



**LOWER VÍTKOVICE
OSTRAVA, CZECH REPUBLIC**



ERIH Annual Conference 2016



Porto, 26th – 28th October

Aerial view of the Lower Vítkovice



About Lower Vítkovice

- The association (NGO) whose mission is to make industrial monuments accessible for education, leisure and culture activities
- Sources of funding: own business (rentals, services), grants/subsidies from municipalities and regional authorities, affiliate program (sponsorship), national/EU funds
- The most visited destination in the Czech Rep. after Prague; 2015 about 1,1 mil of visitors, 2016 estimate to 1,25 mil.
- Educational, social and cultural center with a transregional reach
- Original and entertaining educational programs in unique industrial complex - nowhere else in Europe do we have such evidence about the whole technological flow of production on an area smaller than 15 hectares. The technological flow of material includes black-coal mine – coking plant – blast furnaces.
- Popular place for events, conventions and corporate events; venue for the biggest music festivals in Europe (Colours of Ostrava, Beats 4 Love)
- Complex available to all, without barriers, 24/7 (buildings under operating hours)

International and historical links – I.

- 1828 archbishop of Olomouc **Rudolf Jan Hapsburg** founded Rudolf's Iron Works (Smelting Works) based on the recommendation of **Franz Xaver Riepel** (professor of a Vienna Polytechnics)

***Remark:** Riepl foresaw the realization of a railway from Vienna to Galicia and Vítkovice as the place from where a supply of metals for railway construction could be done. The first blast furnace of Belgian type began construction in 1831.*

- 1835 – plant was leased Vienna's banker Heinrich Geymüller who passed it on to the then called Vítkovice Ironworks, the railroad consortium of major shareholders with the majority position of **Salomon Mayer Rothschild** in the same year. The Rothschilds then became the sole owners of the ironworks in 1843

***Remark:** Salomon Mayer Rothschild was one of five brothers Rothschilds - founders of the world's financial empire. Thanks to his brother in London he met with the invention of the railroad and the possibilities that railroad rendered for the further development of trade and business. And he decided to invest in the construction of railways in Austria. His first building was „Emperor Ferdinand Northern Railway“ between Vienna and Krakow. For such a venture he needed a lot of wrought iron and rails – but import from Britain were not possible because of the high price. That is the reason why he bought Vítkovice Ironworks.*

International and historical links – II.

- 1852 – foundation of coal mine Hlubina in the vicinity of the ironworks
- 1873 – after a crash on the Vienna Stock Exchange and economic crisis almost half of the plant was sold off to the **Gutmann family** who initiated the arrival of a new chief director **Paul Kuppelwieser** (1876)

Remark: Kuppelwieser started an immediate modernization of the production in the plant, coming up with the conception of the so called „New Vítkovice“ which transformed a rural village into a modern industrial city. New colonies for working class, caretaker villas, schools, markets, cafeterias and hospitals were built for employees

- 1924/25 – gasometer construction; diameter 70 m, volume 50.000 m³
- 1930's – economic crisis, the **Gutmans** sold part of their stake to the **Rothschilds**. They rendered the company under the administration of English company **Alliance Assurance Company Ltd.**

Remark: outbreak of war complicated the sale of the company to the Czech-German consortium and therefore the company was under the supervision of German side during the World War II and later under supervision of imperial consortium of Herman Göring's plants (armours for tanks, gun barrels, castings for submarines were produced here)

International and historical links – III.

Remark: Next mention of interconnections within Europe can be mentioned during the Great Depression of the 1930s when the Viennese Rothschilds were greatly weakened due to the financial support of the largest Austrian bank Creditanstalt. About this support Rothschilds were asked by former Austrian chancellor. So they were distinctly helped by British and French Rothschilds – one of the subsequent help was transfer of Vítkovice Ironworks assets to English company Alliance Assurance Company Ltd., whereby Vítkovice was protected against direct Aryanization by Nazis after the occupation of Czechoslovakia.

- 1945 – Vítkovice was nationalized by the state, becoming the largest company in Czechoslovakia during the post-war period
- 1990's – change in ownership: in 1992 the joint stock company Vítkovice was founded and later was privatized. A crucial moment was in 1998 when the production was stopped (27th September)
- Since 2002 the Lower Area of Vítkovice is a national cultural heritage; search for the future shape (redevelopment vs. conservation vs. revitalization)
- 2009 – initiation of revitalization projects (part of developer plan NEW VÍTKOVICE as a link to glory of **P. Kuppelwieser**)

Nowadays – multifunctional auditorium Gong

- Former gasholder was used for the storage of blast furnace gas (secondary product of the blast furnace)
- Capacity: 54 000 m³ of water and 50 000 m³ of gas
- In 2012 rebuilt into the new multifunctional auditorium „GONG“ (designed by an architect Josef Pleskot)
- The original industrial monument was successfully preserved and opened to its new use by building a new structure inside that is dominated by a hall for 1509 people
- **Interests:** Building of the Year 2013 in Czech Rep., World's TOP 10 at Expo Real 2013 (Munich)

[Video](#)



Nowadays – Bolt Tower

- Former blast furnace no. 1, which is the symbol of Lower Vítkovice and represents the historic continuum of pig iron production.
- The entire furnace underwent a complete reconstruction in 1988, when it became the most modern in all of Europe.
- In 2012 was newly adapted into our interactive guided tour and
- In 2015 its silhouette was extended for Bolt Tower based on a design by an architect Josef Pleskot; now it serves as an educational tour with a lookout tower and a café
- **Interests:** *Building of the Year 2015 in Czech Rep., Uppermost café in the city christened by Usain Bolt*

[Video](#)



Nowadays – Science and Technology Centre

- Consists from 2 separate buildings
- Former Energy station No. 6 – now called Small World of Technology U6 (opened 2012) – more than a hundred of interactive exhibits that in an entertaining way explain science to children and adults. The unique exhibition reveals a secret of technical inventions from steaming engine to present day
- Only new building in Lower Vítkovice (opened 2014) - Big World of Technology – it follows up on the already mentioned Small World of Technology U6 and offers its visitors four different “worlds”: Children´s World, World of Science and Discoveries, World of Civilization and World of Nature with the outside botanical garden
- **Interests:** *Biggest non-commercial 3D cinema in Czech Rep., Building of the Ostrava City 2014, member of ECSITE (European network of Science Centers and Museums)*

[Video](#)



Nowadays – creative Centre Hlubina

- Former black coal mine - Directly in Hlubina, the black coal was mined to a depth of 1022 m
- From May 2015 opened as an integral part of the old industrial complex. A new art quarter has emerged from the old buildings and aims at education in humanities and art crafts
- The former operational and administration buildings have become a multi-genre, cultural center with cinemas, music rehearsal rooms and recording studio, presentation spaces, studios, presentation rooms, dance rooms or climbing wall
- Heligonka Music Club - famous Czech folk singer Jaromír Nohavica
- **Interests:** *Building of the Year 2015 in Czech Rep, the 3rd biggest covered climbing wall in Czech Rep.*

[Video](#)



Nowadays – Landek Park

- Former black coal mine, globally famous from the point of view of geology, archaeology, history, natural science and mining studies
- The first settlements and first use of coal in the Landek area date back to about 30 thousand years ago.
- In 1953 the world-famous Venus of Petřkovice/Landek was found here. It is a 46-mm female torso, carved out of hematite. It is the only slim Venus in Europe
- Coal was first mined at Landek more than 200 years ago
- **Interests:** *the largest mining museum in the Czech Rep. with the largest exposure of mining rescue, sports and recreation area with a camp and catering facilities*

[Video](#)



**Thanks for your attention and
see you soon in Ostrava**

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