From March 8 to 14, 2008, Dakar hosted the 11th Organisation de la conférence islamique (Organization of the Islamic Conference; OIC) summit of global leaders from the Islamic world. As chairman of the summit, President Abdoulaye Wade aimed to showcase Dakar as a world-class city and Senegal as an emerging leader on the global stage (see figure 1.1). He named his son Karim Wade president of the national agency created to organize the event, l’Agence Nationale de l’organisation de la conférence islamique (National Agency for the Organization of the Islamic Conference; ANOCI). The image of Dakar that greeted the foreign dignitaries was of paramount importance. In the months leading up to the summit, which had already been delayed a number of times, construction ran at breakneck speed on President Wade’s urban infrastructure projects—especially his signature roadworks and the forty-nine-meter-tall Monument de la Renaissance africaine (African Renaissance Monument) that now towers over the city (see figure 1.2). Thousands of street vendors were forcibly removed from the city to keep them from “encumbering” urban space. But perhaps the most vexing challenge was ensuring that the capital was spotless for the duration of the summit, and, importantly, free of unsightly protests that might mar Dakar’s order and Senegal’s reputation.

The previous two years had been rife with garbage strikes and neighborhood dumping revolts, after Wade’s ejection of the international company responsible for the city’s garbage had left the system in institutional limbo and the workers without contracts. In the months leading up to the
summit, Wade endeavored to enlist the workers in his ordering project. He emphasized that it would be “un-Islamic” to dirty the capital before such an important event and that strikes would not be tolerated. In a deeply religious country, where 95 percent of the population identifies as Muslim (CIA 2016), Islam has long been an important feature of Senegal’s public sphere. The trash workers rose to the occasion, working overtime to ensure that Dakar’s downtown and tourist districts, as well as any other routes that the visitors were expected to see, would be clean and orderly. In the days before the summit, Wade hired an additional fifteen hundred day laborers to aid in the herculean task of cleaning Dakar. During the conference, central districts of the city were indeed the cleanest that many had ever seen them, but a different story was evident in the poor outskirts. With the beleaguered garbage workers dedicating their energies to the city’s most central and elite

![Welcome sign featuring President Wade's image for the 11th Organisation de la conférence islamique (Organization of the Islamic Conference; oic) summit, held from March 8 to 14, 2008, in Dakar. Author’s photo, 2008.](image)
areas and the infrastructure budget directed at prestige projects, the poor, off-the-beaten-track periphery of the city was left to fend for itself. In these areas, garbage piled up in streets and public spaces.

The summit went off smoothly but the rest of Abdoulaye Wade’s term did not. When Karim Wade was later tried and jailed in corruption scandals, his mismanagement of funds as head of ANOCI was front and center. President Wade’s prestige infrastructure projects and institutional tinkering with key urban public services came to represent a potent symbol of his disconnect from the majority of the working Senegalese population. His politicking within the garbage sector was a particularly dramatic example: under Wade’s thumb, the sector saw eight major institutional shake-ups (see table 1.1). Although the wake of structural adjustment in Senegal has seen intense volatility in the infrastructural formulas for managing the city’s garbage, the tenor of that volatility reached an unprecedented pitch during Wade’s presidency.

It’s no accident that when the new president of Senegal, Macky Sall, took power after the highly contested elections of 2012, one of his very first acts in
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Institution managing Dakar’s garbage</th>
<th>Institution type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1960 – 1971</td>
<td>Municipal Services (Commune de Dakar)</td>
<td>Local government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971 – 1984</td>
<td>SOADIP</td>
<td>Private company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984 – 1986</td>
<td>Municipal Services (Commune de Dakar); Army Corps of Engineers</td>
<td>Local government and the military</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986 – 1989</td>
<td>SIAS</td>
<td>Parastatal company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989 – 1992</td>
<td>Set/Setal; SIAS</td>
<td>Parastatal company, youth groups, coordination by local government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993 – 1995</td>
<td>CUD; SIAS</td>
<td>Local government with youth group associations, parastatal company, private local contractors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995 – 2000</td>
<td>CUD; AGETIP</td>
<td>Local government with youth group associations, private local contractors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>HAPD; APRODAK</td>
<td>National agency with private local contractors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001 – 2002</td>
<td>APRODAK</td>
<td>National agency with private local contractors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Alcyon</td>
<td>Private international company (Switzerland)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002 – 2006</td>
<td>AMA</td>
<td>Private international company (Italy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006 – 2009</td>
<td>Entente CADAK-CAR; Ministry of the Environment</td>
<td>Power-sharing agreement between local and national state; private contractors (local and Veolia, France)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009 – 2011</td>
<td>Entente CADAK-CAR; Ministry of the Environment; APROSEN</td>
<td>Power-sharing agreement between local and national state; private contractors (local and Veolia, France)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>SOPROSEN</td>
<td>National agency with private local contractors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012 – 2015</td>
<td>Entente CADAK-CAR</td>
<td>Local government with private local contractors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015 – 2017</td>
<td>UCG</td>
<td>National agency with private local contractors</td>
</tr>
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### Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AGETIP</td>
<td>Agence d'exécution des travaux d'intérêt public contre le sous-emploi (Public Works and Employment Agency)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMA</td>
<td>Azienda Municipalizzata per l'Ambiente (Municipal Environment Agency)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APRODAK</td>
<td>Agence pour la propreté de Dakar (Agency for the Cleanliness of Dakar)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APROSEN</td>
<td>Agence pour la propreté du Sénégal (Agency for the Cleanliness of Senegal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entente Agreements of CADAK-CAR</td>
<td>Communauté d'agglomérations de Dakar–Communauté d'agglomérations de Rufisque (The Urban Agglomerations of Dakar and Rufisque)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CUD</td>
<td>Communauté Urbaine de Dakar (Dakar Urban Community)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAPD</td>
<td>Haute autorité pour la propreté de Dakar (High Authority for the Cleanliness of Dakar)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIAS</td>
<td>Société industrielle d'aménagement urbain du Sénégal (Industrial Urban Planning Company of Senegal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOADIP</td>
<td>Société africaine de diffusion et de promotion (African Distribution and Promotion Company)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOPROSEN</td>
<td>Société pour la propreté du Sénégal (Company for the Cleanliness of Senegal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UCG</td>
<td>Unité de coordination et de gestion des déchets (Garbage Coordination and Management Unit)</td>
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Source: Author’s chart
office was to again reform the institutions responsible for managing Dakar’s garbage. As just the latest chapter in this long saga of garbage politics, Sall’s dissolution of Wade’s garbage management system was a highly symbolic act aimed at purging the previous administration’s failings and charting the country’s new course. This chapter traces Dakar’s dynamic garbage struggles from the late 1980s to the present day in order to delineate the acceleration of a mode of governing-through-disposability as a primary form of state power. As a material practice of power, governing-through-disposability devolves the burdens of infrastructure onto precarious laboring bodies—those of ordinary neighborhood women and the formal trash workers themselves. And yet, in April 2016, decades of labor flexibilization were reversed when the workers won formal contracts and higher salaries. In tracing out that history, this chapter reveals the tumultuous consolidation and contestation of state power in the neoliberal era and reconfigures how we understand the politics of infrastructure.

As one of the first African countries to undertake structural adjustment and one of the continent’s oldest and most respected democracies, Senegal is a fertile case through which to examine how formulas of governing are transformed in the context of austerity and democratic competition. This chapter considers the bundle of technical, institutional, social, and political factors that constitute the garbage collection infrastructure as a lens into state power and politics. In doing so, it builds on a rich tradition of academic inquiry into the relationship between infrastructure and state power, or what Michael Mann (1984) termed infrastructural power in his foundational inquiry into how infrastructure territorializes social life. Whether viewed through its rollout as a symbolic manifestation of modern development, analyzed at the point of breakdown, or understood through spaces and processes of abjection, disconnection, or disrepair, infrastructure is a key site for the ordering of society by the state. Infrastructure assembles political economies, processes and discourses of development, and vernacular political histories in urban space and material practice. As a public collective good, moreover, it crystallizes social-power relations and patterns of injustice in the urban landscape.

The power of infrastructure becomes keenly apparent when considering not just its technical and institutional elements, but also its social components and affective dimensions. Of key importance here are the aesthetic, material, and sensuous qualities that are central not just to how infrastructures operate, but to the structures of feeling to which they may give rise—or
what Brian Larkin has called the poetics of infrastructure. Infrastructure has a performative dimension—its political address is often conjured through event and spectacle. For instance, research into projects of eviction, demolition, or redevelopment, whether justified through singular international events or in the staging of world-class city making and bourgeois environmentalisms, starkly reveal the political content of infrastructural innovations. Infrastructures have a representational logic; they are the means “by which a state proffers . . . representations to its citizens and asks them to take those representations as social facts” (Larkin 2013, 335). Their development, maintenance, or breakdown can inspire awe, fear, desire, and obedience as much as they can incite rebellion or spark imaginative practice. What Dakar’s garbage saga makes clear is that it is the embodied material force of these representations that gives them power. Governing-through-disposability entails the uneven provision of trash infrastructures and the flexibilization of garbage labor—effectively bringing people more firmly into the management of their own waste.

In this chapter, I unpack the implications of different infrastructural arrangements around garbage in Dakar and their associated performative practices for state power and politics. Research on postcolonial politics, especially African politics, emphasizes the reliance on spectacle in expressions of authority (Bayart 1989; Hansen and Stepputat 2001; Mbembe 2001). The theatrical mode of politics is well recognized in Senegal (Cruise O’Brien 2007; Foucher 2007), but what has not previously been explored is how performed power is material, spatial, and embodied. Weaving together an analysis of Senegalese politics, the political economy of development, and institutional transformations in the garbage sector, the chapter details how garbage labor has become a focal point of performative urban politics in the context of economic and political liberalization. Emphasizing the materiality of struggles over hegemony, the analysis shows how governing works through the way that infrastructures organize laboring bodies. In the wake of structural adjustment, performances of governing garbage infrastructures have hollowed out infrastructure’s function and value, focusing instead on the display of toiling bodies in public space and the spectacle of big institutional shake-ups with little substance. Reading infrastructure through waste labor politics brings the crucially important urban labor question to bear on infrastructure politics, illuminating the risks, precarities, and burdens of new systems for organizing the city. The material power of waste renders garbage management systems particularly important performative
vehicles for disciplining the urban public as well as privileged loci for democratic contestation.

Specifically, I focus on garbage politics during two key moments: the implementation of structural adjustment in the late socialist period from 1988 to 2000, and the reign of self-described liberal president Abdoulaye Wade from 2000 to 2012. The first moment is characterized by the dissolution of a more comprehensive, modernist collection system and its replacement by a cheap, participatory infrastructure based on youth labor that slashed the municipal budget, extended patronage networks to new social groups, and deployed neoliberal discourses of participatory citizenship in highly visible performances of ordering. The second period is characterized by escalating tension between the president and the mayor of Dakar, the intensification of institutional instability in the attempt to consolidate power, and the increasingly uneven distribution of order throughout the city. Across these two very different modes of governing garbage, we see three key dynamics: (1) desperate political maneuvering that reinforces patronage modes of governing in the context of scarce resources through attempts to consolidate power and outcompete political rivals; (2) the manifestation of these political responses in episodic, performative, and increasingly fragmented investments that leave the city’s infrastructures highly uneven and, for most, degrading; and, most importantly, (3) the differentiated devolution of the burdens of infrastructure’s politicization onto residents, laborers, and social systems—or the uneven distribution of disposability across the city. Together, this analysis provides a crucial history of the democratic politics of neoliberal reform.

Before I begin the analysis of governing disposability in the neoliberal era, I will first provide a brief historical contextualization of urban politics in Senegal’s colonial and nationalist periods.

**Colonial Legacies of Infrastructural Politics**

An analysis of contemporary politics in Dakar must necessarily be situated within Senegal’s unique colonial political history and the patterns of governing-through-disposability that were introduced during that time. Senegal’s coastal cities have long been theaters of democratic contestation. Founded by the French, Dakar and three other coastal settlements (Saint-Louis, Gorée, and Rufisque) grew to prominence in the late nineteenth century and were organized into *communes* (municipalities) in the nineteenth century. These Quatre Communes (Four Communes), as they came to be
known, represented France’s oldest colonial holdings in tropical Africa as well as the clearest expression of France’s policy of assimilation. Dakar was organized as a fully empowered municipal institution in 1887 and became the capital of the Afrique Occidentale Française (French West Africa) federation in 1902, and it has grown in importance, size, and reputation since that time. Colonial authorities spearheaded major infrastructure projects—including the port facilities as well as the Dakar–Saint-Louis and Dakar–Niger railways—which consolidated Dakar’s role as a major West African trading and administrative center. The city has a long history of “extraversion” on a global stage (Bayart 1999) and has served as a key locus of debate and contestation around questions of citizenship. Though the basis of the economy has shifted along with the successive “globalization projects” (M. Diouf 1998)—from the export of slaves, to peanuts, to tourism today—the city has dominated politics and power in the region for some time.

The originaires (the original inhabitants of the Quatre Communes) are widely recognized to have enjoyed the most political expression of the French colonies in tropical Africa during the colonial period. The Quatre Communes were the locus of a unique and contradictory colonial experiment: the extension of colonial “citizenship” to the originaires. This gave them special rights under French colonial code, which amounted to special legal status and participation in local as well as French elections (Conklin 1997; M. Diouf 1998; Johnson 1971). It also laid the groundwork for municipal politics in Senegal as well as Dakar’s role as the country’s political center. At the turn of the century, black Africans began to dominate Dakar’s municipal administration, and in 1914, originaire Blaise Diagne was famously elected to serve as a deputy in the French National Assembly in Paris (Johnson 1971). Thirty-two years later, Léopold Sédar Senghor would serve as one of the last deputies to France’s National Assembly, before becoming the first president of independent Senegal.

Dakar’s colonial history emphasizes the roots of contemporary uneven development planted in the colonial era and the long history of discourses rendering specific populations disposable. Inequality was central to planning and infrastructure development in colonial urbanism in Senegal and elsewhere (Rabinow 1989; G. Wright 1987) but also governed the distinction made between urban and rural development. In Dakar, key logics of managing urban space and infrastructure during the colonial era were spatial segregation along racial lines through cyclical patterns of displacement, and the distribution of infrastructure in “native” and “colonist” areas according
to privilege. As in other colonial contexts, ideas surrounding the control of wastes were central to the way colonizers fashioned themselves and defined modernity through judging the “backwardness” of natives (Chakrabarty 1991).

Senegal’s bubonic plague of 1914 illuminates a key early expression of the imperative to order public space, infrastructure, and development in the city through discourses and practices of sanitation and public hygiene—or what Maynard W. Swanson termed the sanitation syndrome. In the context of the plague, an effort was made to move native populations—including dispossessing many from their land—from what had previously been a mixed downtown area to a sort of ghetto quarantine on the outskirts of the city called the Médina (Betts 1971; Bigon 2009; Echenberg 2002; Petrocelli 2011). The immediate justification behind the project was to upgrade what were seen as dirty, substandard living conditions and to protect the Plateau district from contagion. In practice, the resettlement project was only partially completed, stemming from the special engagement of originaires in municipal politics. Blaise Diagne played a key role in critiquing the Médina project, and lack of native compliance frustrated resettlement plans (Betts 1971). The episode highlights the long legacy of urban popular resistance to projects of social engineering employing narratives of dirt and disorder in Dakar. It also foreshadowed a much larger-scale urban resettlement and expansion into the sprawling, largely unplanned département (department) of Pikine (founded in 1952) and Guédiawaye (founded in 1972) in the outskirts of the city. The next sections will zero in on the context for the city’s garbage crisis and detail its political stakes.

**1960–1980: Governing Garbage in the Nationalist Era**

In the first two decades after Independence in 1960, Senegal’s development was tightly controlled by the state in its grand plan to modernize and build the nation. The nationalist era was dominated by the Parti Socialiste (Socialist Party) and its strategies to steer the country’s economic, social, and cultural course under the strong leadership of Léopold Sédar Senghor, who served as president from 1960 to 1980. Although the country was more open to democratic competition than many of its neighbors, the political opposition was tightly controlled until reforms began in 1976. Senghor’s vision was a total reconstruction of Senegal’s economy, society, and geography after colonization. His approach was rooted in a developmentalist ideology, as
articulated in key plans and institutions aimed at setting the country on a modernization path that was consistent with ideas of African Socialism (M. Diouf 1997). Economic development was to be steered by long-term development planning centered on a large job-creating public sector.

During these “20 glorious years of employment” after Independence (B. Fall 2002, 50), the state was the main employer, the public sector was highly subsidized, and most urban graduates were privileged with comfortable jobs. The public sector grew to serve the ideological purpose of demonstrating state legitimacy and asserting a socialist legacy. In an attempt to create a middle class and keep the social peace, public sector workers earned rates that were incommensurate with revenues and the cost of basic necessities was subsidized (Bellitto 2001). In addition to the development of the peasantry, urban infrastructure was imagined as a key tool of state-led development to bring about a modern Senegal and unleash a more equitable vision of development. Significant investments were made in such sectors as road construction, housing, industry, and the building of monuments to the new nation, but resources were extremely constrained due to the country’s lack of natural resources and reliance on the rural peanut economy which began to falter with droughts in the late 1960s and 1970s. The modernist, Socialist rhetoric of development and social justice was tempered by the patronage politics honed in the colonial era, which gained steam in the hiring practices and uneven infrastructural investment of the “providential state” (M. Diouf 1997).

Following on colonial trends, in the late 1960s the postcolonial state subsidized housing programs for civil servants while systematically evicting and resettling “squatters” and other “illegal” occupants farther and farther out of the peninsula to areas with little infrastructure (Vernière 1977). As René Collignon has argued, the periodic expulsion of undesirable populations—or déchets humains (human garbage)—seen as “encumbering” urban space ramped up in the 1960s and 1970s.15 Real estate investment and housing construction have continued to be “key components of a strategy to project the image of a modern Dakar as the national capital,” but have been overwhelming concentrated in central districts and woefully insufficient in keeping up with urban growth.16

In the immediate period after Independence, from 1960 to 1971, the management of household waste in the city of Dakar was a small-scale affair directly ensured by the municipal services.17 Horse-drawn carts were used to transport the garbage to a dump located in an old quarry in Hann, not...
far from downtown Dakar, until the dry lakebed, Mbeubeuss (forty kilometers from Dakar), was transformed into a new dump in the late 1960s. This municipal service ran relatively smoothly until its first crisis in 1968—paralleling a political crisis that took place that year—which extended until 1971 (Benrabia 2002, 261). The city had become filthy and garbage a point of political contention, so the municipal authorities decided to privatize the waste-management system. In 1971, the city of Dakar signed a five-year contract with the local private company la Société Africaine de diffusion et de promotion (African Distribution and Promotion Company; SOADIP) for Dakar’s household trash management. The company built two transfer stations, introduced a fleet of modern collection vehicles, and hired more than eleven hundred people (BCEOM 1986). It assured the fairly regular management of garbage until the early 1980s. Faced with defaults in payments from the municipality, however, the company was unable to maintain its equipment and service and ceased all activities in 1984 (BCEOM 1986; M. Diouf, n.d.).

Public events were staged in the 1960s to enlist Socialist Party youth in cleaning the city and ridding it of undesirable elements encumbering the public space (including prostitutes and vagabonds). This precedent was to lead to other initiatives in the 1970s and 1980s, including Operation Augias, through which the state tried to tap local energies in the city’s management. Mamadou Diouf (2002, 268) describes Operation Augias as “the occasion, for the ruling class, to affirm its munificence, its incontestable power and authority over populations locked into the grid of political containment.” It was a way for the ruling party to assert its nationalist project. Not surprisingly, as that nationalist project began to splinter in the 1970s, these events were characterized by disillusionment and even violence.


Senegal’s state-led, nationalist development period was to be short lived. By the end of the 1970s, it was clear that the Senegalese economy was entering into a serious economic crisis. Rural exodus and a stagnant industrial sector were hastening rapid urbanization and the explosion of the informal economy. The providential state—which had become the country’s main employer—was deeply indebted and inefficient. Having borrowed significantly from private banks in the 1970s, Senegal received its first structural adjustment loan from the World Bank in 1979. As such, it became one of the first African countries to undertake adjustment policies and pioneered
Governing Disposability

A massive wave of adjustment programs across the continent and the world. Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) were the primary mode through which neoliberal reforms were exported to the Global South. In Africa, SAPs were the Bretton Woods institutions’ solution to a reading of the African economic crisis epitomized by the Berg Report (Berg 1981). This hugely influential paper, and the SAPs that were built around its prescriptions, offered a highly internalist reading of African economic woes. The Senegalese state and its “political management of the economy” were rendered the source of the country’s problems, demanding intervention and assistance from international institutions (M. Diouf 1997, 311). It was hoped that Senegal, a long-time darling of the international community, would become a model of economic liberalization through adjustment. The neoliberal reforms promoted through SAPs rendered development technical and apolitical and chased out the “nationalist dream of economic development and social equality . . . in the name of economic efficiency” (M. Diouf 1997, 314).

Senghor’s handpicked successor, Abdou Diouf, led the charge for structural adjustment with his arrival onto the political stage in 1981. Diouf’s presidency ushered in the period of “technocracy,” where the old barons of the Socialist Party were replaced with younger technocrats. Fashioned more as managers than as politicians, the technocrats favored administrative expertise over the mass-movement politics associated with the nationalist era. Diouf and the technocrats endeavored to use structural adjustment as a strategy to defuse the economic crisis and reestablish financial equilibrium. In the 1980s, Senegal received a total of fifteen different stabilization and adjustment loans from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (Van de Walle 2001). During this period, the country fell deeper into economic crisis.19 Rapidly losing the ability to keep up with the pace of population growth as financial resources flagged, the government made minimal new investments in urban infrastructure and existing infrastructures crumbled under poor maintenance.

Garbage infrastructure began to emerge as a central issue in urban politics with structural adjustment. With the bankruptcy of SOADIP, in 1984 the city became clogged again with its own waste. The new Socialist mayor of Dakar, Mamadou Diop, took charge of garbage management, resorting to personally organizing periodic waste management activities with the assistance of the Army Corps of Engineers. Despite these efforts, immense piles of garbage built up in Dakar. A special event, Set Wecc (“Very Clean” in Wolof), was organized in February of 1985 by the army with the help of

Governing Disposability 39
the local residents, enabling the evacuation of tons of garbage to the dump at Mbeubeuss. A new parastatal enterprise with the state as majority shareholder was then created to manage garbage through which, it was hoped, the state could exercise more control over the system than it had with the private company. The new garbage company, Sias, was given the exclusive management of Dakar’s trash in 1985 under the oversight of the new municipal entity federating the region of Dakar, la Communauté Urbaine de Dakar (Dakar Urban Community; CUD).20

In many ways, Sias was emblematic of the Socialist state’s vision of a modern public sector in the nationalist era: it was well paid, well equipped, and the workers were unionized and rewarded with the full privileges accorded civil servants who were understood to be the breadwinners of their families. Given the wider agenda to privatize and shrink the state, it was an example of foot dragging in the public sector, an ambitious approach to postpone real adjustment that was to prove untenable in the face of pressures to scale back public expenditures and urban public services. All of this was to shift with the crisis of 1988, which both signaled a profound reckoning with the vicissitudes of structural adjustment and ushered in a more intensive implementation of economic reforms in the face of economic stagnation and pressures for compliance.

Worsening economic conditions combined with the rollback of state services to unleash calamitous social consequences, including a dramatic backtracking on progress made in health and education in the 1960s and 1970s and an employment crisis. By the late 1980s, structural adjustment had brought the golden years of state employment to an end, deeply restructured the urban workforce, and unleashed major changes in organized labor in Dakar. As a bedrock element of adjustment, a central aim of reform packages in Senegal was the shrinking of the public sector through the withdrawal of the state from employment and the flexibilization of the labor force in order to cut the public wage bill.21 Privatization and the withdrawal of the state from public employment joined with the decline of private Senegalese industry to precipitate the collapse of formal employment in the 1980s and 1990s.22 Rapid rates of urban migration flooded the cities, particularly the country’s sprawling macrocephalic capital, Dakar, even as formal jobs there became increasingly rare. The decline of formal labor was met with the mushrooming of the informal sector, which began to dominate the Senegalese economy in the late 1980s.

The city’s young people, who comprised an increasingly large segment of
the population owing to demographic trends, experienced unemployment most dramatically. Stemming from their marginality in social networks and the declining efficacy of educational degrees in securing employment, youth swamped the informal markets and became a central element of the masses of out-of-work people occupying the public space. During this time, the job crisis seriously diminished the purchasing power of the Dakarois just as food prices skyrocketed. These factors and reforms aimed at scaling back health care, education, and other social service sectors all contributed to the general impoverishment of the Dakarois and their widespread dissatisfaction with the government.

Paralleling these processes of economic liberalization were processes of political liberalization that responded to increasing demands for democratic representation from the public and opposition groups, as well as pressures from the international community through SAP conditionalities. Though President Diouf deepened political reforms in the 1980s, challenges to state legitimacy would continue to plague the Socialist Party in the devastating wake of structural adjustment. The growing informalization of the Senegalese economy, furthermore, had broad impacts for state power and patronage resources. Far from the intended goal of neoliberal reforms—namely, to foster the growth of a dynamic, efficient, and productive independent bourgeoisie—Ibrahima Thioub et al. argue that a merchant-capital logic continued to dominate. What changed was the state’s ability to capitalize, structure, and regulate it (Thioub, Diop, and Boone 1998). Reform eroded the capacity of the state to sustain patterns of economic activity established under colonial rule (see Boone 1990) and changed the expression of patronage away from a system that assured stability (Coulon and Cruise O’Brien 1990). As the 1980s progressed, the diminished capacity of the state brought increasing pressure to control shrinking state coffers and, thus, heightened competition between political rivals and different levels of government.

The eroding social contract with the country’s marabouts (religious leaders) was to further challenge the state’s hold on power and legitimacy during this time. Senegalese Islam is overwhelmingly Sufi, with the Tijani and Mouride orders (brotherhoods) dominating the country’s Islamic tradition. In Senegalese Sufi tradition, marabouts play a central role in mediating state-society relations and, as a result, a key feature of Senegalese politics has long been the relationship between government and the Sufi brotherhoods. A social contract between the brotherhoods—particularly the Mouride brotherhood—and the colonial administration provided a source of stability and legiti-
macy for the colonial regime. Senghor then built the political basis of his regime on these same ties, actively seeking and obtaining the cooperation and support of the powerful Mouride leadership and its disciples (Copans 1980; Cruise O’Brien 1971, 1975). State concessions to the religious authorities were reciprocated with political support. Through the use of formal ndigals (religious injunctions), religious leaders mobilized their disciples to vote for the Socialist Party in the elections throughout this period. This tight interrelationship between the state and the Muslim brotherhoods was a key buttress in the face of a challenging economic environment and political instability in neighboring countries.  

The 1980s, however, saw key shifts in the politics of religion, involving essential reorganizations in the fundamental relationship between the brotherhoods and the state and between the marabouts and their talibés (disciples). A number of factors joined during this period to “liberalize” the religious playing field, including the general liberalization of the economy and politics, the diversification and informalization of the economy, and the education, urbanization, and autonomization of the citizen, as well as a weakening of the hierarchical authority of the brotherhoods. Perhaps the greatest illustration of this democratization was the crumbling of the ndigal as a formula for delivering disciples’ votes to the Socialist regime, starting in the 1980s. All of these forces would come together to politicize Dakar’s municipal garbage sector in unprecedented ways.

and Mayor Mamadou Diop’s Battle for Dakar

Together, the forces of economic and political liberalization crystallized in a full-fledged crisis surrounding the 1988 presidential elections. The political crisis manifested in the worst garbage crisis the city had ever experienced. Widespread social unrest and mobilization by a disgruntled populace in Dakar, particularly the city’s youth, met with the Socialist Party state’s scramble to retain its legitimacy, hold on to power, and control the social peace. The reconfiguration of the state’s role in the economy, the reformulation of the relationship between religion and politics, and the liberalization of the political playing field had politicians courting voters like never before. As the dire social consequences of structural adjustment and overall economic crisis deepened and unemployment skyrocketed, young Dakarois took to the streets in record numbers. Massive student strikes in 1985 and 1987 par-
alyzed the education system, leading to an *année blanche* (white year) in 1987–88, where students’ work was annulled (M. Diouf 1996). The workers union of the trash company *siyas* joined in the conflictual spirit of labor organizing during this period and began to strike in the late 1980s to demand better working conditions.

The shifting bases of the state-brotherhood and the talibé-marabout relationships, moreover, were dramatically expressed in the controversial 1988 elections. Despite a blunt ndigal from the Khalifa-General of the Mouride brotherhood to vote for Abdou Diouf, the opposition received a significant proportion of the vote. Not since 1988 has a top brotherhood leader pronounced a political ndigal in favor of a presidential candidate, indicating the deep “cracks in the edifice” of the mutualism provided by the original social contract between the marabouts and the ruling party (Villalon 1999, 2004). Huge numbers of Dakarois rallied their support for opposition candidate Abdoulaye Wade’s electoral campaign—whose slogan promised *sopi* (change)—leading up to the elections of 1988 (Diaw and Diouf 1998; Diop and Diouf 1990; Young and Kante 1992).

Youth mobilizations turned violent with the highly contested election results, which placed incumbent Abdou Diouf as the winner. The government responded to youth riots in Dakar by declaring a state of emergency, imposing a curfew, and arresting and convicting the opposition leaders for their role in inciting the violence. The city’s streets then turned violent again in the spring of 1989 with a spate of ethnically motivated murders in broad daylight during the country’s diplomatic crisis with Mauritania. Though the Socialist Party had retained power, the integrity of the party-state appeared threatened, as acutely symbolized in the sinister vision of the young urban rioters. The crisis ushered in, moreover, a new era of urban protest that was centered on a descent into the streets and mobilization around the management of urban order. The government’s formula for hegemony was being renegotiated in the material spaces of the city. New constituencies were raising their heads, new formulas of power were emerging, and garbage was taking center stage as both a symbol of state crisis and an important terrain on which to battle for control of the city.

A social movement blossomed in the wake of the crisis of 1988 that would herald a new chapter in the city’s infrastructural politics. As I consider in detail in chapter 2, the youth movement Set/Setal offered a constructive response to the general population’s disillusionment with the country’s economic and political state of affairs through neighborhood cleaning activities.
In both an indictment of the state’s failings and a call for the citizens of Dakar to take local development into their own hands after the disappointing elections, youth set out to cleanse the city—physically and morally. These labors came to the attention of Dakar’s Socialist mayor, Mamadou Diop, as he reeled from the threat to his party’s hold on power and schemed to design a new vision of city politics and infrastructure in the face of austerity. The failures of the trash-management system had become an enormous liability for Diop’s office. His response was to seize the fervor for cleaning among the city’s youth and channel it into a wholly new garbage collection infrastructure. Dissolving the last system of municipal garbage collection and firing its employees, he instead built a new system that looked altogether different: a scaled-back, low-tech, participatory garbage sector that required not much more than the simple toil of the city’s youth.

Although the state’s modernist development vision had never been fully realized, Diop’s new garbage sector signaled a foundational shift in the ideological and material basis of the Socialist state’s approach to urban development. The exigencies of neoliberal austerity and the intensification of multiparty democratic competition ushered forth a new logic of governing through infrastructure. These forces justified, indeed required, a shift from the modernist, state-planned, comprehensive infrastructure models—however aspirational—to a community-based, participatory system that was unapologetic in its fragmentation. The transition to the more piecemeal public service turned on the construction of the citizen-laborer: it absolved the state of responsibility for providing employment in the manner of an adult male patriarch and instead conceived of youth as the primary workers of the nation—conveniently extricated from their familial obligations. In other words, the new participatory waste infrastructure allowed Diop and his compatriots in the Socialist Party to instrumentalize neoliberal discourse in their favor. Taking charge of the city’s order became the responsibility of the city’s communities; a clean neighborhood became one in which the people were clean. This acted to patch the cracks in the state’s hegemonic project that were apparent in the physical manifestation of disorder.

Steeped in the now all-too-familiar language of participation, empowerment, and entrepreneurialism, the backbone and connective tissues of the city’s new garbage infrastructure were now young people and their communitarian ties, respectively. In place of state performances of monumental infrastructural achievements, there were instead the highly visible neighborhood performances of “participatory citizenship” by those doing the state’s
bidding through cleaning Dakar’s city spaces. Though it had been attempted before, in the form of Operation Augias and various attempts by the army to coerce the Dakarois into public cleaning, Diop’s *Journées de Propreté* (Days of Cleanliness) were unprecedented. The events were characterized by bright T-shirts, dust clouds rising from the now unclogged streets, and the gyrating exhortations by Senegal’s national hero, musician Youssou N’Dour, for cleanliness blaring over distorted mobile speaker systems. In these scenes, a whole new citizen was born and a whole new infrastructure for managing the city was soldered. This new infrastructure spoke to an entirely different aesthetic regime of ordering. The city’s business was aired and evacuated, not by a quiet and invisible army of well-paid but anonymous professionals, but by noisy, youthful, and familiar young men and women.

Channeling Set/Setal activists into the trash system—and thereby changing the institutional form of the sector as well as the composition of its labor force—offered a financial fix to a budgetary crisis, but was also a calculated political maneuver on the part of Mayor Diop. Diop’s position as mayor was, in a number of respects, highly untenable. Consistent with a long tradition of state centralization in the postcolonial period, the central state tightly controlled resources away from the municipality. Diop was, like his predecessors in the post, a “prisoner” of his dependence on the central state. Though he lacked sufficient resources to run the city and conduct politics, he was charged with the enormous challenge of managing the social peace and cultivating support for the party in the urban areas that were the base of the opposition. Fashioning himself and the new recruits in his administration as urban technocrats, he aimed to distance himself from the classic patronage politics that were crippling his fellow socialists (Diop and Diouf 1992).

At the same time, however, Mamadou Diop had no choice but to develop a new approach to patronage. An accomplished politician who had his own ambitions, Diop was keen to find some financial independence, shore up electoral support, and quiet the foreboding youth agitations that had taken his city hostage. The new trash sector reduced the trash bill and provided him with more control over the budget through the involvement of international funders. Moreover, it served as a direct recruitment tool for political clients in two emerging social groups—youth and women—at a moment when he was considering a bid for the presidency. Offering the trash-sector jobs to the Set/Setal activists thus represented one of the state’s key strategies to deal with its shrinking capacity and legitimacy and to quiet social mobilizations through a more inclusive patronage system. The garbage sys-
tem that was to last for the next ten years was small scale, heavily reliant on
labor, little capitalized, and progressively more fragmented. The turn to fully
off-grid community-based garbage collection projects in the city’s periphery,
Furthermore, hastened the displacement of the responsibility for the city’s
order away from public services and onto the bodies of the laboring poor, and
further splintered the city’s waste infrastructure (see chapter 3).

As the 1990s progressed, structural adjustment moved full speed ahead
and the state accelerated its withdrawal from the public sector, with no
choice but to appease funders. In 1994, under pressure from international
lenders, Senegal devalued its currency, the West African franc (CFA), precip-
itating a short-term economic crisis. With the devaluation of the currency,
a new package of reforms was launched that would signal a more neoliberal
turn and an era of even more marked state disengagement. Whereas deregula-
tion had occurred on a limited, sectoral basis in the 1980s, massive swaths
of the public sector were privatized in the 1990s, including the electricity,
telecommunications, and water sectors. As a last remaining slice of public
sector jobs, the trash sector continued to represent an important pot to con-
trol through a range of institutional experiments.

2000–2006: Alternance and Abdoulaye Wade’s
Infrastructural Dream

The progressing decade was again to bring a tenuous state of political affairs.
Although the Socialist Party’s efforts to gain the support of the urban youth
had at least worked to quiet youth mobilization for a while, this was just a
postponement of a general reckoning with what was to come. Abdou Diouf
won reelection in 1993 with an overwhelming victory, largely attributed to
the successful mobilization of rural voters in contrast to an incredibly high
abstention vote, particularly among the urban youth (Diop and Diouf 1992).
Whereas early in the decade the state had undertaken significant political
reforms aimed at power sharing with members of the opposition, subse-
quent years saw a striking pullback of the political reforms achieved in the
early 1990s (Diop, Diouf, and Diaw 2000). As precipitous declines in public
spending devastated indicators of social welfare, managing the social peace
was made the state’s top priority in order to ensure the proper implemen-
tation of SAPs and neutralize social resistance. At the end of the decade,
despite some economic improvements at a macro scale, Senegal found itself
in a situation characterized by deepening inequality, the degradation of in-
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The decline of the educational system, and the rising cost of living. The Socialist Party could no longer keep a lid on the grievances and social mobilizations that had been bubbling up for years.

On March 19, 2000, Abdoulaye Wade was elected to the presidency. Monitored extensively by the Senegalese media as well as foreign observers, the *Alternance* (turnover) elections were widely considered to be the most free and fair elections to date in Senegal. After hearing of his defeat, Abdou Diouf graciously stepped down in a smooth and peaceful turnover of power. Despite the Socialist Party’s pre-election efforts to quell social unrest and exercise its remaining patronage capacities to retain the support of the growing urban electorate, desperation on the part of a population unable to envision its future, let alone its daily survival, found voice in Wade’s call for *sopi* (change). The development promises of the Socialist Party appeared bankrupt, especially to the exploding youth population born after Independence, for whom the nationalist project held little or no meaning. Wade, who had been a stalwart character on the Senegalese political scene since Senghor through his Parti Démocratique Sénégalais (Senegalese Democratic Party, *PDS*), deftly targeted those disenfranchised and frustrated urban dwellers through dramatic theatrics of public support called *marches bleues* (blue marches) (Foucher 2007), and finally convinced the Senegalese people that he would represent a new direction in Senegalese politics and right the wrongs of the last difficult decades.

*Alternance* indicated to many the advent of true, substantive, multiparty democracy in Senegal. Many observers also highlighted how Wade’s victory represented a dramatic collapse of the *ndigal* as a political tool (Audrain 2004; F. Samson 2000). Although the Mouride leader did not pronounce a formal electoral *ndigal* to vote for the incumbent party, there was widespread rejection of the lower-ranking marabouts’ *ndigals*, leading many intellectuals to applaud the election as a “victory of citizenship” (Mbow 2003, quoted in Villalon 2004, 66). Ironically, these youth sought change through voting for one of the last great Independence-era politicians—and a self-declared liberal (neoliberal in the English parlance), at that.

The political economy of development under Abdoulaye Wade was to signal a departure from the previous era in a number of important respects, particularly with regard to infrastructure. When Wade arrived into office, he set out, first and foremost, to consolidate the economic base of his political power (M.-C. Diop 2013a). To his favor, he faced an economic context that was slightly improved from that facing his predecessor. From a macro-
economic perspective, the second half of the 1990s had shown considerable improvement owing to the benefits of deregulation and of debt relief. With the Bretton Woods funders loosening some of their control over spending, Wade set out to exert as much autonomy as possible in crafting the country’s new development trajectory. Through restructuring diplomatic relations, he sought to mobilize new sources of international finance through courting South-South investment partnerships with countries such as China, Brazil, India, and South Africa, as well as nations from the Middle East. Armed with this diversified finance portfolio, he embarked upon a number of Grands Projets du chef de l’état (Major Projects of the Head of State), centered on infrastructural modernization in telecommunications, a new airport for Dakar, development of the port, new national monuments, and, especially, huge investments in road construction in and around Dakar. It was a promising period in which the great hope that people had carried for Alternance seemed to be materializing in the infrastructural transformations Wade was charting across the city. As Caroline Melly (2013, 399) argues, the personal hardship faced by Dakarois during the construction stage appeared a sacrifice worth the wait for “spectacular expectations for the future.”

Wade’s transformation of the garbage sector was an element of his ambitions to make his mark through infrastructure as well as to centralize control over his infrastructural visions. Just months after the 2000 elections, he set out to eviscerate the fief of Mayor Mamadou Diop through dissolving his municipal organization (the CUD) and its most important element, the participatory trash sector. After serving eighteen years as mayor, Mamadou Diop lost in the local elections on May 12, 2002, to liberal candidate Pape Diop, a close ally of Abdoulaye Wade. A new national government agency was created in 2000 to take over the management of the trash sector, and a call for bids was put out on the international market for a major private waste management company. A private subsidiary of an Italian waste management company, Azienda Municipalizzata per l’Ambiente (Municipal Environment Agency; AMA), was awarded the contract for managing Dakar’s household garbage from 2002 until 2006. The trash workers who had entered the system with Set/Setal were officially hired by AMA with formal contracts, set salaries (65,000 CFA, or about US$120 per month), and regular benefits, temporarily closing out the insecure and informal institutional arrangements under which they had labored for more than ten years in Mayor Mamadou Diop’s participatory system. The workers had new uniforms, new collection equipment, and finally felt that their labor was being valued. They
had formed a union in 2000, in anticipation of the need to defend their jobs and working conditions in the turbulent restructuring that was to come, and the union was formally integrated into the company’s operations.

Though at first Wade’s attempts to modernize Dakar’s infrastructure seemed reminiscent of the state-led modernization approach of the Senghor era and its grand aspirations for stimulating broad-based development and social equity, it was soon clear that Wade’s infrastructural visions were more volatile and less principled than originally hoped. In the garbage sector, the dream of stable, protected labor began to slip within a couple of years of the new system. After some severe scandals—most notably that the company had been found to supply used trucks from Europe instead of new ones—AMA’s deficiencies were apparent by 2003 and the system appeared in crisis again by 2005. Garbage piled up across the city and outraged residents voiced their critiques. The first cases of cholera in many years were registered in Dakar that rainy season. President Wade definitively cancelled the contract in July of 2006, plunging Dakar into a garbage crisis characterized by nebulous institutional arrangements, frequent mobilization by the union, and extensive public dumping. In the lead-up to the elections of 2006, Dakar was drowning in its refuse as workers and residents protested the institutional vacuum. Though Wade was reelected that year, instability in the garbage sector served as the material manifestation of his governing challenges. In the second half of his presidency, the garbage sector would foreground the downward slide of his legitimacy and his increasingly desperate attempts to consolidate power.

2006–2012: Infrastructural Fragmentation and Elitism

The institutional arrangements for waste management following the cancellation of AMA’s contract can be inscribed within an intensification of competition between the national and local state and Wade’s attempt to mitigate the power of the local state. The dissolution of the CUD as one of Wade’s first actions as president represented a strategy not only to disembowel the powerbase of one of his main rivals from the Socialist Party (Mamadou Diop), but also to recentralize political power away from a powerful local government entity and into the national executive. After severing AMA’s contract, he founded an intermunicipal organization federating the Dakar region, the CADAK-CAR. Though seemingly patterned after the CUD, the CADAK-CAR was described as being “less political” and more “technocratic” than its prec-
edent organization and was, in practice, just a skeleton of the CUD’s power and capacity. It can be seen as a thinly veiled attempt to mask centralization efforts within a façade of decentralization. After the departure of AMAN, a “transitional” power-sharing agreement was set up between the national Ministry of the Environment and CADAK-CAR. Though garbage is a compétence transférée (responsibility of the local state), as consistent with Senegal’s 1996 decentralization laws, the special arrangement with the Ministry of the Environment rests on an addendum to the law on decentralization passed in 2002 under Wade’s thumb. Citing Dakar’s exceptionalism, this addendum specifies that decisions regarding Dakar’s trash be determined by central state decree.

In this power-sharing agreement, the Ministry of the Environment contracted with the eighteen private concessionaires (contractors) who supplied the collection trucks and managed the collection and the dump, while the mayor of Dakar, via CADAK-CAR, managed the funds coming in from the state and oversaw the paychecks. During this time, the main problems stemmed from controversy surrounding the one international concessionaire (the rest were local), Veolia Propreté, and the increasingly fierce labor disputes between the state and the trash workers (see chapter 4). A subsidiary of the French company Vivendi, Veolia was hired in late 2006 on a “test” period to coordinate all aspects of the collection for the two downtown districts of Dakar: Plateau and Médina. The conditions under which the contract was awarded to Veolia were shady as they did not stem from a competitive public bid and were rumored to have emerged from personal connections with Wade’s son Karim. Even more significantly, for just these two central districts—out of the Dakar region’s forty-three—at the heart of the financial and administrative operations of the city, the company received a wildly disproportionate share of the budget. In each year, at least 25 percent of the total garbage budget was paid to Veolia to serve just 6.5 percent of Dakar’s population and what were, in many respects, the easiest areas to service (Cissé and Wone 2013, 744). Although the Veolia workers received no special protections and were considered temp workers, this codified a sharp segregation between the poorer and more populous parts of the city—which were served by struggling, underpaid, and under-equipped contractors—and two of the richest downtown districts, serviced by state-of-the-art French equipment.

The power-sharing agreement ran relatively smoothly at the level of government owing to the fact that the mayor of Dakar, Pape Diop (head of
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Cadak-car), and the minister of the environment both hailed from Abdoulaye Wade’s party. However, resistance to the arrangement escalated from 2006 to 2009 as the trash workers mounted increasingly significant strikes and Dakarois voiced their discontent through public dumping. Garbage accumulating in Dakar’s public spaces in 2007 rivaled that of 1988. Trash crisis and disorder symbolized increasing public discontentment with Wade’s government and mobilization of disgruntled citizens as the decade progressed. Things were to change dramatically in 2009 as support for Wade and his party began to slip in the polls. In March 2009, in a turning of the political tide that followed on the heels of a particularly acerbic spate of trash strikes, Socialist candidate Khalifa Sall was elected to be mayor of Dakar, signaling an end to PDS control over the mayor’s office.41 From that moment until 2012, the institutional and labor arrangements in the trash sector took center stage in the political battle between Abdoulaye Wade’s central government and the City of Dakar.

Immediately after taking office in July 2009, Mayor Sall acted decisively on the part of the trash workers through formally hiring them on as employees of Cadak-car, regularizing their payments, and providing them with social security and health services.42 Then, under firm pressure from the trash-workers union, Mayor Sall let the final short-term contract with Veolia expire in December 2009, declaring publicly that he intended to regularize the sector for good by ending closed-door agreements and putting out a public call for bids for the company to replace Veolia. Sall aimed one more blow at Veolia in November 2010, in response to the trash workers’ planned strike during the Muslim holiday Tabaski, by ordering that union delegates who had been fired by Veolia be reinstated and that a section of the union be created within that enterprise. At the same time, Mayor Sall convened a commission to study the garbage sector, propose a strategic plan for its organization, and explore pay raises for the workers.43 Then, in January 2011, the mayor led the charge for an agreement signed between Cadak-car and the bank Bicis,44 to provide accounts for all Dakar public workers, most notably starting with the garbage sector. The union vociferously declared its support for the mayor and Cadak-car.

In reaction to Mayor Sall’s efforts to consolidate authority over the garbage sector, President Wade reshuffled Dakar’s trash management again just a few months later. By April 2011, the mayor and the president had all but declared war over the sector. In a heated set of newspaper interviews that month, the mayor is quoted as saying: “It’s a political battle that we will fight
until the end . . . The surface technicians [trash collectors] are right to refuse to be the sacrificial lamb” (quoted in Soleil 2011). For his part, the president declared: “We must tell the truth. Today’s Mayors are unable to manage garbage” (quoted in Cissokho 2011). Wade retaliated by making plans to transfer the budget and authority for garbage management away from Cadak-Car, back to the newly resuscitated national garbage agency. A street cleanup operation with fifteen hundred youth was organized, circumventing the formal trash workers and prompting them to go on strike. Wade continued to refuse to meet with the trash-workers union and community residents expressed their dismay at the situation through periodic public dumping. A few months later, the story heated up even more when Wade created yet another new national trash-management agency that would take garbage even further out of the hands of the city. Mayor Sall vociferously protested, contesting that it directly contradicted the decentralization laws of 1996 and pointing out the paradox of a (neo)liberal president who in fact seeks to centralize and nationalize, more than deregulate.

In the final months of Wade’s presidency, the garbage sector was again in legal limbo. Although the new agency was not yet in force, Wade transferred the trash budget into the hands of the Ministry of Culture, essentially gutting Cadak-Car—an institution that he himself had created. The workers and mayor alike continued to protest the creation of the new agency, but essentially hunkered down until the presidential elections of 2012 to see what the new political climate would hold for garbage. Wade’s government fell back on the now hackneyed performance of public cleaning in an attempt to shore up political support. Again sidelining the formal trash workers, the Ministry of Culture organized a series of highly visible Days of Cleanliness leading up to the elections in Dakar, where over a thousand young people were paid as day laborers to conduct periodic sweeps of the city.

From these performances of state power through garbage infrastructure, we can read a wider insight into Wade’s mode of governing. Volatility in the garbage sector exemplified the mismanagement of public funds and political manipulation of government agencies in the face of the flagging legitimacy that characterized the Wade era overall (Dahou and Foucher 2004; M.-C. Diop 2013b, 2013c; Mbow 2008). Wade endeavored to concentrate power in the executive, fashioning himself the supreme executor of his “major projects” across many sectors, and mutating government ministries at will in the periodic reorganization of the form and function of his patronage systems (see M.-C. Diop 2013a). This meant jealously guarding control from other po-
political figures, even in his own government, and, sometimes, battling tooth and nail against rival politicians to control specific turf. The institutions of
government were often casualties of these political agendas and personalis-
tic logics (Mbow 2008).

Overall, Wade’s governance of trash and other sectors defied consistent
political economic logics or development goals. The schizophrenic approach
to liberalizing the public sector is a case in point. Though privatization was
key on Wade’s agenda in principle, as we can see in the trash sector, Wade
privatized in fits and starts. With the arrival of AMA came a more forceful
move toward privatization, but with the repeal of that contract and the long
transitional phase to follow, the system languished in a hybrid arrangement
that defied logic outside of the urge to exert control over the sector and its
vast budget. The creation of a national trash management company in the
twilight hours of his presidency further marked a final desperate effort to
manipulate the sector for power and prestige. Intervening sporadically in
diverse sectors, Wade’s style demonstrated a rationality of political maneu-
vering more than one of long-
term development planning (see Ndoye 2013).
Far from a classic reform agenda, his neoliberal experiment was a nonlinear,
messy process anchored in an autocratic approach to combat his waning
legitimacy.

The technical and institutional fragmentation and degradation of gar-
bage infrastructure, especially after 2006, was part and parcel of an overall
pattern of infrastructure investment and development that was profoundly
uneven and, at its base, elitist. Health and education suffered enormously
during this period due to low investments, and Wade’s most famous invest-
ment, his roadworks, overwhelmingly benefited the rich, connecting elite
parts of the city through fancy overpasses and the now famous Corniche
coastal highway peppered with fancy shopping malls (M.-C. Diop 2013a;
Foley 2010; Melly 2013). The mega-highway project linking the peninsula of
Dakar to its sprawling suburbs is a toll road that has eased the commuting
burdens for precious few working-class people. The systematic disinvest
ment in garbage infrastructure after 2006, except in the two downtown
zones serviced by Veolia, rendered street sweeping and access to disposal
deeply unequal across the city. Garbage played a central role in Wade’s aes-
thetic dream to project a certain image of the city, especially to its elite
visitors. The rich neighborhoods and fancy roads had to be clean, but a look
inside the poor and working-class neighborhoods revealed an altogether dif-
ferent reality. This is consistent with wider trends toward splintering urban-
ism that entail the differential development of city infrastructures charted by Stephen Graham and Simon Marvin (2001), but emphasizes the political nature of such fragmentation and its deepening reliance on the body as infrastructure. Degradation of equipment (see figure 1.3) and the devaluation of trash labor worked to devolve the strains and burdens of cleaning—and thus filth and disposability—onto the bodies of the workers and the city’s poorest households.

In garbage and other sectors, including roadworks, Wade’s policies did not, on the whole, grow stable employment, but, rather, relied on flexibilized labor formulas (especially contract labor) which exacerbated the growing disparity between social classes and the strains of social dislocation in a city that was becoming evermore inaccessible to average working people (Ndiaye 2010, 2013). Wade’s investment in work was about image and performance more than ensuring long-term stable employment. The armies of people he hired for his building projects seemed impressive, but in reality these were often day laborers making only meager salaries. Wearing tunics with slogans related to his various projects, these laboring bodies were the visible vital
infrastructure of Wade’s grand projects, allowing him to claim space and responsibility for the transformations taking place, to display the power and promise of the new city to come. But his forced removal of Dakar’s thousands of marchands ambulants (street vendors)\(^46\) and extensive efforts to ramp up street cleaning in order to cleanse and sanitize the city for the oic summit told a different story. Street vendors encumbered urban space in ways that were messy and unmodern, and striking garbage workers betrayed the rising tide of dissent bubbling up in Dakar. Both were contrary to the image of order that Wade was trying to project to the world. Although it wasn’t completed in time for the oic, the African Renaissance Monument (see figure 1.2), on the other hand, perhaps most clearly represents Wade’s vision. As the most striking of Wade’s attempts to mark public space, the huge statue depicting an African nuclear family gesturing to the West sought to conjure Dakar’s emergence as a world-class city in the making. Instead, it has not ceased to be the butt of jokes, and served as the site of protests when it was unveiled and during his failed bid to retain power in 2012.\(^47\)

Trash Politics after Abdoulaye Wade

On March 25, 2012, a new era of trash management was ushered in with the election of Macky Sall as president after what turned out to be Senegal’s most violent and contentious elections yet. Upon taking office, Sall announced his intention to dissolve Abdoulaye Wade’s new national trash management agency and relocate Dakar’s garbage management back into the hands of local government.\(^48\) By summer 2012, Veolia had finally left Senegal and a number of steps were being taken toward regularizing the sector. Although the mayor of Dakar, Khalifa Sall, and the president, Macky Sall (no relation), hail from different parties, from 2012 to 2014 they demonstrated their willingness to work together with regard to Dakar’s trash management. The cadak-car organization was officially resuscitated and garbage was placed fully under its tutelage. At a trash conference hosted by the trash-workers union that took place in June 2012, representatives from both offices and other implicated institutions all indicated that they were committed to working together with the union to ensure that the sector’s perpetual “transitional” phase would come to an end with a final, effective, and just management system. After years of lobbying, the trash workers’ collective bargaining agreement was finally signed by the trash-workers union, the mayor of Dakar, and the director general of cadak-car on June 24,
2014 (République du Sénégal 2014). This signaled an important reversal of austerity-era management trends and a major gain by a prominent social movement. Although implementation was slow, the collective convention signaled a reversal of the flexibilization of labor in the sector and carried the trash workers’ hope for an end to a long period of instability and insecure legal protections.

Unfortunately, the workers’ hopes that the sector would be stabilized and depoliticized once and for all were dashed as garbage continues to be thrown back into the spotlight of political maneuvering. Further reconfigurations in the sector stemmed out of an escalation of tension between President Macky Sall and Mayor Khalifa Sall. In October 2015, the president reneged on previous commitments and removed garbage from under CADAK-CAR to instead place it under the control of an agency titled l’Unité de coordination et de gestion des déchets (Garbage Coordination and Management Unit; UCG), which is managed by the (national) Ministry of Local Governments. The trash-workers union, which was not consulted before this change, harshly critiqued the transfer, underlining that its key objective is safeguarding the gains it has worked so hard to obtain. Although there have been a few small issues of noncompliance with the collective bargaining agreement by UCG, most advances in the sector have been protected, and new equipment and uniforms were furnished to the workers in April 2016. The union continues to complain about salary levels and late payments, and periodically warns that it will do what it must to protect healthy working conditions in the sector. The continuing saga indicates that, though the sector has pioneered a reversal of austerity trends, ongoing competition over scarce resources and power will continue to politicize Dakar’s trash collection.

Conclusions

Dakar’s garbagescape has become a central terrain of contestation over the legitimacy of the Senegalese state. This chapter has analyzed modes of governing in Senegal in the wake of structural adjustment, through considering battles over Dakar’s garbage infrastructure at the end of the socialist era and throughout the liberal era to follow. Across both periods, we see the primary importance of infrastructure as a theater for political debate and shifting contours of state-society relations. Just as Mayor Mamadou Diop knew all too well that the garbage sector was of ultimate importance in his ability to manage the city, urban populations, and the rising tide of youth
dissent in that era, President Abdoulaye Wade and Mayor Khalifa Sall also found themselves entangled—like it or not—in the delicate task of governing trash. Controlling garbage infrastructure means controlling the image and ordering processes of the city. If dirt and disorder are metaphors for corruption and vice, then a clean and orderly city signifies the proper functioning of government and the virtues of its leaders. Controlling garbage infrastructure, moreover, means capturing specific people to do the dirty work with different material burdens and rewards. As a highly visible and arduous labor, cleaning work functions as an important space for the performance of state legitimacy and a form of material power.

The first lesson to be drawn from governing garbage across these two moments concerns an anxious pattern of political maneuvering over limited resources. Politicking at the heart of the garbage sector reinforces patronage modes of governing and compromises state legitimacy, coherence, and accountability. The exigencies of austerity in both periods precipitated desperate attempts to consolidate power and outcompete political rivals, and the unraveling of a cohesive urban development vision. A long-term logic of doing politics by doling out favors through the public sector and increasingly constraining resources has bred incessant meddling and squeezing of the public sector for what little power can be gleaned. This history of institutional volatility in the garbage sector illuminates, moreover, how the governing work of different infrastructural formulas has primarily turned on the question of labor. Courting the trash workers has become imperative given their role as one of the last remaining bastions of the civil service over which the state can exert direct control, and because of the extraordinary power they hold through the general trash strike and their close contact with the Dakarois. Across both periods, a central feature of garbage politicking has been the flexibilization of trash work in cheap infrastructural solutions that simultaneously curry favor while they discipline and control.

Second, the manifestation of these political responses in episodic, performative, and increasingly fragmented investments leaves the city's infrastructures highly uneven and dilapidated in many areas. In this way, this story highlights how neoliberal development works through the governance of disposability—determining which spaces and people can be discarded, degraded, and devalued. At the same time, it shows how governing infrastructure works through a hollow, performative mode centered on mobilizing and ordering bodies in public space. The continual reinvention of infrastructure's institutional design frustrates its coherence, functional capacities, and
equal access across the urban landscape. Specifically, however, we can see very different approaches to grappling with waste and disposability, especially between Mayor Mamadou Diop and President Wade. Put simply, Diop seems to have understood garbage in a way that Wade simply never did. With few other resources at his disposal, Diop embraced garbage—despite its negative connotations—as a core feature of his new political approach, and he benefited in the long run from this savvy calculus. For his part, Wade never really got his hands dirty. He ignored or sidelined the trash workers for years, trying instead to manipulate the sector through high-level institutional changes, but underestimating the power of the trash workers and neglecting trash itself as a kind of political matter. The force of discard in Dakar politics depended upon the specificity of these distinct conjunctures and their associated personalities.

Third, and as we shall explore more fully in the next chapter, the consequence of this politicization and fragmentation is that the social, material, and symbolic burdens of infrastructure are devolved onto ordinary people (residents and laborers) and social systems that are rendered disposable. New management regimes in both periods have reconfigured the relations of social reproduction, placing responsibility for cleaning the city more firmly onto the precarious laboring bodies of youth and women. In this way, garbage illuminates the material and symbolic power of governing disposability. However, this devolution precipitated its own response in the rising tide of protests and social contestation witnessed after 2006 in Dakar. Garbage politics from Set/Setal to the union strikes in 2007 illuminate how formulas for hegemony are unstable and comprise a messy dialectic of contestation that threatens to bring about radical reconfigurations. Wade losing his grip on Dakar in the late 2000s and then definitively in the elections of 2012 signaled a new era in Senegal’s garbage politics and stirred hopes for stemming the practice of politicking through infrastructure. The full import of the shift to Macky Sall’s governing formula remains to be seen.

Overall, this history of governing through garbage offers insight into how neoliberal reform is negotiated and managed within the state in the context of a fiercely democratic urban landscape. Senegal is a revealing case through which to examine these processes, given its rich urban democratic history as well as its role as a test case of adjustment. From the implementation of structural adjustment by the Socialists to Wade’s pursuit of a new neoliberal formula to more recent battles between the mayor and the president, we see the different strategies employed by ambitious politicians to carve out their
political agendas within these political economic constraints. The result is a checkered history of institutional tinkering and dramatic performativity in the space of public infrastructure. In the face of limited resources and populist demands for accountability, infrastructural labor comes to the fore as the key thing to be manipulated, often at the expense of a coherent development vision and eventually to these politicians' own political demise. In this context, austerity breeds political rationalities characterized by excessive competition within the state, perpetual processes of political reinvention, and a confusing medley of experimental institutional forms. Far from a singular script of urban change, then, neoliberal reform is consolidated and contested through unruly negotiations around everyday infrastructures in place.