

**BSECS 55th Annual Conference “Big and Small”  
Pembroke College, University of Oxford, 7th – 9th of January 2026**

# **Big plans and small realities**

## **The organisation of the sugar factory of Rijeka in context of the Habsburg commercial politics 1750-1775**

**Maja Perić**

**Croatian Institute of History, Zagreb**

**This research is fully supported by the Croatian Science Foundation under the project number IP-2024-05-5581**



**HRZZ PROJEKT LIGHT**  
Između znanja i neznanja

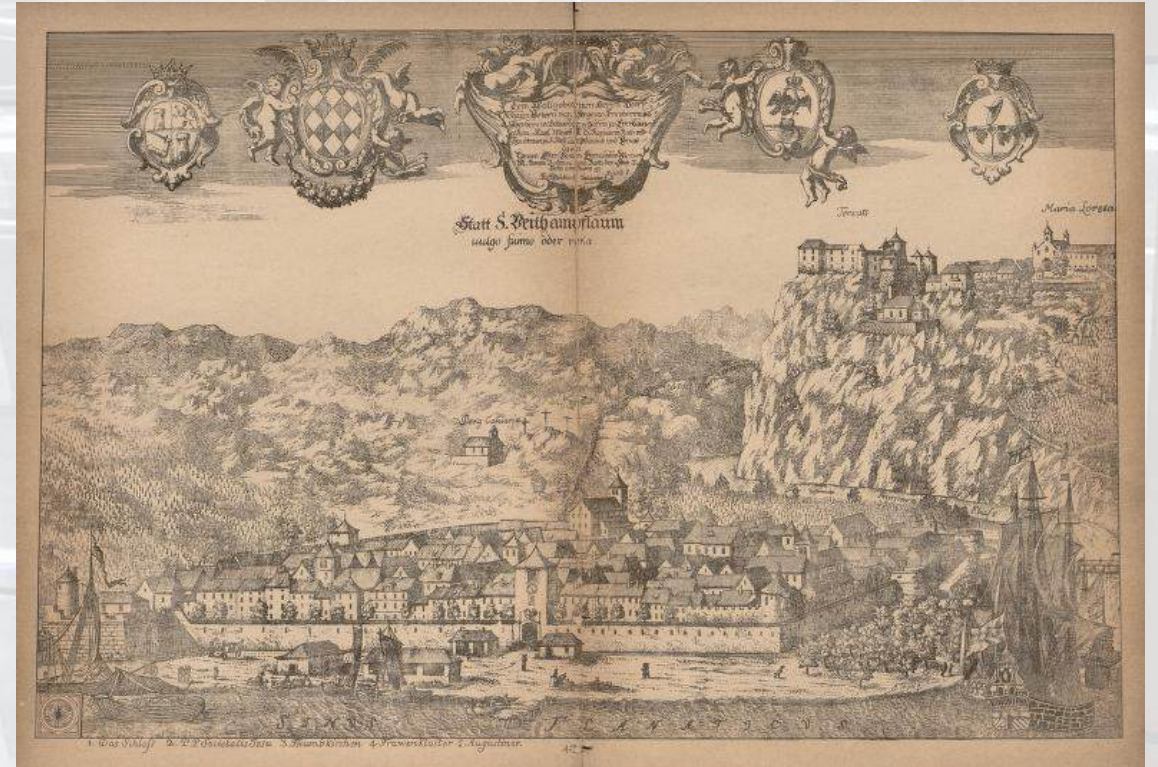


# Two cities – one big common state project



## Antwerp

by Frans Hogenberg, ca. 1572, Print Collection, Museum Plantijn-Moretus in Antwerp



## Rijeka

ca. 1689 in „Die Ehre des Herzogthums Crain” by Johan Weichard Valvasor, Maritime and History Museum of the Croatian Littoral, Rijeka

# Habsburg commercial policy: „Adriapolitik”

- Economic improvement of the Adriatic Habsburg territory
- Competition with other colonial powers
- Reforms and modernisation
- Improvements in infrastructure
- Trade advantages
- 1719: Trieste and Rijeka (Fiume) free trading ports



**Charles VI**  
by Johann Gottfried Auerbach, 1735,  
Museum of Fine Arts,  
Vienna

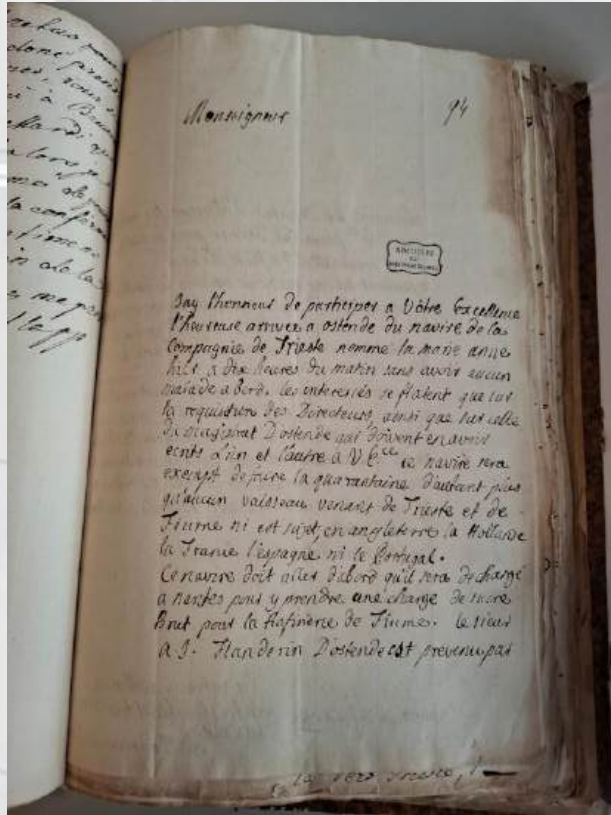


**Joseph II**  
by Anton von Maron, 1775,  
Museum of Fine Arts,  
Vienna



**Maria Theresa**  
by Martin van Meytens, 1759,  
Museum of Fine Arts, Vienna

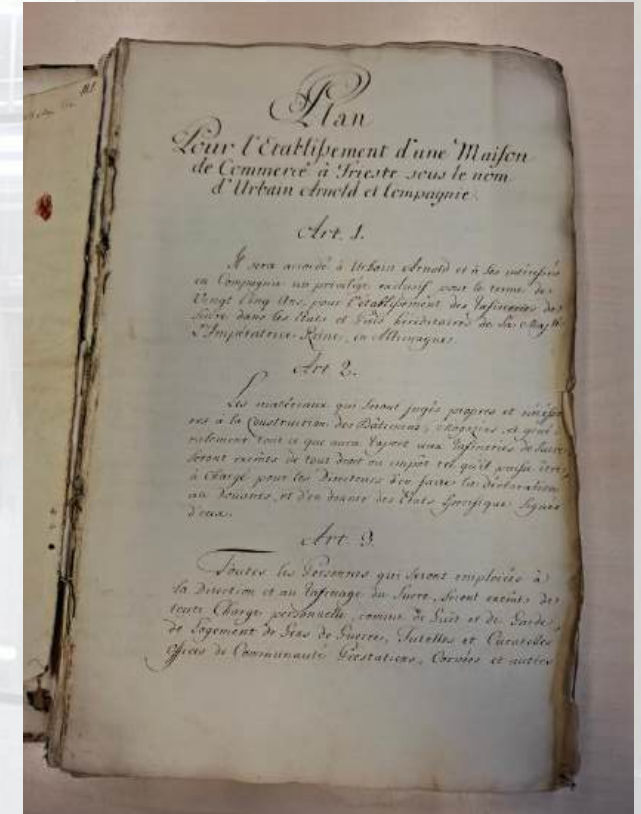
# Big plans: The Privileged Company of Trieste and Fiume



**Negotiation letter**

Secretarie van State en Oorlog (no.1030), f. 94r, State Archives, Brussels

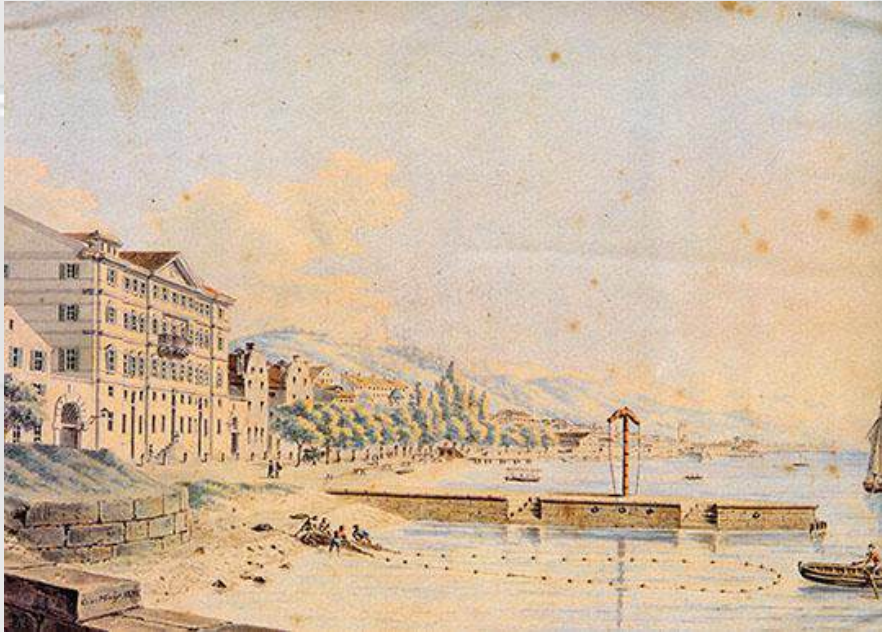
- Negotiations late 1740s
- **PATENT: 1st of October 1750**
- Trieste and Rijeka
- Tax exemptions and several advantages
- Import of luxury and exotic products
- 25 years



**Plan of the establishment of the Company**

Fasz 103, Kommerz Lit Akten 900, Beilagen 2, Hofkammerarchiv, Vienna

# Big plans: The sugar refinery in Rijeka



View at the sugar factory building in Rijeka  
City Museum, Rijeka

- Sugar: exotic and luxury product
- Sugar refining + rum and liquors
- Wax, cocoa, coffee, tea, ship-building
- Central- and South-America, India and China
- No cane, but raw sugar
- Import from Bordeaux, Nantes, Le Havre, London, Lisbon, Liverpool,...
- Buying from Marseille or Venice



Sugar loafs/cones „kampanul”  
Preserved at the City Museum, Rijeka

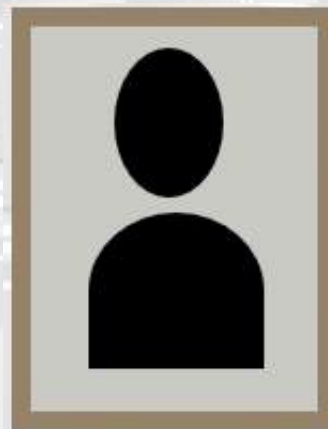
# Big plans: Antwerp investors



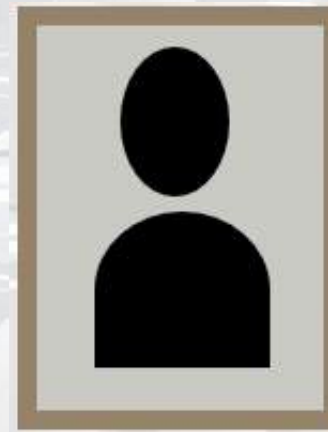
**Count Phillip Kinsky**  
One of the primary negotiators and supporters of the establishment of the Company in Vienna, National Library of Austria, Vienna



**Count Rudolf Chotek**  
One of the primary negotiators and supporters of the establishment of the Company in Vienna, unknown



**Aldegonde Proli**  
One of the primary negotiators and supporters of the establishment of the Company in Antwerp



**Urbano Arnoldt**  
One of the primary investors and directors of the Company in Antwerp



**Charles Proli**  
One of the primary investors and directors of the Company in Antwerp Felixarchief, Antwerp



**Jean Jacques Moretus**  
One of the primary investors of the Company in Antwerp, Museum Plantin Moretus, Antwerp

- Wealthy banking families, investors in Antwerp society
- Negotiations
- Company directors

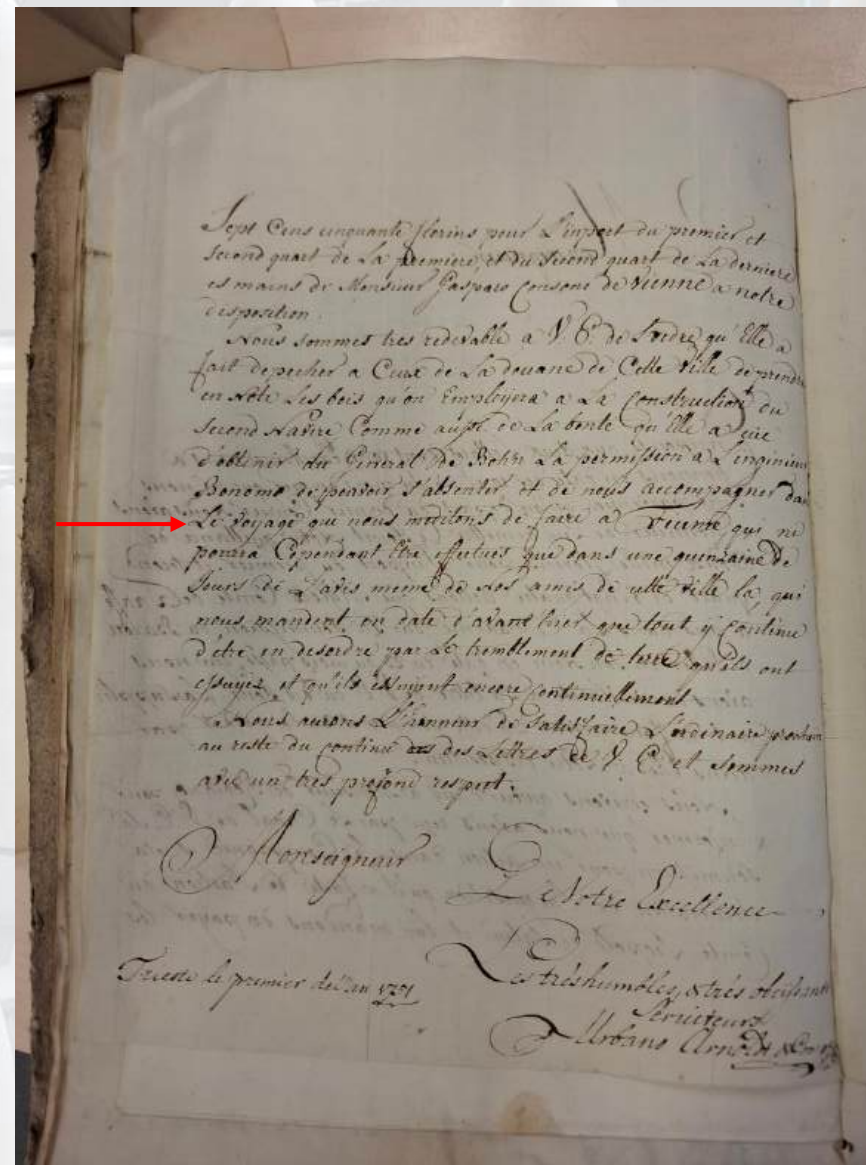
# Small realities: Location issues

## – The earthquake

- Rijeka: earthquake 28th of November 1750
- 1<sup>st</sup> of January 1751:

*Le vojage que nous meditons de faire a Fiume, qui ne pourra Cependant Etre effectués que dans une quinzaine de Jours de L'avis meme de Nos amis de cette ville la, qui nous mandent en date d'avant-hier que tout ij continu d'etre en desordre par Le tremblement de terre*

Letter from the 1st of January 1751 from Urbano Arnoldt in Trieste to Vienna, Fasz 103, Kommerz Lit Akten 897, Beilagen 1, vol 1-3, Hofkammerarchiv, Vienna



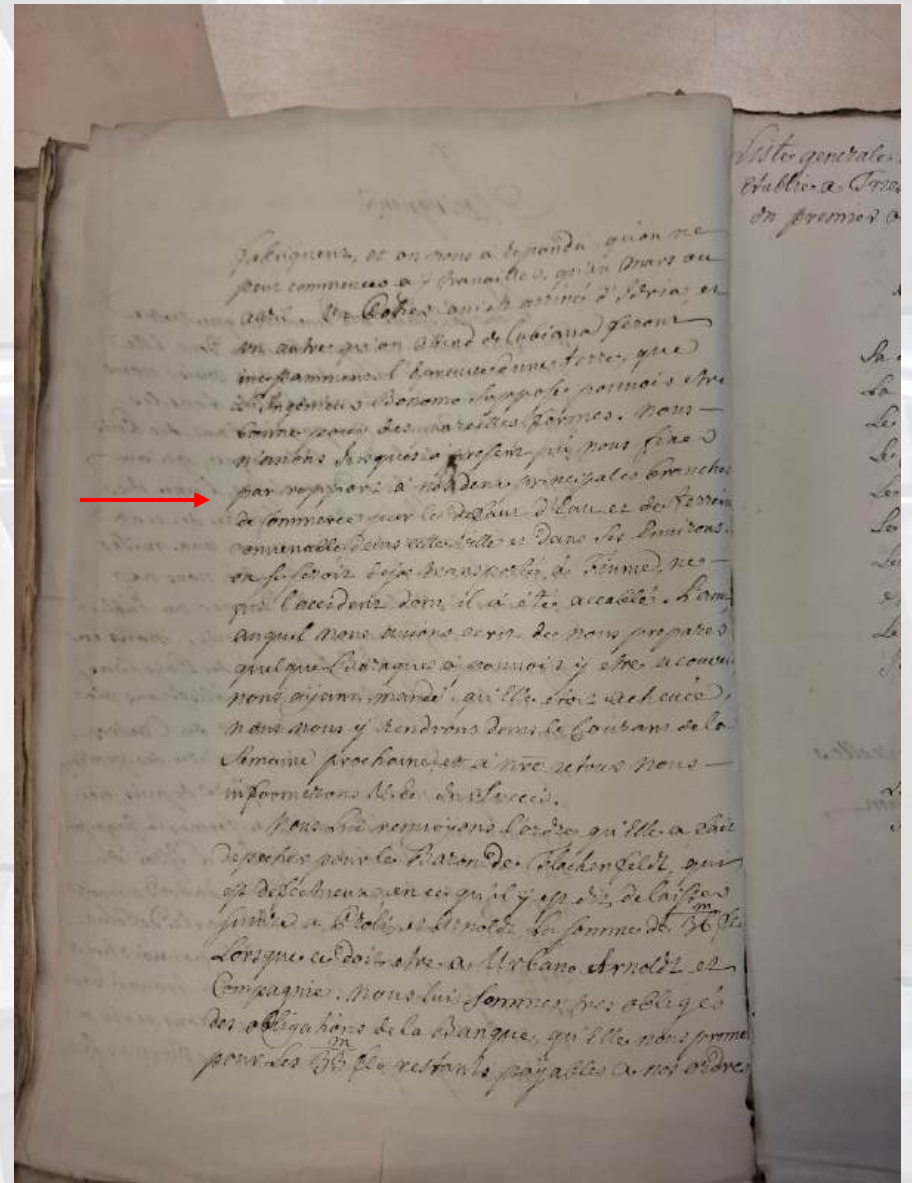
# Small realities: Location issues

## – Water infrastructure

- Fiumara river
- 29th of January 1751:

*(...) par rapport à nos deux principales branches de commerce par le defaut d'Eau et de terrein convenable dans cette ville et dans ses Environs.*

Letter from the 29th of January 1751 from Urbano Arnoldt in Trieste to Vienna, Fasz 103, Kommerz Lit Akten 897, Beilagen 1, vol 1-3, Hofkammerarchiv, Vienna



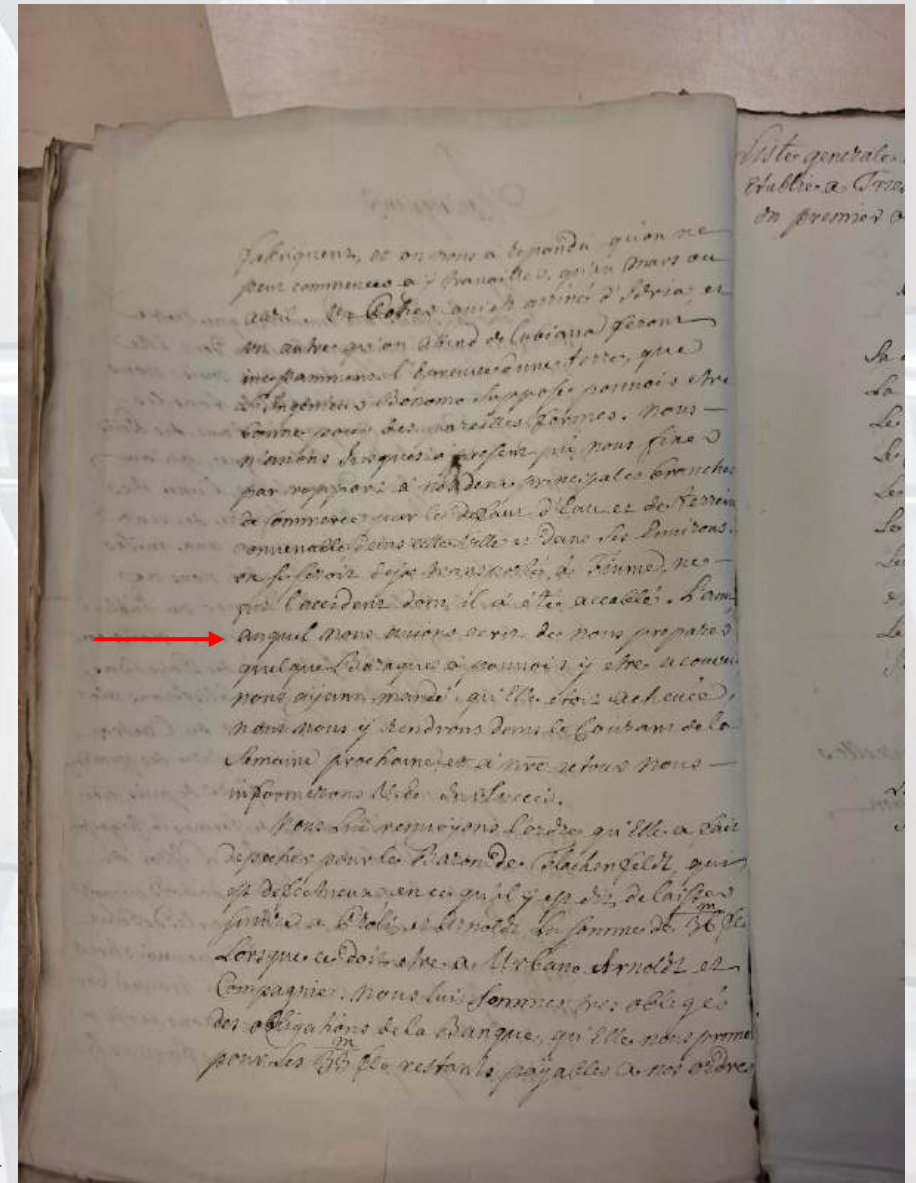
# Small realities: Location issues

## – Temporary solutions

- 29th of January 1751:

(...) *L'ami,*  
*auquel nous avons écrit de nous preparer*  
*quelque Baraque à pouvoir ij etre acouvert*  
*nous aijant mandé, qu'elle etoit achevée (...)*

Letter from the 29th of January 1751 from  
Urbano Arnoldt in Trieste to Vienna, Fasz  
103, Kommerz Lit Akten 897, Beilagen 1,  
vol 1-3, Hofkammerarchiv, Vienna

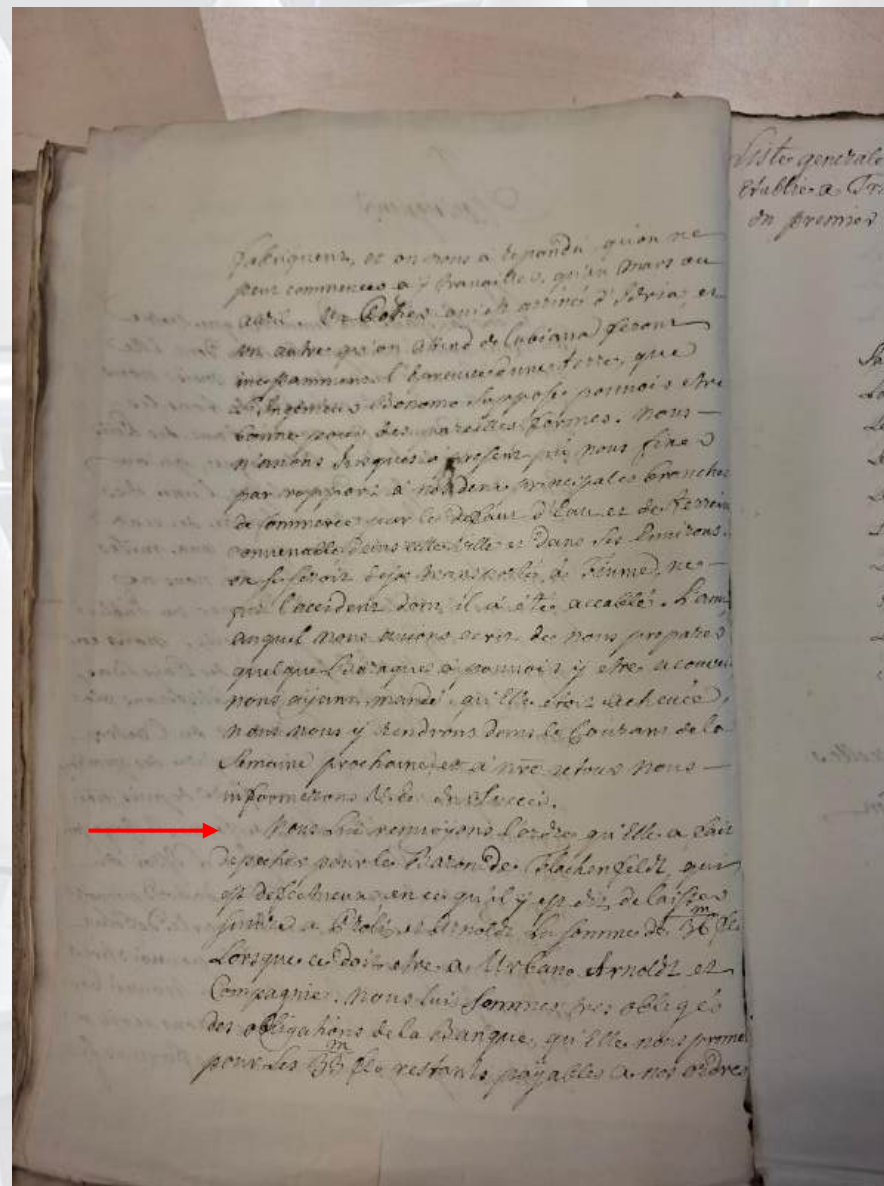


# Small realities: Administration and bureaucracy

- 29th of January 1751:

*(...) Nous lui renvoijons l'ordre (...), qui est defectueux en ce qu'il ij est dit de laisser suivre a Prolis et Arnoldt (...)  
Lorsque ce doit etre a Urbano Arnoldt et Compagnie. (...)*

Letter from the 29th of January 1751 from  
Urbano Arnoldt in Trieste to Vienna, Fasz  
103, Kommerz Lit Akten 897, Beilagen 1,  
vol 1-3, Hofkammerarchiv, Vienna

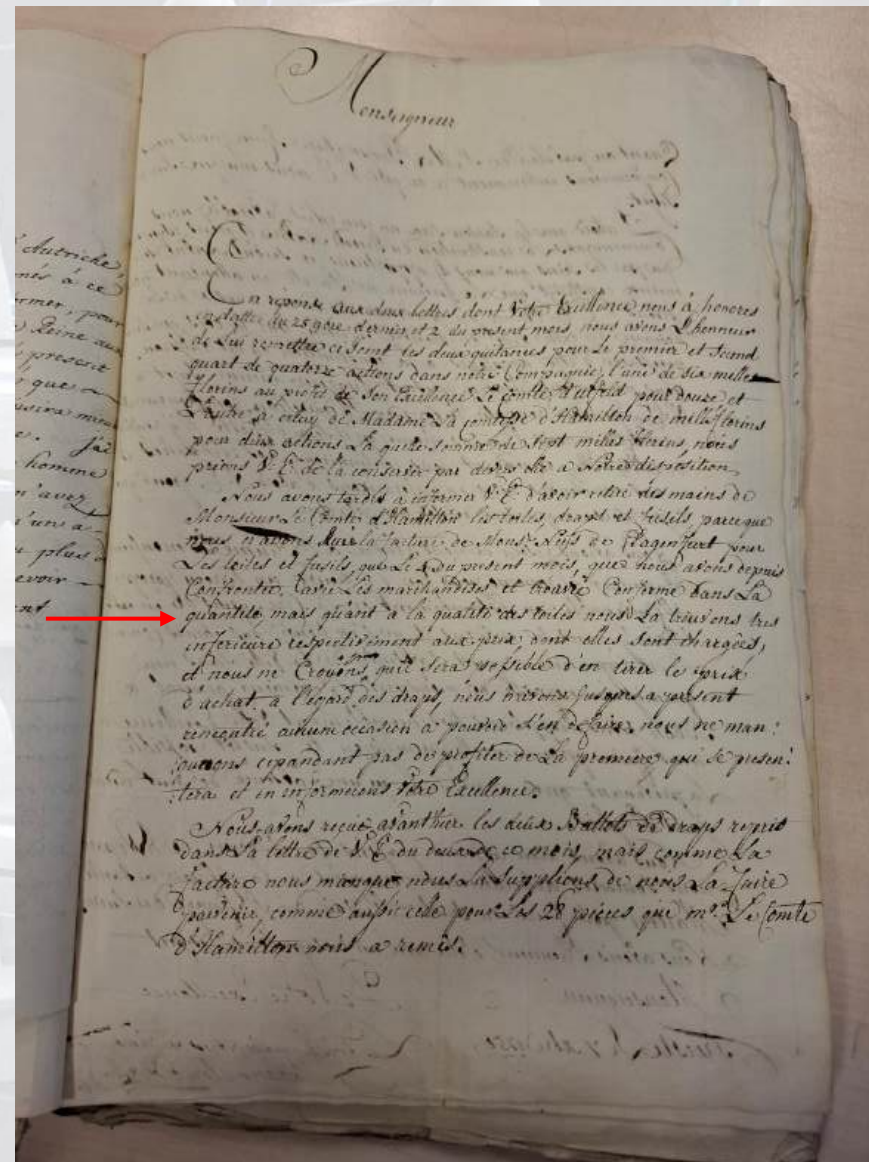


# Small realities: Orders and quality

- 7th of November 1750:

*(...) mais quant a la qualite des toiles nous La trouvons tres inferieure respectivement aux prix, dont elles sont chargées, et nous ne Croijons qu'il sera possible d'en tirer le prix d'achat a l'egard des draps (...)*

Letter from the 7th of November 1750 from Urbano Arnoldt in Trieste to Vienna, Fasz 103, Kommerz Lit Akten 897, Beilagen 1, vol 1-3, Hofkammerarchiv, Vienna



# Small realities: Piracy

- Newspapers
- Delay of cargoes due to piracy

## Examples:

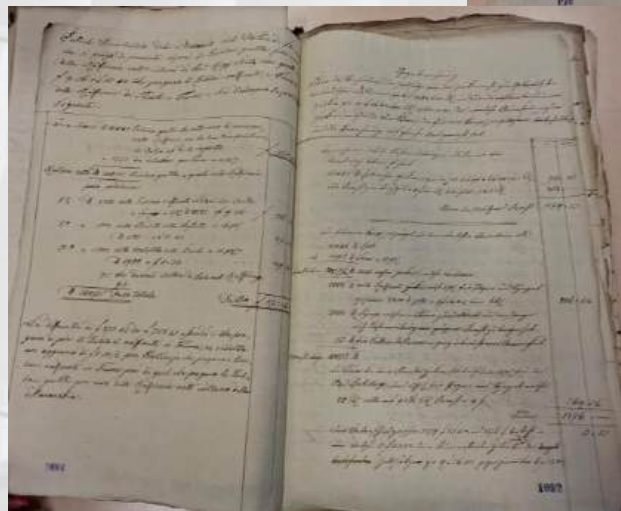
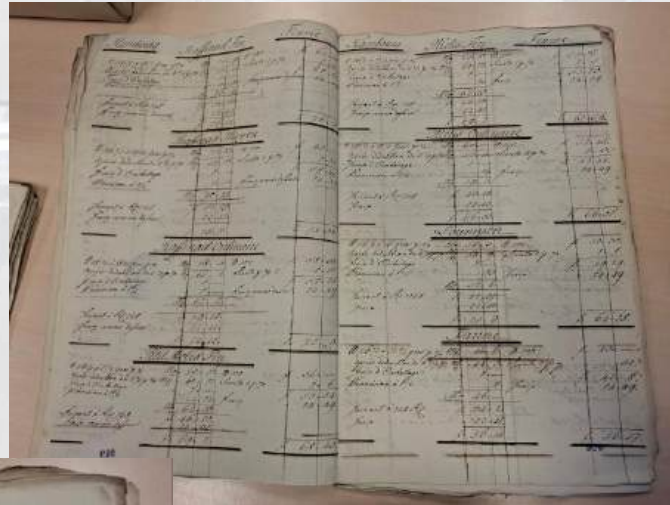
- Gazette van Antwerpen
  - 30th of October 1753:  
*soo blyft echter onsen Coophandel in dese Have, als mede in die van Trieste ende Fiume seer bloeyende, ter oorsaecke dat de gesejde Zee schuymers op onse Water, ofte ontrent onse kusten tot nogh toe niet gesien en worden, het welek men toe-schryft aen de groote oplettenheydt van de Commandanten*
  - 20th of June 1755, 15th of January 1765, ...
- Wiener Zeitung
  - 15th of November 1769:  
*Ein Homburgisches Kaufmanschiff, so von Trieste und Fiume nach Haus segeln wollte, wurde in dem mittelländischen Meere von einem algierischen Seeräuber weggenommen, und nach Tunis gebracht.*



Gazette van Antwerpen, 30th of October 1753, Heritage Library Hendrik Conscience, Antwerp

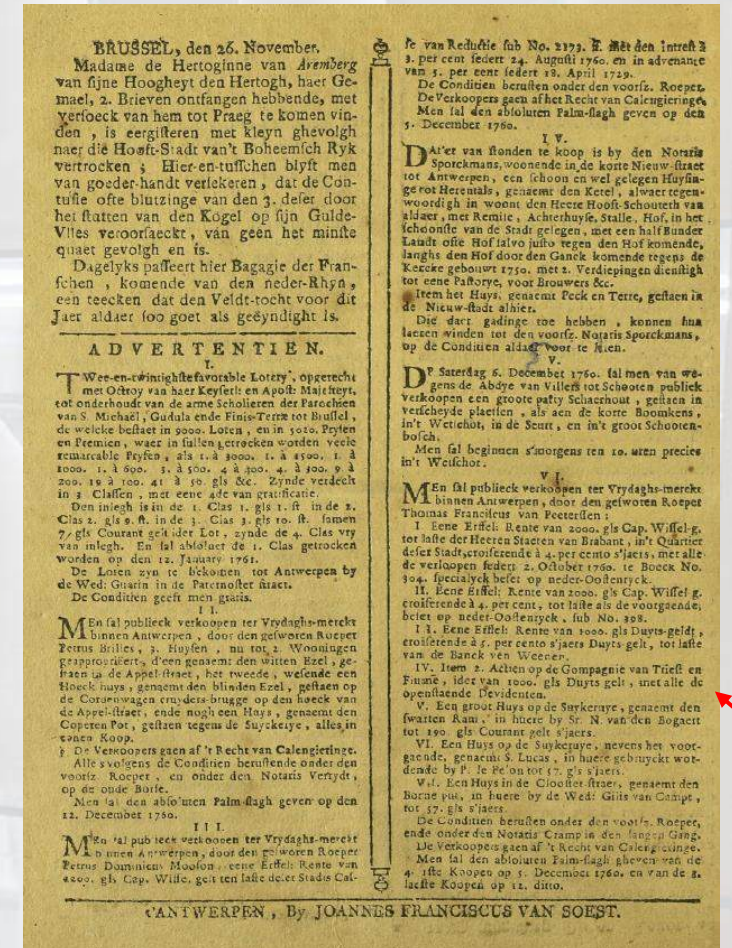
# The Company and the sugar factory: Big plans and small realities

- Newspapers and preserved documents: Flourishing trade
- Administrative and bureaucratic system
- Advertisements for shares
- South-East European centre of sugar production



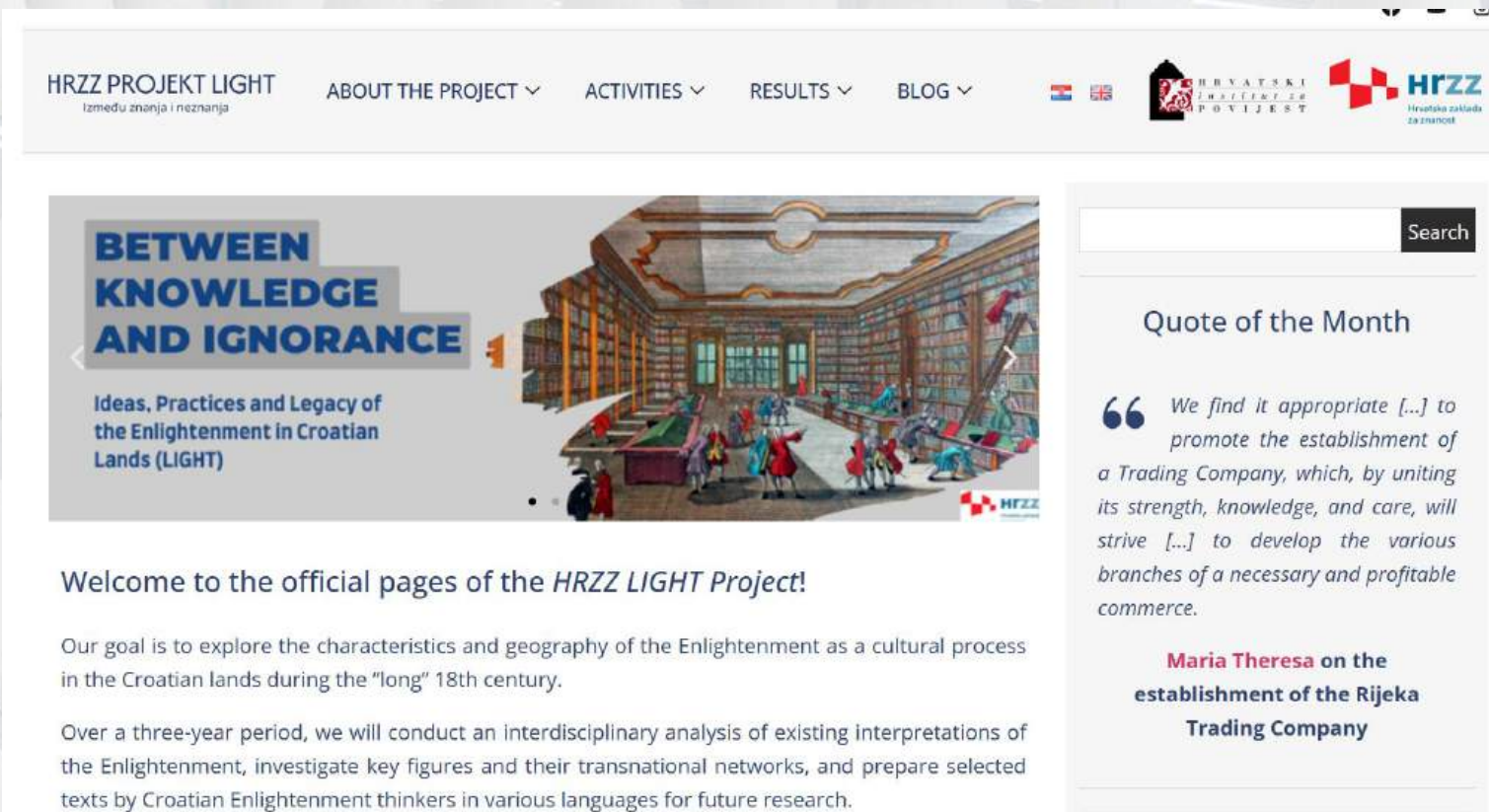
## Examples of the Company's preserved administrative documents

Fasz 103, Kommerz Lit Akten 894,  
Beilagen 2, folio's 919-920r and  
1091v-1092r, Hofkammerarchiv,  
Vienna



Advertisement about the selling of shares  
Gazette of Antwerpen, 28th of November 1760,  
Heritage Library Hendrik Conscience, Antwerp

# HRZZ project „LIGHT: Between Knowledge and Ignorance. Ideas, Practices and Legacy of the Enlightenment in Croatian Lands



The screenshot shows the homepage of the HRZZ LIGHT Project website. At the top, there is a navigation menu with links for 'ABOUT THE PROJECT', 'ACTIVITIES', 'RESULTS', and 'BLOG'. The main header features the project title 'HRZZ PROJEKT LIGHT' with the tagline 'Između znanja i neznanja'. Below the navigation, there is a large banner image of a historical library interior with the text 'BETWEEN KNOWLEDGE AND IGNORANCE' and 'Ideas, Practices and Legacy of the Enlightenment in Croatian Lands (LIGHT)'. To the right of the banner is a search bar and a 'Quote of the Month' section featuring a quote from Maria Theresa about the establishment of the Rijeka Trading Company. The main content area below the banner includes a welcome message and a description of the project's goals and activities.

HRZZ PROJEKT LIGHT  
Između znanja i neznanja

ABOUT THE PROJECT ▾ ACTIVITIES ▾ RESULTS ▾ BLOG ▾

HRZZ  
Hrvatska zaklada za znanost

**BETWEEN KNOWLEDGE AND IGNORANCE**

Ideas, Practices and Legacy of the Enlightenment in Croatian Lands (LIGHT)

Welcome to the official pages of the *HRZZ LIGHT Project*!

Our goal is to explore the characteristics and geography of the Enlightenment as a cultural process in the Croatian lands during the "long" 18th century.

Over a three-year period, we will conduct an interdisciplinary analysis of existing interpretations of the Enlightenment, investigate key figures and their transnational networks, and prepare selected texts by Croatian Enlightenment thinkers in various languages for future research.

Quote of the Month

“ We find it appropriate [...] to promote the establishment of a Trading Company, which, by uniting its strength, knowledge, and care, will strive [...] to develop the various branches of a necessary and profitable commerce.

**Maria Theresa on the establishment of the Rijeka Trading Company**

- Carried out at the Croatian Institute of History
- From 16th of December 2024 to 15th of December 2027
- Funded by the Croatian Science Foundation under grant number IP-2024-05-5581.
- Principal investigator: dr. sc. Teodora Shek Brnardić
- First large-scale research about the Enlightenment in Croatian historical lands

For more information, visit our **website**: <https://light.hipzg.hr/en/homepage/>

**Thank you for your attention!**

E-mail: [maja.peric@isp.hr](mailto:maja.peric@isp.hr) or [majaperic4@hotmail.com](mailto:majaperic4@hotmail.com)