"Change under cover: The status of individual concepts"

In subject position of a verb like 'rise' or 'change', a noun phrase like 'the temperature' has to contribute not only its actual value, but also values for neighbouring indices. In PTQ, Montague solves this by letting nouns (at an index) denote sets of individual concepts \(<s,e>,t>\) instead of sets of individuals \(<e,t>\). Unfortunately, this induces a double index dependence that gives rise to counterintuitive predictions (cf. Dowty, Wall and Peters 1981, Romero 2006). Lasersohn (2005) proposes a radical simplification of Montague's treatment which avoids this double index dependence. He argues that even nouns like 'temperature' denote sets of individuals. In intensional argument positions, he derives individual concepts by using the intension of a Fregean definite description "the unique temperature (at time t and world w)". However, Lasersohn's account cannot be applied to examples where more than one object of the relevant type is under consideration.

(1) Every temperature is rising.

Moreover, we want to account for Nathan's observation that 'change' is interpreted differently depending on the lexical noun. (2a) is normally interpreted as expressing that the set of bodyguards has different members now, whereas for (2b) it is sufficient that some mayors have exchanged cities, the overall set of mayors thus staying the same:

(2) a. Three bodyguards have changed.
b. Three mayors have changed.

I argue that a natural solution to both problems can be obtained if we assume that nouns denote individuals, but take into account that quantification (like questioning and belief attribution) proceeds with respect to a particular way of individuating the objects in the domain (cf. Aloni 2000). Such a perspective consists in a set of individual concepts (a conceptual cover). The lexical semantics of the noun is shown to be one (but not the only) factor in determining what perspective on the individuals in question is taken.

References:
Romero (2006) 'Some paradoxes about individual concepts' Invited Talk at Sinn und Bedeutung 11, Barcelona.