

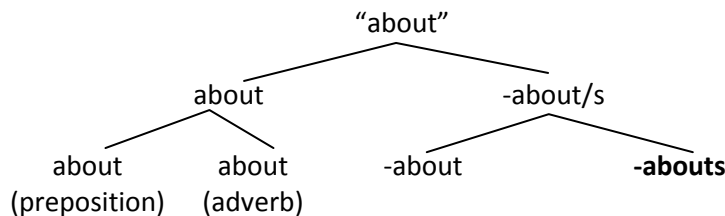
**All about the syntax of *-abouts*\***

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## (1) "about"



- (2) a. I read a book \*(about) flowers. (preposition *about*)  
 b. There were (about) 100 people there. (adverb *about*)  
 c. In the woods, a river tumbles by. Roundabout, the birds sing. (-*about*)  
 d. In the woods, a river tumbles by. Roundabouts, the birds sing. (-*abouts*)

- Both *-about/s*<sup>1</sup> and (adverbial) *about* express approximation in contemporary English.

- There are next to no occurrences of *-abouts* which cannot be replaced by *-about*:

- (3) a. It's worth 100 quid, or thereabouts. (≈ It's worth approximately 100 quid.)  
 b. It's worth 100 quid, or thereabout.

- A possible exception is *whereabouts*<sup>2</sup>:

- (4) a. Whereabouts does he live? (≈ Where approximately does he live?)  
 b. \* Whereabout does he live?

- However there are instances of *-about* which not all speakers can replace by *-abouts*<sup>3</sup>:

- (5) a. Belgium has roundabout 11 million inhabitants.  
 b. % Belgium has roundabouts 11 million inhabitants.

- There is no independent pre-modifier *\*abouts*, equivalent to *about*:

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<sup>1</sup> I use *-about/s* to indicate post-modifier *-about/-abouts*, regardless of whether it is written as one orthographic word together with the preceding element (e.g. *whereabouts*), or as an independent orthographic word (e.g. *where abouts*). Here I abstract away from such orthographic variation.

<sup>2</sup> Note that the form in (4b) is acceptable for speakers of Scottish Standard English, and in fact preferred by some to (4a). I restrict my focus here to varieties of English spoken in England.

<sup>3</sup> % indicates a form which not all speakers consider grammatical.

- (6) a. We arrived at about 8pm. (≈ We arrived at approximately 8pm.)  
 b. \* We arrived at abouts 8pm.
- (7) a. There were about 5 people there. (≈ There were approximately 5 people there)  
 b. \* There were abouts 5 people there.

**Aim:**

- (i) To document and account for the fact that *-abouts* has a restricted distribution.
- (ii) To show that despite its restricted distribution, the form *-abouts* is:
  - a) **productive** i.e. forms involving *-abouts* are not lexically stored (or not for all speakers).
  - b) **grammatically-conditioned** i.e. the alternation between *-abouts/-about* is not just a case of free variation, but is influenced by the immediate syntactic environment.

**Outline of the talk:**

1. Introduction
2. Introducing the data: *whereabouts*
3. Further data: the scope of *-abouts*
4. Towards an analysis
5. Conclusions

**2. Introducing the data: *whereabouts***

- An (almost certainly non-exhaustive) overview of the *-abouts* forms attested:
- |                           |                      |                          |                      |
|---------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|
| (8) a. <i>whereabouts</i> | b. <i>whenabouts</i> | c. <i>how manyabouts</i> | d. <i>nearabouts</i> |
| <i>thereabouts</i>        | <i>thenabouts</i>    | <i>how oldabouts</i>     | <i>roundabouts</i>   |
| <i>hereabouts</i>         | <i>nowabouts</i>     | <i>how oftenabouts</i>   | <i>justabouts</i>    |
- In section 3, I will discuss the full range of *-abouts* forms.
  - In section 4, I will consider what unites the elements which can co-occur with *-abouts*.
  - However, I will begin by focussing on one single form involving *-abouts*: *whereabouts*.
  - 2 reasons for this choice:
    1. *whereabouts* is the most widely accepted *-abouts* form.
    2. many of the key points concerning the behaviour of *-abouts* can be made with reference to this form (although *whereabouts* nevertheless has some idiosyncrasies, see section 2.3).

**2.1 *whereabouts* vs. *where***

- In this section, I briefly compare the behaviour of *whereabouts* to that of simple *where*.

**2.1.1 Interrogative *where***

- (9) a. Where does he live?  
 b. Whereabouts does he live?
- *whereabouts?* asks the same as *where?* but requests a less specific value.
  - OED definition: 'About where? in or near what place, part, situation, or position?'<sup>4</sup>
  - *whereabouts*, like simple *where*, can occur in both matrix (cf. 10) and embedded (cf. 11) interrogatives, and can appear in a higher clause than that in which it is interpreted (cf. 12):

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/228212?redirectedFrom=whereabouts#>. Accessed on 18.01.2011.

- (10)a. Where did he eat? matrix interrogative  
b. Whereabouts did he eat?
- (11)a. I wondered where he ate. embedded interrogative  
b. I wondered whereabouts he ate.
- (12)a. Where do you think we could meet up? long-distance interrogative  
b. Whereabouts do you think we could meet up?<sup>5</sup>
- No context where *whereabouts* cannot be replaced by the simple form *where*.
  - However, there are contexts where *where* cannot be replaced by *whereabouts*.

### 2.1.2 Relative *where*

- Whilst *where* can introduce restrictive relative clauses (cf. 13a), non-restrictive relative clauses (cf. 14a), and free relatives (cf. 15a), *whereabouts* is excluded (13b, 14b, 15b)<sup>6</sup>.
- (13)a. I ate at the place where he ate. restrictive relative  
b. \* I ate at the place whereabouts he ate.
- (14)a. I ate in China town, where he ate when he was in London. non-restrictive relative  
b. \* I ate in China town, whereabouts he ate when he was in London.
- (15)a. I ate where he ate. free relative  
b. \* I ate whereabouts he ate.
- Syntactic not semantic restriction, which I do not attempt to account for here:
- (16) I ate about/roughly where he ate when he was in London.

### 2.1.3 A brief aside on the nature of -s<sup>7</sup>

- What is the -s that appears on *whereabouts* (but not on *where*: \**wheres* - see Kayne 2005a)?
  - It is not plural -s:
- (17)a. Whereabouts is interesting? singular agreement  
b. \* Whereabouts are interesting? \* plural agreement
- (18)a. Where is interesting? singular agreement  
b. \* Where are interesting? \* plural agreement
- (19)a. \* Which places is interesting? \* singular agreement  
b. Which places are interesting? plural agreement

**Empirical generalisation:** the -s of -abouts is not plural -s.

<sup>5</sup> From <http://www.sheffieldforum.co.uk/archive/index.php/t-378704.html>. Last accessed 11.07.2011.

<sup>6</sup> *whereabout* used to have a (rare) use as a relative pronoun as illustrated in (i), although this use is now obsolete (<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/228211#eid14722869>, accessed on 18.01.2011).

(i) 1722 WHISTON *The Earth* II. 218 At..Pekin..whereabout probably Noah liv'd immediately before the Deluge.

<sup>7</sup> Thanks to Guglielmo Cinque for bringing to my attention the need to exclude the possibility that the -s of *whereabouts* is plural -s, and to Liliane Haegeman for helping me construct the relevant examples.

## 2.2 -*abouts* vs. *approximately*

- *approximately*, *roughly*, *about* are 'true' adverbs, *-abouts* isn't.

### 2.2.1 *whereabouts* vs. *where approximately*

- *whereabouts* and *where approximately*: similar meaning, different syntactic behaviour.
- McCloskey (2000: 63, f.n. 8) illustrates with variations on the pattern *where exactly* the wide range of positions which an adverb can occupy in relation to a *wh*-expression.
- Here illustrated using *approximately*, because of the semantic ground shared with *-abouts*.
- *-abouts* occurs in only a very limited number of the positions which *approximately* can.

#### 2.2.1.2 Cases where *whereabouts* is able to replace *where approximately*

(20)A: He gave a talk yesterday.

B1: Where approximately?

B2: Whereabouts?

(21)a. Where approximately did he give a talk?

b. Whereabouts did he give a talk?

#### 2.2.1.3 Cases where *whereabouts* is unable to replace *where approximately*

(22)a. Where does he live approximately?

b. % Where does he live abouts?

(23)a. Where did he say approximately that he lived?

b. % Where did he say abouts that he lived?

(24)a. Approximately where does he live?

b. % Abouts where does he live?

- (21)-(23) are marked % rather than \* as some speakers do not consider these forms absolutely ungrammatical. Such speakers are in the minority however.
- Strong preference for *where* to directly precede *-abouts* with no intervening material.
- *-abouts*: occurs in a sub-set of the contexts in which *approximately* can.
- Therefore *-abouts* of *whereabouts* does not show the prototypical behaviour of an adverb.

### 2.2.2 \**abouts* vs. *approximately* in declarative environments

- Following McCloskey (2000: 63 f.n.8) on *exactly*, *approximately/roughly* in declarative contexts (cf. 24)<sup>8</sup> are presumably the same items as *approximately/roughly* in *wh*-phrases.

(25) a. She made (approximately) ten trips (approximately) to France last year.

b. She made (roughly) ten trips (roughly) to France last year.

<sup>8</sup> (25) and (26) are modelled on (v + vi) in McCloskey (2000: 63 f.n.8).

- There is no independent adverb *abouts* (cf. 26a), however. The form that occurs is rather *about* (cf. 26b).

- (26)a. She made (\*abouts) ten trips (\*abouts) to France last year.  
 b. She made (about) ten trips (\*about) to France last year.

- Note that *about* can only occur as a pre-modifier (at least in my judgement<sup>9</sup>).
- This contrasts with the strong preference for *how old abouts*, over %abouts *how old*.

### 2.2.3 Distribution of -abouts vs. approximately: summary

#### Empirical generalisations:

- (i) -abouts has a very restricted distribution in comparison to adverbs e.g. *approximately*:
  - a) -abouts is dependent on the presence of a preceding element e.g. *where*.
  - b) Material cannot intervene between this preceding element and -abouts.
  - c) The range of preceding elements which may occur is limited.
- (ii) There is no bare \*abouts. Bare adverb *about* is possible.
- (iii) *about* is a pre-modifier, -abouts is a post-modifier.

Table 1 – Distribution of -about/s vs. about

post-modifier -abouts	pre-modifier abouts	post-modifier -about	pre-modifier about
whereabouts thereabouts	% abouts where % abouts there	* whereabouts thereabout	? about where about there
* halfway abouts	* abouts halfway	* halfway about	about halfway

### 2.2.4 whereabouts exactly

- -abouts vs. approximately: semantic as well as distributional differences?
- Meaning of -abouts bleached (in comparison to *about*).

(27) Whereabouts **exactly** does he live?

- (28) a. \* Where approximately/roughly **exactly** does he live?  
 b. \* Approximately/roughly where **exactly** does he live?

- (29)a. He lives (\***exactly**) about (\***exactly**) 100km from the capital.  
 b. He lives (\***exactly**) approximately/roughly (\***exactly**) 100km from the capital.

- Is there an interpretational difference or not between (30a) and (30b)<sup>10</sup>?

<sup>9</sup> Quirk et al (1985: 663) claim that *about* can occur as a post-modifier as well as a pre-modifier, and in fact use this as a diagnostic for the adverbial status of *about*. They give their example (3b), here reproduced as (i) by way of illustration. However, they label this 'informal' and do not discuss the emphasis marked on *forty*, which is not required to make the sentence felicitous when *about* is a pre-modifier, as in (ii), their (3b).

(i) She is FÖRTY about.  
 (ii) She is about forty.

<sup>10</sup> Note in relation to this that the Merriam Webster online dictionary (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/whereabouts>, accessed on 18.01.2011) gives simple *where* as a synonym of *whereabouts*.

- (30) a. Where exactly does he live?  
 b. Whereabouts exactly does he live?

- Semantic bleaching doesn't hold (to the same extent) for all *-abouts* forms:

- (31)a. There must have been 100 guests, or thereabouts.  
 b. The exhibition took place in 1820, or thenabouts.

### 2.3 Summary of the idiosyncrasies of *whereabouts*

- Two respects in which *whereabouts* departs from the general behaviour of *-abouts* forms:
  1. The obligatoriness of -s (for speakers of Standard English)
    - *-about* can usually replace *-abouts*: *thereabouts/thereabout* vs. *whereabouts/\*whereabout*.
  2. The existence of a corresponding noun
    - *whereabouts* is the only *-abouts* form for which there exists a corresponding noun<sup>11</sup>.
    - nominal *whereabouts* shows interesting behaviour in being restricted to genitive contexts:

- (32)a. The police are keen to ascertain the suspect's whereabouts yesterday evening  
 b. The police are keen to ascertain the whereabouts of the suspect yesterday evening.

### 2.4 Conclusions

- Through illustration with *whereabouts*, it has been demonstrated that in terms of its syntax, and potentially also its semantics, *-abouts* does not behave like a typical adverb.
- In the next section I consider the full range of forms which can co-occur with *-abouts*.

### 3. Further data: the scope of *-abouts*

- In section 2 we saw that:
  - (a) *-abouts* does not show the behaviour of a typical adverb
  - (b) *-abouts* must always co-occur with some other preceding element.
- Nevertheless, *whereabouts* is not simply an idiosyncratic exception.
- It forms part of a productive pattern of *-abouts* forms which show similar behaviour.
- I present the range of elements which can co-occur with *-abouts*, and explore the patterns and regularities that they show.

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<sup>11</sup> There is also a noun *roundabout*, but this has a distinct meaning, and cannot involve *-abouts* - the *-s* of *roundabouts* is clearly plural *-s*, as (i) shows.

- (i) a. \*The roundabouts is a hazard for learner drivers.  
 b. The roundabouts are a hazard for learner drivers.

With nominal *whereabouts*, both singular and plural agreement are attested. My personal preference is for plural agreement with the structure in (ii), but for singular agreement with the structure in (iii). This is again interesting, but beyond the scope of this presentation.

- (ii) a. ? The suspect's whereabouts is still unknown.  
 b. The suspect's whereabouts are still unknown.  
 (iii) a. The whereabouts of the suspect is still unknown.  
 b. ? The whereabouts of the suspect are still unknown.

- Data sources:
  - (i) an informal corpus search (BNC, COCA, Google search engine)
    - assess the range and relative frequency of *-abouts* forms.
  - (ii) informal questionnaire survey of a small sample of native speaker informants
    - to establish correlations between the patterns accepted and rejected.

### 3.1. Elements which co-occur with *-abouts*

- In this section, I simply note and classify the range of *-abouts* forms attested.
- In section 4, I offer an explanation as to what the elements which can co-occur with *-abouts* have in common.

**Table 2 - Classification of *-abouts* forms**

	<b>locatives</b>	<b>temporals</b>	<b>wh-expressions</b>	<b>approximatives</b>
<b>- complement</b>	<i>whereabouts</i> <i>thereabouts</i> <i>hereabouts</i> <i>nearabouts</i> <i>roundabouts</i>	<i>when abouts</i> <i>thenabouts</i> <i>nowabouts</i>	<i>whereabouts</i> <i>when abouts</i> <i>how many abouts</i> <i>how old abouts</i> <i>how often abouts</i>	<i>(or) nearabouts</i> <i>(or) roundabouts</i> <i>(or) thereabouts</i> <i>(or) thenabouts</i>
<b>+ complement</b>	<i>nearabouts [here]</i> <i>roundabouts [here]</i>			<i>nearabouts [£100]</i> <i>roundabouts [£100]</i> <i>just abouts [£100]</i>

- Each of the forms in table 2 has its own peculiarities and distribution in external syntax.
- Focus here is upon the internal syntax of *-abouts* expressions, and what is held in common.
- Many observations made in relation to *whereabouts* apply to the *-abouts* forms generally:
  - *-abouts* can almost always be replaced by *-about*.
  - The constituent parts cannot be separated by intervening material (for most speakers).
  - Requirement/strong preference for *-abouts* to follow the element it co-occurs with.

#### 3.1.1 Examples of *-abouts* forms

##### 3.1.1.1 *-abouts* - complement

###### ○ locatives

(33) a. Whereabouts do you live?

b. Fortunately, it happened that at that very moment a certain, completely noble but not particularly prosperous knight, the master San Alberto, was traveling by, coming from the mighty emperor Frederick's lands and going to Florence to see the grand Dante who was from thereabouts, and he stopped to spend the night at the roadside abbey.<sup>12</sup>

c. We don't see a lot of snow hereabouts.<sup>13</sup>

d. In the woods, the birds sing. Nearabouts, a river tumbles by.

e. In the woods, a river tumbles by. Roundabouts, the birds sing.

###### ○ temporals

(34) a. When abouts did he leave?

b. Yeah pistols from thenabouts should be absurdly large.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Example from COCA. From Ozolins, Aivars (1998) 'Tale No. 13'. *Review of Contemporary Fiction*. Last accessed 13.07.2011. Unless otherwise stated, examples are of my own invention, often modelled on attested examples, and were deemed grammatical by native English speaker informants on informal questionnaire investigations.

<sup>13</sup> From <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/hereabouts?show=0&t=1310592341>. Last accessed 13.07.2011.

c. Hey dude, you wanna grab something to eat nowabouts?<sup>15</sup>

○ **wh-expressions**

(35)a. I can pick up apples, no problem. How many abouts?<sup>16</sup>

b. I think I know who the culprits were. How old abouts were they?

c. I have been told that it is possible to volunteer for tours that would need someone from my MOS. Is this true? If so, how often abouts would tours be available?<sup>17</sup>

○ **approximatives**

(36)a. It's worth 100 quid, or nearabouts.

b. It's worth 100 quid, or roundabouts.

c. It's worth 100 quid, or thereabouts.

d. He was going to Antarctica, in 1919 (or then-abouts).<sup>18</sup>

### 3.1.1.2 -abouts +complement

○ **locatives**

(37)a. I'm from nearabouts Aberdeen.<sup>19</sup>

b. I'm from roundabouts Aberdeen.

○ **approximatives**

(38)a. I worked in the fields from 5.00 in the morning until nearabouts 8.00 at night.<sup>20</sup>

b. I worked in the fields from 5.00 in the morning until roundabouts 8.00 at night.

c. Thanks for your reply, he has his basking area which is just abouts 30 C.<sup>21</sup>

### 3.2 Speaker/dialect variation

- Not all speakers accept the full range of -abouts forms presented in table 2.
- Enormous amount of variation between different speakers/varieties of English as to which forms are considered grammatical, and to what extent.
- I cannot hope to cover that comprehensively here.
- However, from the data I have collected, 3 main groups of speakers can be identified:
  - Group 1: -abouts is not productive; *whereabouts* only
  - Group 2: range of -abouts forms; *roundabouts but \*roundabouts here/£100*.
  - Group 3: range of -abouts forms; *roundabouts and roundabouts here/£100*.
- It is the behaviour of these 3 groups for which I will offer an explanation in section 4.2.

<sup>14</sup> From

<http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:8dIXWhZYWdMJ:forum.nationstates.net/viewtopic.php%3Ff%3D23%26t%3D68702%26p%3D5554084+%22thenabouts%22&cd=49&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=uk&source=www.google.co.uk>. Last accessed 15.07.2011.

<sup>15</sup> From <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Nowabouts>, last accessed on 11.07.2011.

<sup>16</sup> Modelled on attested example from <http://www.shannondale.org/forum/showthread.php?6517-Halloween-Party-Help>. Last accessed 13.07.2011.

<sup>17</sup> From [http://www.reddit.com/comments/dlpia/anyone\\_here\\_currently\\_enlisted\\_in\\_the\\_army\\_reserve/](http://www.reddit.com/comments/dlpia/anyone_here_currently_enlisted_in_the_army_reserve/). Last accessed 13.07.2011.

<sup>18</sup> From [http://ossuslibrary.tripod.com/Mov\\_NonFiction/Shackleton.htm](http://ossuslibrary.tripod.com/Mov_NonFiction/Shackleton.htm). Last accessed 13.07.2011.

<sup>19</sup> (37a, b) are modelled on an attested example from <http://blindman.15.forumer.com/index.php?showtopic=25958>. Last accessed 13.07.2011.

<sup>20</sup> (38a, b) are modelled on an attested example from <http://uk.answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20080302075105AA0APrg>. Last accessed 13.07.2011.

<sup>21</sup> From <http://www.tortoiseforum.org/archive/index.php/thread-25889.html>. Last accessed 13.07.2011.



#### 4. Towards an analysis

- In section 4.1, I offer a generalisation for what the elements which co-occur with *-abouts* have in common.
- In section 4.2, I offer an analysis, couched in the framework of generative transformational grammar, for the distribution of *-abouts* for each of the 3 groups identified.

##### 4.1. Uniting the *-abouts* forms

- It appears that a diverse range of items can precede *-abouts*:
  - o locatives: *where, there, here*
  - o temporal expressions: *when, then, now*
  - o wh-phrases: *how many, how old, how often*
  - o adverbs: *round, near, just*
- Q: What do all these elements have in common?  
A: They are all accompanied by a null noun.  
(see Kayne 2005a, b, c; Svenonius 2006, De Belder 2007 a.o).
- The locatives, temporal expressions and *wh*-phrases act as determiners for these null Ns:
  - o locatives: *where* PLACE, *there* PLACE, *here* PLACE
  - o temporal expressions: *when* TIME, *then* TIME, *now* TIME
  - o wh-phrases: *how many* NUMBER, *how old* AGE. *how often* FREQUENCY<sup>22</sup>
- Locative adverbs modify a null locative determiner + null N:
  - o locative adverbs: *round* (T)HERE PLACE, *near*(T)HERE PLACE
- The adverbs *round, just, near* in the approximatives modify (expressions containing) null Ns.
  - o non-locative adverbs: *round* NUMBER/TIME/AGE etc.  
*near* NUMBER/TIME/AGE etc.  
*just* NUMBER/TIME/AGE etc.
- Note that many structures containing null Ns have been proposed (see e.g. Kayne 2005c).
- My claim is therefore not that any structure involving a null noun will automatically be able to co-occur with *-abouts*, but rather that any *-abouts* structure must involve a null noun.
- This also explains the exclusion of forms such as those in (39), which involve an overt noun (rather than a null noun) co-occurring with *-abouts*.

- (39)a. \* *abouts* 100 people  
b. \* 100 people *abouts*

Generalisation: The forms which can co-occur with *-abouts* have in common the fact that they are accompanied by a null noun.

<sup>22</sup> FREQUENCY is the only null noun I make use of which is not already proposed by Kayne.

#### 4.1.1 Null nouns in the syntax

- I make two crucial assumptions about null nouns:
  1. Null nouns are present in the lexicon i.e. PLACE is not simply *place* with a phonologically null representation, but a distinct lexical item (Kayne 2005c).
  2. Null nouns need to reach a position higher in the structure than their base position in order (for their non-pronunciation) to be licensed (Kayne 2005b).

#### 4.1.2 -about/s

- In the forms presented in Table 2, *-about* can almost always occur instead of *-abouts*.
- This suggests that *-abouts/-about* represents variation in the phonological realisation of the same item (henceforth *-about/s*).
- Recall that:
  1. *-about/s* has a restricted distribution in comparison with that of 'true' adverbs such as *approximately, roughly, exactly*.
  2. *-about/s* has bleached semantic content in comparison to *about* (at least in some cases).

Claim: *-about/s* is the realisation of a functional head (F) rather than a lexical item<sup>23</sup>.

### 4.2 An analysis for -abouts forms

#### 4.2.1 An analysis for group 1 speakers

- Group 1: *-abouts* is not productive; *whereabouts* only
- Analysis: *whereabouts* is stored as a lexical item.

#### 4.2.2 An analysis for Group 2 speakers

- Group 2: range of *-abouts* forms; *roundabouts* but \**roundabouts here/£100*.

##### 4.2.2.1 Proposal

- Recall that the functional head F may be realised as either *-about* or *-abouts*.
- The contrast which group 2 speakers show between *roundabouts* and \* *roundabouts here/£100* (vs. *roundabout here/£100*) suggests that this is not free variation.
- Rather, F may only be realised as *-abouts* under certain syntactic conditions.
- What are these conditions?
  - Two possibilities to discount:
    1. F can only be realised as *-abouts* when there is no overt element following.  
BUT    % *abouts how many*                      → mostly this is the case, but crucially not always
    2. F can only be realised as *-abouts* when another item precedes.  
BUT    \* *roundabouts here/£100*                      → necessary but not sufficient condition

<sup>23</sup> The lexical item *about* which occurs as an adverb and a preposition is distinct. The functional item *-about/s* which I discuss here presumably developed from this lexical item.

- We have already established that:
  - The form *-abouts* can occur only when preceded by an overt element.
  - Members of the relevant class of overt elements have in common that they must always be accompanied by a null N.

Proposal: The form *-abouts* is possible only when there is a null N preceding.  
(where 'preceding' means specifically 'occupying the specifier position of FP').

- i.e. what rules out \*roundabouts here/£100 for group 2 speakers is not the presence of an overt object in complement position, but the absence of a null noun in spec-FP.
- Note that the presence of a null N in spec-FP permits, but does not require, F to be realised as *-abouts*. For most speakers, in most cases, it can also be realised as *-about*<sup>24</sup>.
- *about* is a pre-modifier → *about when, about there*
- yet *-about/s* follows the item it modifies → *whenabouts, thereabouts*

Proposal: Null Ns originate below *-about/s* (just as overt nouns follow *about*).  
The 'inverted' order of e.g. *whenabouts* is thus the result of displacement.

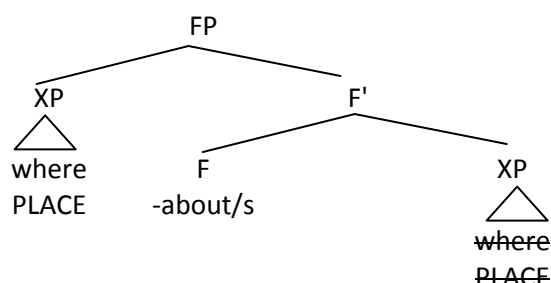
Summary of the proposals:

- *-about/s* realises a functional head F which can be realised either as *-abouts* or as *-about*.
- F can only be realised as *-abouts* when there is a null N in its specifier.
- This null N originates below *-about/s* in the structure but must raise in order (for its non-pronunciation) to be licensed.

#### 4.2.2.2 Application to the data

- I will now demonstrate how these proposals account for the patterns in the data identified above for group 2 speakers<sup>25</sup>.
  - o locatives, temporals and *wh*-expressions

(40) *whereabouts*



<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, for some speakers, when the conditions are met for F to be realised as the form *-abouts*, this is the favoured realisation. To deal with the issue of this variation would take us too far from the goal of this talk.

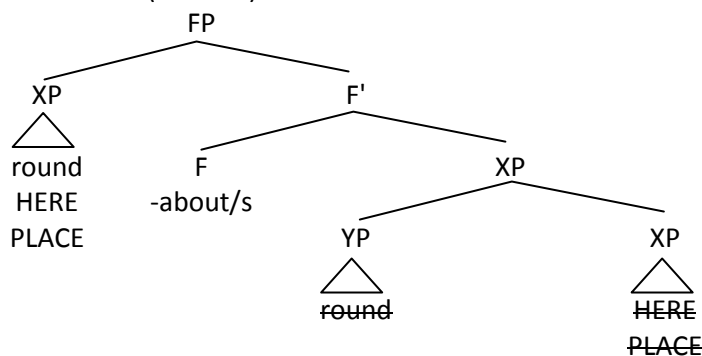
<sup>25</sup> In the tree diagrams presented below, strikethrough font is used to indicate a copy of a constituent which will not be phonologically realised at spellout.

- An XP consisting of the null N and its accompanying locative/temporal/*wh*-expression is merged as the complement to the head F.
- By assumption, the null N cannot remain in situ, as it must reach a position where its non pronunciation is licensed.
- The XP containing the null N thus raises, targeting the first available landing site, spec-FP<sup>26</sup>.
- As the result is that a null N occupies spec-FP, F can be realised as *-abouts*<sup>27</sup>.
- The question arises as to why it is the whole XP which raises, and not just the null N.

Proposal: A null N cannot move alone. Its presence must be marked by an overt element.

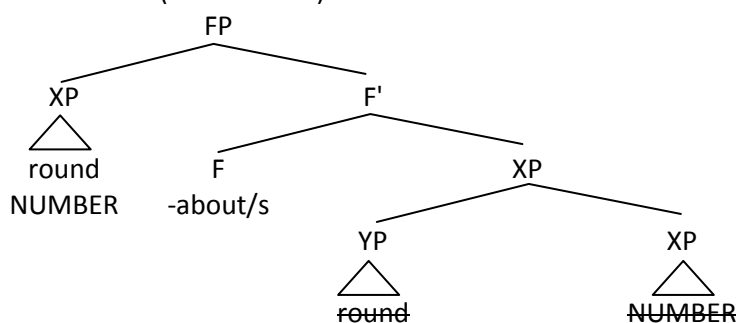
- The same kind of derivation applies to the temporals and *wh*-expressions.

(41) *roundabouts* (locative)



- The derivation is much the same as that discussed for *whereabouts* above, only this time the demonstrative *HERE* is null, as well as the noun *PLACE*.
- Movement of a null noun must be signalled by the presence of an accompanying overt item.
- The adverbial *round*, inserted into the specifier of the XP it modifies, serves this purpose.
- As the null noun must reach a higher position, the XP containing it raises to the first available specifier position, spec-FP. As *round* sits in the specifier of the XP, it raises too.
- As FP has a null N in its specifier, F can be spelt out as *-abouts*.

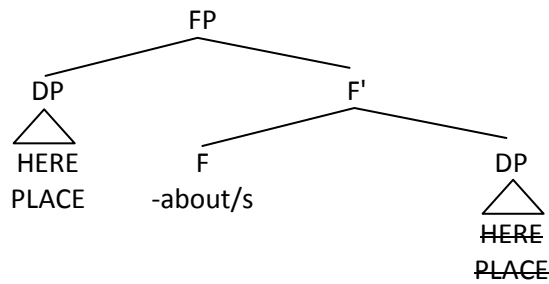
(42) *roundabouts* (non-locative)



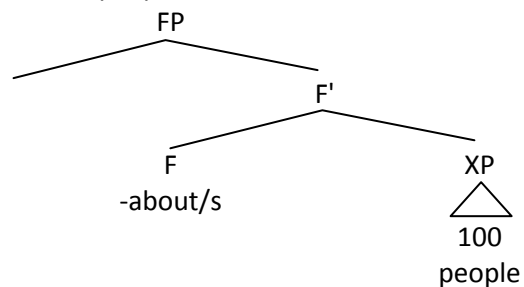
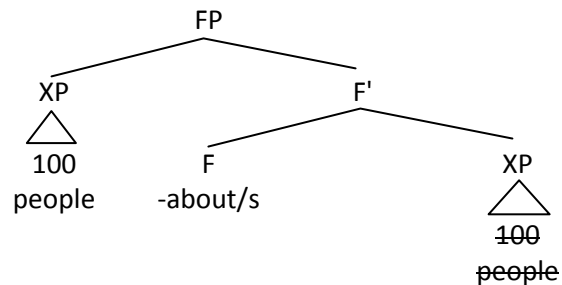
- The derivation runs as for (40), but with null noun *NUMBER* instead of null *HERE PLACE*.

<sup>26</sup> This movement violates anti-locality constraints on movement, which have been argued to rule out movement of a phrase from complement position into the specifier of the same maximal projection (see e.g. Grohmann 2000, Abels 2003). I do not take a position on this issue here, but it is not problematic for my account if there is an additional projection between FP and DP.

<sup>27</sup> Here I do not take a stance on whether spec-FP is itself a position where the (non-pronunciation of) the null noun is licensed, or whether the null N must subsequently continue to raise higher to reach such a position.

(43)\**abouts*

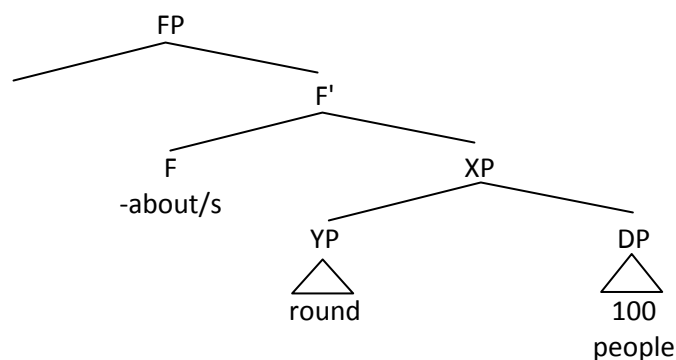
- As the condition which must be fulfilled in order for F to be realised as *-abouts* is that a null N occupies spec-FP, a derivation such as (43) might be expected to yield bare *abouts*.
- Yet movement of a null N must be marked by an accompanying overt constituent. It is the failure to meet this condition which makes (43) ungrammatical.

(44)\* *abouts 100 people*(45)\* *100 people abouts*

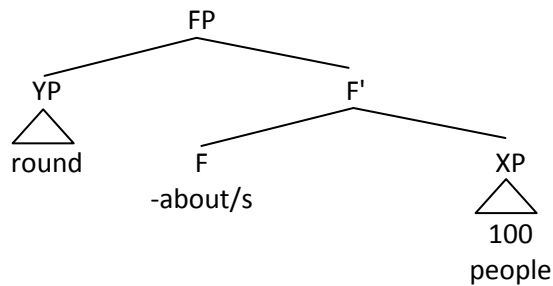
- (44) and (45) are both ruled out for the same underlying reason: there is no null N in spec-FP, therefore F cannot be realised as *-abouts*.
- It is unlikely that the structure in (45) can even be derived, as overt Ns, in contrast to covert Ns, have no obvious motivation to raise.

(46)\* *roundabouts 100 people*

a)



b)



- This also extends to (46):
- (46a): assume *round* were inserted low to modify the XP, as in the derivations of *roundabouts* given in (41) and (42). Then, on the assumption that without a null N, XP has no motivation to raise, spec-FP remains empty, and F cannot be realised as *-abouts*.
- (46b): even if *round* were directly inserted into spec-FP, F still cannot be realised as *-abouts*, as no null N would be present in spec-FP. Thus this could generate *roundabout 100 people*, but not *roundabouts 100 people*.

### 4.3 Group 3 speakers

- Group 3: - range of *-abouts* forms; *roundabouts* and *roundabouts here/£100*.
- Behave like group 2 except that cases such as (46) are grammatical.
- How can such strings be derived?
- (46a) seems an unlikely source, as the overt noun has no motivation to raise.
- I therefore suggest that (46b) is the source of *roundabouts 100 people* for group 3 speakers.

Proposal: The presence of an overt constituent in spec-FP which permits F to be realised as *-abouts*.

- Group 2 speakers: (46b) cannot yield *roundabouts 100 people*, as only *round* occupies spec-FP, and a null N is required in that position to permit F to be realised as *-abouts*.
- Group 3 speakers: (46b) can yield *roundabouts 100 people*, as although only *round* occupies spec-FP, for these speakers this is sufficient for F to be realised as *-abouts*.
- It is only in such cases that the application of the group 3 rule for realisation of F as *-abouts* yields a different result to application of the group 2 rule.
- For structures such as (40)-(42) (*whereabouts*, *roundabouts* (locative), *roundabouts* (non-locative)), the only difference is in terms of what permits F to be realised as *-s*:
- Group 2 speakers: this is due to the null N which has raised to spec-FP.
- Group 3 speakers: this is due to the overt constituent which has raised with the null N.
- (43) (\**abouts*) and (44) (\**abouts 100 people*): still excluded for group 3 speakers as there is nothing overt in spec-FP.
- (45) (\**100 people abouts*): excluded because no motivation for an overt N to raise to spec-FP.

#### 4.3.1 Reanalysis

- I tentatively suggest that the grammar of group 3 speakers is more innovative, and relies on reanalysis of certain of the structures presented above.

- As a null N is by definition non-overt, and must always be accompanied by overt material, speakers begin to associate the overt material in spec-FP with the realisation of F as *-abouts*.
- They begin to consider this the trigger for *-abouts*, rather than the presence of a null N.
- Overt material unaccompanied by a null N inserted directly into spec-FP is then equally able to trigger the realisation of F as *-abouts*, as *round* does in (46b). There is nothing which prevents this from co-occurring with an overt, in-situ complement to FP.
- *round* was perhaps particularly susceptible to such a development, as it is less evident that it originated below *-abouts* (*whenabouts/about when, roundabouts/\*about round*).

#### 4.4 Summary

- To conclude section 4, I provide a brief (relatively) theory-neutral summary of the analysis I have provided for each of the groups of speakers.<sup>28</sup>
  - Group 1: *-abouts* is not productive; *whereabouts* only  
Analysis: *whereabouts* is stored as a lexical item.
  - Group 2: range of *-abouts* forms; *roundabouts* but *\*roundabouts here/£100*.  
Analysis: There must be a null N preceding *-about/s* for it to be able to be realised as *-abouts*. Movement of a null N must be marked by overt material.
  - Group 3: range of *-abouts* forms; *roundabouts* and *roundabouts here/£100*.  
Analysis: There must be overt material preceding *-about/s* for it to be able to be realised as *-abouts*. This requires either movement of a null N marked by overt material, or direct insertion of overt material into a position directly preceding *-about/s*.

#### 5 Conclusions

- In relation to the aims identified in the introduction, I have shown that the form *-abouts* is:
  - a) **productive** (for speakers in groups 2 and 3)  
A range of *-abouts* forms were documented and classified. Although on the surface they appear quite varied, regularities in their syntactic behaviour were observed.
  - b) **grammatically-conditioned**  
Although *-abouts* has a very restricted distribution, the possibility for it to occur depends on conditions being met in the syntactic environment. An analysis accounting for the distribution of *-abouts* for each of the three groups of speakers I identified was offered.
- There are additional questions which it would be of interest to explore in future research:
  - More speaker variation: especially varieties of Scottish English - strong preference for *-about*, not *-abouts* in forms such as *whereabout(s)*.
  - Adverbial -s: presence vs. absence of -s e.g. *forward(s), backward(s), anyway(s)* etc.
  - Cross-linguistic comparison: Dutch: adverbial -s (Corver 2007, 2009); prepositions which show alternations in form in similar environments e.g. *met/mee* 'with': *met een mes* 'with a knife', *daarmee* 'with that' [literally 'therewith'].

<sup>28</sup> Potential support for the idea that some speakers store *whereabouts* as a lexical entry, whilst others form it in the syntax comes from the fact that, the main stress may fall either on the first syllable (as for compounds) or on the second syllable (as for syntactic phrases). This point is made by Corver (2007: 6 f.n. 3) in relation to the Dutch data that he discusses. It remains to be seen whether there is a correlation such that speakers in Group 1 have the first stress pattern, and speakers in Groups 2 and 3 the second, as might be expected.

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