ROTTWEIL – The official unveiling of the MULTI elevator system, the first linear-motor elevator, was held at the ThyssenKrupp Test Tower in Rottweil, Germany, on the 22nd of June.

With over 200 participants – among those, experts in vertical transportation, architects, engineers, journalists and many other people involved in the construction industry – the exciting event presented had the great opportunity for all involved. In a nearby white dome, Antony Wood, CTBUH Executive Director, and Coen van Oostrom, CEO of OVG Real Estate, gave presentations dedicated to the role of mobility – and its reinvention – not only in building design, but also in the urban context. Then, together with the thyssenkrupp Elevator CEO, Andreas Schierenbeck, they moved to the Test Tower. The audience watched on a live stream as they reached the 80-meter long MULTI elevator shafts where Markus Jetter, tke Head of Systems & Components, was waiting for them, ready to activate the new revolutionary system. Once there, on the beat of the drums and on the notes of the “MULTI song” they pushed the button and the rope-less cabin arrived from the upper levels and then switched to the next shaft, horizontally! For the first time in 160 years, the DNA of the conventional elevator has been broken and a new possibility for mobility in building has been enabled.

Following this occasion for the building community, the enthusiastic audience was divided into different groups and led by tke staff on tours of the Test Tower where different interactive stations were organized. The attendees had the possibility to ride the transparent panoramic elevator, which led to the roof top of the 246-meter tall tower, where they were greeted by a 360° view of the German Black Forest. Next attendees were led to the mechanical room where they watched an informative video about the MULTI System and experienced the Microsoft “HoloLens”, a mixed-reality headset that could support elevator maintenance in the future. At another informative station, there was a prototype of a MULTI cabin made of plastic and carbon fiber materials in order to reduce its weight. At the same station, Karl-Otto Schöllkopf, the tKE Global High Rise Consulting, and Dario Trabucco, CTBUH Research Manager and Iuav Professor, presented the early results of a collaborative project between tke and a group of students at the IUAV University of Venice. Finally, the attendees had the possibility to see the MULTI moving – both vertically and horizontally – as they entered in the dedicated shaft. Following flashing led lights and moving mechanisms and rails, the first rope-less cabin arrived – quickly and silently – before coming to a smooth stop and moving horizontally on its rails system, and then, finally, moving up again in a new shaft.

The innovation presented during this exciting unveiling has been well summarized by Antony Wood, who stated “This is perhaps the biggest development in the elevator industry since the invention of the safety elevator some 165 years ago. The ‘holy grail’ for elevators has been to move beyond being pulled vertically by a rope under tension - towards a system that allows movement in inclined or horizontal directions. MULTI, more than any other product delivered to date, really shows the way forward for that potential. This has the capacity to transform the industry at large, changing the way tall buildings are designed, and allowing for much more efficient core designs, as well as better connectivity in buildings.”