

**“NEW HOME” CONCEPT AS A PART OF HUMAN-CENTERED PEDAGOGICS****Egle Karpavičiūtė**

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**Summary**

The article explores the “New Home Concept” as an emerging framework within human-centered pedagogics, emphasizing the pedagogical value of supportive, emotionally resonant, and context-responsive environments. Drawing on contemporary insights from neuroarchitecture, environmental psychology, and community-based design, the study argues that the meaning of “home” extends far beyond physical shelter. Instead, it represents a multidimensional learning ecosystem that shapes cognitive capacities, emotional regulation, creativity, and social development. Based on the author’s experience and model of transforming houses into holistic, human-supportive environments, the article conceptualizes the home as a pedagogical space where learning processes are embedded in everyday spatial, sensory, and social experiences. The study analyzes four interrelated design principles (emotional resonance, functional harmony, community integration, and adaptive sustainability) as educational mechanisms that cultivate a person’s well-being, autonomy, and intergenerational interaction. Special attention is given to the needs of neurodiverse individuals, whose sensory and cognitive profiles require flexible, predictable, and inclusive environments capable of minimizing stress and enhancing learning engagement. The article further examines the pedagogical significance of natural elements, shared community hubs, and adaptive technological solutions, arguing that such components can function as catalysts for place-based and experiential learning. The “New Home Concept” is presented as an educational paradigm that repositions the living environment as a co-teacher: one that supports the development of personal competencies, social connection, and long-term well-being.

**Key words:** neuroarchitecture; learning ecosystems; inclusive design; spatial pedagogy; community-based learning; well-being-oriented education; experiential environments.

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**1. Introduction**

In the context of profound social, psychological, and educational transformations of the early twenty-first century, the concept of “home” is undergoing a fundamental re-evaluation. Global challenges (most notably the COVID-19 pandemic, accelerated digitalization, growing social isolation, and increased awareness of mental and neurodiversity-related health needs) have expanded the functional and symbolic role of residential spaces far beyond their traditional interpretation as mere physical shelters (*Watson & et., 2021*). Contemporary homes increasingly function as spaces of learning, work, creativity, emotional regulation, and social interaction, thereby positioning the residential environment as a significant pedagogical factor in human development. Within this paradigm shift, human-centered pedagogics emerges as an interdisciplinary framework that integrates insights from pedagogy, neuroscience, environmental psychology, and design studies. However, despite the growing body of research on learning

environments and well-being, the pedagogical potential of the home as a formative, continuous, and life-long educational space remains insufficiently conceptualized. This gap is particularly evident in relation to inclusive and neurodiversity-sensitive design, community-based learning ecosystems, and emotionally responsive spatial environments.

The scientific novelty of this study lies in conceptualizing the “New Home Concept” not merely as an architectural or design model, but as an integral component of human-centered pedagogics, where the home is interpreted as an active educational agent that nurtures cognitive, emotional, social, and creative human potential. Drawing on the interdisciplinary design framework that includes emotional resonance, functional harmony, community integration, and adaptive sustainability, this research advances a social and pedagogical reinterpretation of residential space as a micro-ecosystem of continuous human learning and development.

The study aims to present the “New Home Concept” as a pedagogically grounded model within human-centered education, demonstrating how residential environments can function as inclusive, adaptive, and development-oriented learning spaces across the human lifespan. To achieve this aim, the study addresses the following research objectives:

- to analyze contemporary interdisciplinary approaches to human-centered design and their relevance for pedagogical theory;
- to conceptualize the home as an educational environment influencing emotional well-being, creativity, and social learning;
- to identify pedagogical implications of neurodiversity-oriented and community-integrated residential design;
- to systematize the structural logic of the “New Home Concept” within a human-centered pedagogical framework.

The methodological foundation of the research is based on an interdisciplinary approach combining theoretical analysis, conceptual modeling, and qualitative synthesis of findings from pedagogy, environmental psychology, neuroscience, and human-centered design. Methods include comparative analysis, structural-functional analysis, and conceptual generalization of empirical and theoretical insights presented in contemporary design-pedagogical discourse. The logic of the study proceeds from a critical rethinking of the traditional notion of home, through the integration of human-centered and neurodiversity-sensitive principles, toward the formulation of a pedagogically grounded model of residential space as a continuous learning environment. This structure ensures conceptual coherence and allows for a systematic representation of the “New Home Concept” as a meaningful contribution to modern human-centered pedagogics.

## **2. Human-Centered Pedagogics in Contemporary Applications**

Human-centered pedagogics emerged as a response to the limitations of technocratic, standardized, and outcome-driven educational models that dominated much of the twentieth century. Its intellectual roots can be traced to the mid-twentieth century, when rapid industrialization, mass schooling, and later digitalization increasingly treated learners as passive recipients of knowledge rather than as complex, developing individuals. Against this background, scholars and educators began to argue for an educational paradigm that prioritizes human dignity, personal meaning, and holistic development. The theoretical foundations of human-centered pedagogics draw from several converging traditions. Humanistic psychology, particularly the works of Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers, played a pivotal role by emphasizing self-actualization, intrinsic motivation, empathy, and learner autonomy. In pedagogy, these

ideas resonated with earlier progressive educators such as John Dewey, who conceptualized education as an experiential, socially embedded process, and Maria Montessori, who advocated for learner-centered environments adapted to individual developmental needs. Later contributions from Lev Vygotsky highlighted the socio-cultural dimensions of learning, reinforcing the idea that education unfolds within relational, environmental, and cultural contexts rather than in isolation (*Andrews & et., 2019*). Human-centered pedagogics developed in opposition to rigid instructional models by proposing that education should begin not with curricula or institutional requirements, but with the learner as a whole person. This includes cognitive abilities alongside emotional states, social relationships, bodily experiences, cultural identity, and individual life trajectories. Over time, the approach expanded beyond formal education to include lifelong learning, professional training, community education, and, increasingly, the design of learning-supportive environments.

Several core principles define Human-centered pedagogics:

- holistic development principle: views learning as inseparable from emotional well-being, creativity, and social belonging;
- individual variability principle: recognizes that learners differ in cognitive styles, sensory perception, pace of development, and motivational drivers;
- agency and participation principle: declares that learners are active co-creators of their educational pathways rather than passive objects of instruction;
- contextual embeddedness principle: acknowledges that learning is shaped by physical environments, social relations, cultural norms, and everyday life conditions;
- ethical responsibility principle: underpins human-centered pedagogy, emphasizing respect, inclusivity, and the creation of conditions that enable human flourishing rather than mere performance optimization (*Latecka, 2023*).

In the contemporary world, human-centered pedagogics is applied across multiple domains. In education systems, it informs inclusive teaching practices, project-based learning, social-emotional learning, and learner-centered assessment. In digital education, it guides the design of platforms that prioritize usability, psychological safety, and meaningful engagement over efficiency alone. In organizational and professional learning, it shapes coaching models, leadership development, and well-being-oriented workplace education. Increasingly, human-centered pedagogics is also influencing the design of physical environments (schools, universities, workplaces, and homes) recognizing space as an active pedagogical factor. This expansion reflects a broader understanding that learning and human development are continuous processes embedded in everyday environments (*Garcia-Lopez & et., 2020*). Thus, human-centered pedagogics today functions not merely as an educational methodology, but as an integrative framework for aligning education, environment, and human potential in complex contemporary societies.

### 3. Neurodiversity and the Limits of Inclusivity Paradigms

In recent decades, neurodiversity has emerged as a key concept for understanding human variability, emphasizing that neurological differences (such as autism spectrum conditions, ADHD, sensory processing differences, dyslexia, and other cognitive variations) are natural forms of human diversity rather than pathologies requiring correction. Importantly, the proportion of neurodivergent individuals within modern societies is increasing, not only due to improved diagnostic practices, but also as a result of intensified cognitive demands, digital overstimulation, urban density, and prolonged psychosocial stress. Neurodiversity is

therefore not a marginal phenomenon but a structural characteristic of contemporary society that requires systemic reconsideration across educational, social, and spatial domains (Houting, 2019). Despite growing recognition of inclusivity as a normative social value, prevailing inclusion frameworks remain largely oriented toward visible, physically measurable forms of difference. Architectural accessibility standards, educational accommodations, and public policies often prioritize mobility impairments, visual or auditory disabilities, and other physically divergent conditions. While these measures are essential, they insufficiently address the less visible, yet equally impactful, needs of neurodivergent individuals whose challenges are primarily sensory, cognitive, emotional, or regulatory in nature (Dwyer & et., 2023).

This imbalance reveals a conceptual limitation of modern inclusivity: it frequently operates within a compensatory logic, focused on physical access and formal equality, rather than within an adaptive logic that recognizes diverse modes of perception, processing, and interaction with the environment. Neurodivergent individuals may experience heightened sensitivity to noise, light, spatial complexity, unpredictability, or social density: factors that are rarely captured by conventional accessibility standards. As a result, spaces that are formally inclusive may remain functionally exclusionary for a substantial and growing segment of the population. From the perspective of human-centered pedagogics, this gap is particularly problematic. Learning, development, and social participation are profoundly shaped by environmental conditions. When residential, educational, or communal spaces impose constant sensory overload or cognitive stress, neurodivergent individuals are forced into continuous self-regulation, masking, or withdrawal (Quigley & et., 2024). Such environments do not merely fail to support learning; they actively undermine well-being, creativity, and long-term participation in social life.

A widened understanding of neurodiversity requires shifting from the notion of “accommodation” toward the principle of environmental responsiveness. Rather than treating neurodivergent needs as exceptions to a normative standard, inclusive systems must recognize variability as the baseline condition of society. This implies designing environments (especially homes and community spaces) that offer sensory modulation, predictability, choice, and degrees of social engagement. Importantly, these features do not benefit neurodivergent individuals alone; they enhance comfort, emotional regulation, and cognitive clarity for all members of society (Cook, 2024). Within the New Home Concept, neurodiversity is therefore understood not as a specialized category, but as a lens through which inclusivity itself must be redefined. A truly inclusive society is not one that merely grants access to existing structures, but one that rethinks those structures in accordance with diverse human ways of sensing, thinking, and being. In this sense, neurodiversity becomes a catalyst for the evolution of human-centered pedagogics, prompting a transition from standardized inclusion toward genuinely adaptive and life-supportive environments.

#### **4. The Built Environment and Emotional and Cognitive States**

The idea that buildings and physical environments shape human emotions, behavior, and cognition is neither new nor incidental. Across civilizations, architecture has long been understood as a powerful medium through which societies transmit values, regulate behavior, and shape individual inner experience. From sacred temples to domestic dwellings, built space has functioned not only as a material structure, but as a formative psychological and pedagogical force (Higuera-Trujillo & et., 2021). Historical architectural traditions provide clear evidence

of this awareness. Gothic architecture, for example, intentionally employed verticality, dim light, pointed arches, and monumental scale to evoke a sense of human smallness in relation to a higher, transcendent order. Cathedrals such as Notre-Dame de Paris or Chartres were designed to overwhelm the senses, directing attention upward and reinforcing the idea that individual existence gains meaning through alignment with a greater spiritual purpose. Within such spaces, a person often experiences humility, introspection, and emotional submission: states that were pedagogically aligned with medieval religious worldviews. Conversely, Renaissance architecture marked a shift toward human proportion, symmetry, and harmony. Inspired by classical antiquity, architects such as Brunelleschi and Alberti sought to reflect rationality, balance, and human dignity through spatial order. These environments conveyed a different psychological message: the human being as a rational, autonomous agent capable of understanding and shaping the world (Coburn & et., 2020). This transition illustrates how architectural forms mirror and reinforce dominant conceptions of the human role in society.

Modern research in environmental psychology and neuroscience confirms what historical practice intuited. Spatial characteristics (light, color, scale, acoustics, texture, and geometry) directly influence emotional regulation and cognitive processing. Environments dominated by harsh lighting, high visual contrast, sharp angles, and overcrowding are associated with elevated stress levels, irritability, and aggressive responses. Studies demonstrate that sharp corners and angular geometries can unconsciously activate threat perception, increasing physiological arousal and defensive behavior (Yao & et., 2021). Similarly, excessive brightness and saturated colors, particularly reds and yellows, may heighten agitation and reduce attentional stability. In contrast, spaces characterized by natural light, moderate color palettes, organic forms, and visual coherence tend to support calmness, concentration, and emotional safety. Curved lines, soft transitions, and predictable spatial organization reduce cognitive load, allowing individuals to allocate mental resources toward creativity, learning, and social interaction. Importantly, these effects are not uniform; they interact with individual sensory sensitivity, cultural background, and personal experience, reinforcing the human-centered pedagogical principle of individual uniqueness (Vartanian & et., 2021).

Beginning in the early 1980s, these insights prompted a significant rethinking of work environments. Open offices, biophilic design, flexible layouts, and attention to employee well-being emerged as responses to evidence that productivity is inseparable from emotional and psychological comfort. While the effectiveness of specific models remains debated, the underlying assumption that space educates behavior and shapes mental states has become widely accepted in organizational design. However, a critical imbalance persists. While workplaces have increasingly been redesigned to enhance motivation, creativity, and efficiency, residential environments have often remained governed by functional minimalism, economic constraints, or aesthetic trends detached from human psychological needs (Kostourou, 2019). This disconnect is particularly problematic in contemporary conditions, where people spend unprecedented amounts of time at home, engaging not only in rest, but also in work, learning, emotional recovery, and social interaction.

From the perspective of human-centered pedagogics, this reality demands a broader reconceptualization of everyday environments. If space functions as a continuous, non-verbal educator, then homes—no less than schools or offices—must be understood as powerful contexts that shape emotional resilience, cognitive clarity, and personal development. Recognizing the pedagogical influence of physical atmosphere is therefore not an aesthetic concern, but a foundational step toward environments that support human dignity, diversity, and long-term well-being.

## 5. The “New Home” Concept in Contemporary Society

The concept of the “New Home” emerged as a response to profound structural changes in modern society that have fundamentally transformed the functions of residential space. Traditionally, the home was primarily understood as a private domain intended for rest, family life, and basic physical protection. Work, education, social interaction, and cultural participation were largely spatially separated and institutionalized outside the home. However, the accelerated social transformations of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, intensified by globalization, digitalization, and most notably the COVID-19 pandemic, have dramatically altered this spatial division of human life. In contemporary conditions, the home has become a multifunctional environment that simultaneously accommodates living, working, learning, caregiving, creative activity, and psychological recovery. During periods of lockdown and remote interaction, homes temporarily replaced offices, schools, gyms, and social venues, revealing both their hidden potential and their structural inadequacy for such complex roles (*Shen & et., 2023*). This experience exposed a critical contradiction: while the home has become the central space of everyday human existence, its conceptual and architectural models have largely remained anchored in outdated functional assumptions.

The “New Home” concept arises precisely at this intersection between expanded social functions and insufficient spatial adaptation. It challenges the reduction of housing to square meters, technical standards, or aesthetic trends, and instead proposes understanding the home as an environment that actively shapes emotional states, cognitive processes, social relations, and personal development. From this perspective, the home is no longer a passive container of life activities, but an active participant in human formation. A defining feature of the “New Home” idea is the rejection of isolation as a dominant organizing principle. Contemporary research and lived experience demonstrate that individual well-being is inseparable from social context. Loneliness, weakened social ties, and fragmented communities have become characteristic challenges of modern urban life. As emphasized in human-centered design research, no home exists in isolation; its quality is deeply influenced by neighbors, shared spaces, local infrastructure, and the broader community network.

Thus, the “New Home” extends beyond the boundaries of a single dwelling and incorporates the immediate social environment as an integral component. Courtyards, shared paths, community gardens, multifunctional hubs, and informal meeting spaces are not supplementary amenities, but essential elements that transform collections of housing units into living social ecosystems. Importantly, this approach respects human diversity by allowing varying degrees of social engagement (from active participation to voluntary privacy) thereby avoiding forced collectivism while counteracting social alienation. In this expanded understanding, the home becomes a micro-level social institution that supports informal learning, intergenerational exchange, emotional regulation, and the development of social competence. Everyday interactions with neighbors, shared responsibility for common spaces, and participation in local initiatives function as continuous, experience-based educational processes. These processes are not structured through formal curricula, yet they profoundly influence values, behaviors, and identity formation throughout the lifespan.

For this reason, the “New Home” concept can be legitimately interpreted as a component of social human-centered pedagogics. Human-centered pedagogics emphasizes holistic development, contextual learning, relational experience, and the inseparability of education from lived environments. When the home and its surrounding community are designed to support psychological safety, inclusivity, adaptability, and social connection, they perform a

pedagogical function by nurturing human potential in everyday life. Unlike institutional education, this pedagogical influence is implicit and continuous. The spatial organization of the home, the quality of shared environments, and the rhythms of community life subtly educate individuals in cooperation, empathy, self-regulation, and belonging. In this sense, the “New Home” becomes a foundational environment of lifelong learning, where human development unfolds not through instruction, but through meaningful interaction with space, others, and oneself. Consequently, the “New Home” concept reflects a broader shift in understanding human development in modern society. It aligns residential space with the principles of human-centered pedagogics by recognizing that education, well-being, and social cohesion are inseparable from the environments in which people live most of their lives. By rethinking the home as both a personal and communal space, this concept responds to contemporary social realities and offers a framework for more humane, resilient, and development-oriented living environments.

## 6. Conclusions

The transformation of the concept of home in contemporary society reflects deeper shifts in how human development, education, and well-being are understood in the twenty-first century. As demonstrated in this study, the home can no longer be interpreted solely as a private, functional shelter detached from broader social and pedagogical processes. Instead, it has evolved into a complex, multifunctional environment where living, working, learning, emotional regulation, and social interaction increasingly intersect. This shift necessitates a fundamental rethinking of residential space through the lens of human-centered pedagogics. The article has substantiated that physical environments exert a continuous and often unconscious influence on emotional states, cognitive processes, and patterns of social behavior. Historical architectural traditions and contemporary research alike confirm that space functions as a powerful formative factor. When this insight is combined with the principles of human-centered pedagogics (holistic development, individual uniqueness, contextual learning, and ethical responsibility) it becomes evident that the home represents one of the most influential yet under-theorized educational environments of modern life.

The analysis has shown that prevailing inclusivity paradigms, while effective in addressing physical accessibility, frequently fail to accommodate sensory, cognitive, and emotional diversity. This gap reinforces the urgency of adaptive, responsive environments that recognize variability as the norm rather than the exception. Homes and communities designed with sensitivity to neurodivergent needs not only foster inclusion but also enhance well-being and functionality for all individuals. Within this framework, the New Home is conceptualized as an integrated social and pedagogical ecosystem. It extends beyond the boundaries of individual dwellings to include neighbors, shared spaces, and community infrastructure as essential components of everyday learning and socialization. Such environments support informal education, intergenerational exchange, emotional resilience, and the development of social competence through lived experience rather than formal instruction. In this sense, the New Home operates as a micro-level manifestation of social human-centered pedagogics, embedding educational processes directly into daily life. By recognizing the home as a continuous educational environment, the study offers a conceptual foundation for future interdisciplinary research and practical applications in housing policy, community planning, inclusive design, and lifelong learning strategies. Ultimately, reimagining the home as a human-centered pedagogical space opens new possibilities for fostering human potential, social cohesion, and sustainable well-being in an increasingly complex world.

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