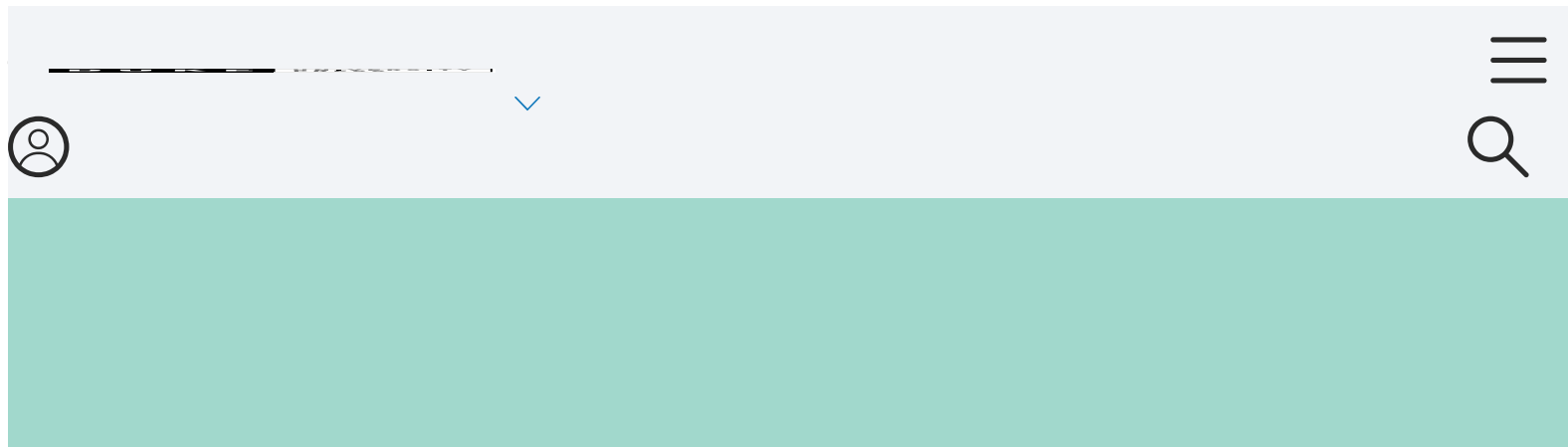


# Theorizing neoliberal urban development: A genealogy from Richard Florida to Jane Jacobs.

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Radical History Review (2012) 2012 (112): 65-87.



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# Article Contents

<https://doi.org/10.1215/01636545-1416169>

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This article considers the role of theory in neoliberal urban development/redevelopment practice in the past half-century. Specifically it reconsiders the writings of Jane Jacobs, one of the most important figures in defining the so-called urban crisis of the 1960s and 1970s. With a vision at once liberal and conservative, Jacobs established a political and economic fluidity that allowed successors to manipulate her innovative theories as they saw fit. The works of one such disciple, Richard Florida, are examined here at length. Florida has interpreted the recent turn toward neoliberal cultural, tourism-focused, and consumer-driven urban development and merged it with Jacobs's theories in order to cast himself as a key public advocate for “creative-class” planning with only marginal success and even less accountability. Despite popular and scholarly critiques of the creative-class model, Florida's celebrity and the popularity of his theories among public officials and economic elites alike have entrenched neoliberal urban planning as the dominant paradigm, not unlike Jacobs's transformative work in the 1960s. Placing Jacobs and Florida within the global phalanx of neoliberal visionaries contributes to the larger historiographical project of understanding neoliberalism's origins in the political economy of our own time.

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Online ISSN 1534-1453

Print ISSN 0163-6545

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