Garbage collection is such an expected public service that it is hardly recognized in political science literature. We chose to study it for precisely that reason. We wanted to examine a government function that is so basic that we could nail down the resources that a government relies on to get its work done. What we found were thousands of pages of descriptions of putrefying waste. We encountered stories of precarious living conditions, opportunistic political actors, beleaguered public officials, and overlooked people who make things work and keep the community safe. It has been a privilege to spend time with the ingenious, committed, and diligent people who cleaned up a mess so well that we don’t even notice what a feat they accomplished.

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THE POLITICS OF TRASH