The Otaniemi area is situated in the eastern part of Espoo – practically in the centre of the Helsinki Metropolitan Area these days. The area is recognized as the cradle of modern Finnish technology and industry as well as the main campus of Aalto University.

Before the construction of the campus, Otaniemi was part of the centuries-old Espoo rural landscape. The need for technical laboratories as well as the rise in the numbers of students in higher education required a move of the Helsinki University of Technology away from Hietalahti as well as investment in the construction of a higher education infrastructure. The State purchased Otaniemi Manor for this purpose in 1949.

Architect Alvar Aalto won the area’s design competition along with his spouse, Aino Aalto, who succumbed to a difficult illness over the course of the competition. The plan was deployed as the basis for the area in 1950. It included not only the State research premises and Helsinki University of Technology but sports facilities and a student village as well. In the same connection, the area received its current nomenclature.

Part of the Teekkari Village and the sports facilities were the first buildings to be completed for the 1952 Olympic Games. After the end of the Games, Otaniemi has frequently functioned as a sports village for European and World Championship events. Of the research institutes, the first to be completed were the Geological Survey of Finland building and the University of Technology’s sawmill, which were needed not only for research in wood technology but as a material supplier for the construction of the area.

Due to a strike, the planning of the Otaniemi area was extended to the end of the 1950s, when the first larger buildings for the Helsinki University of Technology were completed. The first part of the university’s main building was opened for use in 1964, and the inauguration was held in connection with the promotion ceremonies in 1966.

Otaniemi grew into a nucleus for research supporting Finnish industry during the 1970s and 1980s. Approximately 40,000 people currently work in the area. That number is set to grow in the years to come as Aalto University concentrates its operations on Otaniemi. (Panu Nykänen, Ph.D.)

Walking on Campus

This brochure invites you to familiarize yourself with the buildings, nature and stories in Otanimi.

Where is the most obvious ‘fifth façade’? Which building is located at Otaniemi’s highest elevation?

The campus is continuing to develop: the West Metro section will launch its operations, a new university building will be completed at Aino Square, and residential construction will be increased. Regional planning is directed by sustainable development and the goal is self-sufficiency in energy.
1. OTKAARI 1
The main building of the former Helsinki University of Technology, designed by Alvar and Elissa Aalto, was completed in 1964. It dominates the central area of the campus from a small hill where the main building of the Otaniemi Manor was located during the 1700s. The roof of the auditorium continues towards the park in the form of an amphitheatre. The red bricks of the campus buildings suggest old Finnish industrial architecture, illustrating the close relationship of the work done within its edifices with industrial activity.

2. THE LIBRARY
The library building designed by Alvar Aalto was completed in 1969. It is Finland’s oldest building on campus, completed in 1966. The building functions as a venue for various activities and largest library in the technical field. The Polytechnical Students’ Museum is an absolute jewel of its kind. According to the international Association of Museums (ICOM), acting under IUCN, this is the world’s oldest student museum that has been left visible. The original Servin Majun mökki has evidently been a recreational facility in Helsinki’s Alppila district. Address: Jämäntäiväntie 4.

3. SHOPPING CENTRE
At the outset of the 1960s, Alvar Aalto designed a shopping centre and bank building for the centre of Otaniemi. The copper gabled roof of the long, one- and a half storey building culminates in a fifth, clamshell-like façade, which descends in front of the business premises into a curved-edged canopy. In 1987, Aalto’s office designed an additional building for the north section of the shopping centre, where Aalto University’s student association currently functions. Address: Otaaari 11-15.

4. HEATING PLANT
The campus-based heating plant building designed by Alvar Aalto was realized at the outset of the 1960s. The most visible section of the building is the cubeshaped power plant, whose internal engineering is exposed to view from a glass façade. The roof of the structure and its linked projection are made of copper. The engineering offices and control centre are situated in the lower rectangular-shaped premises. Address: Otaaari 6.

5. SAW BUILDING
The saw building designed by Alvar Aalto is the oldest building on campus, completed in 1955. For a long time, it was merely a cold shed on top of a sawing line, as the building did not even have insulation. The saw served the Helsinki University of Technology campus during the construction period in the 1950s and 1960s, and was later used to train students from the Department of Forest Products Technology. Currently, the Saw Building functions as a venue for various events. Address: Kevätmiehenkatu 1.

6. OTAHALLI
Otahalli Sports Centre, designed by Alvar Aalto, was completed for the 1952 Olympics. The building’s larger hall was at one time the country’s largest structure of its kind, and the apse between its wooden rafters is 45 metres long. Otaniemi’s sports centre boasts a grassy field, grounds for track and field, a skating area, two street basketball courts, three tennis courts and a jogging track. Address: Luolamiehentie 7.

7. JÄMERÄNTÄIVAL 1
This building, completed in 1966, is the only dormitory on campus designed by Alvar Aalto. The four-storey, V-shaped edifice has over 200 rooms, and originally it functioned during the summers as a hotel. The southeast façade on the dormitory’s east wing undulates and the layout resembles a fan, which is reminiscent of Aalto’s previously designed MIT dormitory in Boston.

8. DIPOLI
The Student Union building designed by Reima and Riitta Pietilä was completed in 1966. The materials of the structure, which represents organic architecture, derive from Finnish nature: pine, copper and natural stone. Of the total number of Dipoli’s 550 windows, only four are the same as each other. The opening- and closing Käpy (Cone, 1968), a work of art by Kaija Perko and Heikki Koivikko, is located in front of the building. Address: Otaaari 24.

9. TEKNOLOGIFÖRENINGEN
The Swedish speakers’ society house, part of the former Helsinki University of Technology, was designed by Kurt and Thure Möberg and was completed in 1966. The building has no straight corners, and a mythical drinking horn inspired its shape. Club TF – the first disco in the region of Finland’s capital – functioned in the premises, and since the 1950s the tradition has been continued by the Tiffi AB restaurant. Address: Otaaari 22.

10. TEKKARI VILLAGE
Teekkari Village was planned and designed by Heikki Siren and Matti Melakari. The first stage of the village – nine point houses – was completed for the 1952 Olympics. The construction of those buildings represents the world’s largest stunt ever performed by students: engineering students helped on-site to clear and move, in a voluntary work project, a total of 600,000 bricks from the Soviet Embassy, which had been bombed and destroyed during the Continuation War. Address: Jämäntäiväntie 6 a, b, c.

11. SERVIN MÖKKI
Kajia and Heikki Siren designed this student’s restaurant, which was completed in the centre of the Teekkari village in 1952. Currently in use as a multi-purpose facility, the building’s unperturbed milieu is born from the large windows and structures that have been left visible. The original Servin Majun mökki has evidently been a recreational facility in Helsinki’s Alppila district. Address: Jämäntäiväntie 6.

12. OTANIEMI CHAPEL
The chapel, designed by Kajia and Heikki Siren, is situated on the highest hill in the Otaniemi campus area. It stands on a plateau on the hilltop, resulting in a splendid series of premises from the front courtyard to the low and reed-filled gulf, it is bordered by open water. At the same time, it functions as a venue for various activities and sense of community.

13. POLYTECHNICAL STUDENTS’ MUSEUM
The Polytechnical Students’ Museum is an absolute jewel of its kind. According to the International Council of Museums (ICOM), acting under IUCN, this is the world’s oldest student museum that has been left visible. The original Servin Majun mökki has evidently been a recreational facility in Helsinki’s Alppila district. Address: Jämäntäiväntie 6.

14. NEW BUILDING
Verstas Architects is designing a new building for Aalto University. It will enclose the campus area with a public square forming a heart, together with the former main building and library designed by Alvar Aalto. The edifice, segmented in terms of scales to resemble a village, openly conjures the operations of the university with its environment – communicating the message of Aalto University’s values, ambitions, creativity and sense of community.

15. MANOR ESTATES
An impressive utilitarian and decorative garden was built round the ancient Otaniemi manor estates (from the 1700s), with greenhouses and a linden alley (15a) linking the buildings. Another partially preserved linden alley proceeds behind the current library (15b). In addition to the empire-influenced main building (15c) of Haglund’s manor estate, a red-brickled pigsty (15d) has remained, which functions these days as a riding school.