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How Modernity Forgets

Why are we sometimes unable to remember events, places and objects? This concise overview explores the concept of 'forgetting', and how modern society affects our ability to remember things. It takes ideas from Frances Yates' classic work, *The Art of Memory*, which viewed memory as being dependent on the stability of place, and argues that today's world is full of change, making 'forgetting' characteristic of contemporary society. We live our lives at great speed; cities have become so enormous that they are unmemorable; consumerism has become disconnected from the labour process; urban architecture has a short lifespan; and social relationships are less clearly defined – all of which has eroded the foundations on which we build and share our memories. Providing a profound insight into the effects of modern society, this book is a must-read for anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists and philosophers, as well as anyone interested in social theory and the contemporary western world.

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To Marina Voikhanskaya

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The best streets are those that can be remembered. They leave strong, long-continuing positive impressions. Thinking of a city, including one's own, one might well think of a particular street and have a desire to be there; such a street is memorable ... There is a magic to great streets. We are attracted to the best of them not because we have to go there but because we want to be there. The best are as joyful as they are utilitarian. They are entertaining and they are open to all. They permit anonymity at the same time as individual recognition. They are symbols of a community and of its history; they represent a public memory.

—Allan B. Jacobs, *Great Streets*, pp. 9–11

Contents

Acknowledgements	<i>page viii</i>
1. Introduction	1
2. Two types of place memory	7
3. Temporalities of forgetting	40
4. Topographies of forgetting	99
5. Conclusion	132
Index	148

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