Sweeping is very similar to *comment*-sluicing. The non-wh-remnants in these two cases of Sweeping show the characteristics of a mixed-quoted expression. I presented a unified analysis for IWW-sluicing and *comment*-sluicing in French, arguing that these two cases of Sweeping in French are instances of reprise sluicing (inquiring about the meaning of the mixed-quoted expression: how or in what way are you using / do you mean the word/phrase ‘X?’), and that an explicit clarification request is the underlying structure of these instances of Sweeping. More specifically, I argued in favor of a short cleft analysis of these underlying structures. Finally, a third type of Sweeping, i.e. SpaCing (*Sluicing Plus A Ça*) was brought into the picture, and it was shown that only *comment*-sluicing allows for the combination with SpaCing, unlike IWW-sluicing, which does not. It was argued that IWW-sluicing differs from *comment*-sluicing in this respect, because IWW-sluicing involves a complex wh-phrase, while *comment*-sluicing involves a minimal one. Only a limited number of minimal wh-phrases when combined with *ça* have undergone a process of grammaticalization into a single phrase.

It goes without saying, that, without a doubt, these and other cases of Sweeping in French deserve closer attention. To name but one example: due to space limitations, the analysis of *Why*-stripping in French has remained undiscussed in this paper. At first glance, given the many empirical similarities with *comment*-sluicing and IWW-sluicing, the analysis proposed here for the latter two cases of Sweeping could arguably be extended to *Why*-Stripping in French. This is different than the analysis proposed by Ortega-Santos et al. (2014), Yoshida et al. (2015) and Corver (2021), though, who argue that the non-wh-remnant in *Why*-Stripping undergoes leftward focus movement followed by clausal ellipsis (as briefly mentioned in section 3.1). Moreover, there does not seem to be a consensus yet regarding the precise details on the position(s) of the different wh-phrases in these types of elliptical constructions. As such, we end on the thought in (56):

- (56) A: Nous devons approfondir davantage cette question à l'avenir.  
*we must deepen more this question in the=future*  
 ‘We need to explore this issue further in the future.’
- B: À l'avenir dans quel sens ?  
*in the=future in which sense*  
 ‘In the future in what way?’

### Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the two *Nordlyd*-reviewers for their constructive, extensive, and detailed – and therefore highly helpful and much appreciated – comments. This paper has much improved thanks to their feedback. Any remaining errors or shortcomings are, of course, my own.

Johan, I am deeply grateful to you for your guidance, mentorship, and inspiration, especially during my doctoral years. I can say that our close collaboration has had a lasting impact on me, shaping my development not only as a linguist, but also as a university *enseignant-chercheur*, and as a person. It is a particular pleasure to contribute to this Festschrift with a paper on French, in recognition of your long-standing contributions to French linguistics. Warmest wishes on your 65<sup>th</sup> birthday.

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