

Corpus-based insights into discourses of age in the 18th century. A mixed methods approach using the obituaries of the *Wien[n]erisches Diarium* as a starting point.

Corpus: *Wienerisches DIGITARIUM*

- digital edition of the historical newspaper *Wien[n]erisches Diarium* (since 1780: *Wiener Zeitung*)
- 339 issues (approx. 3 mil. tokens) from 1703-1799
- full text created with Transkribus
- XML format according to well-known TEI-standard
- structural and typographical annotation
- <https://digitalium.acdh.oeww.ac.at> (Resch & Kampkaspar 2020)

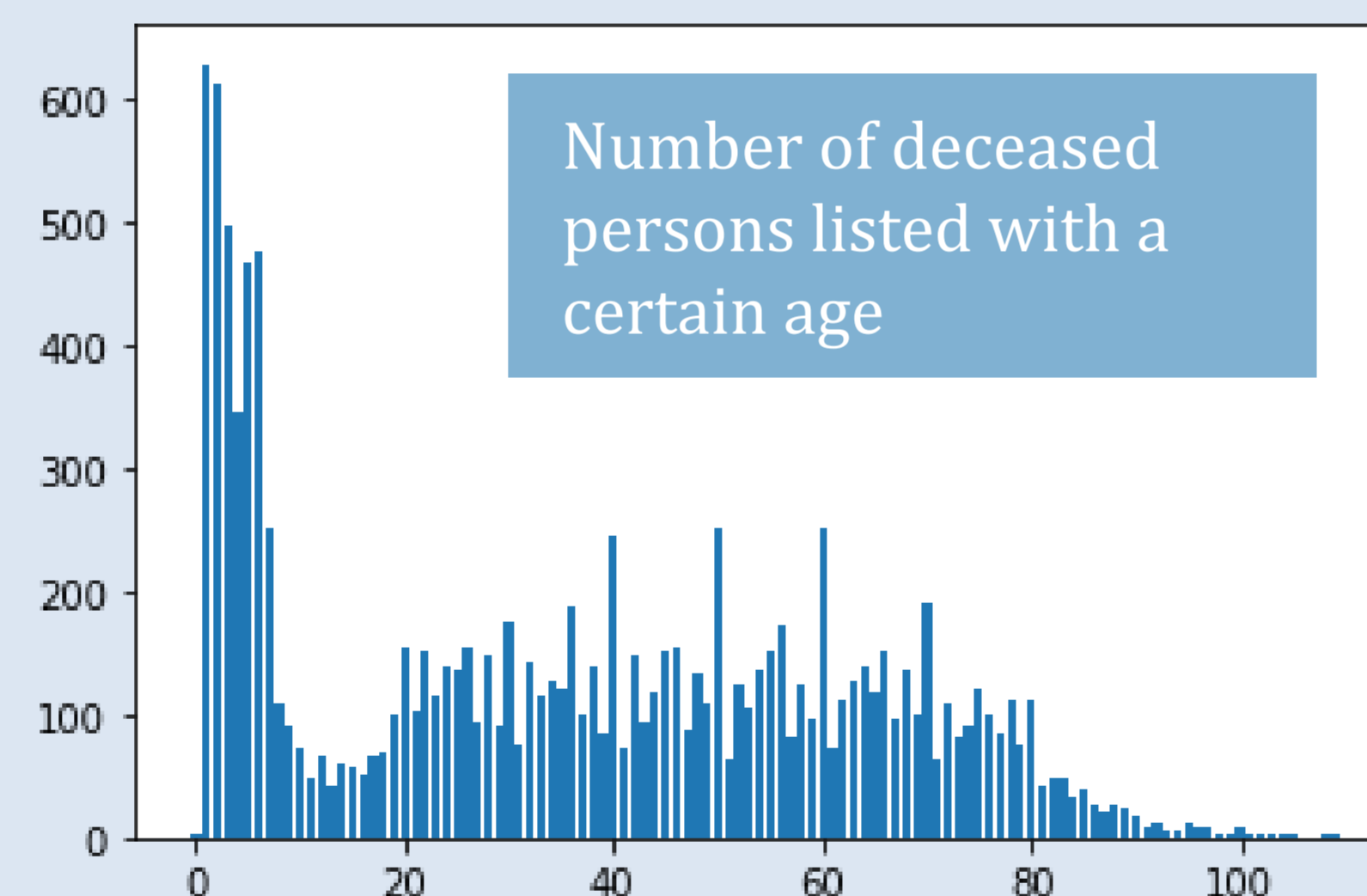
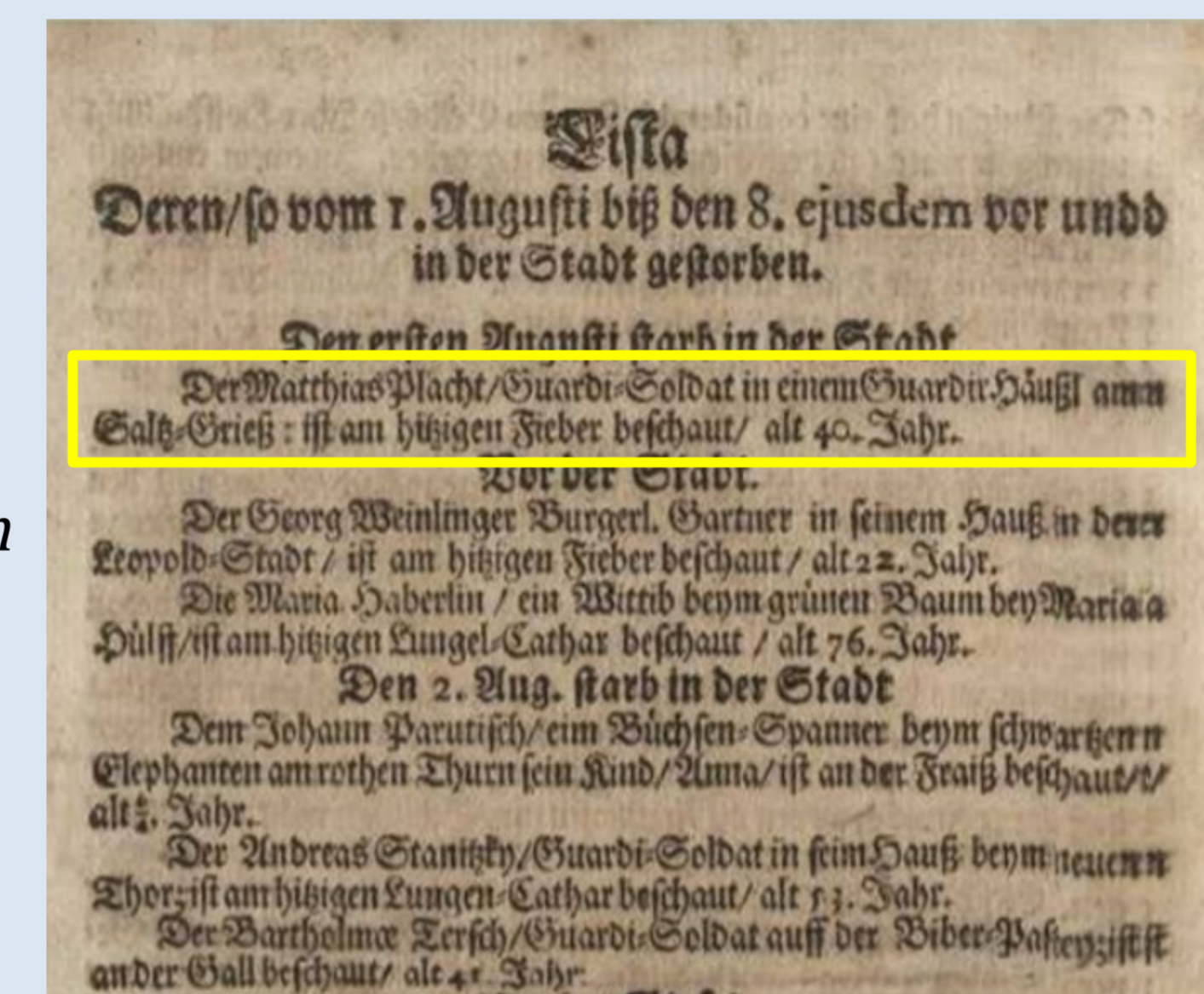
Wienerisches
DIGITARIUM.

→ current project: „VIENNA TIME MACHINE: Corresponding digital data treasures and knowledge resources“ (PI: Claudia Resch)

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Starting point: Extraction of age from lists of obituaries

- lists of deceased in and outside the city centre of Vienna in almost every issue
- relatively consistent structure
- detailed information in each entry (name, occupation, place of death, age, ...)
- e.g. *Der Matthias Placht / Guardi=Soldat in einem Guardir=Häußl am Saltz=Grieß: ist am hitzigen Fieber beschaut / alt 40. Jahr.*

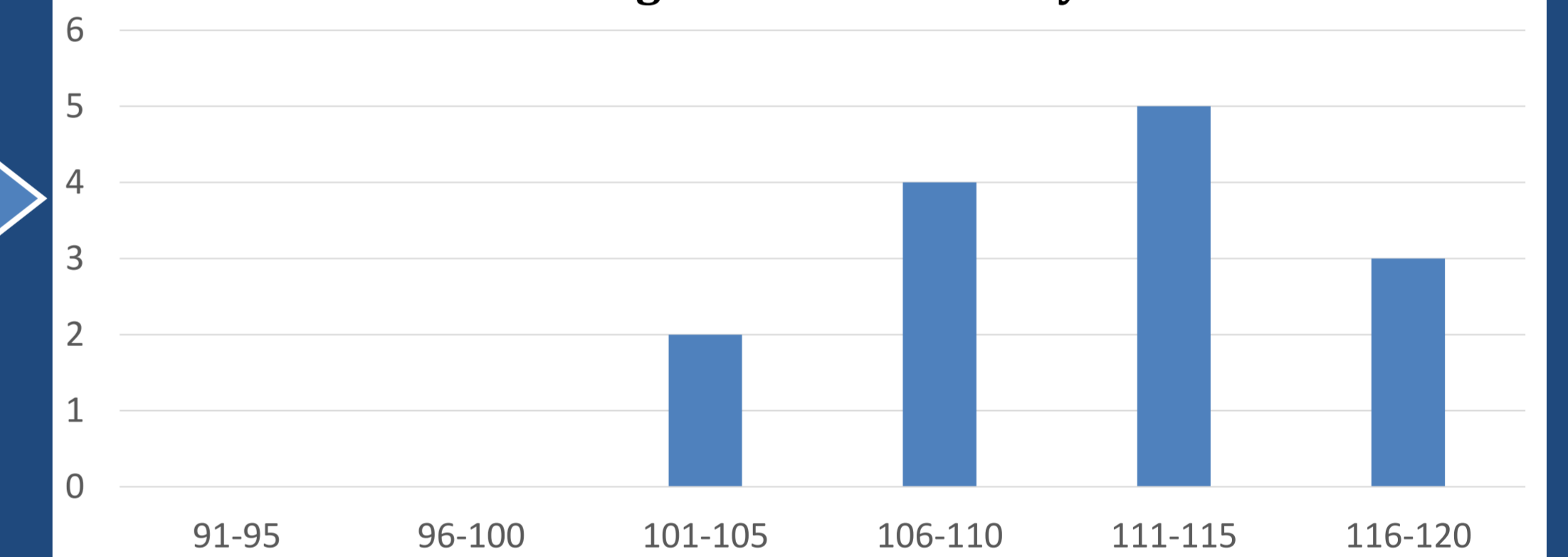


- automatic extraction of age from 12.120 entries
- span: 0-109; mean value: 35
- high infant and child mortality rate
- spikes at round numbers (40, 50, ...)

Discourse moment: Remembering individuals of high age

- multiple newspaper articles written about individuals because of their high age (*merkwürdiges Alter* 'age worth memorizing')
- e.g. *Von Bielefeld [...] vernimmt man, daß allda ein gewisser Mann, namens Didacus Rolf, im Alter von 116. Jahren 10. Monaten und 11. Tagen gestorben.* [WD 1753-01-13: 3]

Number of text passages per age:
When does an age start to be worthy of remembrance?



- recurrent expression: *es auf X Jahre bringen* 'to make/bring it to high age' → high age as an achievement, a goal to be actively reached
- cf. Borscheid (1989): one must work for a „good“ age
- coherent with frequent emphasis on healthiness and capabilities of the old people written about:
 - e.g. *Er hat nie etwas von Krankheiten gewußt, und den völligen Gebrauch seiner Sinnen bis zu dem letzten Hauche seines Lebens beybehalten.* [WD 1766-04-05: 5]
 - e.g. *Fünf Tage vor seinem Hinscheiden habe er sich zu Beht gelegt, bis dahin aber wäre er seiner harten Arbeit beständig nachgegangen.* [WD 1759-10-03: 6]
- cf. Göckenjan (1993): discursive pressure on old people to be of use for society (discourse about instead of from old people)
- critical question: did people really live to be over 100 years old in the 18th century?
 - maximum age in obituaries: 109 vs. in articles: 119
 - cf. Ehmer (2008): approx. 10% of the population in the 18th century were over 60 years old
 - cf. Süßmilch (1787: 448): *daß alle alte Leute [...] ihr eigenes Alter selten recht wissen, und bey ihrem Absterben gemeinlich älter angeben werden*

Discourse moment: Infant and child mortality as (non-)topics

- obituaries document high infant and child mortality – however: topic is rarely mentioned in medial discourse
 - exception 1: aristocracy (e.g. reports on the death of Maria Theresia's children)
 - exception 2: curiosa (e.g. quadruplets)
- official announcement in the *Diarium* makes exclusion of infant/child mortality topic from the discourse of (non-)aging explicit:

Erneuertes Edict, wie es in denen Königl. Preussischen Landen mit der Trauer gehalten werden solle. [...] Die Eltern betrauren ihre kinder / im fall dieselben das zwölfte Jahr ihres alters überlebet haben / drey monat lang: wegen der kinder aber die unter zwölf jahren sterben / solle gar keine trauer von denen Eltern angeleget werden. [WD 1734-07-31: 5]

Discourse moment: Society's portrayal of older people

- concordance analysis
- Greis: ehrwürdig, würdig, alt, gekrümmt* → positive, but age has negative impact
- hohes Alter*: shows proximity to death discourse
- pens.*: almost entirely k. k. / nobles / high military ranks → retirement limited to upper classes (cf. Gabler & Proksch 2020)
- cf. Borscheid (1989): high age is portrayed positively from 1750 onwards
- neutral = 0, positive = 1, rho = 0.4579, p = 0.086 → moderate positive correlation

