

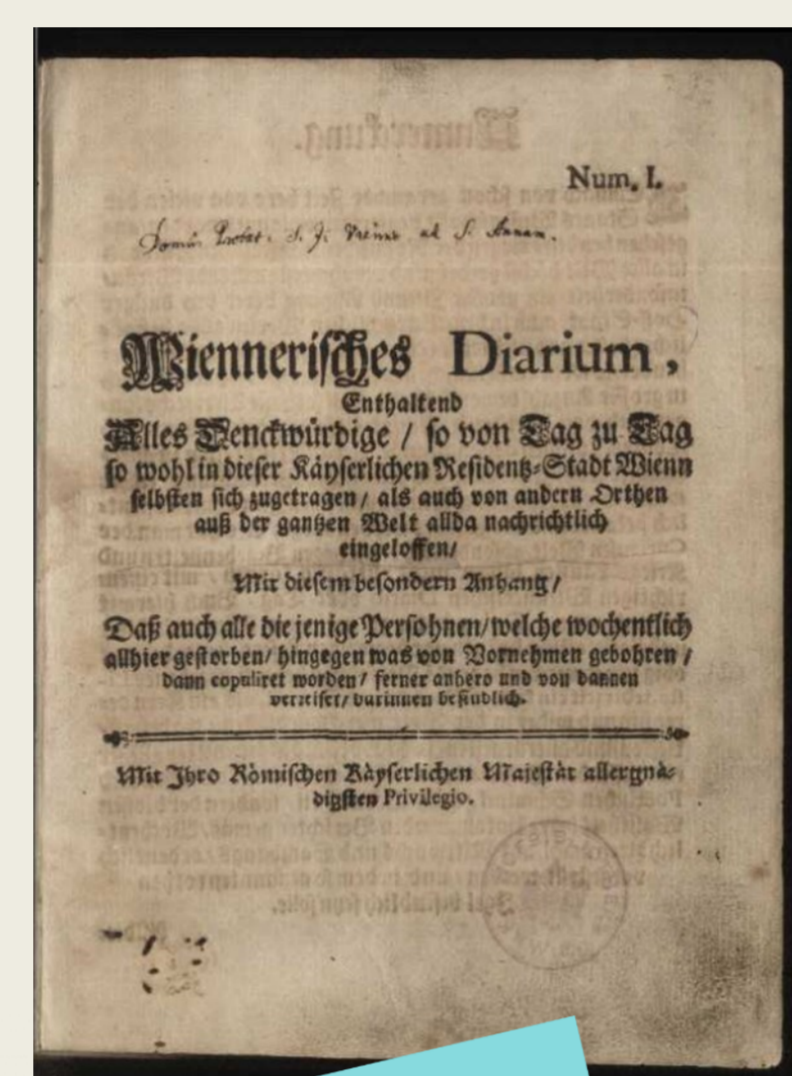
Dealing with events beyond human understanding: medial representations of natural disasters in the early modern press

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METHOD

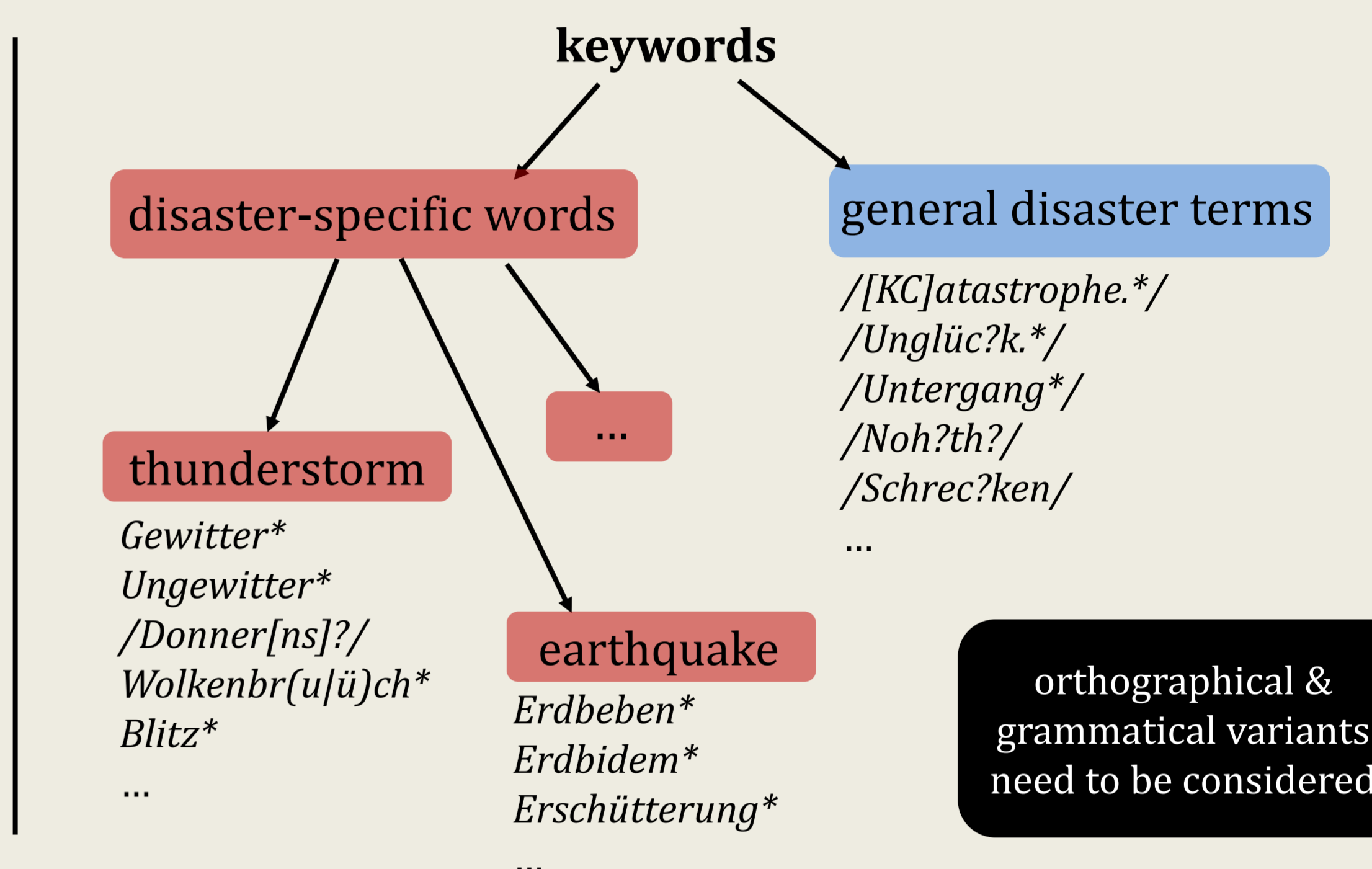
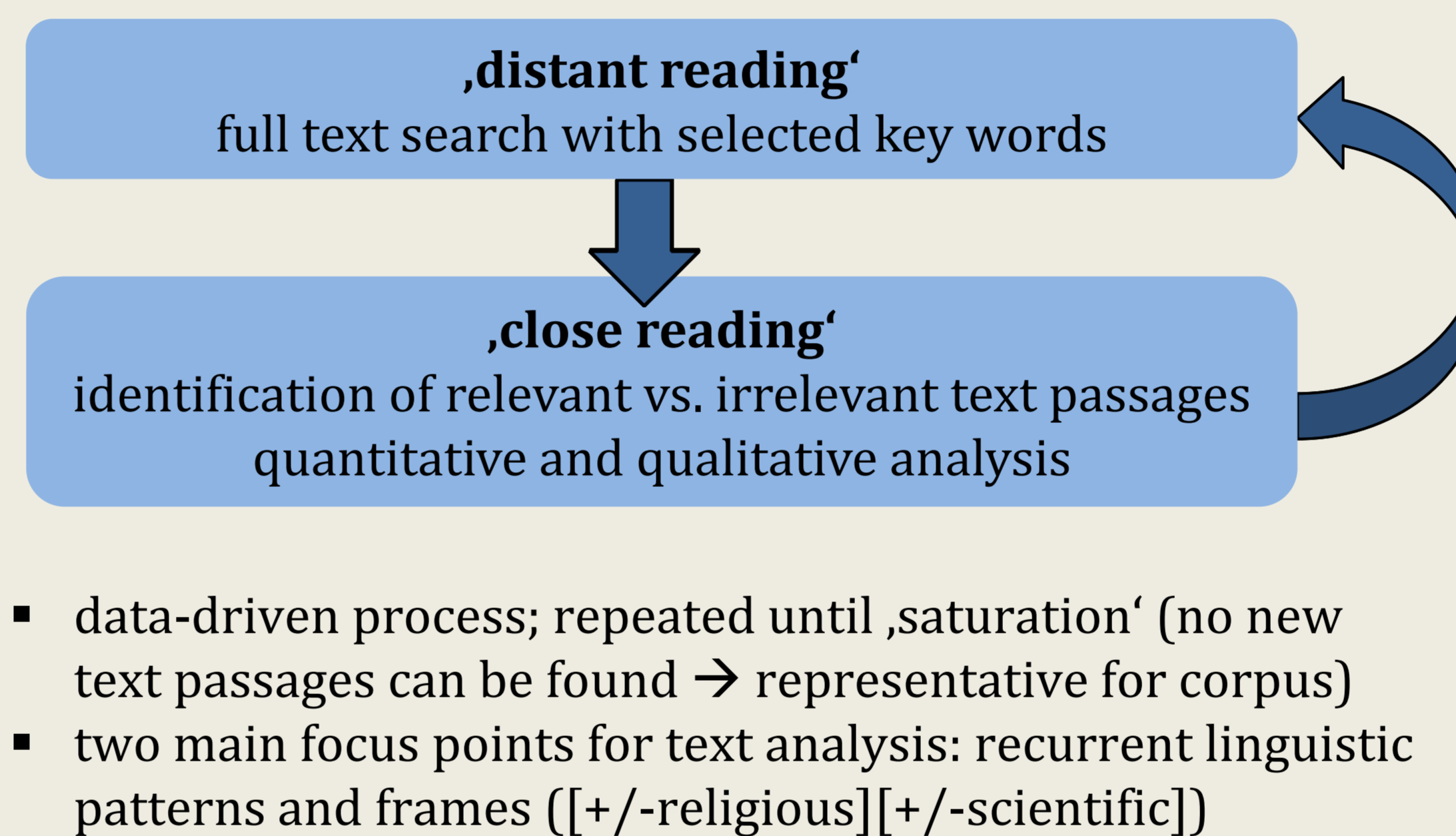
Corpus: Wienerisches DIGITARIUM

- digital full text corpus of 339 issues (~ 6.000 pages / ~ 3 mil. tokens) of the historical *Wien[n]erisches Diarium* from the 18th century
 - balanced distribution of issues over time period
 - searchable full text created with Transkribus
 - XML format according to TEI P5-standard
 - structural and typographical annotation
- project: <https://digitarium.acdh.oeaw.ac.at>
→ corpus: <https://digitarium-app.acdh.oeaw.ac.at>
(Resch & Kampkaspar 2020)

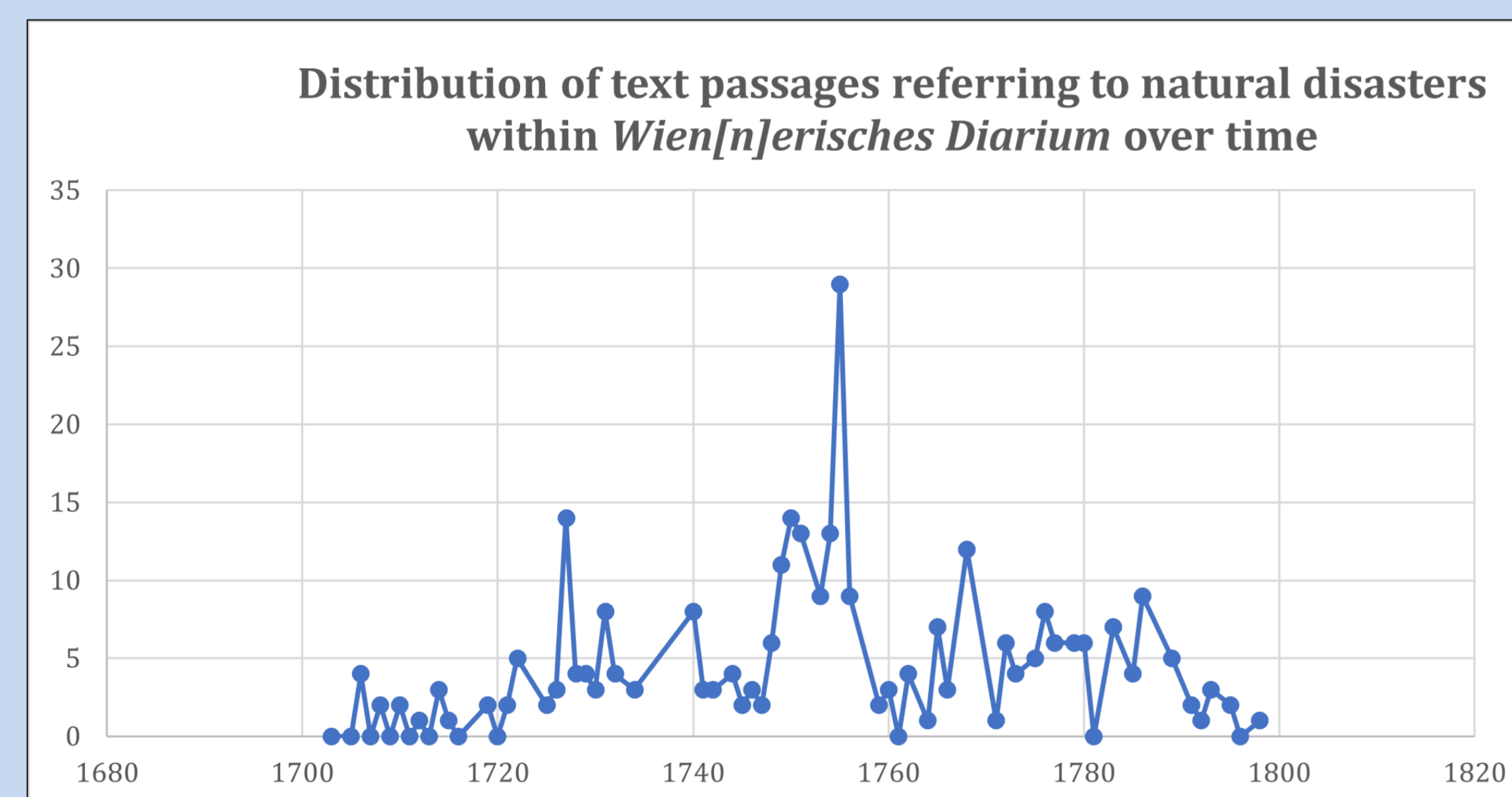


Wienerisches
DIGITARIUM.

Methodological Approach



1 Number and distribution of text passages referring to natural disasters

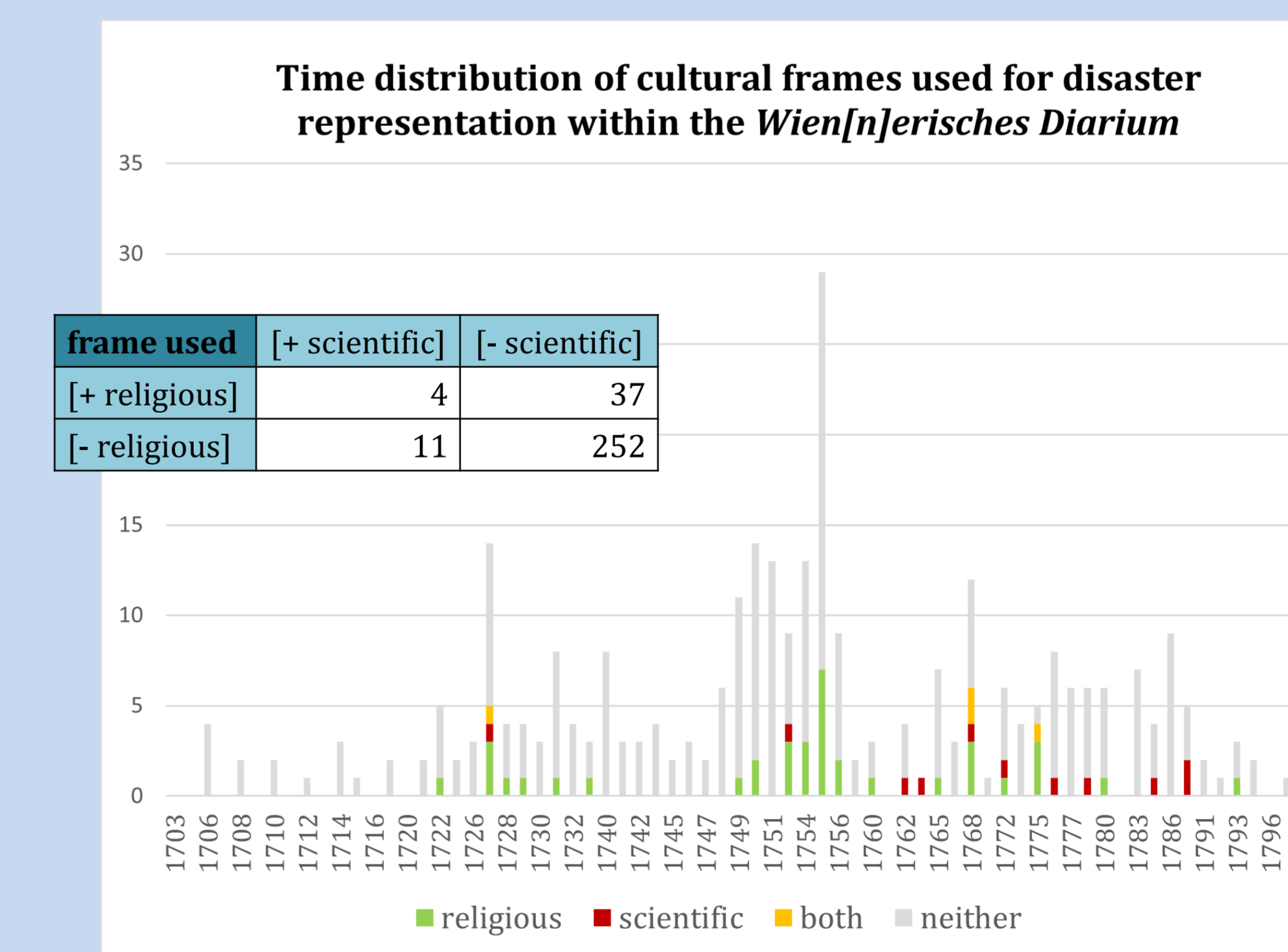


- 304 text passages in total (length: one sentence to four pages)
- 1755: Earthquake of Lisbon – high medial response (cf. e.g. Löffler 1999, Lauer & Unger 2008, Koopmans 2018)
- natural disasters as popular topic: continually present in the *Diarium* of the 18th century and at least one finding in 163 different issues (48% of all searched issues)

2 Recurrent linguistic patterns as hints to central aspects in disaster representation

- emphasis on singularity and extremity of reported disasters
- repeated references to the collective memory of a community/humanity
 - (1) *dergleichen entsetzliche Ungewitter [...] als bey Menschen=Gedenken nie gewesen* (WD 1730-03-25: 4)
 - (2) *und es kam wieder eine dermaßen hohe Fluth, daß die älteste Leute sich dergleichen nicht zu erinnern wissen* (WD 1773-11-15: 5)
- frequent use of superlatives (e. g. „*das betrübteste Spectacul*“ – WD 1754-08-14: 4; „*die elendesten Umstände*“ – WD 1766-03-26: 1)
- written medium reaches its limits: „*Das Unglück derjenigen, die dadurch litten, ist nicht zu übersehen und zu beschreiben.*“ (WZ 1789-09-12: 3)
- natural disasters as ‘indescribable’ – go beyond the realm of human communicability and understanding
- (one) countermeasure: comparing the extraordinary events to ordinary aspects of every-day life to make them relatable and imaginable – e. g. the sound(s) of an earthquake:
 - (3) *als wann eine Kutsche über die Gassen fährt* (WD 1744-09-12: 09)
 - (4) *man hörte ein unterirdisches Getös, Sausen, und Brausen, welches einem in Sude brudelnden Wasser ähnlich schiene* (WD 1768-02-27: 19)

3 18th century as age of enlightenment: religious vs. scientific frames



- ten of eleven scientific frames between 1750 and 1800
- parallel existence of different frames (even in one text)
- complex long-term transition: religious > scientific

RESULTS