

**QT30:**

# A Corpus of Argument and Conflict in Broadcast Debate

Annette Hautli-Janisz<sup>1</sup>, Zlata Kikteva<sup>1</sup>, Wassiliki Siskou<sup>1,2</sup>, Kamila Gorska<sup>3</sup>, Ray Becker<sup>3</sup> and Chris Reed<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Passau, <sup>2</sup>University of Konstanz, <sup>3</sup>University of Dundee  
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## **Broadcast political debate**



One of the core pillars of democracy!

- The public's easiest access to opinions that shape policies
- Enables the general public to make informed choices

## Question Time (QT)



Broadcast since 1979.

BBC One, Thursdays, 10:45 pm, repeated twice later in the week

Weekly panel of five, moderated, responding to questions by the audience.

1.4 million viewers every week\*

One of the most viewed political debates in the UK\*\*

General tone: Asking for justifications...

- ...sometimes diplomatically
- ...sometimes outwardly hostile

\* [https://twitter.com/BBCNewsPR/status/1331526320795365378?ref\\_src=twsrc%5Etfw](https://twitter.com/BBCNewsPR/status/1331526320795365378?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw)

\*\* <https://yougov.co.uk/ratings/media/popularity/current-tv-programmes/all>

## QT30

30 episodes of *Question Time* from 2020-21

Coverage of controversial debates on

- Brexit
- the government's handling of the pandemic
- national scandals (e.g., the Dominic Cummings affair)

The largest corpus of analysed dialogical argumentation ever created:

- 19,842 utterances, 280,000 words
- surpasses the second largest (Visser et al. 2020) by a factor of 3
- freely available at <http://corpora.aifdb.org/qt30>

## Related work

### Strand #1: annotation of dialogical argumentation

- sharp rise in the number of argument corpora in the last 10 years
- dialogical data used to a much lesser extent
- but: usually no annotation of pragmatic structure

### Strand #2: empirical work in broadcast political debate

- corpora: election debates and TV interviews (US2016, Haddadan et al. 2019, Visser et al. 2020; UK PM debates, Degano 2016)
- individual phenomena: conversational violence (Luginbühl 2007), pseudo-argumentation (Hess-Lüttich 2007)

## QT30 annotation

Inference Anchoring Theory (IAT) (Budzynska et al., 2014b, Budzynska et al. 2016)

- Model of the ways in which arguments are created, referred to, supported and attacked in combative dialogical settings
- Specific subset of more general discourse frameworks such as PDTB (Prasad et al. 2008) and SDRT (Asher and Lascarides 2003)
- Applied to more than 2.5 million words across languages, all openly available at [corpora.aifdb.org](http://corpora.aifdb.org)

AudienceMember 20211111QT10 [0:30:22]

*Without the likes of Russia, India and China on board, are this week's COP-26 breakthrough pledges such as the reduction of methane emissions a glimmer of hope or more blah blah blah?*

Fiona Bruce [0:30:38] [...] Paul. [...]

Paul Polman [0:30:52] [...] *The question is a pertinent one. We need the bigger countries like India, China, Russia, 100 percent on board. But the situation is actually a little bit better than the question would suggest. Before COVID started, we have all worried that nobody was serious to stick to the Paris Agreements [...]*

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QT episode from 4 November 2021



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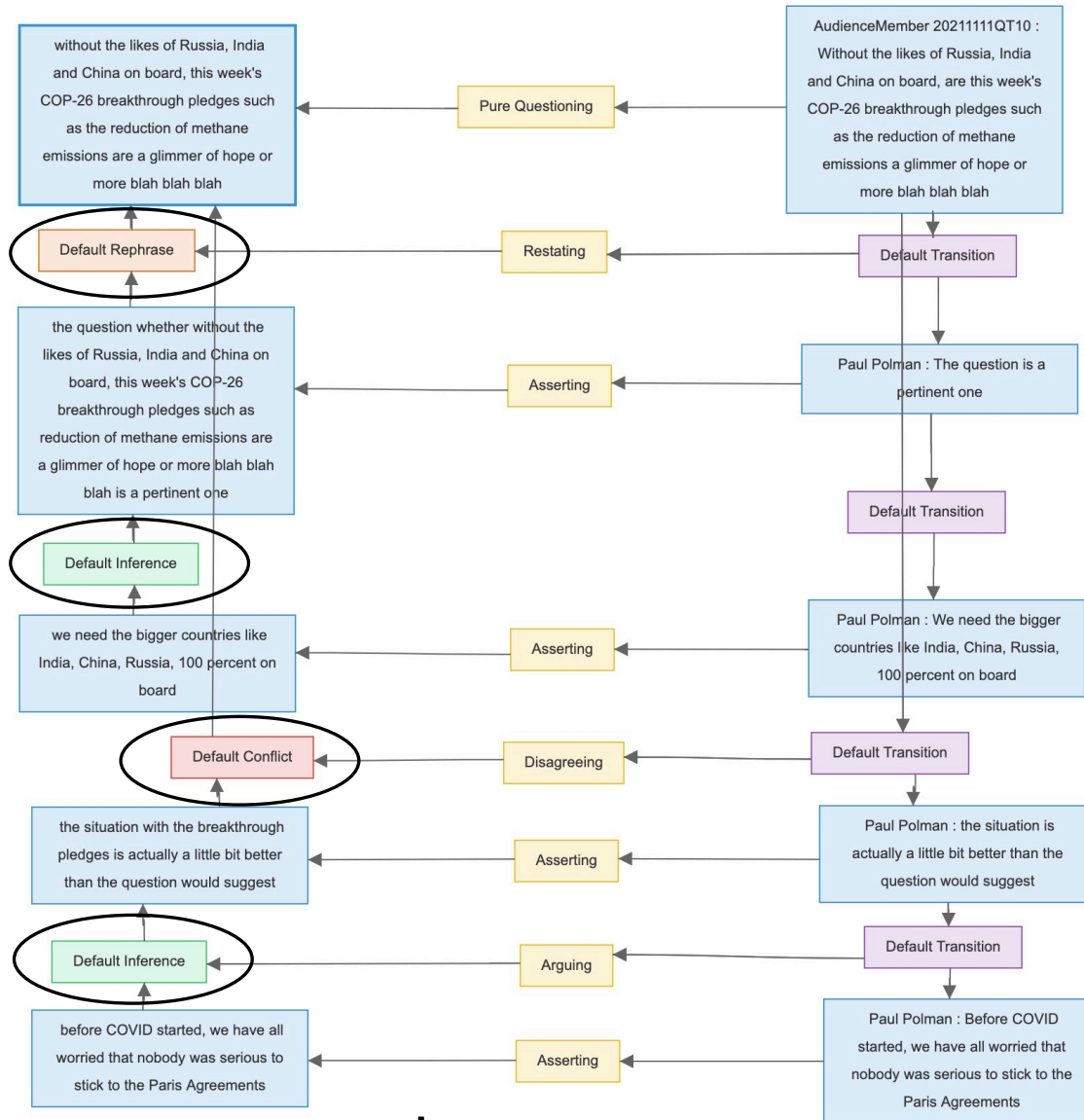
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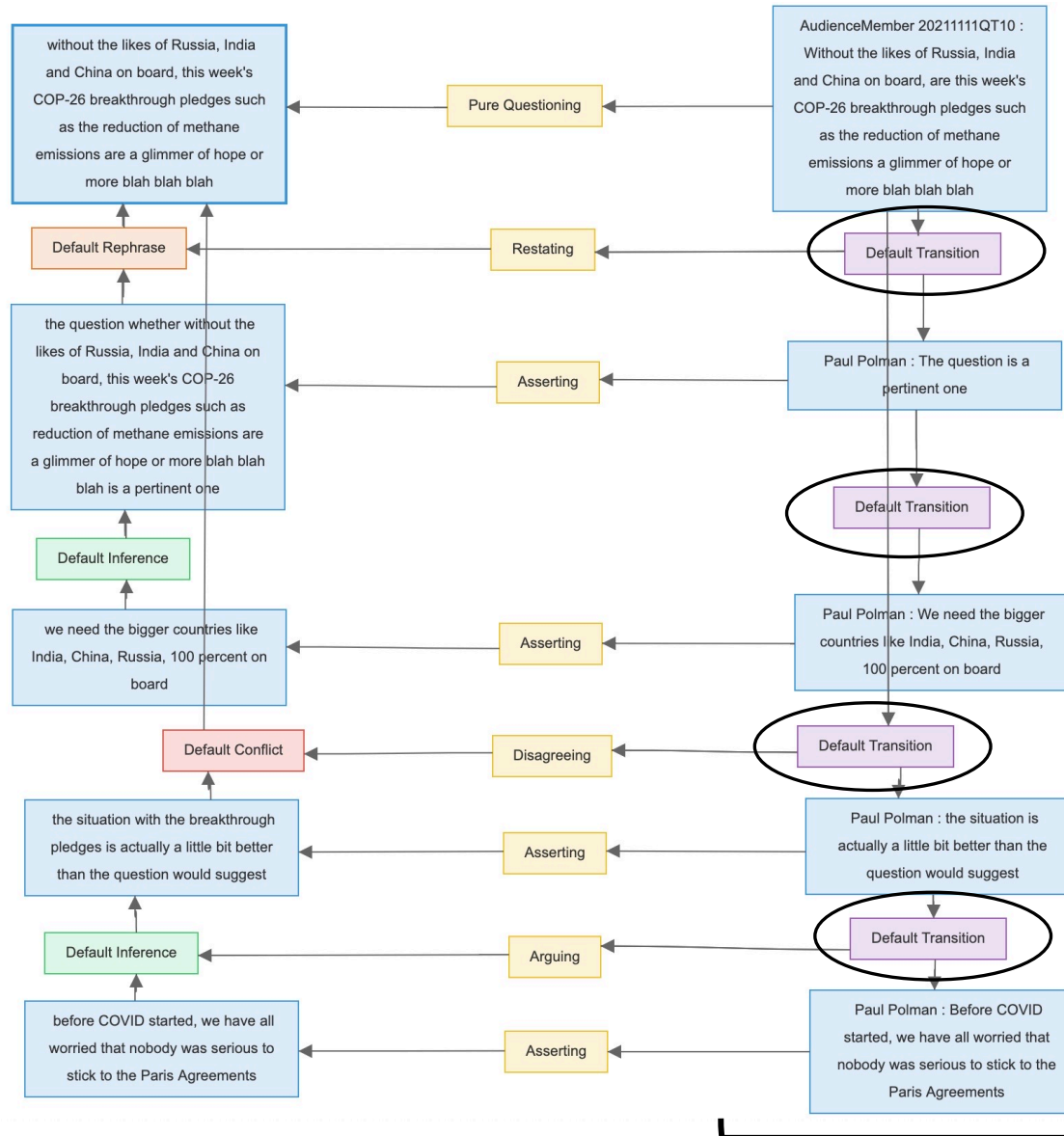
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QT episode from 4 November 2021

relations  
between  
propositions  
(‘Inference’,  
‘Conflict’,  
‘Rephrase’)

argumentative structure





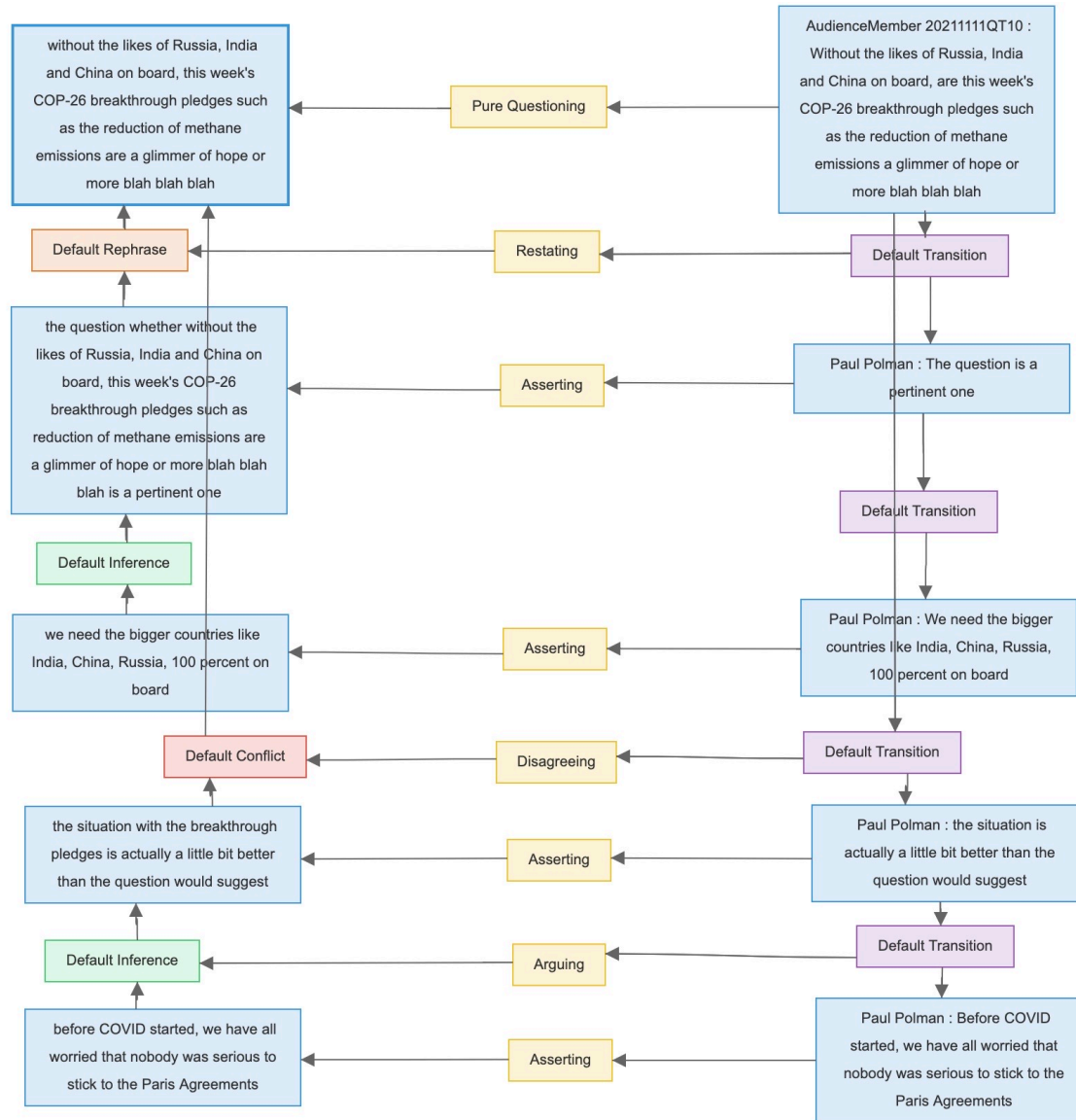
relations  
between  
locutions  
(‘Transition’)

dialogue structure

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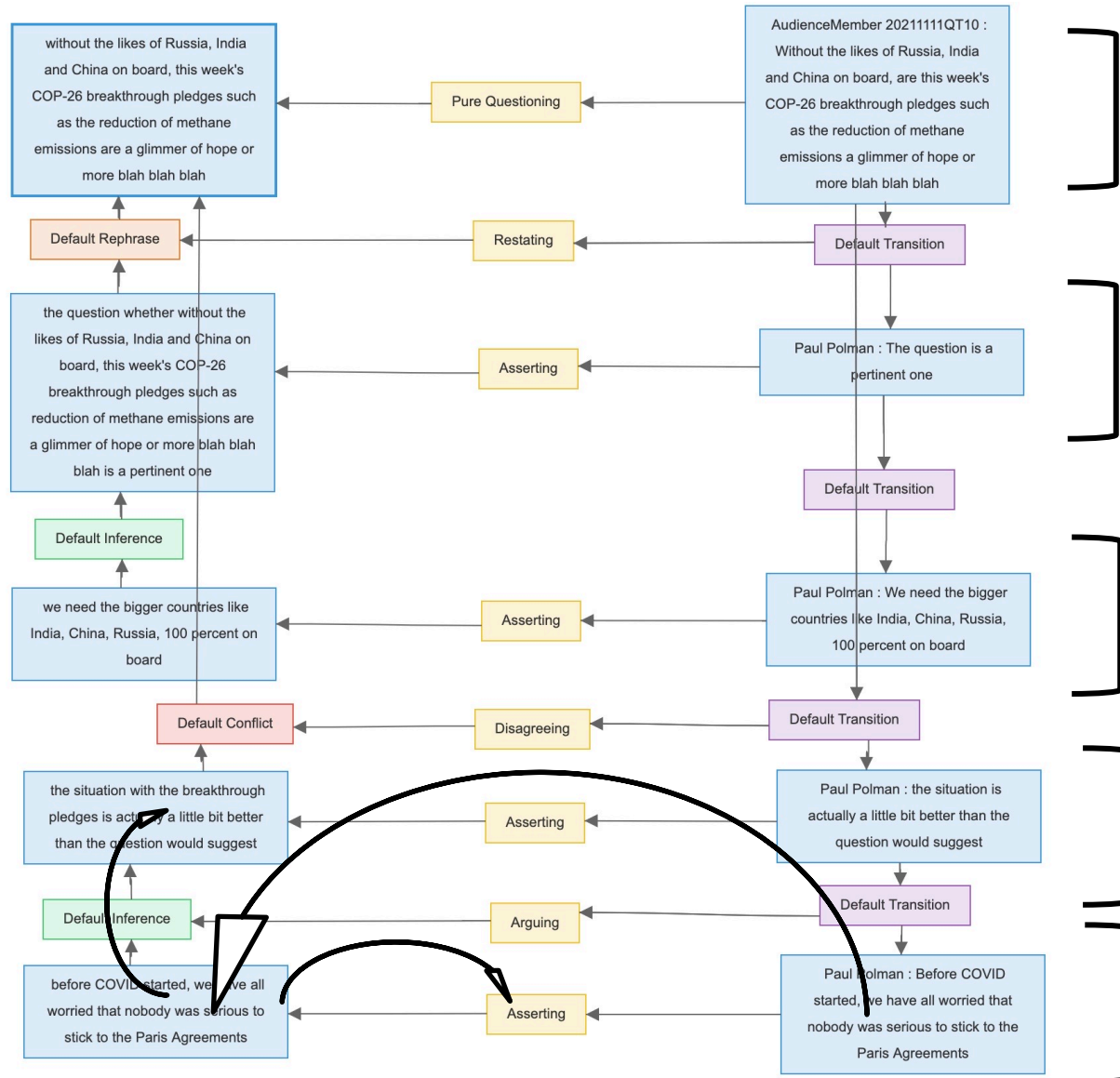
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Illocutionary relation	Speaker S...
<b>Asserting</b>	...asserts information or communicates an opinion.
<b>Agreeing</b>	...declares that they share the opinion of the interlocutor.
<b>Arguing</b>	...provides justification to a claim. Anchors an 'Inference'.
<b>Assertive Questioning</b>	...communicates information and at the same time asks for confirmation/rejection from their interlocutor.
<b>Challenging</b>	...declares that they are seeking the grounds for the interlocutor's opinion.
<b>Disagreeing</b>	...attacks the interlocutor or declares not to share the interlocutor's opinion.
<b>Pure Questioning</b>	...is seeking information or asking for the opinion of their interlocutors.
<b>Restating</b>	... rephrases a previous claim. Anchors a 'Default Rephrase'.
<b>Rhetorical Questioning</b>	... expresses an opinion in the form of an interrogative.
<b>Default Illocuting</b>	Used to capture an answer to a question, i.e., the answer instantiates (parts of) the question.

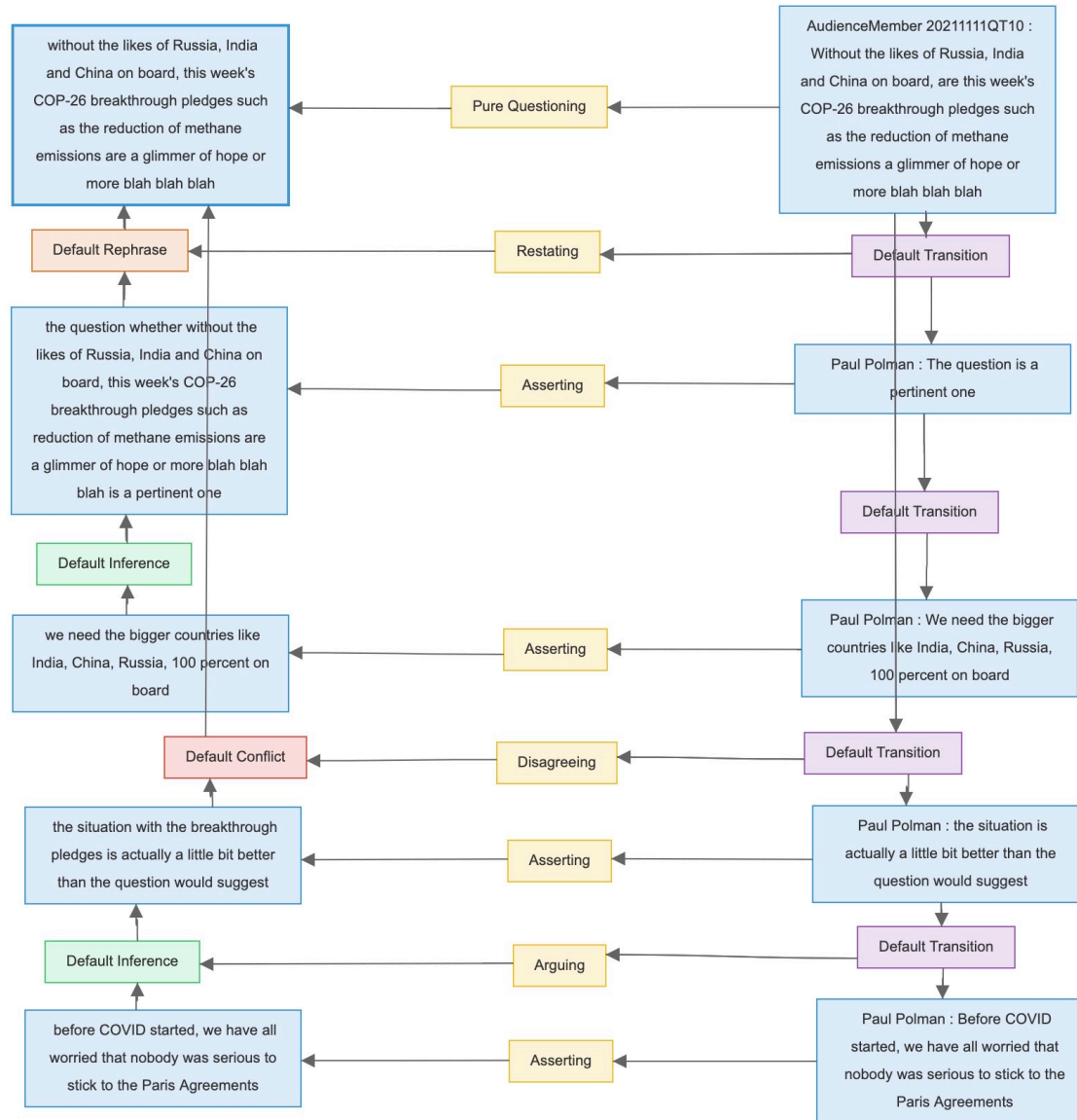


**Segmentation into Argumentative Discourse Units (ADUs)**





## Classification and structure identification



## Reconstruction

## Corpus statistics

- 29 hours of transcribed broadcast material
- 400 participants (1 moderator, 125 panel members, 300+ audience members)
- 19,842 locutions
- > 30 annotators across Europe
- Freely available here:  
<http://corpora.aifdb.org/qt30>

	in total	in %
<b>Propositional relations</b>		
Default Inference	5,205	48%
Default Conflict	976	9.4%
Default Rephrase	4,637	42.6%
Total	10,818	100%
<b>Illocutionary relations</b>		
Asserting	19,343	53.7%
Agreeing	260	0.7%
Arguing	5,558	15.4%
Disagreeing	1,279	3.6%
Restating	4,166	11.5%
Questioning	1,766	4.9%
pure	1,199	3.33%
assertive	243	0.7%
rhetorical	224	0.62%
challenging	100	0.28%
Default Illocuting	1,866	5.18%
Total	36,004	100%

Table 1: Distribution of propositional and illocutionary relations in QT30.

## Corpus structure

- Each episode has its own subcorpus in QT30
- Words/segment stable across episodes, 14.15 words/segment
- Number/types between 7,489 (14October2021) and 11,761 (29April2021)
- CASS score = 0.56 (moderate agreement)

Corpus name	words/ locution	words/ corpus	words/ episode
28May2020	14,32	8,835	10,521
4June2020	14.96	9,425	10,292
18June2020	14.94	9,726	10,569
30July2020	13.77	8,840	9,833
2September2020	16.07	10,911	10,911
22October2020	16.09	8,350	9,032
5November2020	14.24	9,583	11,293
19November2020	14.87	7,970	7,979
10December2020	13.87	8,973	9,013
14January2021	14.16	8,708	8,722
28January2021	16.18	9,303	9,031
18February2021	14.49	8,824	8,980
4March2021	13.65	9,541	9,611
18March2021	14.65	8,218	8,750
15April2021	14.88	10,996	11,911
29April2021	14.12	11,761	13,310
20May2021	14.79	11,432	11,697
27May2021	13.54	9,870	10,527
10June2021	12.67	9,147	9,299
24June2021	13.65	9,541	9,548
8July2021	13.71	8,815	8,826
22July2021	13.53	8,997	10,679
5August2021	13.01	8,860	8,913
19August2021	14.02	8,960	8,999
2September2021	14.5	9,468	10,130
16September2021	14.19	8,769	10,199
30September2021	13.14	10,577	12,046
14October2021	12.63	7,489	8,691
28October2021	13.02	10,429	11,430
11November2021	13.38	7,948	9,026
<b>QT30</b>	<b>14.15</b>	<b>279,966</b>	<b>290,299</b>

Table 3: Number of words/locution of each subcorpus in QT30, the number of analysed words in the graph and overall word count per transcript

## **Rhetorical patterns of broadcast debate**

QT30 provides the community with

- an extensive and rich dataset in which to explore a range of argumentative and dialogical dynamics
- a significant new resource for mining arguments in dialogue and other pragmatic structures such as
  - question-dodging
  - insinuation
  - attacks and supports of ethos
  - common ground navigation

## Questions to the data

### Q1: Are conflicts well supported?

Extract all conflicts where either the target or the source are supported, i.e., targeted by a 'Default Inference'.

Result:

- Only 200/976 conflicts receive support.
- Support mostly on the source of the conflict (142 out of 200).

→ Conflicting claims are commonly not supported in *Question Time*.

## Questions to the data

### Q2: Do patterns of conflict differ between roles?

30% of conflicts between speakers.

- Panel is most combative.
- Audience is least combative.

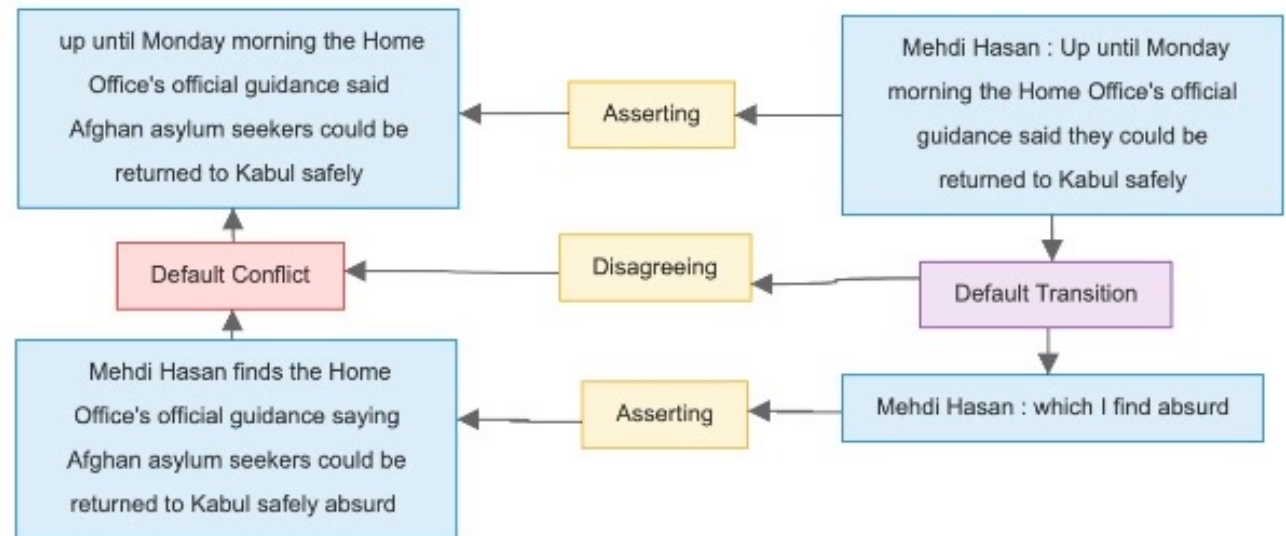
conflicts w/	moderator	panel	audience	total
moderator	–	81	18	99
panel	57	117	25	199
audience	13	16	13	42
total	70	214	56	340

Table 4: Overview of patterns of conflict across the different roles in QT30: moderator, panel members, audience members

## Questions to the data

### Q2: Do patterns of conflict differ between roles?

70% of conflicts where target and source are contributed by the same speaker.





## Questions to the data

### Q2: Do patterns of support differ between roles?

Overwhelming majority: Speakers support their own claims (4,637/5,025).

Support in terms of rephrasing one another:

→ Members of the panel interact the most.

supports	moderator	panel	audience	total
moderator	–	30	12	42
panel	13	48	5	66
audience	7	6	–	13
total	20	84	17	121

Table 5: Overview of patterns of support across moderator, panel members and audience members in QT30.

rephrases	moderator	panel	audience	total
moderator	–	51	59	110
panel	315	49	52	416
audience	101	10	21	132
total	416	110	132	650

Table 6: Overview of patterns of rephrasing across moderator, panel members and audience members in QT30.

## Questions to the data

Is *Question Time* really a combative, justification-seeking political broadcast?

- Conflict is the least frequent argument relation.
  - Mostly conflicts with claims contributed by the same speaker.
  - Panel with the highest share of attacks.
- Justification-seeking/giving is very frequent
  - Supports and rephrases
  - Overwhelmingly by the same speaker

→ Speaker neither explicitly attack or support each other.

## Wrap-up

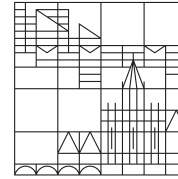
### QT30

- is the largest individual corpus of analysed dialogical argumentation
- combines well-versed political and lay people's rhetoric on important issues of national interest in the UK
- real-time interaction of political figures with the general public
- is freely available: <http://corpora.aifdb.org/qt30>

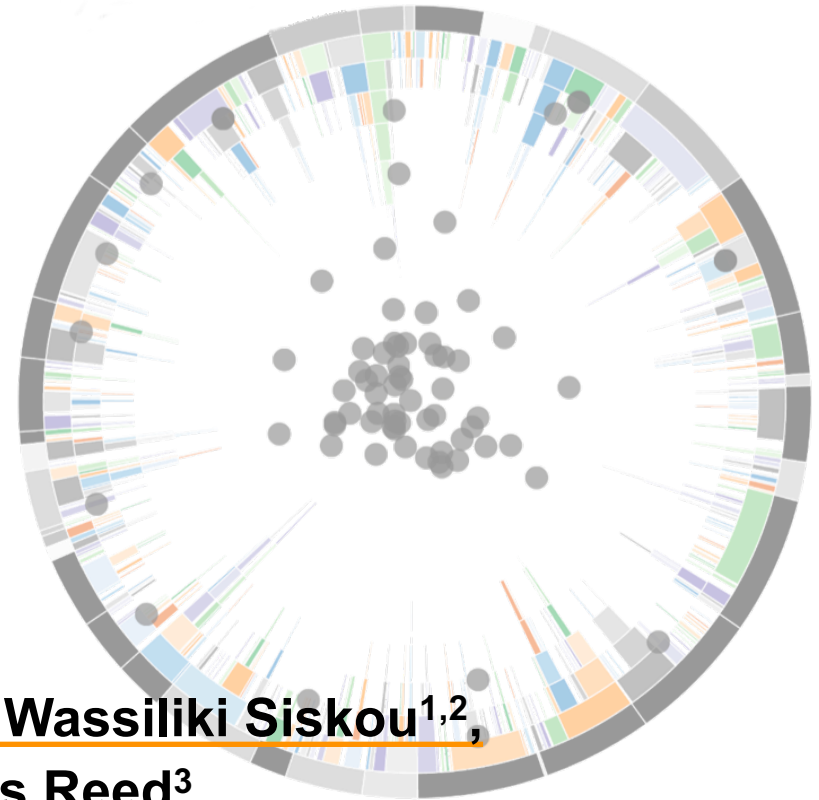
# Outlook

## Use QT30 for

- longitudinal analysis of controversial topics in the UK in 2020-21
  - how do arguments evolve?
  - how is information reframed?
  - how are critical questions navigated?
- a large-scale resource for deriving computational models of discourse and argumentation
  - question-answering
  - argumentation schemes



**Thank you.**  
**Questions?**  
**Comments?**



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