The phenomenon of Doubly Filled COMP is well-known from embedded constituent questions and relative clauses, and it refers to a structure in which a left-peripheral operator in [Spec,CP] co-occurs with a complementiser located in the C head. In West Germanic languages, such configurations are ruled out from the standard varieties. The lack of the co-occurrence of an overt operator with an overt complementiser originally led to the postulation of the so-called Doubly Filled COMP Filter (DFCF), which is thought to be responsible for the ban on the overtness of the C head if the specifier of the same CP is filled. In the non-standard varieties of West Germanic languages, however, such co-occurrences are attested, which raises the question what their relation is to the DFCF, and whether the DFCF should be maintained at all. I will argue that, strictly speaking, there is no DFCF. The lack of Doubly Field COMP in the standard dialects follows the economy of derivation, in that only a minimal number of clause-typing elements is actually inserted into CP. In non-standard-dialects, the insertion of an overt element into C follows from a requirement on filling C, which results in doubling if there is an operator in the specifier already. I will show that there is considerable variation concerning the exact element filling the C head, apart from the classical configuration with elements corresponding to that: present-day South German dialects provide evidence that the wh-element may move to C under certain conditions. Based on contemporary and historical data, I claim that the tendency to fill the C head in embedded interrogatives is related to similar requirements in main clause (V2 in German and Dutch, interrogative T-to-C in English), and as such the peculiarities of West-Germanic Doubly Filled COMP effects are related to a more general property of the respective languages, that is, the filling of C with a non-complementiser element.

In my talk, I will concentrate on the special case of embedded polar questions, where doubling effects have not been extensively examined in the relevant literature. Polar questions also contain a wh-operator corresponding to whether (yes-no operator): as opposed to constituent questions, this operator is not moved to the CP from a lower position in the clause but is inserted there directly, and unlike ordinary wh-operators, it is not a focussed constituent and can thus remain covert. Doubling of the form whether that is attested in Old English and Old Saxon. In addition, verb movement to C with an overt yes-no operator in [Spec,CP] was possible in Old High German, even though V2 is a main clause property in West Germanic, and the doubling of whether in [Spec,CP] and a lexical verb or do in C is attested in earlier stages of English. I argue that all of these cases follow from the requirement to fill the C head with overt material, and the overtness of the operator is due to the fact that it marks [wh]; doubling is likely to disappear as soon as an element grammaticalises as a polar [wh] C element. The data from West Germanic polar questions show that the insertion of that in Doubly Filled COMP patterns is related to the requirement to adjoin phonologically overt material to a null C head (or to insert a non-null C head).

In addition, I will briefly examine doubling patterns in Hungarian embedded polar questions, where the overt marker of [wh] is the element -e, located on a lower functional periphery (as a head of an FP, functional projection). In Modern Hungarian, there is no doubling since the finite subordinator hogy ‘that’ is located higher (in the CP), hence this is rather an instance of functional splitting. In Old Hungarian, -e was absent from embedded clauses and the complementiser ha ‘if’ marked the [wh] property of the clause. The doubling of ha (in C) and -e (in F) is attested in Middle Hungarian, yet this is doubling distributed over two distinct peripheries and no Doubly Filled COMP. In modern non-standard varieties, however, -e occupies a higher position in the FP-domain and it co-occurs with a polarity operator in the specifier of the same FP: I argue that this is due to the reanalysis of the features associate with -e and the relevant elements in the specifier, a development that started in Middle Hungarian.