

PLACES AND VOICES FROM SAN DESVELO · VOLUME 1

DEPÓSITO NORTE

*A documentary investigation
through voices, records, and images*

ANA BELÉN VARGAS



Depósito Norte

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Documentation by Ana Belén Vargas and Thilo Wilts

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About this documentation

In the directories of San Desvelo I found the Depósito Norte under several names: warehouse, technical reserve, radio substation and municipal property. None of these are wrong; none covers all verifiable uses.

The starting point of my research was a planned brochure about municipal buildings. Short texts on the year of construction, function, responsibility and current status were planned. At the Depósito Norte, however, it was not even possible to clearly determine the responsible department. A northern distribution point appears in the construction documents, the oldest inventories speak of a warehouse, and coastal radio files speak of a technical reserve. A later stamp lists the building as active, even though the recorded support system had been out of service for years at that point.

The planned double page became this independent documentation.

I have arranged the materials not in the order in which I found them, but rather according to the activities through which the building existed over four decades: building, storing, connecting, delivering, reusing and inventorying. Each chapter is assigned a main voice. Photographs whose origin or motif could only be partially determined are marked accordingly. Reconstructed document pages reflect readable content and are not treated as a replacement for the damaged original.

During the evaluation, I differentiated between observation, memory and file findings. I don't treat an illegible signature as a code; I treat a different year as a dating problem. A precisely remembered space is neither confirmed nor refuted simply because the preserved plan does not show it. This documentation therefore claims to be traceable, not complete.

For the reconstruction, I interviewed former employees, drivers and residents, looked at private photographs and compared documents from the Archivo Municipal. I have newly transcribed excerpts from an older tape interview with Beto Saldaña. Teresa Valdivia, Alberto Salinas

and Inés Gamarra accompanied the current inventory. I treat your findings as documented contemporary findings, not as a conclusive explanation of the building's history.

I reproduce memories as memories, file information as file information. Where the two do not match, I leave the deviation visible. The conversations were shortened and the language was carefully smoothed out; Omissions in transcriptions are marked. Names of private individuals are used with permission. Some dates remain approximate because neither the interlocutors nor the existing documents allow greater precision.

The building is located north of Centro, behind Las Palmeras, on a former camino de servicio. It's small, flat and easy to miss. Stones lie on its corrugated roof against the coastal wind. The gate is made of corrugated iron. A gray PVC channel ends on the left outer wall after a few meters. Anyone who visits it will find no secret complex or hidden machine. One finds concrete, shelves, cables, lists and the traces of ordinary work.

That's precisely why it's worth taking a closer look.

I conducted the interviews in several rounds. If a memory changed in the second conversation, I did not automatically replace the earlier version. If both versions were important for the classification, both appear. I had experts check dimensions and technical terms; the interpretation remained separate.

This book is neither an official inventory nor a conclusive local history. It is my organized presentation of what can be said about a small communal building when files, objects and voices complement each other without completely collapsing.



Today's general view of the Depósito Norte, taken from the former camino de servicio. The Pacific lies outside the picture to the right and can only be assumed as brightness in the Garúa. Photo: Ana Belén Vargas, 2026.

Chapter 1 – A Building for the North

INTERVIEWS AND SOURCES

At my first site visit in the early morning, the Garúa was low above Las Palmeras. I documented the former camino de servicio, the tire tracks, two pieces of concrete on a curve and a water tank behind a low wall. These details are important for classification because they show current access and continued use of the path.

The Depósito is at the end of this path. I captured a flat concrete block building with a corrugated sheet roof, partially set into the hillside. There are stones on the roof as a windbreak. A gray cable duct runs along the left outer wall, which ends after about three meters in a lighter cap.

The remains of a municipal sticker remain on the gate. MUNICIPALIDAD and PATRIMONIO are still legible; the inventory

number SD-MUN-07 was added by hand. The number seven appears to have been added later, but it is not possible to date this change.

For the current overall recording, I waited until the path was clear. The unspectacular character of the building is itself an important finding: it can be easily overlooked in today's environment.

A week later I showed this recording to Rodolfo Mena. In the interview, he initially described today's gate as new and then specified that it was newer than the original one.

INTERVIEW EXTRACT · RODOLFO MENA · CONSTRUCTION FOREIGN

"I don't remember the exact year of construction as much as I remember the work steps. First the access was paved, then came the walls, the gate and the roof. For us it was a small, communal building. That it would later have so many functions was not foreseeable when it was built."

"The gate is new," he said.

It wasn't new. The rust was deep on the edges and the castle was older than some of the houses in Las Palmeras.

"Newer than the first," Rodolfo said. "That's what I mean."

He was seventy-two, maybe seventy-three; to the first question about his year of birth he said 1953, to the second he said that his mother always counted the years according to the governments. As a young man he had worked on construction sites, later for a company that built curbs and low retaining walls for the municipality. What he remembered most about the Depósito were cement bags, mixed water and the question of how much weight a corrugated sheet roof could bear if it was weighed down with stones against the wind.

I conducted the interview in front of Rodolfo's house, south of the Mercado Municipal. I compared his information with the construction survey, the budget documents and later plans.

"What was the building called back then?"

"Almacén."

"Just depot?"

"The sacks said almacén. An engineer said distribution point. The people who brought the material sometimes said north. Take this to the

north. Put that to the north. When you're working, not every wall needs a full name."

Commission and construction period

In a budget overview from 1979 there is a position for an estación de distribución norte. The amount is small and is included between expenses for street lighting and the repair of a pump house. A construction plan is not attached to the position. The earliest photo that can be identified with certainty shows low walls and part of the roof. On the back is written in blue ballpoint pen: Norte, avance de obra, 1981. The first complete inventory begins in 1983.

Rodolfo insisted that he had already worked there in 1980.

"Maybe it was the preparation," he said. "Maybe we put the wall on the path first. Maybe the photo was developed later. A photo doesn't know when the cement was mixed."

He didn't say that defiantly. He was only interested in dating if it changed the order. He remembered the order: First, the access road was compacted. Then came the low support on the slope. Then the foundation of the front room. A wall had to be placed a second time because the first line was too close to where a vehicle was supposed to turn. The water for mixing came in two barrels. One day a hose was missing, another day a bag of cement was missing. The work did not stop because of this; you started where material was available.

"What should the distribution point be for?"

Rodolfo took his glasses out of his pocket, put them on and looked at the photo.

"For things that had to go north."

"Water?"

"Also."

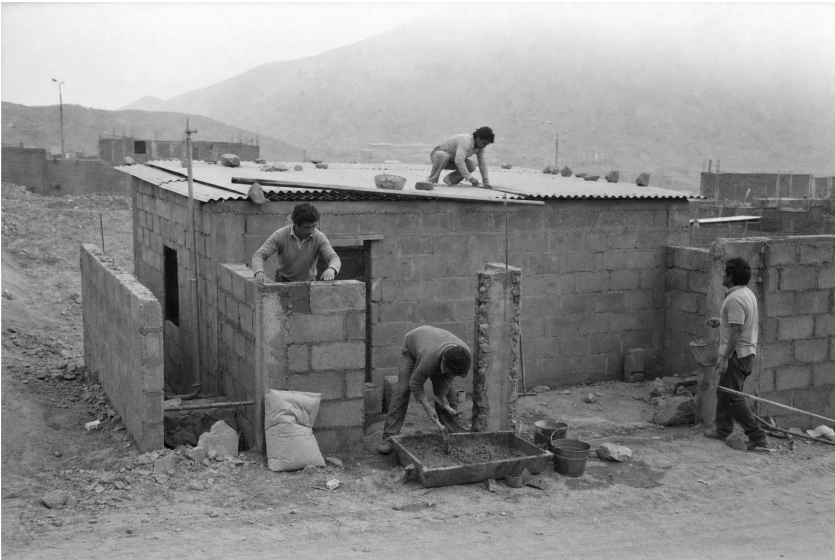
"Radio?"

"Maybe later. Back then there were pipes. Cables too. Lamps. A piece of pole. If something didn't fit in the small warehouse in the Centro, it went there. That's not a special function. That's space."

The city did not grow evenly at that time. Centro was close enough that a new depot would have hindered rather than helped. To the north lay

the paths to Radio Desvelo, to Cerro Vigía and to properties that already had plot numbers on plans, even though there were no houses there yet. The Cantera was accessible via an older connection. Las Palmeras consisted of individual walls, temporary shelters and areas where the future roads could only be seen from the tire tracks.

A mixed-use depot at this location was practical. Parts for street lamps could be brought from here to the northern sectors. Pump seals and valves didn't have to go through Centro every time. Radio technology and components for weather observation remained dry enough as long as the roof held. The purpose of the building was not clear from the start because the work it was intended to facilitate was not either.



Construction work on the later Depósito Norte, probably in 1981. The photo shows the low concrete block walls, the corrugated sheet roof and an open work area in front of the construction. Photographer and exact month are unknown. Municipal Archives of San Desvelo.

In the photo, four men are standing between the half-finished walls. One kneels on the roof. Another is working on the front opening, where the gate later sat. In the background, Cerro Dormido rises, still without the dense row of walls and rebar that now fronts its lower slope. To the left of the building there is a narrow wall running to the rear. It ends outside the picture.

Rodolfo first pointed to the man on the roof.

INTERVIEW EXTRACT · RODOLFO MENA

"I remember the stones on the corrugated roof. They weren't a marker. The wind from the sea rattled the tiles and we put heavy stones where they helped. After repairs they came back up, but not always in the same place."

| *"He was afraid of heights."*

The roof was barely eight feet above the ground.

| *"Height is when you can fall down," he said. "The number is not important."*

The stones were added at the end of the construction work. The wind from the sea reached under the edges of the plates and caused them to beat at night. Initially, smaller stones were planned, evenly distributed. Rodolfo and another worker argued about whether many small stones or a few heavy ones were better. The engineer decided on a mix and drove away before they were finished. The next morning two plates had slipped. The workers then laid the stones as they saw fit.

"And that's how they're still lying," said Rodolfo.

Some probably. The number and position change in the pictures from different decades. This proves repairs, wind and the simple fact that a roof has been walked on. It is not a secret order. Still, the stones are one of the building's most reliable features. The gate changed. A window was made smaller or bricked up. The wall along the path received new plaster. The stones remained in an irregular line above everything.

The second question, which had Rodolfo looking longer at the photo, concerned the area behind the building.

"We worked there," he said.

| *"Was that a yard?"*

| *"No."*

| *"An open area?"*

| *"Yes."*

| *"With a wall?"*

“With two, depending on which day you mean.”

He explained that the rear extension did not take shape all at once. At first there was only a low edge to prevent material from sliding down the slope. A wall was later extended. He no longer knew whether the area was closed. For him it was a place where iron was bent, plates were laid and water was boiled in a corner protected from the wind. A yard is something that belongs to a house. This place was part of the work.

Two rooms are listed in the preserved site plan from 1983. The rectangle of the front bearing takes up most of the area. There is a narrow side room next to it. Behind the building the line ends straight. In the 1981 recording she appears to be continuing to run. Perspective, a later-removed retaining wall, and Rodolfo's work area are equally possible explanations.



Comparison between the building photograph from probably 1981 and the site plan from 1983. The rear boundary is not completely visible in the photo. The plan includes two interior spaces and no courtyard. Reconstruction: Ana Belén Vargas.

Rodolfo didn't draw the floor plan. He said floor plans were for people who remembered lines. He remembered weight. On the front wall, fewer blocks were needed than he expected based on the length. Not many less. A row, maybe just half of a row. The sand for the mortar was

finer than at other construction sites. A bag drew water overnight even though it hadn't rained. We were able to make two of these memories plausible based on other construction site reports. There is no delivery note for the number of blocks.

| *"Was the building bigger on the inside than it looked on the outside?"*

Rodolfo put the glasses on the board.

| *"Every finished room is smaller inside than when it was being worked on," he said. "When you're building, everything is still outside. Bags, panels, people. When the gate is in, all that's left is the space."*

I explained the question again. He listened without becoming impatient.

| *"You mean whether we measured ourselves."*

| *"Perhaps."*

| *"Then a wall would be crooked."*

| *"Was a wall crooked?"*

| *"Of course. But not like that."*

He picked up the board and held it up to the light. It was slightly warped. He said it was enough for the shelf.

Plan, photography, and current condition

Two days later there was a site inspection with a copy of the plan back to the depot. A man was working on a motorcycle along the way. The gate was still closed. The Garúa had obliterated the upper half of Cerro Dormido. Three different plaster surfaces could be seen on the wall to the left of the building. The oldest was rough and dark. A younger surface ended in a vertical edge. Behind it lay bare concrete block.

From where the 1981 photo must have been taken, the back wall was barely visible. The slope and a neighboring wall that was built later concealed the lower course. I didn't go onto the adjacent property. The plan remained on the hood of the car, moving in the wind until Alberto placed a small stone on each corner.

The plan was not an execution drawing. It showed walls, two doors, a driveway and a narrow strip called a retiro. Material thicknesses were missing. Cables were only indicated by three short lines. There was a number in the corner that didn't match any of the folders received.

Alberto later looked it up in the property files and found the same sequence on a list of projects that had been renamed between 1979 and 1982.

The northern distribution point was successively called puesto de reserva, almacén de apoyo and depósito de enlace. The change did not take place at clean intervals. Two names appeared next to each other in the same month. An order for cement named the distribution point and the supplier's invoice simply named Norte. On one note, someone had crossed out agua and written servicios over it. No correction was signed.

"This is not evidence for various purposes," Alberto said. "This is evidence that different people have described paper."

"And if different people meant different purposes?"

"Then it's additional proof of that."

The files allowed a reliable but rough order. In 1979, money was allocated for a northern location. Earthworks and masonry work began in 1980 or 1981. In 1981 a building existed. In 1983 a complete inventory was available. In between, acceptances, opening minutes and a final functional description are missing. The absence wasn't unusual enough to bear weight on its own. Municipal buildings were often constructed in sections and were used before the final process was completed.

Rodolfo didn't remember any opening. He remembered his first truck.

The driver arrived too early, before the gate was properly hung. On the loading area were pieces of pipe, lamp housings and two boxes, the contents of which Rodolfo did not see. The engineer wanted everything stored in the front room. The workers protested because the ground was still wet in one place. In the end the boxes remained on boards. Someone wrote NO MOVER on the wall in chalk. The next morning they stood in the next room.

"Who moved them?"

"Someone who wanted to work."

"Were you there at night?"

"No."

"Was there a guard?"

| *"Later."*

| *"Then no one knew who moved the boxes?"*

Rodolfo looked at us as if the question had been asked incorrectly. "They were dry. That was the answer."

As he remembers, one of the first things in the building was a long wooden table and three mismatched chairs. Today's metal table came later. On the wooden table, nails were sorted, bread was cut and a map was laid out when the wind outside was too strong. A worker wrote measurements directly onto the board. The numbers disappeared beneath smudges and nicks. When the table was replaced, someone used two boards from it for a shelf.

Rodolfo couldn't say whether this shelf had been in Elena's later Sala B. He didn't know Elena back then. For him, the history of construction ended as soon as other people began to bring things into the room. This wasn't indifference. It was a professional boundary.

"When I finish a wall, it belongs to whoever stands in front of it," he said.

I walked the old camino de servicio. From the Depósito it didn't lead straight to Centro, but initially along the lower flank of Cerro Dormido. At a junction a wider, firmer track was visible in the ground. Vehicles could have driven to the quarry there. Another trace was lost between new property walls. The distances explained why the structure touched multiple services: no facility was immediately adjacent, but several were closer than the central warehouse.

A woman sat on the edge of a wall, peeling paint from a metal frame with a small knife. She had lived in Las Palmeras since 1994. She knew the Depósito as a closed building where vehicles stopped. In the first few years the route had fewer houses and more trucks. She remembered no inauguration, but a municipal sticker that was larger and bluer at the time.

| *"Was the building important?"*

| *"Important enough that someone was always looking for a key."*

She didn't want her name in the book. Her statement was not treated as a building history in itself, but it confirmed the way the place was perceived in the district: existing, functional, rarely explained.

Back at the gate, Alberto placed the copy of the plan on the ground. The drawing was small enough in scale that one millimeter meant several centimeters on the building. He pointed to the back line. If the draftsman only set the wall thickness schematically, the usable area shifted. When the retaining wall was included in the construction, a different conclusion emerged on paper. If a light roof existed, it did not need to appear in the floor plan.

"You can build a yard out of three inaccuracies," he said. "Or remove it with the same three."

I photographically documented the plaster edges, the narrow outer strip and the point where the back wall disappeared into the slope. There was no clear additional area in any image. The building remained small. Even the possibility of an addition did not make it another building, but an ordinary building with incomplete documentation.

Later I looked for the deliveries of the concrete blocks. Two invoices roughly matched in terms of time and quantity. One named 1,200 blocks, the other 600. Together they would have been enough for more masonry than is visible today. A portion could have been used on the driveway, shoring, or another project. Rodolfo's memory of having used fewer blocks than expected could neither be confirmed nor refuted.

"Material never stays in a single invoice," he said as we read the numbers to him. "A sack goes there with a truck, half a sack goes back with a worker. In the end you think the wall has been eaten."

He remembered an apprentice who counted the remaining nails every evening. Not because anyone asked for it, but because he was convinced that missing nails would be deducted from his wages. A week later, the apprentice changed construction sites. The nails stayed in a tin can. In the photo from 1981 there is actually a small can next to the mixing trough. Nothing more can be said.

Such details gave the building back its time. Not 1979, 1981 or 1983 as separate claims, but days when there was no water, a panel rattled, a gate didn't hit and a box had to stand on boards. This did not make the chronology any more precise. It became more habitable.

In the last folder from the construction department there was a piece of paper without a file number. On it were five amounts of material and the word norte. Three positions matched Rodolfo's memory:

corrugated sheets, hinges, cement. Two remained unclear. Canal gris could refer to a watercourse, a cable channel or simply the color of a profile. Piedra techo was not a common name for a material, but Rodolfo immediately understood it to mean stones for the roof.

The 1983 inventory marked a different beginning. The construction was already the background there. The first line called shelves, the second cables, the third parts for lighting. No sentence explained that the building had opened. Usage started on paper by counting things.

The list had three manuscripts. One wrote neatly in block letters, one added quantities, one put small ticks in the margins. On the last page it said entregado, handed over, without recipient. Teresa thought it was possible that the inventory would be transferred to a new responsible person. Rodolfo said it could just as easily mean handing over a delivery.

So there was no mysterious year missing between construction and inventory, but rather an everyday threshold. At some point, workers stopped mixing mortar. Someone put up a shelf. A vehicle brought parts. A key changed hands. No single process turned the building into a warehouse; repetition did.

Rodolfo remembered the first morning after finishing his work. He didn't come to the construction site, but passed by on the way to another one. The gate was closed. There were two coils of cable in front of the wall. Nobody from his team was there.

INTERVIEW EXTRACT · RODOLFO MENA

"I remember the first morning after our work. The gate was closed, there were two cable rolls in front of the wall. That's how I knew that the building was in use. I don't know whether the rolls came to the warehouse later or were transported further."

"That's when I knew we were done," he said.

"Because the building was used?"

"Because things were outside and were no longer my problem."

By evening the rolls had disappeared. He didn't know whether they were brought in or transported on. In terms of chronology, the event

was small. For the construction worker, he marked the end more precisely than any acceptance form.

| *“Nobody bought them,” he said. “We took them off the slope.”*

Then why were they on a list? Maybe someone noted existing materials, not an order. Maybe the note was part of a later repair. The paper was younger than the building record, but could not be dated with certainty. Once again, a small document did not create a solution, but rather a connection between the file and the handle.

Rodolfo asked that the roof stones in the book not be referred to as signs. They are also not a symbol of protective disorder. They were there because corrugated sheets made noise in the coastal wind and screws alone didn't always hold. The fact that they lasted for decades gave them meaning. However, its first function remained banal.

At the last site visit he compared the current roof edge with the construction photograph. He recognized a corrugated panel whose profile seemed narrower at the edge and thought it would be replaced later. Alberto was able to measure the difference but not date it. A repair invoice from 1992 mentions four panels, another from 2007 only mentions “North Cover”. Both could affect the same place.

Rodolfo described how repairs were prepared at the time. Stones came down and were placed along the path in a general order. After screwing it together, you carried it back up, but didn't necessarily take the same place. Therefore, a stone could be old without its current location being old. The series of photos shows continuity of the procedure, not the arrangement.

| *“If one was missing, did you replace it?”*

| *“If the roof rattled.”*

| *“Through a similar one?”*

| *“Through a heavy one.”*

The answer explained the different color and shape better than any symbolic reading. There were no selected objects on the roof. There were solutions that had worked long enough to become part of the building.

| *“If you call everything meaning,” he said, “people forget why you did it.”*

The dimensions of the remaining building largely corresponded to the plan. The driveway had become narrower. The turning area that Rodolfo had mentioned twice was partly built up. A wall leading to the rear in the photo could have been a support, a property line, or the beginning of an enclosed area. None of this could be proven without putting more weight on the shot than it could bear.

Rodolfo called in the afternoon. After the conversation, he looked for a former colleague and reached out to his daughter. The colleague had died. The daughter didn't have any photos of the building, but she remembered that her father had talked about the "Northern Edition" for a while. Not from the warehouse. Not from the distribution point.

"Is this important?" asked Rodolfo.

I classified it as another name.

"Then it's probably important for your book," he said. "It was important for us whether the gate closed."

"Did it close?"

There was a brief noise on the other end, as if he were putting the phone down on the table and picking it up again.

"The second time," he said.

The first gate did not close properly. The right half hung lower and the clasp didn't hit the eyelet. Two men lifted the sheet metal while a third added the hinges. The gate could then be closed if you lifted it slightly on the last part. It was later replaced. Rodolfo didn't know when. He found the fact that today's gate was so naturally part of the building at first glance more remarkable than the different dates.

"You see a thing long enough," he said, "and then you believe it was there from the beginning."

On the next visit, the Garúa was already stroking the corrugated iron. The gate didn't give an inch under my hand. The roof tiles lay dark on the slabs. The PVC duct ended on the left wall after three meters.

The structure was there. That was enough to start with.

Chapter 2 – What was stored there

INTERVIEWS AND SOURCES

For this chapter, I interviewed Elena Barrientos at a neighborhood library. She brought a checkered notebook, several clear envelopes and a folder with working copies and initially organized the material by size.

“That’s not the order,” she said. “Just so we have space.”

The interview did not take place at the previous workplace. Elena therefore corrected an initial caption that spoke of a return to the Depósito: She was not returning, she explained, but was describing her work at the time.

“I’m not going back,” she said. “I’ll explain a job to you.”



Elena Barrientos during the conversation. She corrected quantities and spatial information directly on the working copies. Photo: Ana Belén Vargas, 2026.

Elena managed inventory at the Depósito Norte between 1986 and 1999, initially as an assistant and later as the person responsible for issuing and returning items. The exact name of her position changed. In a personnel file she is called *auxiliar de almacén*. *Encargada* is on

two payrolls. A maintenance report calls her responsible temporally, even though she had been working there for seven years at the time.

| *"Temporal was a cost center," she said. "No time given."*

Work organization and inventory

She didn't know the shelves by their numbers, but by their load capacity. The first one on the left carried cables and heavy metal parts. The second was reserved for gaskets, fuses and small boxes because it was less deep. On the back shelf were things that no longer needed to be installed, but also shouldn't be thrown away. Street lamps stood upright in a wooden box so that the glasses wouldn't hit each other. Pump parts were wrapped in oiled paper. Tools were only hung on the wall when someone needed them on a daily basis; everything else went into lockable boxes.

INTERVIEW EXTRACT · ELENA BARRIENTOS · WAREHOUSE MANAGEMENT

| *"I remember the shelves by their load capacity, not by numbers. On the left were cables and heavy metal parts, next to them were seals and fuses. The order wasn't pretty, but it was practical. I knew which box was heavier than the list said."*

I pointed out that the photo seemed emptier.

Elena took the 1988 photo and placed it next to a copy of an inventory page.

| *"Because the photographer was standing in the aisle. If he had turned around, he would have hit the shelf."*



Issue of materials in the Depósito Norte, probably 1988. Elena Barrientos checks a list; a delivery is sorted in the background. Elena Barrientos private archive.

She recognized herself by the jacket. The jacket was blue, although the print made it appear almost gray. She first called the man in the background Víctor, then Jaime. After a pause, she decided it must have been Jaime because Víctor would never have carried a box that high. The large lamp cases on the table were part of a delivery for the northern section of the coastal road. Three of them were returned because the frames didn't fit.

"A lot of things didn't fit back then," said Elena. "That doesn't mean it was bad. It means you had to compare."

A working day began with the gate. Whoever came first lifted the right half slightly before pushing the shutter back. Then it was ventilated as long as the garúa was not too dense. Cardboard boxes that had been lying on the outside wall were checked. Moisture showed up first on the staples and then on the labels. Cable reels were not placed on the edge, even if it was quicker because the floor was uneven there. During lunch break someone boiled water. Elena had an enamel mug with a blue rim that she put in the map cabinet every evening.

The map cabinet was not one of the cards that later became important. It was a low metal cabinet with shallow drawers for delivery notes,

small maps and label supplies. There were scales on its top. There was a pencil next to it that was attached to a string but still regularly disappeared.

"You tie a pencil and people take the string," Elena said. "That's administration."

Their humor was not aimed at the Municipalidad. She talked about systems in which people worked and yet which never fully matched their behavior. A tool could be officially returned and lying on a construction site. A roll of cable could be considered issued, even though only eight meters were missing. A box could be reserved for two years for a project that was neither canceled nor started. For such cases, Elena kept her own symbols on the side of the list: a slanted E for borrowed, a small square for damaged, a dot for checked.

"And what did a circle mean?"

"Don't throw it away yet."

At this point Elena pulled out her checkered notebook. It was not an original from the depot years, but a later copy. After leaving the company, she wrote down individual stocks from memory, initially because a former colleague had asked her about a pump seal. After that, she kept adding something: the color of a box, the position of a lamp, a number that she was no longer sure about. Uncertain information was in brackets. She underlined twice things she had only heard from others.

A double page reconstructed the day of the big edition after the street lighting went out. Elena hadn't written down the date, but rather the order. The first call came at seven o'clock. At quarter past seven the key to the small toolbox was missing. Shortly before eight, a mechanic brought back three defective frames. Afterwards, two men from the water department arrived, although their disturbance had nothing to do with the lighting. They needed seals for a valve that wasn't on any of the lists they brought with them.

"Those were the days," Elena said. "When something went down, it wasn't just one thing that went down. Everyone remembered at the same time what they had been wanting to get for a week."

The serving took place on the metal table. One person named the material, a second looked for the number, Elena checked the quantity

and destination. When someone said “cable,” she asked about the length, cross-section and connection. When someone said “lamp,” she wanted to know whether they meant the housing, the socket, or the bulb. Many disputes in the Depósito were not conflicts but rather incomplete nouns.

By ten o'clock the hallway was full. A box of street lamp parts had been opened even though it was reserved for another project. A driver was waiting for a signature. Someone had put water on and forgotten. The little stove went off before the pot was empty. Elena remembered the smell of hot metal and the damp air coming through the gate.

“Was the room messy?”

“The day was full. It's not the same.”

She also organized under pressure. Issued parts were no longer on the shelf, but in a free area next to the table. Returns never came straight back to their place. First it was checked whether they were complete, damaged or just mislabeled. A returned part could be the same on the outside and have a different connection on the inside. Anyone who sorted it without checking postponed the problem until the next failure.

In the afternoon a mechanic brought a box that according to the list was supposed to be empty. Inside were three fuses and a set of screws. Elena didn't write “found.” She wrote “present, origin open”. Many years later, Teresa recognized this formulation as a precursor to her own categories. Elena had no theory about the city. All she had learned was that an unknown origin did not make an object less material.

“If there's something on the table, it's there,” Elena said. “If you don't know where it comes from, don't write that it's not there.”

“Was that an official category?”

“If I wrote it, it was official to my work.”

The phrase EN OBSERVACIÓN appears in later documents. She didn't know Teresa Valdivia from any technical standard. Elena didn't know it as a form term either. However, she immediately understood what such a category could serve.

“Something has been expanded,” she said. “It might work. Maybe someone needs a part of it. Maybe the engineer will come on Thursday. If you write it as active, it's not true. If you write it as removed, someone will pick it up. So watch it.”

She looked at the copied list.

"It's no secret. It's a shelf."

On the reconstructed inventory page there are two amplifiers, a relay box, an emergency power device, four cable reels, a measuring mast, three signaling devices and a map cabinet. Not everything was in the building at the same time. The list continued for years. Several entries change status without a new serial number being noted. An amplifier is initially active, later removed and operational again in 2011. The relay box was decommissioned in 2006 and then under observation. When it comes to the emergency power supply, RETIRADO is followed by ACTIVO.

MUNICIPALIDAD DE SAN DESVELO				
PATRIMONIO · CONTROL DE INVENTARIO				
Dependencia: DEPÓSITO NORTE		Código: SD-MUN-07		
CÓD.	DESCRIPCIÓN	1989	2006	2011
R-02	AMPLIFICADOR	ACTIVO	RETIRADO	OPERATIVO
RC-1	CAJA DE RELÉS	ACTIVO	FUERA	OBSERVACIÓN
GE-4	GRUPO ELECTROGÉNERO	ACTIVO	RETIRADO	ACTIVO
CR-4	ROLLOS DE CABLE	4	2	1
MS-1	MÁSTIL DE MEDICIÓN	ACTIVO	RETIRADO	—
SG-3	SEÑALADORES	3	3	EN OBSERVACIÓN
FC-1	FICHERO METÁLICO	ACTIVO	ACTIVO	ACTIVO

Reproducción tipográfica · Archivo Municipal

Typographically reconstructed inventory page based on entries from several years. The status sequence has not been standardized. Municipal Archives of San Desvelo.

Elena checked every line. She corrected the translation on the measuring mast. It was not a complete mast, but three segments, at least one of which was later used at the weather station. The signaling devices were not sirens. One had a defective cover. The map cabinet was never removed, even if a list said so.

"It's too heavy," she said.

"Heavy things can be removed."

"Of course. But not by the people who were there at the time."

She talked about a morning when a mechanic brought back a borrowed tool. The handle was the same, the inventory number was not. He insisted that he had received the tools from the Depósito. Elena looked for the issue list, found his signature and next to it the number of the missing tool. According to the stamp, the returned piece belonged to El Faro's water supply.

"What have you done?"

"I accepted it."

"What number?"

"Between both. Otherwise we would have had one tool too many and one too few. That would have been worse than two numbers."

In the afternoon the workshop manager came by to clarify the matter. He picked up the tool, examined the head and said it was his. Elena asked if he meant the tool or the number. He put it back and drank some coffee. In the end the piece remained in the depot. Three months later it was spent on repairs at Cerro Vigía. It didn't return.

Lunch breaks were short and not required together. Nevertheless, around twelve o'clock a temporary order emerged that was not on any list. Whoever was in the building moved a cardboard box aside, put water on and divided the free section of the table. Drivers sometimes stayed if their next tour was not yet decided. Fitters ate while standing. Elena only sat down when no issue was announced.

She remembered a box that had been sitting next to the table for almost a year. He was reserved for a project that was never completed. No one was allowed to open it, but no one picked it up. During breaks it served as a place to store cups and tools. The label became soft, the string loose. When Elena finally received approval, the box contained connecting parts that had since been replaced with a different model.

"Did you throw them away?"

"No. They came to the back."

"To Sala B?"

"Probably."

For the first time she sounded uncertain about this room because she was reconstructing not the shelf but the path of an object. The word

probably remained in the transcription. It showed that her certainty had different levels.

A photo from a break shows three people at the open gate. Elena isn't into it. Only first names are on the back. The box next to the table could be the same, but its label is illegible. The image bears no anomaly. It still became important because it showed how dense the room was during normal use: a chair in the aisle, cups on material, a jacket on the wall. Anyone familiar with today's almost empty interior easily underestimates how much work has changed the perceived dimensions.

"It seemed smaller when it was full," Elena said. "But you knew better where everything was."

This reversal was remembered for later measurements. An empty space makes boundaries visible and at the same time makes them more difficult to assess. Shelves, boxes and repeated paths create a practical dimension that disappears once the items are removed.

Such stories took up more space in the conversation than the divergent plans. Elena remembered the names of materials, the weight of a box, and a driver's bad habit of folding delivery notes in his breast pocket. She knew which lamp flickered above the table and how long a smell of petroleum lingered in cardboard. It wasn't until almost two hours later that she drew the floor plan.

The unconfirmed Sala B

She started with the gate. Behind it was the front section of the depot. She drew the heavy shelves on the left and the table on the right. She marked the switch boxes on the back wall. The narrow side room was where it is in the 1983 plan. Then she put another door behind the map cabinet.

INTERVIEW EXTRACT · ELENA BARRIENTOS

"I remember a Sala B. There were sensitive parts, measuring devices and sometimes documents. I'm now unsure about the position of the door. However, I remember the back shelf and the small flat key very clearly."

"Sala B," she said.

I didn't ask immediately. Elena continued the line, added a shelf and wrote humedad on the outside wall. The room was narrower than the front section of the depot, but wider than the familiar side room. If you put it to scale behind the map cabinet, it would protrude beyond the outside wall.

"What was it for?"

"Delicate parts. Measuring devices. Sometimes documents."

"How did you get in?"

She pointed to the door.

"She's not here today."

"Then it was bricked up."

"There's slope on the other side."

Elena pushed the drawing back to us. "Then your plan is wrong."

The sentence was not meant as a challenge. For them, the memory of use had a different evidentiary value than the memory of measurements. She didn't know how wide Sala B had been. She knew there was a shelf in there. On the second floor there was a row of gray boxes, the lids of which were secured with two screws. There was a dark spot of moisture on the wall on the left. When Garúa lasts longer, the boxes there first become soft.

The maintenance documents, however, describe the building as unusually dry. Pages that were in the green folder from 2004 to 2011 hardly show any waves or stains. The metal brackets are only superficially rusted. It is possible that Sala B was damper than the other rooms. It is also possible that Elena uses a room from another depot in her memory.

I showed her photographs of communal camps from Puerto Esperanza and Centro. She recognized several shelving systems, but didn't confuse any of them with the Depósito. When she saw a picture of the water workshop, she immediately said that the door was on the right, not the left. When asked whether Sala B might have been part of this building, she replied: "There was no shelf with gray boxes there."

"What was in the boxes?"

"If I still knew, I would tell you."

"Could they have been radio parts?"

| *"Could have been connections for pumps. Gray is not a function."*

In the weeks after the first conversation, Elena continued to search. She found a list of street lighting expenses, two damaged photographs and an index card with only three lines readable. In the first there was Sala B. In the second there was a crowd: twelve. In the third the word sellado, sealed. The card had no inventory number or stamp. On the back someone had written down a telephone number that is no longer in use.

One of the damaged photographs showed the left row of shelves after a delivery. The edge was bent and the bottom half was discolored by moisture. Elena identified three coils of wire, a stack of lamp housings, and a box of metering connectors. A door stood open in the background. All that was visible behind it was a bright area.

"Sala B," Elena said.

On the back it said almacén norte / entrega. No room name. The position of the door could also match the known adjoining room if the photographer was closer to the gate than Elena assumed. I placed the picture next to the floor plan. Elena postponed it three times and stuck to her assignment.

She told how sensitive parts ended up in the back room. Not everything that was small was sensitive. Seals could lie open in boxes. Measuring devices remained wrapped in cloth or paper. Relays were not placed next to the wall because moisture attacked their contacts. The gray boxes had their own key, which hung on the ring of those responsible for the depot. At that time, Elena carried seven keys. She knew everyone by weight.

| *"Which one was for Sala B?"*

She placed her hand on the table as if she could still feel the ring in her palm. "A small flat one. The beard only had two levels."

| *"Could it be the little key from the map cabinet?"*

| *"Today's?"*

I showed her the inventory photo. She enlarged it on the phone. The key was not fully visible because of the angle.

| *"Could," she said. "That's not confirmation."*

Remembering a key was easier than remembering a door, she explained. Keys were touched every morning, doors were usually opened without being looked at. If a lock got stuck, it was remembered. The lock on Sala B rarely got stuck. The door was lighter than the one to the next room and made a dry sound when closed. There was a metal rail or a flat threshold on the floor.

I asked about the light. Elena didn't remember any lamps in the room. With the door open, light came from the front storage area. For longer work, someone placed a portable light on the shelf. This information made a windowless room more plausible, but did not resolve its relationship to the outside wall.

A former mechanic, whom Elena identified through the damaged photograph, remembered the Sala B only as a name on lists. He thought this meant the familiar next room. He didn't see the shelf with gray boxes in front of him. However, he was rarely in charge of the issue and only entered back areas when Elena sent him.

"You see," Elena said after we read his statement to her. "He waited until I brought the thing."

"He says he only knows two rooms."

"Then he waited in two rooms."

The statements contradicted each other without any of the people appearing unreliable. The fitter remembered his job. Elena remembered hers. A building can have different spatial boundaries for people because not everyone has access to every area. This explains an unknown space socially, not geometrically.

By the time Elena finished working in 1999, the inventory was already smaller. Radio Desvelo stored more technology, while municipal parts more often went directly to workshops. Some shelves emptied. Others became more mixed. Elena continued to do her marginal characters, but new forms left less room for them. On the last sheet, which is definitely hers, there is only a circle next to a relay box.

"Don't throw it away yet," she said.

In 2011 the same box was published as EN OBSERVACIÓN. The handwriting is different.

Elena didn't leave the Depósito on a special day. Her position was transferred to another unit. For two weeks she worked in the center in the morning and in the warehouse in the afternoon so that a handover could take place. The new person in charge knew the technical parts better, but their spatial organization less well. He wanted to number the shelves. Elena helped him, although she wasn't convinced that numbers improved the ways.

Shelf one became the heavy left shelf. Shelf two is the flatter one. According to her memory, the back shelf in Sala B was number five. Shelf five does not appear on any surviving lists. The episode ends at four.

"Then there's a page missing," Elena said.

"Or the shelf was counted differently."

"We put the numbers together."

She remembered the small white signs, black numbers and two screws. There are holes on today's left shelf that could fit such signs. Comparable traces are missing in the next room. The wall in the suspected Sala B is not accessible because the room itself is not confirmed.

On the last afternoon, Elena checked the keys. The ring had become lighter. Some boxes had been removed and a lock had been replaced. According to her own statement, she gave away the small, flat key for Sala B individually because it was no longer hanging on the ring. The recipient signed on a sheet of paper of which she did not have a copy.

"Why wasn't he at ringside anymore?"

"Because someone needed him."

"For what?"

"For the door."

The answer went in circles and still remained true to its working logic. A key was not managed abstractly. It was taken, used and returned. Elena remembered the use, not the process that was supposed to get it into the file.

After the handover, she took her cup, two pens and a cloth with her. She left the checkered pad there. Years later, she thought she recognized the same top corner in a 2004 photograph. That could be

true. Checkered blocks look similar to each other. The desire for continuity made a paper not proof.

I asked if she missed the building.

"No," Elena said at first. Then she looked at the portrait that had been taken during the conversation. "I miss knowing where things were."

At the Centro she worked with better forms and more telephones. Material was in several places. A request could be answered more quickly, but Elena saw the item less often. In the depot, she knew which box was heavier than the list said, which box was soft at the bottom, and which shelf held an item that no one officially needed anymore.

INTERVIEW EXTRACT · ELENA BARRIENTOS

"I don't miss the building. I remember knowing where things were there. There were better forms and more phones in the Centro, but the item was farther away. A false status then just made it easier to read."

This closeness should not be romanticized. It also meant dust, a lack of tools and responsibility without clear authority. Elena didn't talk about the good old days. She spoke of a work whose accuracy was material.

A typical month-end close began two days before the date on the form. Elena went shelf by shelf, putting little pencil dots next to positions she had seen. She did not immediately write off missing quantities as a loss. First she checked issue slips, then returns, then the boxes containing damaged material awaiting a decision. Only then did an item receive a status.

This order explains why some lists seem both orderly and inconsistent. On one page there are numbers with a ruler, on the next there are marginal notes and arrows. The form was official; the actual work followed the path of things. A cable could be issued, partially returned, shortened and re-entered as different stock. The form required a number even though the item had changed identity.

Elena showed us three verbs that recurred in the lists: entregado, devuelto, revisar. Issued, returned, checked. The last word kept material in an in-between state. It could be working, damaged, or waiting for someone to decide. Later readers sometimes turned revisar into a warning. For Elena it was initially a work instruction.

"How long could something be under scrutiny?"

"Until someone came."

"Days?"

"Or years."

She remembered a roll of black wire that had the same mark on three inventories. Nobody wanted to spend it because the insulation was dull in one place. Nobody wanted to write them off because the rest seemed usable. Ultimately the role was missing. Elena didn't believe in theft. It was probably taken away during repairs and used in another unit. A missing item could be the end of a long indecision.

The inventory page with the changing status sequence was therefore not smoothed. Their contradictions were part of the use. A clean reconstruction with uniform columns would have given the impression that the inventory was completely known at all times. In fact, Elena's precision was to limit clutter so that work could be done the next morning.

When comparing the handwritings, she recognized her own abbreviations, but not every line. She wrote a round seven differently than the person who added after her. She initially thought two entries were hers and later those of a colleague. I didn't assign them.

Handwriting similarity is not a reliable proof of identity, especially in forms whose terms have often been copied.

The photo from 1988 shows Elena with a list in front of her body. No line can be read on the magnification. All that is visible is that her left thumb is holding a spot while her right hand is pointing towards the shelf. A man is carrying a box behind her. The image confirms work and spatial density, not the content of a particular issue. Elena looked at it for a long time and finally said that she had worn the same cardigan three days a week back then. This accuracy also helped the dating less than expected.

"Today you would do it with a computer," she said. "Then the false status would be easier to read."

Elena didn't think the card was evidence.

"Proof of what?" she asked. "That I didn't invent the name? I already knew that."

She remembered one day after a street light malfunction. Several lamps in the north were out and two teams arrived at the Depósito almost at the same time. One needed fuses, another needed light sockets. It wasn't raining, but the garúa had darkened their jackets. There were boxes in the aisle in the front storage area. Someone was boiling water. A repairman sat on a reel of cable and claimed to have received the wrong parts. Elena went into Sala B, picked up a box from the second shelf and found the exact lamp socket that wasn't on any list.

"That's exactly why you remember a shelf," she said. "Not because it's secret. Because it had the right part on a bad day."

I later visited the Depósito with her sketch. There was a joint in the material behind the map cabinet. It could have come from a repair. The plaster there was smoother and slightly lighter. It was not possible to conclude with certainty that the door was bricked up. Outside, in the same place, the slope was so close that there was hardly room for a room. When measuring repeatedly, the depth of a narrow shelf was missing between the external dimensions and the internal path, not the width of the Sala B drawn by Elena.

When I told her the dimensions, the first thing she asked was whether the map cabinet was still there.

"Yes."

"Then you measured from the wrong point."

"We measured from three points."

"Then three times."

She didn't smile. Later, when the documents were back in the shopping bag, she asked for a copy of her own drawing. She sat down again and traced the line of Sala B with a darker pencil. The position of the door shifted it a few centimeters to the left.

I asked if Elena was more sure now.

"Not given the situation," said Elena. "With the shelf, yes."

Chapter 3 – The Years of the Radio Station

INTERVIEWS AND SOURCES

My main source on Beto Saldaña is an older tape interview. The recording begins with a knock on the microphone, the noise of a chair and paper, and a short technical query. Then Beto's statement begins.

| *"If it lights up, I guess we need to get started."*

The interview was not conducted for this book. It was probably created between 1999 and 2002 as part of a collection on Radio Desvelo. On the cover it says Ruta Nocturna / B. Saldaña / lado A; a date is missing. I left unintelligible passages open and did not add time uncertainties afterwards.

Radio Desvelo had been licensed on 103.7 MHz since 1987. The addition La voz de la costa appeared in advertising breaks, on bills and on a sign above the studio entrance. The station broadcast local news, music, municipal notices, lost documents, weather observations and advertisements for businesses whose owners did not always pay bills on time. Ruta Nocturna started late. The exact time changed with the program schedule.

"Who was the show for?" the interviewer asks.

| *"For people who were awake."*

"Driver?"

| *"Drivers. Fishermen, if they were far enough in to hear us. Security guards. Bakers. People waiting for someone. You can't sort a nighttime show by profession. A radio doesn't know why someone isn't sleeping."*

Beto's voice is warm and used to pauses. He doesn't start again after every sentence. If he misses a word, he leaves room for it to come back. The tape hiss stays evenly underneath his voice. It only drops in two places, as if the level had been changed subsequently.



Beto Saldaña in the Radio Desvelo studio, probably in the late 1990s. The photo was not taken in the Depósito Norte. Private archive, photographer unknown.

The studio was north of El Faro, but not at the Depósito. There was a technical connection between the two places, not a spatial one. Beto speaks of boxes that were relocated due to lack of space: sound carriers, cables, an emergency power device, a dismantled mixing console, spare parts for the transmitter. Some things came back. Others remained in the Depósito for so long that no one knew whether they were reserves or stocks.

Radio Desvelo and the Depot

The program *Ruta Nocturna* had no fixed sound that could be reconstructed today from a surviving recording. There are excerpts, commercial breaks and two music cassettes on which Beto speaks between tracks. A full night is missing. On one tape, he begins warning drivers to avoid the northern coastal road because a truck has lost cargo. He then reports the state of the *garúa*, reads a message about a wallet he found, and apologizes to a store whose commercial was played at the wrong tempo.

INTERVIEW EXCERPT · BETO SALDAÑA · RADIO DESVELO

"I remember Ruta Nocturna as a broadcast for people who were still on the move or awake. The radio was often directions: people didn't know a sector number, but they knew which wall was never finished and where a dog was sleeping."

"We had three watches," says Beto in the interview. "One above the door, one at the desk and one in the telephone. None showed the same time. There was still only one time for the listeners."

The interviewer asks which ones he named.

"The one that was the least wrong."

In his memory, radio work consisted of corrections that no one heard. A tape had to be braked with your finger, a control was not allowed to be pushed to the marked point because it scratched there, a microphone cable only held if it formed a loop under the table. The station was not a place of flawless transmission. Their reliability came from people knowing the mistakes.

The Depósito extended this practice spatially. What couldn't be repaired in the studio went north. No final decision was made as to what might still be useful there. At times, a technician named Eulogio kept his own list of parts on hand "just in case." The case was never further described. There are times in one column and weather abbreviations in another. It is possible that Eulogio logged failures. It is also possible that the list mixed several tasks.

Beto remembered Eulogio as someone who was reluctant to speak during a broadcast. When he came into the studio, he left a piece of paper next to the desk. There were instructions on it like three more minutes, don't turn off the generator or just microphone. He once wrote Norte listo.

INTERVIEW EXCERPT · BETO SALDAÑA

"I remember the Depósito as a reserve, not as a second studio. There were cables, a generator and temporarily removed equipment. A line or a short test does not make a storage room a broadcasting room."

"What did that mean?"

"That something was ready in the north."

"In the depot?"

"Probably."

"A transmission?"

"They want the word very much."

Beto pushes an object across the table on the belt. "Ready can be a generator. A line. A man with a cable. If we had broadcast from there, I would have needed a microphone there. I don't remember a microphone."

A former listener from Puerto Esperanza had two recordings of Ruta Nocturna. He had not kept them for the program, but because he wanted to copy music from the cassettes. In one recording, Beto's voice changes for almost a minute. It becomes drier, closer and loses the spatial sound. The normal studio signal then returns. A technical change in the line, a different microphone channel or the quality of the private recording are sufficient explanations. No second voice or unusual content can be heard on the tape.

"The road to El Faro remains open," Beto says in this section. "There is a vehicle on the edge to the north. Anyone passing there should drive slowly."

The message could be related to a repair. A municipal report that same week mentions a lighting problem, but without a time. A delivery note leads cables to the north. None of the documents explicitly refer to the shipment. A possible night only emerges when viewed together, and that is precisely why it remains uncertain.

The owner of the recording remembered that Radio Desvelo sometimes sounded "smaller" during failures. He didn't mean quieter. The voice seemed to have less space. His description is similar to Beto's distinction between broadcast and feed: The program could be created in the studio and reach the broadcaster via a different technical route.

Provisional transmission

A provisional broadcast at the Depósito would therefore be neither a second studio nor a refuted memory. The expression on the back of the photo can describe a technical process that Beto classified differently linguistically. It is also possible that the labeling is incorrect.

"Who decided what went there?"

"The one who had no room."

"Was there a list?"

"Of course there was a list. That's another question."

He laughs briefly. He then explains how the tapes were stored. Not directly on the wall, not under the small window, not on the floor. Moisture was visible to paper and initially only audible to magnetic tape. A poorly stored recording didn't immediately sound wrong. She lost first the high places, then the calm between the words.

Sound recordings only appear briefly in Elena's inventories. Radio Desvelo kept its own lists. One of them notes the removal of forty-eight cassettes and twelve open tapes in 1993. The recipient is indicated as Norte. A return is not documented. On a later sheet there are still seven cassettes and three tapes, with no explanation for the difference.

"People think that in a radio archive every voice remains," Beto says on the tape. "In reality, casings remain. Empty reels. A program that you wanted to keep has been dubbed over. An advertisement that no one needs anymore has been lying there for twenty years."

The Depósito's radio years begin not with a broadcast, but with a lack of space. The studio received new technology before the old one was picked up. An amplifier failed and needed to be repaired. An emergency generator had to be located closer to the northern line. Cable spools returned from a construction site and were initially stored next to municipal pump parts. The clear separation between radio, water and weather observation exists more strongly in the files than in space.

In a photograph, two men stand in front of the open gate. One carries a wooden box, the other a device with two coils. An older pickup truck backed into the wall. The picture was long listed as a studio shot because it says equipo Radio Desvelo on the back. Only the comparison with the roof stones and gate shows the location.



Radio Desvelo technology in front of the Depósito Norte, early 1990s. The building served as a warehouse and technical reserve, not a second regular studio. Municipal Archives of San Desvelo.

On the same back there is a second note, in different ink: *transmisión provisoria* – Depósito Norte. The word *provisoria* is more common in older acts in San Desvelo than *provisional*. A name or date is missing.

In the interview, the unknown interlocutor asks Beto whether there was ever any broadcast from the Depósito.

The tape continues to hiss. Then it goes silent for about two seconds. It is not an unnatural silence; the fundamental tone drops along with the voice, as if someone had moved the control or edited the tape later.

“No,” says Beto.

“Never?”

“Not from the depot.”

“There is a photograph labeled provisional transmission.”

“Then someone captioned the photo like that.”

“What could that mean?”

“A feed. A bypass. Maybe they moved the generator there. Maybe off is the wrong word. If I put a cable through your window, I don't live in your house.”

He then talks about an evening out. First the ventilation in the studio failed, then part of the supply. The emergency lighting was sufficient for the desk, but not for the next room. A technician drove north with cables and a flashlight. Beto stayed in the studio and filled the time with music until the tape slowed down. After that, for a few minutes there was only the microphone signal and a quiet hum.

"Did the listeners notice anything?"

"Listeners notice everything and call it something different. One said we were further away. A woman said my voice was closer. A driver called the next day and wanted to know why we said the time twice."

"Did you say them twice?"

"Certainly. Moderators repeat themselves. Only later they act as if it was intentional."

A transmission log from the relevant period contains the note enlace auxiliar. The date is torn off on the corner. The program items are complete: music, advertising, a sign of a closed road, weather, music. No entry mentions the Depósito. There is also no evidence that Beto himself was there.

The technical still life from the warehouse shows the material that recurs in various memories: generator, cable reels, mixer, tape recorder and boxes. The objects do not form a hidden studio. A microphone is missing. Likewise, headphones, record players and the paper order that surrounds Beto in the regular studio photographs.



Outsourced technology from Radio Desvelo in the Depósito Norte, probably early 1990s: emergency power unit, cable reels, tape recorder and expanded mixer. Municipal recording without reliable dating.

The recording contains a small window on the right edge. In later exterior views no opening can be seen at the same location. This could be due to the angle. It is also possible that a window was bricked up when the neighboring wall was raised or the interior was changed. Not enough of the exterior wall is visible in the photograph to determine the location with certainty.

I reconstructed the camera position based on the shelves and the incidence of light. If the photographer was standing close to the gate and aiming to the right, the window would have to be in today's side wall. A smoother plaster surface is visible on the outside. A cable duct runs above it inside. A bricked-up opening would be possible. However, the 1983 plan does not show a window at this point.

Rodolfo remembered a small opening for ventilation, but couldn't place it safely. Elena remembered the high window in the front section of the depot and a portable lamp in the Sala B. Beto didn't mention any windows. Three sources did not add up to a clear building history.

Alberto measured the smooth plaster surface. It was wider than the window in the photo if both images suggested the same scale. Plaster

rarely follows an earlier opening exactly. A repair can be larger. The area could also have come from pipeline work.

"If we wanted to prove there was a window there, we would find enough," Teresa said. "If we wanted to prove that there wasn't one there, that would be the case."

That's why the caption remained: possible window, later not assigned with certainty.

A former radio technician looked at the device photo in more detail. He recognized the mixer as a model that Radio Desvelo had purchased used. Two channels were already unreliable back then. The tape recorder probably did not come from the studio, but from a community recording room. The generator could be the same one that was later listed in different inventories.

"Could you send it?"

"With a generator, you don't transmit. You power something."

"Could the Depósito be part of a transmission?"

"Any cable can be part of a transmission."

He explained a possible provisional feed-in. The studio signal could be routed via a cable or a transported device, while part of the supply was secured at the Depósito. There was no need for a presenter or music source in the depot. The process would be technically relevant and linguistically still not a broadcast "from" the building.

Such a solution required lines that are indicated on the later network map. It didn't prove that the bright trail to B.L.A. related to that. The technician didn't know the card. When I only told him the connections FARO, VIGÍA, CANTERA and RADIO, he thought the mix was plausible for a municipal aid system.

"What would be the fifth port?"

"If it's not labeled, I won't tell you a name."

His reticence corresponded to Inés' later working style. Technical knowledge only reduces uncertainty where the findings are sufficient. It does not replace missing labeling.

The technician remembered two trips to the Depósito. At the first one he got cables. At the second one he brought the mixer. He was there during the day and saw Elena. He did not experience any broadcasting.

After a breakdown, a colleague drove north at night; He didn't know whether this was the same evening that Beto was talking about.

| *"There were a lot of failures," he said. "Later they become one."*

The files confirm this majority. Malfunctions in ventilation, supply, pipes and generators are spread over years. Memories combine repetitions into a night worth telling. That doesn't make the night wrong. It just changes their scale.

Beto doesn't mention the window. He talks about bills instead. Advertising was cheaper at night and still difficult to sell. Some stores paid in goods. A parts dealer supplied fuses twice that did not fit the transmitter. They came to the Depósito because they could be used for street lighting. They lay there until Elena assigned them to a different number.

| *"Did you know Elena Barrientos?"*

"Naturally."

"What kind of person was she?"

"A person from whom you return what you borrowed."

"Bands too?"

| *"Especially ribbons."*

In a later conversation, Elena recalled that Beto rarely came to the Depósito himself. Radio Desvelo usually sent a technician or driver. When Beto came, he would bring a list and read it while Elena checked the items. He used a radio voice even when there were only three people in the room.

| *"It wasn't vain," Elena said. "He just spoke like that."*

The last documented radio-technical activity at the Depósito does not coincide with the official end of the station in 2004. The assistance system is marked FUERA DE SERVICIO on August 12, 2006.

Maintenance notes will follow until 2011. It is possible that only lines were secured, devices were checked or property was recorded. A shut down system does not disappear the moment a switch is flipped. Cables stay in walls. Boxes stay on the wall. A generator remains in a list even if it no longer starts.

Between 2004 and 2006 there are a number of small pieces of evidence that do not provide a clear ending. One invoice is for the cleaning of a

device that was already removed according to the inventory. Another note mentions the replacement of two fuses without specifying the associated system. On a list of keys, Radio Desvelo is still next to Depósito Norte, although the studio was no longer broadcasting regularly.

I asked two former technicians to read the entries. The first thought it was rework. Devices would have to be removed, lines separated and rooms secured. The second said a support system could have been kept ready for community reporting or testing even after a station ended. Nobody remembered such a company. Both contradicted the idea that the notes could be used to infer a continued secret mission.

“Secret is expensive,” said the first technician. “We would have needed spare parts for that.”

In a box from the studio archives was a program schedule for the last confirmed week. The Friday column does not end with a farewell broadcast. There is music, local news and a repeat. Two entries are missing on Saturday. On Sunday the site is empty. Beto was right: looking back turns an absence into a final evening that those involved did not recognize as such at the time.

His interview was written before Radio Desvelo's later broadcasts gave renewed importance to the city in the novel. Precisely for this reason, the archive voice could not be burdened with later knowledge. Beto speaks of a time when failures had technical, financial and personnel reasons. He knows the Depósito as a warehouse and connection point.

I decided to only note tape hiss and dropouts in the transcription where they actually limited a statement. Not every crack received a bracket. Otherwise the materiality of the recording would have overshadowed its content. The tape was old, the recorder wasn't serviced, the microphone position changed. A technical error was initially exactly that.

A piece is evidently missing in one place. Beto begins a sentence about a late-night phone call and ends mid-word. The conversation then continues with another topic. A mechanical kink is visible on the cassette. It would have been easy to treat the missing content as particularly important. However, no one knew whether ten seconds or several minutes were lost.

The interviewer noted on an accompanying sheet: cambio de cinta / llamada sin interés. The call was of no interest to him. For Beto, he could have been commonplace. This gap would be particularly tempting for later readers. That's why it only appears in the book as a damaged passage, not as a hidden message.

Another excerpt shows Beto's way of working better. During a broadcast, a driver reported a dark street lamp north of Las Palmeras. Beto had the curve, the next wall and the color of a gate described to him. He didn't ask for a sector code. He then repeated the location so that a municipal driver could find it.

“Radio was often directions,” he says in an interview. “People didn’t know the number of their street, but they knew where a dog slept and which wall was never finished.”

This attitude connects the studio with the Depósito without merging the two places. The station gathered language along the routes. The depot gathered materials for the networks. Both worked because people practically completed incomplete information. The later desire for a single correct map or inventory encountered systems that worked precisely through local knowledge.

In the studio archive, the tapes were not arranged according to location, but rather according to broadcast days. The Depósito therefore only rarely appeared as a separate entry. It appeared in subordinate clauses: A technician should get cables there. A driver is waiting at the northern gate. A planned transmission was delayed because a unit did not start. Taken together, the locations did not result in a second transmission location, but rather the acoustic trace of a supply location.

I listened to thirty-two cassettes in their entirety and another sixteen in samples. Many featured music or local ads. Some were overplayed. The speed was unstable on four bands. The research was not limited to passages with noticeable noise because this would automatically make technical defects significant. A sound was not noted until it coincided with an announcement, a documented test, or an interruption.

A recording from March 1994 contained a steady low tone after the local news. It lasted eleven seconds, then an advertising tune started. Prueba línea was written on the cardboard box. Beto may have written

the note, but did not recognize it for sure. The sound was similar to the humming sound later heard in the Depósito, only in its rough pitch. Recording device, tape speed and speakers made an accurate comparison impossible.

The former studio engineer listened to both recordings on headphones. He cited at least four common causes: mains hum, an open line, feedback from a poorly isolated device, or mechanical fluctuation of the tape. "Same sounds are not the same source," he said. This sentence became the limit of the comparison. The archive preserved a similarity, not a connection.

Beto's broadcasting practice was improvised, but not without rules. Before each night's journey he checked his watch, telephone and tape machine. He spoke to reports without a confirmed location with one caveat. During power outages, he repeated instructions more slowly. He had a booklet with accents on difficult street names. Between the pages were receipts and a dried plant that no one identified.

NORTE – depósito was written on one page, including three telephone numbers. Two were proven to belong to municipal authorities; the third was out of service when the directory was printed. It is not clear from the magazine whether Beto called there or was expecting calls. The note only proves that the place appeared in his practical network.

One employee recalled that broadcast equipment was sometimes assembled in the Depósito before festivals. A team picked up the boxes in the morning, and they returned the next day with missing adapters and damp cables. Beto complained about the return and later lent material to the same people again. This circulation explains why municipal and radio technical holdings appear next to each other in photos without being organizationally the same.

The term provisional transmission led to misunderstandings in later accounts. It could mean a test from the yard, a line check, a brief contribution from a celebration, or simply preparations in the depot. No surviving program list mentions a regular broadcast from the Depósito. A single attempt remained possible; staff, suitable acoustics, a secure power supply, and program records were lacking for a permanent studio.

On one of the surviving tapes, Beto does not mention the temperature around midnight. He only says that the Garúa is “at the level of the lamps”. A driver from Puerto Esperanza should drive slowly at the northern junction. Then he plays music. No name, no time and no sound indicates an unusual broadcast. Nevertheless, the passage makes the night livable: someone is sitting at the desk, someone is driving, someone is waiting for a message.

I played an excerpt for Elena. She listened with her eyes closed, not out of emotion, but because the tape was quiet. When Beto said that a radio doesn't know why someone isn't sleeping, she nodded. She opened her eyes at the claim that tapes had been protected from moisture.

“They should be protected,” she said.

“Weren't they?”

“Not all of them. One time someone brought a box that was already soft at the bottom. We put the ribbons one by one on paper. Beto came the next day and said that was exactly the right order. He had no idea if it was the right order.”

She laughed. This was one of the few moments when the memory of Radio Desvelo did not have to be limited by a document. Two people remembered the same professional trait: Beto's ability to make a practical solution sound like a program item after the fact.

He doesn't call Elena by name on the tape. He only speaks of “the woman in the north who knew which cable was really missing.” It could mean her. Elena said, of course she meant it. She then added that it could have been a different one if Beto had mixed up the years.

On the interview tape, Beto is asked why Radio Desvelo stopped.

INTERVIEW EXCERPT · BETO SALDAÑA

“I don't remember a single dramatic last evening. A radio stops because of money, parts, licenses and people. At that time it was only a week in which no one knew whether the next broadcast would take place.”

“Because radios stop,” he says. “Money, parts, licenses, people. Later you make it one last evening. Back then it was just a week and you didn't know if the next one was coming.”

“And the Deposito?”

"What's with it?"

"Was there still technology there?"

"Certainly."

"Was the system active?"

Beto moves paper. Something small falls to the ground in the background. Maybe a pen.

"Active is a word for lists," he says. "If you ask if anyone has used it, you have to ask someone who has been there."

The conversation then switches to an advertising tune. Beto hums two notes and stops because he is annoyed by the key. He tells of a speaker who mis-emphasized every place name except San Desvelo. The tape continues for a few seconds after his last answer. You can hear the chair, paper and a person outside the recording area. Then the recording ends.

No voice played backwards. No message from the Depósito. Just a room where a conversation is over.

Chapter 4 – Deliveries After Dark

INTERVIEWS AND SOURCES

In the interview, José Luis Gamarra first asked about the route I took to the Depósito. For him, access to the building meant considering the approach road, the turning area, and actual driving practice; this perspective determines the chapter.

“Behind Las Palmeras on the left or just at the low wall?”

I described my route behind Las Palmeras to him. He thought the route was wrong, even though it led to the building. His distinction between arrival and access suitable for delivery vehicles proved important for the reconstruction.

“Then you went the wrong way.”

“We have arrived.”

“It’s not the same.”

José Luis was a driver for municipal workshops and later for a building materials dealer in Puerto Esperanza. His dates remained approximate. He organized memories by vehicle: the green truck with the weak handbrake, the pickup truck with the screwdriver in the ashtray, a blue van whose right-hand door could only be opened from the outside. If he said that a delivery was “in the year of the green truck,” the repair invoice time period could be limited to three or four years.

Routes and records

His routes were more accurate. From Puerto Esperanza to Centro: depending on traffic. From the quarry to the depot: slowly downhill, then a tight curve. From El Faro north: not along the beach when the air was humid because salt and sand made the brakes work differently. The path behind Las Palmeras was easier during the day and clearer at night. You saw less, said José Luis, but only what the headlights needed.

INTERVIEW EXTRACT · JOSÉ LUIS GAMARRA · DRIVER

"I remember the track better than the space. Behind Las Palmeras there was a tight corner, then the low wall and the gate. For a driver, the Depósito consisted of arriving, turning, unloading and a signature."

Night deliveries were not secret. Cement and metal were driven early or late when the heat was lower. Spare parts arrived at the end of the shift if they had to be picked up from a workshop beforehand. Urgent repairs are not based on office hours. Sometimes there was simply no vehicle available until the other tours were finished.

At my request, José Luis reconstructed an overnight delivery from the order in the workshop to the placement of the material. As far as possible, I compared his information about the vehicle, load and route with repair invoices and trip sheets.

"What did it say?"

"Línea costera. Sector N-4."

"No deposit?"

"No."

At first he didn't go to the depot. The first address was on a section of line north of El Faro. There was no one there. A gate was locked and the name on the note belonged to a technician who was working in Centro that day. José Luis waited twelve minutes. He knew the number because he had calculated a quarter of an hour on the trip sheet and the dispatcher later deleted three minutes.

From there he drove back to the workshop, but received instructions over the radio to put the material "in the north". Radio reception was poor. He didn't hear the name of the person who relayed the message. Such gaps were normal during driving. An instruction had to be executable, not literally complete.

On the way he picked up Hilario. The guard was waiting at an intersection with a thermos and a jacket that was too thick for the season. There was a bag with keys on the passenger seat. Hilario checked them as they drove, lifting the trailers in the light of the street lamps. One wore only a blue thread.

"Like the key in the archives?"

"Many keys had threads."

"Blue?"

"Blue was cheap."

The drive through Las Palmeras was slower than during the day. Children no longer played on the path, but vehicles without lights stood on the sidelines. Concrete was being mixed on a house. A bare light bulb hung over the driveway. The truck had to drive so close to the wall that Hilario folded in the mirror. Behind the last dense houses the street fell into the diffuse light of the Garúa.

José Luis remembered sounds as distances. The loose tool behind the seat hit a certain bump in the road. Then there was a long quiet moment. Shortly before the depot you could hear the cable reels working on the loading area, even though they were wedged. Those who knew the route needed fewer signs at night.

"Why are there photographs of trips like this?"

"Because someone had to show that it was delivered."

A photo was not an artistic decision. It could substantiate an expense, document vehicle damage, or show a supervisor why a trip took longer. Some photos were taken after unloading. Then a vehicle looked empty, even though the caption mentioned material. Others showed people who happened to look into the camera and were later thought to be responsible.

"What did you bring to the Depósito?"

"Anything that hadn't reached its destination."

"For example?"

"Cables. Boxes. Lamps. Parts for pumps. Empty barrels if someone thought they were still needed. A piece of mast. Once six sacks that weren't allowed to get wet, and that very night the Garúa came into the cabin."

For drivers, the depot was less a building than a process: arrive, turn around, turn off the engine, find the key, open the gate, check who is signing. The turning surface was important. A loaded truck had to be positioned in such a way that it did not have to reverse back to the main connection after delivery. Rodolfo Mena moved a wall during construction to enable precisely this movement. Later, a new property wall took away part of the radius.

"Today you wouldn't drive there in the green truck," said José Luis. "Back then. There's also a shortage of space."



The former camino de servicio with tire tracks and concrete remains, at the end of the 1990s. The Depósito is in the center of the picture; Las Palmeras was still loosely developed. José Luis Gamarra private archive.

In the picture, the street runs as a bright area between unfinished walls. The Depósito is small enough to be overlooked at first. Cerro Dormido fills the background. There are pieces of concrete along the lane that José Luis recognized as edge markings. They were not placed by the municipality. Drivers would have moved them if a curve went differently after rain or construction work.

I pointed out the low rainfall.

"That's why you remember when it does."

Night as Working Time

The Garúa was enough to bind dust and flatten light. Some nights it was so low that a truck's beam of light couldn't reach further than the gate. You didn't see the stones on the roof until you got out. The engine sounded in the corrugated iron after it was switched off. José Luis usually waited a few seconds before calling. Not out of superstition. A

driver who immediately speaks next to a switched off engine will hear his own volume incorrectly.

INTERVIEW EXTRACT · JOSÉ LUIS GAMARRA

"I remember how small the night made the place. In the day you could see houses, paths and the hillside. At night there was only the searchlight, the gate and the area where a box was carried. The night didn't make anything more secret; it just made the edges smaller."

The delivery receipts in his possession were folded and soft at the edges. Destinations were not always given as addresses. Some call line sections, others call rows of plots or sectors. A consignment note from 1997 lists Sector N-4 / Línea Costera as the destination and the Depósito does not. Nevertheless, José Luis remembered dropping off the load there.

GUÍA DE REMISIÓN · SERVICIOS MUNICIPALES
SAN DESVELO

FECHA	17 / 08 / 1997
ORIGEN	PUERTO ESPERANZA
UNIDAD	CAMIÓN MUNICIPAL 04
CONDUCTOR	J. L. GAMARRA
DESTINO	SECTOR N-4 / LÍNEA COSTERA
MATERIAL	2 ROLLOS DE CABLE · 1 CAJA DE RELÉS · 6 CONECTORES PESO DECLARADO: 286 KG

RECIBIDO: _____ HORA: 22:40

Reconstructed waybill from an overnight delivery from August 17, 1997. The destination is indicated as a sector and line section; the receipt signature is not legible. José Luis Gamarra private archive.

"There was no one at the actual destination," he said. "So it came north."

"Was that usual?"

"It was possible. Common is a word that files use when no one has counted the frequency."

The load consisted of cable reels, a relay box and connecting parts. The weight on the receipt roughly matched the positions. The time of 10:40 p.m. was within the working hours of a driver who had started in Puerto Esperanza in the afternoon and had previously driven to two other locations. What is unclear is not the journey, but the reception.

José Luis remembered a guard named Hilario who was along for the ride that evening. In the personnel files there is a Hilario Cárdenas in the property protection, but no division for the date. A former colleague from key management confirmed that a security guard or workshop employee was often taken along at night if the driver did not have his own key. Spare keys were temporarily in three different places. The process was confusing, but not unusual.

In front of the gate, José Luis turned off the engine. Hilario got out of the passenger side and walked around the vehicle. At that moment the gate opened inwards.

"Quite?"

"One page."

"Have you seen anyone?"

"No. I sat higher. The light was bad. The gate opened."

"Could Hilario have opened it?"

"He was standing next to me."

"Someone might have driven ahead."

"Naturally."

José Luis did not wait for me to offer a simple explanation. He supplied several himself. A technician may have been working in the building. Another guard could have arrived earlier. The gate may not have been properly locked and moved when Hilario touched the second half. The memory of the order may have shifted after almost three decades.

"Were you afraid?"

"I had a load that had to go."

The photo of an overnight delivery shows a vehicle in the gate, three men working and cables in the loading area. It's not sure if it's the same night. The truck is blue, not green. José Luis recognized the spot, but

none of the men clearly recognized it. One could be Hilario. One could also be himself, only the jacket is wrong.



Night delivery at Depósito Norte, late 1990s. Vehicle, gate and material are recognizable; the people could not be identified with certainty. Municipal recording.

José Luis's strongest memory was not of opening it, but of waiting afterwards. There were no lights on in the building. Someone had placed a flashlight on the metal table. When unloading, the deep sound of the engine disappeared, but a remnant of it remained in the room. José Luis assumed that the corrugated plates or a generator were vibrating. Hilario said nothing about it. The men carried the relay box in first, then the coils of cable.

He estimated that unloading took less than twenty minutes. Coils of cable were not thrown. She was placed on the edge, turned and guided two by two across the floor. The relay box was lighter but more cumbersome. One carried in front, one behind. The flashlight was positioned so that its light hit the threshold. The man from the building didn't hold her.

“Did he help?”

“He said where.”

“Where exactly?”

| *"Left. Then behind."*

José Luis only entered the front area. He remembered shelves, the table and a smell of cold cable. He didn't see an additional door. When the first roll was in the room, the gate seemed further away than when it entered. He explained about the light: the headlights were outside, only the flashlight inside. Distance changes when the brightest point is behind you.

Hilario went back to the vehicle after the second roll because the tailgate was open. José Luis was in the building with the unknown man for a few seconds. They didn't speak. The deep sound remained audible. Then a motorcycle started outside and the sound disappeared from the engine.

| *"Did you know the man?"*

"I thought so at the time."

"Today?"

| *"Today I don't know his face anymore. That's something different."*

On the way back, José Luis Hilario asked about the receiver. The guard replied that the signature was enough. They stopped at a lighted intersection so José Luis could add the time. The freight bill says 10:40 p.m. If his memory is correct, the number indicates the end rather than the beginning of the delivery.

The vehicle was emptier, but not quiet. The chain on the tailgate hit the metal on bumps. José Luis stopped briefly and wrapped a piece of cloth around it. This little act is not in the logbook. She stayed with him because the material was missing the next morning.

| *"Is this important?"*

| *"For the trip, yes. For your building, probably not."*

Such boundaries were maintained in the conversation. Not every ambiguity had to be part of the deposit. A lost piece of fabric, a wrong minute or a driver who forgets a face are part of memory, not automatically part of the place.

The logbook records the return to the workshop only after midnight. The number of kilometers is plausible if a detour via the coastal road is assumed. José Luis didn't remember this detour. Maybe he was filling up. Maybe he took Hilario somewhere else. Maybe the number is

transferred incorrectly. The document made the night no more complete than the conversation.

The next morning no one asked about the delivery. The material later appeared in an inventory list of the Depósito. The relay box changed status several times in the following years. Whether it was the same box could not be confirmed by the number. José Luis didn't recognize him in any of the photos.

"Which room?"

"In front."

"Was there a Sala B?"

"For drivers, there is front and there is no front."

He didn't sign the receipt. As he remembered, the illegible receipt signature belonged to the man who must have already been in the building. He didn't see the face clearly. The man was wearing a Municipalidad jacket or a jacket of the same color. When José Luis later asked who was on duty, Hilario said it didn't matter because the material had been accepted.

The former key manager did not remember any such incident. However, she explained that names on receipts are often illegible because of signatures on the hood or gate wall. A man in the building did not automatically mean assigned duty. Technicians continued to work after disruptions, cleaners arrived early, drivers waited late. Responsibility often followed work until the next day.

She showed us an old key book. Each issue should be noted with time, name and return. In practice, lines were missing. A key could have been returned in the morning and reissued in the evening without the second event being recorded. If a vehicle urgently needed to leave at night, the guard would take a ring and add the number later. The blue thread appeared in several descriptions, but was not a clear identifier of the Depósito.

"Was there a key inside?"

"For the map cabinet, perhaps. For a box. Not every little lock was in the book."

"For a Sala B?"

The woman thought about it. "The name means something to me. But if you said it before, I don't remember if it told me anything before."

This caution was more important than additional reassurance. Memories change as we speak. A name you hear can attach itself to an existing form. Therefore, her statement was not used as evidence for Elena's room.

To reconstruct the location, I drove the route again with José Luis. He insisted on driving himself but took a smaller vehicle. In Puerto Esperanza he showed the location of the former workshop. Today there is a tire shop there. The exit had been widened and the old wall had disappeared. On the road to San Desvelo he recognized two curves, a closed restaurant and a gas station, which at the time only consisted of a pump.

The closer the site reconstruction came to Las Palmeras, the more often he corrected the current route. There used to be no one-way regulation. At that time, two streets ended openly in the dust. A shortcut was closed by a wall. José Luis drove slowly without becoming nostalgic. For him, changes were neither loss nor progress, but rather new conditions for a driver.

He stopped before the curve at the former camino de servicio.

"This is where the building starts," he said.

The deposit was not yet visible.

"Why here?"

"From here you decide how you get out."

He explained the turning angle, showed the former open area and the wall that now took up part of it. A driver who only looked at the gate came in. A driver who was thinking about the return trip used to tilt the vehicle. Therein lay its precision: the place was made of movements, not walls.

When the group reached the gate, he didn't get out. He looked through the windshield at the shutter. He didn't recognize today's metal. The height and right suspension were roughly the same as he remembered. On the left side of the path there was a missing post where a rope or chain had previously hung.

"So that no one drives on?"

"So that people could see that they shouldn't continue driving. That's a difference."

Behind the depot the narrow track led along the slope. José Luis pointed in that direction without turning his head. He still knew she was there. He again denied whether he had ever followed her.

"A driver can be curious," he said. "But that doesn't make the load any lighter."

Other documents contain target information that can no longer be assigned today. A sector code appears twice and then disappears. According to the plan at the time, a row of plots is located where Los Pinos was later built. A section of pipe could have led to the Cantera. None of the evidence confirms La Hondonada or an invisible district. Above all, they show how material was moved through a growing city whose names and borders did not grow at the same pace.

José Luis sorted the receipts not by date, but by route. One stack belonged to Puerto Esperanza, one to Cantera, one to Centro and the northern sectors. Some trips touched multiple stacks. On a piece of paper the origin was Cantera and the destination was a pump station, but the load consisted of cable protection pipes. This was not a contradiction if the quarry was only an interim storage facility or meeting place.

"A shipping bill shows where paper begins," said José Luis. "Not always where the journey begins."

He remembered a delivery of empty barrels. The barrels were cleaned and were intended to be used for water during construction work. At the depot it turned out that two lids were missing. The recipient refused to accept it. José Luis didn't go back, but waited until someone brought suitable metal sheets. The barrels remained outside the gate overnight and were listed on a different list the next morning.

Another trip brought parts of a measuring mast. The segments protruded beyond the loading area and had to be marked with red fabric. On the way the marking came off. José Luis used a piece of his own jacket because there was no other cloth. Years later, Elena remembered three mast segments that were never on the same shelf at

the same time. Driver and depot memories touched here in a practical detail.

The Cantera rides were harder. Dust settled in brakes and clothing. Unloading was not carried out immediately at the Depósito if sensitive equipment was open at the same time. José Luis then waited outside until Elena or someone else in charge made room. The gate remained half open. To a resident driving by, the building looked active, even if there was only one truck waiting for turnaround.

"How many times have you been there?"

"Often enough that I knew the curve. Not often enough that I knew the space."

At least twenty-two possible trips over more than ten years can be derived from the evidence. Only nine mention the Depósito explicitly. Six can be assigned via material and signature. The rest probably remains. The number shows regular use, not secret logistics.

The mileage was checked separately. In five trips the difference matched the shortest route via Las Palmeras. Three values were too high if the Depósito had been the only target. José Luis explained that a driver rarely completes just one job. He brought documents to the Centro, fetched fuel or took dismantled material with him on the way back. The logbook often summarized such detours in one line.

A particularly high value initially led to a route along the coast. However, the accompanying piece of paper said *cubierta* in the margin. José Luis did not read the word as hidden, but as a cover: the wagon was probably transporting corrugated sheets that had to be tied down because of the wind. A second meaning would have been possible linguistically, but it did not fit better with the material and vehicle. The process showed how quickly an ordinary working word sounds suspicious in the wrong context.

The returns were more poorly documented than the expenses. An empty vehicle did not need a parts list. Damaged parts were sometimes left behind the cab and were not unloaded until the following morning. In a workshop photo, José Luis recognizes a gray box that he remembers came from the depot. The back of the picture only mentions a repair to the vehicle. The box therefore remained unassigned.

The names of the recipients were also not stable. A first name could indicate the security guard, the technician in charge, or just the person who usually knew who to look for. Two pieces of paper name Elena, even though Elena was proven to have a day off on one of the days. She considered it possible that her name would continue to be used as shorthand for whoever was responsible for the depot. José Luis said a driver writes the name that opens the door, not necessarily the name of the person behind the door.

During a reconstruction, Alberto placed the known trips on a city map from the respective years. The lines did not form a hidden network. They followed roads, pumps, lamps and construction sites. Some apparently ended up empty because later cards no longer had old working names. Others were overlapped at the Depósito, which made it seem less like a destination than a joint: material arrived, changed paper or vehicle and disappeared back into the company.

José Luis only looked at the map briefly. It makes his job neater, he said, but not more correct. On paper, all curves are equally dry. No plan shows where a car could turn if there were already cable rolls in front of the gate. His ways consisted of such conditions. The map preserved direction; memory preserved resistance.

In later stories, the night reinforced what was normal during the day. A missing receiver sounded more suspicious after dark. An open gate with no person visible was given more weight. José Luis contradicted this effect without recanting his memory.

“The night makes nothing more secret,” he said. “It just makes the edges smaller.”

During the day you could see neighboring walls, paths, houses and the slope. At night the place consisted of spotlights, gate and the area where you carried a box. That's why José Luis told the building more closely than Rodolfo or Elena. His truth was a beam of light.

I asked if he had ever slept in the Depósito. Drivers sometimes waited a long time. Jose Luis said no. He slept in the vehicle if he had to. There was a smell of materials in the building and someone could close the gate. Other drivers would have taken breaks there. One person put a jacket on cable rolls and claimed that it was more comfortable than a

seat. José Luis didn't want to name names because he only knew the stories from workshop discussions.

The informal use as a break room connected his statements with Rosa and Diego's memories without referring to the same times. A communal building could serve several small needs, one after the other and simultaneously: keeping materials dry, keeping a driver waiting, protecting a stove from the wind, turning a bicycle upside down.

José Luis distinguished three types of waiting. In the first one the engine stopped because only one signature was missing. On the second, he parked it and sat on the bumper while space was made in the warehouse. In the third, no one knew when a receiver would arrive. Then he removed the key, put the cargo folder under the seat and walked back to the curve where the lights of the Centro could be seen. He never moved so far away that he could no longer hear the truck.

This gradation explained several times on the receipts. Sometimes there were only seven minutes between arrival and reception, sometimes almost two hours. A later hand had entered the same time for both fields in two cases. José Luis thought this was an afterthought. "At midnight, no one wants to write down that they were looking for the man." The explanation was plausible, but could not be proven. In the transcription it remained marked as his assessment.

During long stays, the Depósito became a small social place. A security guard brought coffee in an aluminum pot. A mechanic was checking a fan belt with the light coming from the door. Anyone who had arrived earlier knew which stone belonged under the right gate leaf. Conversations revolved around tires, daily allowance and the question of which road would be passable again after the next Garúa. Nobody talked about the facility as a whole. For those involved, it consisted of the next section and the material that was still missing.

José Luis remembered a list hanging on a nail next to the gate. It didn't contain any destinations, just first names and times. When it rained or fogged, the paper would curl up at the edges. Elena did not remember such a list. In a photograph from the late 1990s, a light, narrow object can be seen at the location mentioned. It can be a leaf or a strip of chipped paint. The memory could not be confirmed, but neither could it be refuted by the current situation.

Once José Luis returned with a load that had not been accepted at the destination. Two boxes of ceramic insulators then stood in the front room for three weeks. He recognized it by a damaged corner and the red string securing a lid. Two boxes are noted on the later return receipt, but neither the cord nor the damage. Elena no longer knew the process. The example showed how an item temporarily became inventory without ever being included in an annual inventory.

| *"What happened after three weeks?"*

| *"They were driving again."*

| *"Where?"*

| *"On another piece of paper."*

He didn't laugh at the answer. For him, it was complete. A depot did not explain things; it wedged them between two instructions.

José Luis talked about a return trip where bright stones lay on the side of the road as if water had sorted them. It hadn't rained. Perhaps they came from a spilled cargo. Maybe someone had marked the edge of the path. The line started behind the Depósito and ran along the slope for a bit.

| *"Did you follow her?"*

| *"I was a driver."*

| *"That means?"*

| *"My path was on the note."*

During the last conversation, I put the consignment note from 1997 on the table. José Luis ran his finger over the receiver line. He didn't try to decipher the signature.

INTERVIEW EXTRACT · JOSÉ LUIS GAMARRA

| *"I remember the 1997 delivery, but not the face of the recipient. The signature was enough for me. For a driver, a place belonged to whoever opened the gate."*

| *"Did you wonder who owned the building then?"*

He shook his head.

| *"For a driver, a place belongs to whoever opens the gate."*

Chapter 5 – Other Uses

INTERVIEWS AND SOURCES

Diego Soria did not know the Depósito by its official name. In the interview he called it the building behind the wall. His statement documents more recent, informal use after the aid system was already out of operation.

"Empty means you can't find anything," said Diego. "You always found something there. Usually nothing good, but something."

A broken bike. Two pigeon nests. Cable remnants. A wooden handle without tools. An outlet that worked even though his uncle claimed the power was turned off. Diego charged an old phone while they waited for better weather. After twenty minutes the battery was full. He didn't know how much.

"Did you see the fuse?"

"No."

"Could an extension cord come from outside?"

"Naturally."

"Was there one?"

"Not that I've seen."

During the current inspection he pointed to a socket on the right wall. The plastic was yellowed and a screw was missing. On the same wall, scratches ran through two layers of paint. Some looked like names but weren't fully legible. Nails were stuck at regular intervals over a horizontal plaster edge.



Traces of informal use in today's interior: row of nails, paint edge, old socket, scratches and an enameled mug in a box. Photo: Ana Belén Vargas, 2026.

Diego remembered that there had been jackets hanging there. His uncle repaired a pump or a small generator; he had been indifferent to the exact machine. He himself wanted to go outside again. The room smelled of metal and petroleum. Pigeons cooed under the roof. There was a single exercise book page on the floor with only math boxes visible.

The exercise book page mentioned cannot be directly assigned to Rosa Alarcón. Rosa contacted me herself after a tip from a former neighbor. In the first phone call she said she had lived there and immediately said: not for long.

Rosa's Recollection

Rosa was eight or nine years old. Her mother temporarily had no accommodation of her own and took on cleaning and security duties. It is not documented whether there was a formal order. The name Alarcón does not appear on payrolls. It is possible that the mother gained access through another employee or was listed under a second surname.

INTERVIEW EXTRACT · ROSA ALARCÓN

"I remember afternoons in the depot. My mother worked and I did my schoolwork at the table. When someone went to get materials, I folded up the notebooks. I don't know for sure today whether we lived there; for me as a child, it was a place where we stayed at times."

For Rosa, it wasn't the Depósito Norte. It was "the depot my mother looked after." They slept on mattresses that were rolled up during the day. Cooking was done on a petroleum stove. Water came in canisters. In the morning, Rosa did her schoolwork at a wooden table before heading down to Las Palmeras.

In the interview, I asked Rosa to describe a typical morning in the depot. She remembered her mother getting up before first light, folding blankets, putting the stove outside the door and checking for moisture under the boxes. Rosa washed herself with water from a small bowl; she particularly clearly remembered the smell of petroleum on her hands.

Breakfast meant bread and something warm to drink. When gas or petroleum was scarce, the water remained lukewarm. Rosa copied her assignments while the light from the high opening shone onto the table. Later the table was in the shade. They didn't use an electric lamp in the morning, even if the socket worked.

"Why not?"

"My mother said electricity costs money."

"Did she pay him?"

"That wasn't her question."

Before Rosa went to school, her mother didn't hide the mattresses. She rolled them up and put a blanket over them. The people who were collecting materials saw that someone was living there. Most people didn't comment. A man once brought two oranges. Another complained that the table wasn't free. Rosa's mother pushed the notebooks aside and let him fill out his form.

"Are you ashamed?"

It took Rosa a long time to answer. "At school I said we lived with an aunt. That was easier. In the depot itself it was just our morning."

The way to school led through Las Palmeras. Back then the houses were more loosely distributed. Rosa knew two shortcuts between walls. When Garúa was deep, her hair became damp, but the ground remained dusty. She remembered a place where water overflowed from a tank and left a dark trail across the path. There she cleaned her shoes before reaching the denser Centro.

She didn't always return straight away in the afternoon. Her mother occasionally worked elsewhere or received a visit from an acquaintance. When the gate was closed, Rosa waited on the low wall. She could tell by the noise whether someone in the building was sorting, repairing, or just moving paper. A workshop sounded irregular. One issue consisted of voices, short footsteps, and scraping boxes. When her mother was alone, you could hear the broom.

These everyday sounds gave her testimony a spatial precision that the plan did not possess. Rosa knew where a pot was, how far the mattress was from the table and which edge she hit her knee on. She didn't know how the room lay in relation to the outside wall. Childhood is measured in ranges: from the bed to the cup, from the table to the gate, from the clothesline to the mother's hand.

"Was that bad?"

"It was far."

"I mean, living there."

"We lived. What was bad was when the stove didn't turn on."

Her memory consisted of processes. The mother got up first, but didn't open the gate until Rosa was dressed. Trucks woke them up. The smell of petroleum remained in the clothing. An enameled cup was not allowed to be used for screws, although other cups were used for this purpose. Some days men came, got parts and left without asking why there was a textbook on the table.

A private photo shows a girl at the table. In the background there is a woman at the stove. Concrete wall, small opening and simple pipes fit the Depósito, but do not prove the location. The recording does not have a labeled back. Rosa recognized her mother's blanket, mug and jacket.



Rosa Alarcón doing her schoolwork, probably around 2001. According to her statement, the recording location is the Depósito Norte; there is no independent confirmation. Rosa Alarcon private archive.

The photo had been kept in an envelope with school pictures, receipts and two photos from Puerto Esperanza. The trigger was barely damaged at the corners. Rosa thought a neighbor had operated the camera. Her mother didn't have any of her own at the time. A bright shape can be seen in the reflection of a metal surface, too small to be identified. She was not enlarged or interpreted as an additional person.

Rosa's mother could no longer be questioned. Later, she rarely told her daughter about her months in the depot. Not because she wanted to hide anything, but because it was one temporary stop among several moves. For adults, it was a temporary solution. For Rosa, it encompassed a larger part of the life she remembered from that age.

After leaving the depot, the family lived in two rooms with relatives. Rosa continued on the same route to school, only it started further down. Rosa occasionally saw the depot from a bus or mototaxi. The gate was then closed. At one point she thought she saw laundry behind the wall, but couldn't tell whether it belonged to the building or to the neighboring property.

| “Did others live there later?”

"I don't know it."

"Did your mother keep the key?"

"No. She returned things."

Rosa remembered the return as a small process in the Centro. Her mother placed a key on a desk and waited for a signature. Rosa sat on a chair in the hallway. There was a copier running on the other side of the wall. She didn't know whether the key belonged to an envelope. The process could have been any municipal key. Nevertheless, for her, the sound of the copier was associated with the end of the accommodation.

The mother took the enamel mug with her. Rosa was sure that later he was standing in a kitchen and ended up jumping off the edge. The undamaged mug in today's map cabinet could therefore not be the same. This negative association was one of the few safe boundaries between memory and the present.

"Then don't let him be my cup," said Rosa.

The request was heeded. In the book it appears as material evidence of use, not as personal possession.

A social history of the Depósito could neither romanticize the accommodation nor turn it into a dramatic plight. The family lived there because other options were temporarily lacking and because there was access. The place offered shelter, water in canisters, a table and a door. It was not a home in the legal sense. In everyday life he could still be one for a few months.

Rosa spent the longest time talking about the exercise books. Paper took on a smell in the building. At school, she thought others would notice the petroleum. Probably no one noticed. She left the notebooks open in the afternoon so that the smell would disappear. Paper dried slowly in the Garúa. The pages curled at the edges.

The green maintenance records from the same period are noticeably dry. This difference could be due to storage, paper quality or space. He was also able to support Rosa's Recollection of another building. None of these paths were mandatory. Personal notebooks were on the table, files in the closet. That alone could be enough.

"Where were the mattresses?"

The Unconfirmed Yard

Rosa drew a corner that would be possible in the well-known front section of the depot. Then she moved the table further back, into an area that doesn't appear as a room on the plan. She remembered a small courtyard. There was laundry hanging there. The wall was low enough that she could see the top of passing trucks.

INTERVIEW EXTRACT · ROSA ALARCÓN

"I remember a clothesline and a low wall. I remember where the laundry was hanging, but I'm not sure how to get there from the gate. Maybe it was a courtyard, maybe I'm connecting two nearby places."

"Was the yard open?"

"Upstairs, yes."

"How did you get in?"

"Through the door behind the closet."

The formulation was created without knowledge of Elena's sketch. I hadn't asked Rosa about a Sala B or a map cabinet. However, her door was in a different place. Elena led the way into a narrow storage room. At Rosa's house she led to a yard with a clothesline. Rodolfo's open work area, in turn, was behind the building, but was not a courtyard for him.

Rosa later found a second photo. It shows clothes on a line, a low wall, a roof edge and a pool. No clear feature connects the recording with the deposit. That is precisely why it was not rejected. A private photograph first proves that someone wanted to preserve a moment, not where it took place.



Clothesline in a small yard or work area, early 2000s. Rosa Alarcón assigns the recording to the Depósito Norte. Location not confirmed.

I compared three sketches. Rodolfo's work area was open to the path. Elena's Sala B was closed and contained a shelf. Rosa's yard was open at the top and had a clothesline. No drawing completely matched any other. The only thing they had in common was that behind the visible front section of the depot there was a used area that does not appear in the 1983 plan.

Possible explanations remain numerous. The plan may be incomplete. A slight addition may have been removed later. Rosa can remember another municipal building. The courtyard may have been outside the Depósito, separated by a wall or a narrow passage. A childhood memory can connect two places without being fictional.

For the image comparison, we not only looked for similar walls. Alberto measured the relationship between the pool, wall height and visible roof edge on the laundry photo. With no known focal length and no object of certain size, the values remained relative. They suited a narrow courtyard, but also a rear washing area in several houses in Las Palmeras.

The shadow fell short and soft. From this, a time of day, but not a direction, could be reliably derived because the Garúa scattered the light. A dark streak at the bottom of the wall could be moisture. At today's Depósito, the corresponding external wall shows similar discoloration, but the same construction style is common in the district. The visual comparison hardly reduced the number of possible locations.

Rosa identified one of her mother's light-colored dresses in the photo. A cousin also recognized the dress, but dated the photo two years later. Both statements could be correct if the dress was worn for a long time. The dating therefore remained "early 2000s". This approximate figure was less editorially satisfactory, but closer to the source than a precise year.

I asked Rosa to tell me the way to the yard without seeing a sketch. She started at the gate, walked past a table and turned left. On the second pass she turned right. When asked about the discrepancy, she did not object to the question. "I know where the laundry was," she said. "I don't know how to get there today." Memory could hold a target point and lose the unifying outline.

The cleaner described a bucket spot outside the building in 2003. There was a short line for cloths, not clothes. Their location suited the side strip more than Rosa's yard. It was possible that a small working device became an enclosed courtyard later in memory. There could also have been two different lines. No statement was allowed to replace the other.

In an electricity bill, consumption increases slightly over three months. The difference was enough for a lamp, a stove or a small appliance, not for a regulated technical operation. It could also have been caused by an incorrect reading. The bill did not show any overnight stay. It only matched Rosa's statement that the lights were sometimes on in the evenings.

A neighbor remembered people at the gate, but no residents. He occasionally saw blankets over the wall early in the morning and thought they were protective material from a delivery. When I mentioned the laundry photo, he said he noticed a line. However, at that time he was working out of town on a weekly basis. Its negation limited the frequency more than the possibility.

The various statements did not provide a complete domestic picture. There was a lack of cooking utensils, regular sleeping places, a secure water connection and a clear door to the yard. Present were individual afternoons, possible nights, blankets, a mug and memories of light. Informal use could be just as fragmentary: sufficient for people, too small for an administrative category.

Rosa became impatient when every specific statement was answered with a question about her safety.

"I don't know how wide the wall was," she said. "I know my blouse was hanging there."

She remembered a morning when, despite Garúa, the clothes were almost dry. Her mother sent it back because a button was missing. Rosa searched under the table, then by the mattresses. The button was lying next to the wall in the yard, even though she hadn't taken off her blouse there. The button was blue. His mother sewed him on with black thread because no one else was there.

"Is that the strange story?" Rosa asked.

"No."

"Good. It was just a button."

The social uses of the building did not leave their own sequence of files. Workbench, break room, protection from Garúa, short-term issue and possible accommodation took place within other jurisdictions. One room didn't officially become a break room because people were boiling water there. One family was not given an address because they slept there for several months. Informal use was not a substitute for rezoning. It just disappeared more easily from the administrative language.

Diego knew the same social continuation from later years, only without a family. After the official shutdown, the Depósito became a place where a task could be done if the workshop was too far or the path was too wet. His uncle knew someone with a key. Who this someone was alternated in Diego's memory between a mechanic and a guard. What was crucial was that the gate could be opened.

The broken bike belonged to a cousin. The chain came off under load because a tooth on the sprocket was bent. In the Depósito they turned it

on its head. The uncle carefully knocked back the metal, lubricated the chain and cursed the fine dust that clung to everything. Diego was holding a flashlight even though it was daytime. The light was dim in the back.

INTERVIEW EXTRACT · DIEGO SORIA

"I remember a broken bike, a socket and a small lamp on the telephone. My uncle turned the bike upside down and repaired the chain. As a child, I didn't see whether the electricity came from the regular system or via a cable from outside."

"Was there a door there?"

"An opening."

"To a room?"

"In dark."

He laughed at his own formulation. When asked more closely, he described the familiar adjoining room. There were no gray boxes on the wall. There was a shelf, but almost empty. There was a rolled up piece of plastic on the floor. Pigeons had collected nesting material under the roof.

During the repair, a man came in, picked up a metal box and left. Nobody introduced themselves. Diego assumed the man worked for the municipality. His uncle assumed he was a radio engineer. Both assumptions arose from clothing and tools, not from information.

Diego only used the socket after the man had left. The charger fit easily. He held the plug in place with a piece of cardboard. A small lamp on the phone glowed. This moment later gained more weight in memory because the files listed the system as out of order. Back then it was just practical.

"If there had been no power, I would have forgotten about it," Diego said.

The sentence describes a fundamental problem in the history of buildings. Working temporary arrangements leave stronger memories than systems that have been switched off correctly. An unexpectedly useful connection is told. A socket without electricity is not possible.

When they were finished, Diego pushed the bike out. The gate was stuck to the ground. The uncle raised it slightly, the same movement that Rodolfo described for the first gate and Teresa for the last visit. Whether it was the same technical necessity or an acquired habit could not be determined.

A former cleaner, who did not want her name printed, confirmed that there were blankets in the Depósito at times. She thought they were Night's Watch material. She didn't remember the courtyard. There was a dark place behind the map cabinet, but no door. According to her own assessment, she only entered the building in 2003. At that time, one opening could have already been closed.

Diego, on the other hand, remembered no yard. He remembered a narrow gap behind the building where you could park a bicycle. When I showed him the laundry photo, he said the wall could be anywhere in Las Palmeras. When we showed him Rosa's sketch, he turned the paper ninety degrees.

"So maybe," he said.

In this orientation, the courtyard was not behind the map cabinet, but on the side of the building. Today's narrow outer strip could fit this. However, there is no door leading out of the interior. There is only the external opening, which appears larger in some photographs and smaller in others.

During the physical examination, nails, paint edges, a bricked-up connection and the enamelled cup were found. None of this proves accommodation. Everything is compatible with workshop or break use. The cup was in an inventory box with no entry. Elena didn't recognize it as her own, but she looked at the blue edge for a long time.

"There were those everywhere," she said.

"Yours too?"

"Mine was cracked."

Not this one.

Stories of other uses rarely began with a decision. Nobody said: from today onwards this will be a lounge, a workshop or accommodation. An item was left after work. Someone brought a second chair. A meal was

eaten in the slipstream and again the next day. Only in retrospect did such repetitions receive a name.

Rosa did not describe the afternoon as an exception. After school she went there with her mother because the route was shorter than the detour to her aunt. There were forms on the table; a space next to it remained free for the magazine. When someone went to get supplies, Rosa would pack up her things. She didn't know the adults by their functions, but rather by their sounds: one knocked on the metal twice before entering, a woman always placed keys loudly on the table, a man only whistled when he left.

"Were the people expecting you there?"

"They knew I was there sometimes."

"Was it allowed?"

"That word didn't appear."

This answer characterized informal use more accurately than a subsequent permission question. Practices could be tolerated, overlooked, or simply not regulated. In the personnel folder there were no complaints about a child in the depot or any indication of care. The silence of the files did not prove consent. It just showed that Rosa's presence created no lasting effect for the administration.

On hot days the door was open. Rosa remembered how fine dust collected on the edge of her notebook. At Garúa, the air in the room became cooler without the floor getting wet. Her mother then placed a jacket over the back of the chair. At one point, Rosa fell asleep and woke up to metal being dragged across concrete outside. She later thought this sound was the gate. In today's photos the grinding track actually ends near the right hand sheet. Her age cannot be determined.

Diego came for a different reason. His uncle repaired bicycles for colleagues, never as an official business. He had a set of keys, a repair kit and a pump without a handle. He did small jobs in front of the gate; When it was windy, he carried the bike into the front room. Diego turned the pedals while his uncle listened for a grinding noise. The fact that an inventory list says "rubber parts, various" does not mean that there was bicycle material there. The category was part of the municipal supply and was much older than Diego's memory.

One Saturday, Diego brought a radio. Not one of the large devices from Beto's inventory, but a portable receiver with a broken antenna. The uncle connected a cable to the socket. The radio hissed, picked up a voice for a few seconds and fell silent again. Diego remembered this moment because his uncle said the walls were too thick. During the later inspection, Inés thought this was a possible everyday explanation. Reception, contact and power supply could fluctuate independently of each other.

I asked about the socket.

In the sketch, Diego went first to the north wall, then to the wall next to the gate. Finally he drew a circle between both positions. "She was where the cable reached." The sentence didn't give a location from his memory, but it did provide a useful delimitation: the device was probably in the front area. Nothing more could be gained from it.

Rosa and Diego say they never met. Their uses may have overlapped in time, but no source places both in the same space. The book puts their stories side by side, not together. Especially with small buildings, it is easy to get the impression that everyone who remembers knew each other. In fact, the same table could be used for years by people who knew nothing about each other.

Another clue lay in the bottom drawer of the metal table: three blunt pencils, a bent hair clip and a piece of graph paper. The paper was blank. Teresa didn't take any of this as evidence of a child. Pencils were part of the depot, a hair clip could have fallen out of any pocket, graphed paper was common in technical books. Together things seemed personal; individually they remained ordinary. The inventory had to withstand this difference.

Rosa also remembered a mug with a blue rim. When I showed her the find, she first said it was smaller. During the second conversation she thought she recognized the shape. I noted both reactions. Repeated questioning can sharpen memories, but also bind them to the image presented. Therefore the cup was not designated as their possession.

The private family photo asked the same question. On the back there was only Rosa's first name and a year with an illegible last digit. The wall behind her was bright, the table narrow, the floor stained. Alberto compared the visible distances with today's space. They were

compatible, but not clear. Hundreds of simple rooms in San Desvelo had similar walls and tables. The caption adopted Rosa's attribution and cited the lack of independent confirmation.

Informal users rarely left documents created specifically for them. Their sources were minor things: a subject at the edge of the picture, a person who was not on any personnel list, an object without a number, an electricity bill whose consumption was too small for a business and too large for complete emptiness. None of these traces carried the entire narrative. It was only their proximity that made their use likely, without specifying their exact scope.

The working socket also remained open. Inés explained that a single circuit could have been powered separately from the old auxiliary system. An external feed was possible. Likewise a later repair. The switched off main fuse in the present said nothing certain about an afternoon years ago.

Rosa did not visit the Depósito with us. She wanted to see the street, not go in it. To reconstruct the location, I drove slowly through Las Palmeras until the building behind the wall became visible. Rosa sat in the passenger seat and didn't say anything at first.

"The gate was on the other side," she finally said.

"Are you sure?"

"No."

She asked to drive past the path again. The second time she looked not at the gate, but at the low wall to the left. The PVC channel ended there. On the roof the stones lay dark in the Garúa.

"Maybe I'm remembering the street wrong," Rosa said.

Both sentences remained equally weighted.

Chapter 6 – The Inventory

INTERVIEWS AND SOURCES

For the current inventory, I accompanied Teresa Valdivia, Alberto Salinas and Inés to the depot. Teresa brought copies from the Archivo Municipal and separated them into categories seen, mentioned on file, remembered by witnesses, and unattributed. The originals remained in the archive.

Alberto carried the 1983 plan, Inés carried two measuring devices along with spare batteries and extension cables. I recorded the process and photographed the work steps. At the entrance behind Las Palmeras, a new wall had narrowed the lane; this change was also documented.

Access was achieved using the key kept with the documents. The damp gate could only be opened after Teresa had repositioned the key and relieved the pressure on the bottom edge of the gate leaf. The interior also contained metal shelves, a table, a map cabinet and control boxes.

On-site Inventory

We started with the exterior recording. Alberto measured the front, side panels and the accessible parts of the rear; Teresa and I photographed the starting points. The slope, concrete remains and a neighboring wall that was built later limited the measurement. Inés also noted where pipes came out of the wall and where the gray PVC duct ended.

INTERVIEW EXCERPT · ALBERTO SALINAS · INVENTORY

"I remember that each measurement showed new boundaries. The 1983 plan was probably only schematic. External dimensions, plaster and wall thickness explained some of the deviation, but no clearly hidden space."

The outside tour took longer than expected. On paper the building was a rectangle. On site it consisted of wall, plaster, slope, support and later additions. One corner was barely accessible due to a neighboring wall. There was a narrow strip running back on the left side, just wide enough for one person. The PVC duct ended there with a sealed cap.

Inés did not test her violently. An inventory was not permission to open components.

Alberto marked each measurement point with chalk on a piece of tape, not directly on the wall. After the photo, Teresa took the tape off again. She didn't want to leave a new trace that could later be read as an older marking. At the third point the strip stuck poorly because the Garúa had made the plaster damp. Alberto held it with his finger until Inés wrote down the number.

"If we're wrong by two centimeters?" Teresa asked.

"Then we're wrong by two centimeters."

"And if the old measurement started on a different edge?"

"Then let's compare two different things."

These sentences were included in the work log. Not all uncertainty affected the building. Some were concerned with the method. The 1983 plan probably measured rough edges. The current wall bore plaster and layers of repair. The slope could have built up at the back. Anyone who immediately turned the difference into an impossible space was skipping over too many small, real deviations.

There were twenty-one larger stones and several smaller ones on the roof. Three were brighter. A corrugated plate was newly screwed to the edge. Alberto photographed them from the path. There was no safe ladder to access the roof. The resident probably saw actual maintenance, but the order and person remained unclear.

At the gate, Teresa checked the inventory label. The printed portion had further faded. The handwritten number remained legible. Under grazing light, an older adhesive border appeared, larger than today's sticker. Perhaps there had been an earlier marking there. She just noted the dimensions of the rim.

Inside, Alberto didn't measure the wall, but rather the walkway. From the gate to the table. From the table to the next room. From the next room to the map cabinet. Only then did he take the direct measurements. He didn't calculate out loud. Teresa knew this as a sign that he didn't like an outcome.

"How much?"

"Not enough."

"For what?"

"For one room. Too much for comfortable rounding."

The difference was approximately the depth of a narrow shelf. Elena's Sala B still didn't fit the external dimensions. Nor did Rosa's yard. An incorrectly placed measuring point, plaster thickness, slope and the inaccessible rear wall could together explain part of the problem. No one repeated the measurement until a more spectacular number emerged.



Current inventory in the Depósito Norte. Teresa Valdivia checks documents, Alberto Salinas compares plans and dimensions, Inés examines the electrical system. Photo: Ana Belén Vargas, 2026.

Teresa placed Elena's sketch on the metal table. She didn't mark where Sala B should be. Instead she wrote: Space remembered by witness; Location not confirmed. Next to the material joint she put: repair or closed opening; cannot be determined without component testing.

The map cabinet was difficult to open. In the top drawer were old labels, two pencils and a small key that didn't fit any existing lock. The second contained folded plans. The third was empty except for fine dust. In the fourth lay an enameled mug. Teresa didn't put it on the table. She took a photo of him in the drawer and closed it again.

“Pink cup?” asked Alberto.

“A cup.”

“Elena’s?”

“A cup.”

Inés checked the main fuse and then disconnected the individual socket. The lever was down. On the box was the yellowed note NO ACTIVAR SIN AUTORIZACIÓN. The socket initially showed no voltage. When Inés connected the second device, a value appeared briefly and then fell back to zero.

“Induction, residual charge, contact failure,” she said.

“Or electricity,” said Alberto.

“Current is not an explanation. Current is what we want to measure.”

Technical findings

During the technical test, a faint, deep sound was heard in the interior. Teresa recorded it as an unlocalized noise. Inés placed a measuring device between the door and the control box; the display responded briefly, but could not be reproduced reliably. Near the next room, the display turned off and flickered again after taking a step back.

INTERVIEW EXTRACT · INÉS · TECHNICAL TESTING

“I remember a deep tone that we couldn’t locate reliably. The measuring device reacted near the card, but not reproducibly. Perception is there; it is therefore not yet a measurement and not an explanation.”

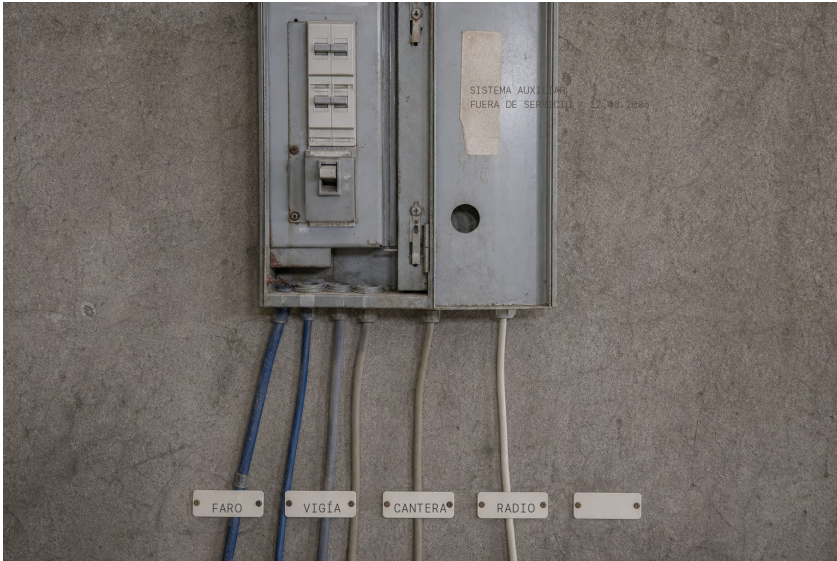
“Battery?”

“No.”

“Field?”

“That’s a word for later.”

The switch boxes were neater than the rest. Cables ran in straight bundles. Old brackets remained where wiring had been removed. Five plastic strips designated the ports: FARO, VIGÍA, CANTERA, RADIO and an empty strip. The writing was even. There was a lighter spot on the empty strip, as if a word had been there for a long time.



Switch boxes and cable labels in the Depósito Norte: FARO, VIGÍA, CANTERA, RADIO and an unlabeled fifth strip. Photo: Ana Belén Vargas, 2026.

None of the people tried to read the blank space. Teresa photographed her front and side. Inés checked the material. Alberto noticed that the wiring harness behind the fifth strip was lighter, but went into the same wall channel as the others.

“The labeling was removed,” he said.

“Or never appropriate,” Teresa said.

“Then the surface wouldn’t be any brighter.”

“That’s an observation.”

“What did I say?”

“A conclusion.”

The status sequence was in the green maintenance folder. 2006: Auxiliary system out of service. 2011: Building operational. 2018: active. No file documented a recommissioning. It was possible that the words referred to different objects: system, building, asset. Teresa created a separate sheet for each level.

The folder didn't start in 2006. The first pages were older and came from different folders. Someone had brought them together later. Holes

were not always in the same place. A water supply form sat next to a radio log. In between there was a list of work to be done on the roof. The sorting roughly followed years, but not jurisdictions.

Teresa read each heading before Alberto suggested a classification. Mantenimiento preventivo. Revisión de enlace. Control patrimonial. Security of property. The same action could appear under several terms: a box was opened, a cable was checked, a lock was replaced. It was not possible to tell from the heading alone whether a system was being operated or just secured.

An entry from 2008 mentioned testing the emergency power device. The status of the device was removed at this point. A side note said no arranca, won't start. Alberto took this as proof that it was still in the building. Teresa pointed out that a list could also have been copied from an older template. Inés said you can check a device that has been removed without reinstalling it.

“So three options,” said Alberto.

“At least,” Teresa said.

Another sheet documented the replacement of the lock. The date was legible, but the key number was not. The process took place between two years in which, according to the key book, there was no access. That didn't mean no one had entered the building. It just meant that the two systems were not congruent.

Teresa marked the maintenance documents with adhesive strips: blue for documented action, gray for unclear assignment and yellow for contradictions. The majority of vacancies were based on missing connections between documents, not on direct contradictions.

Inés tested the low tone at five fixed positions. At the gate, the measured value fluctuated with external noise, at the table it remained low, and in front of the control boxes it rose briefly. In the next room, a device reacted near the map, while a second device showed no corresponding change there.

“Which one do you believe?” Alberto asked.

| “Both, until I know what they each measure.”

Even without the devices turned on, the sound could not be reliably localized. Possible causes remained resonance of the structure, traffic, a pipe in the ground or a removed unit. Inés therefore did not use any further technical terms.

Three levels were separated in the work log: The auxiliary system was out of operation in 2006, with no subsequent proof of activation. Maintenance and access to the building are reserved until at least 2011. It was listed as active in the asset portfolio in 2018, although the meaning of this status remained open.

“You could just write that the terms don’t mean the same thing,” Alberto said.

“Then I should know that the writers meant them separately.”

“They’re making it difficult for us.”

“I make fields.”

The network card was hanging askew in the next room. Two hooks were straight, two were not. Teresa resisted the impulse to judge her. Printed lines connected Radio Desvelo, El Faro, Cerro Vigía, Cantera and the Depósito. Thinner additions led towards Centro and Los Pinos. A bright trail ran southeast toward the edge. It said B.L.A.

Before the card was removed or touched, Teresa recorded its condition. Wooden plate, four hooks, dust edge, slight curvature at the bottom right. A small amount of damage was near Cerro Vigía. At the bottom there was a metal clip without paper. The bright trail to B.L.A. had no bump or depression that could be felt with the finger. Inés shone a light over it from the side. The trail became clearer and disappeared again.

“Abrasion?” Alberto asked.

“Then there must be a lack of material,” said Inés.

“Protection from dust?”

“Then there must have been something there.”

There were no pinholes and no glue residue. A chemical change to the paper was possible, but could not be tested on site. Teresa noted material analysis as only an option. The book project did not warrant sampling. A light line was no reason to damage a document.

They compared the map with a copy from the archives. The trace was barely visible on the copy. B.L.A. could be read, but seemed like a side note with no connection. The pencil dot D. SUR was missing from older reproductions and only appeared on another map after the first inspection. The two findings could not be combined to form a common network. They were on different papers and in different times.

Alberto traced the visible connections on tracing paper. He used solid lines for printing, dashed lines for pencil and initially left the light trace free. Only on a second sheet did he put it as a very thin line. Both versions went into the folder.

“Which one is correct?”

“The first one shows the material,” Teresa said. “The second our observation.”

“And the map?”

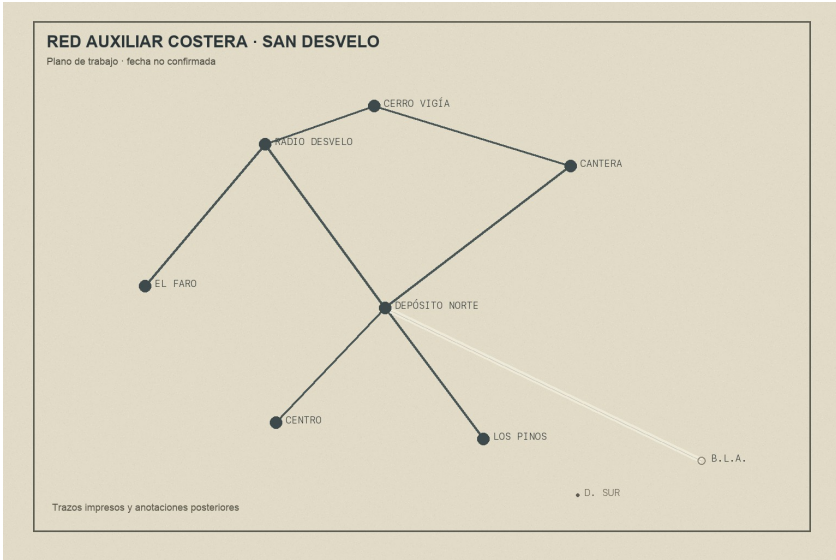
“Show both without asking us.”

The nodes had different types of reality. Radio Desvelo was a place and an institution. El Faro was a quarter, possibly also a technical connection. Cerro Vigía was the terrain and measuring point. Cantera referred to a quarry whose exact operating boundaries had shifted. Centro was not a single node. The printed map was already simplifying before an unusual line was added.

Inés did not follow the visible cables beyond the wall. Without plans and activation it would have been unsafe. She only noticed that several lines led into a common channel. Whether they left the building, ended up, or were separated later remained unclear. The empty fifth strip belonged to a real cable, but not necessarily to an active connection.

The line was visible on paper, but only uncertain in photographs. Alberto took several shots. One was blurred. On one of them the bright trace was missing in the reflex. A third showed the line but cut off the abbreviation at the edge. No picture was wrong. Each limited just differently.

DEPÓSITO NORTE



Reconstruction of the network map from the next room. The bright trail towards B.L.A. is not a printed or drawn line; D. SUR appears as a later pencil point.

Inés brought the measuring device closer to the map. The display went out. When she stepped back, the ad reappeared.

“That was the case the first time,” said Alberto.

“That’s why it’s not a cause,” said Inés.

Teresa recorded the repeated device failure near the card without determining a cause. The observation remained in the inventory as a reproducible device behavior with an unclear mechanism.

There was no legend for the network map. FARO could mean El Faro, a radio point or a connection later named the same. VIGÍA matched Cerro Vigía. CANTERA to the quarry. RADIO to Radio Desvelo. B.L.A. pointed to Bajo La Arena, but did not explain why a technical line led there. D. SUR remained a pencil dot on another map, not a confirmed attachment.

During the visit I spoke to a local resident from Las Palmeras. She reported seeing a non-uniformed person on the roof three or four months ago. Their concern was not an unusual phenomenon, but

rather the question of who was responsible for loose corrugated sheets. The name and mission of the person observed could not be clarified.

“Did she open the gate?” Teresa asked.

“I was in my kitchen.”

“Could it have been a neighbor?”

“Of course. But which neighbor repairs a municipal roof?”

Alberto looked at the roof. Three stones were lighter than the others. This could be a fresh break. It could also only show the dry top. The resident did not want her name in the publication. She didn't insist she saw anything strange. She wanted to know who would be responsible if a slab fell on the path in windy conditions.

A clear technical responsibility could not initially be identified during the research.

The inventory was given five categories: seen, measured, mentioned in the file, remembered by witnesses, not assigned. Teresa said each object and statement only once. The cup remained visible. Rosa's cup was remembered. A connection between the two remained unassigned. The Sala B was remembered. The material joint remained visible. The missing shelf depth remained measured.

On the second day, they transferred the categories into a common list. This showed how quickly grammar could reinforce an assertion. Bricked up door sounded like a door was proven. Teresa changed it to material joint, described as a possible earlier access. Active socket was too short measured value on socket. Unknown space became space remembered by witness without confirmed location.

Categories and limits of evidence

They identified a source for each formulation. Seen needed photo and date. Measurement required device, starting point and uncertainty. Mentioned in the file needed a signature or at least the documented location. Remembered needed a person and the context of the conversation. Unallocated was not allowed to serve as a repository for anything inconvenient; it had to name which connection was missing.

INTERVIEW EXTRACT · TERESA VALDIVIA · INVENTORY

"What I remember most is the language of the list. Seen needed a photo and a date. Measured needed a device and an uncertainty. Remembered needed a person. A blank field was not an error if it showed that a question had been examined and not answered."

The method slowed down the work. A simple sentence could take five minutes. However, it was later clear where a statement had its limits. Elena remembered the Sala B. Teresa saw the material joint. Alberto measured the difference. No single entry was allowed to turn these three levels into proven space.

When it came to laundry, the separation was even clearer. Seen photo. Hof von Rosa remembers. Location not confirmed. Similar work surface reminiscent of Rodolfo. No geometric match. The list did not make the superposition a stronger piece of evidence, but rather showed where the sources touched each other.

Alberto got used to the form. Towards the end he himself corrected Window Disappeared to Window Visible in a Photo; not clearly assigned in later exterior views. Inés deleted the word interference field from a draft and replaced it with device behavior near the map. Teresa didn't change that.

The categories were not a protective formula against the strange. They just prevented uncertainty from being confused with certainty. A finding could remain open even under precise language.

Alberto thought some of the wording was overly cautious. "If we write everything like that, no one will read it."

"Then we have to write better, not act safer," Teresa said.

They also sorted out absences. No second studio. No documented regular shipment from the warehouse. No confirmed Depósito Sur. No jurisdiction that covered all years. Absences were not given their own column because otherwise they would appear like objects. Teresa put them in the notes.

The list ended at eighty-seven positions. Many were banal: shelf, table, drawer, cable holder, screw, plaster edge. It was precisely this density that prevented the few deviations from swallowing up the entire place.

The Depósito did not consist of a Sala B and a bright line. It consisted of eighty-seven things observed and several decades of work.

On the third day of work, Teresa, Alberto and Inés went through the list backwards. They started not with the gate, but with the smallest entry: a washer on the floor of the next room. The change in perspective was intended to prevent the order of the tour from becoming the order of the story. What was close to the entrance was not automatically more important or older.

The washer was not given its own number. It was one of a group of loose metal parts whose location was photographed and then secured in a bag. Alberto asked if that wasn't an exaggeration. Teresa replied that the bag was less of an upgrade than a brake. Without a location, the part would later be assigned to every possible device. The location was initially just a pane from the next room.

With the metal shelf, they checked the shelves individually. Two were replaced, one was inserted upside down. Underneath the third, there was a 14 written in chalk. Elena had said in an early conversation that shelves were numbered by aisle, not by furniture. The number could therefore belong to an earlier shelving system or to a later assembly. Teresa photographed them without incorporating them into the chronology.

The green maintenance folder contained more routine than education. Replacing a lock. Sealing at the edge of the roof. Cleaning a contact. Check for moisture. In several years only “no findings” was entered. Between 2006 and 2011, maintenance notes continued despite the auxiliary system being considered out of service. This was not a contradiction: a disused system could be secured, controlled or gradually dismantled. It remained unclear why some sheets only had a signature and no result.

Inés compared the signatures not by name, but by how they worked. A technician drew measurements in small boxes. Another person wrote the date first and left a gap afterwards. From 2009 onwards the color of the pens changed more frequently. Neither personnel nor responsibility could be derived with certainty from this. It just showed that the folder had been in more than one hand.

The low tone did not occur that morning. They didn't turn on any equipment or move the card. Inés measured the socket, the switch box and the cable tray. The values remained small and uneven. They could come from induced voltages, measurement errors or a remote supply. They were not enough to claim functionality.

“If we don’t hear anything, do we write that it’s gone?” asked Alberto.

“We write that we didn’t hear it today,” said Inés.

Teresa created her own observation entry for this. Date, time, people, conditions. No sound heard. The wording was longer than the event. It made the absence verifiable without making it permanent.

The map was also recorded a second time. Front light showed creases and stamps; Sidelight made the bright trail visible; Back light revealed no perforation. Alberto made a dimensional drawing with a ruler. The track was not uniform in width. In two places it briefly followed the printed net and then detached itself again. That spoke neither of a planned connection nor of a mere scratch. Paper could become lighter in many ways through pressure, moisture, and storage.

The pencil point D. SUR was on another layer. Its particles sat above the polluted surface, but that only proved that the entry had originated later as part of the deposit. An exact year could not be obtained from this. Teresa specifically did not take a fiber sample. The map was a unique piece and the possible dating did not justify damage.

During lunch break they ate outside the gate. The interior should not be altered by crumbs, cups or displaced chairs. This caution seemed almost comical in a place that had thrived on use for decades. Alberto sat on the low wall and looked at the outside opening. From there it seemed to belong directly to the next room. Inside it was offset. The construction made two different geometries in just a few steps.

After the break, they checked the measurements again. The deviation between plan and as-built shrank when the external plaster was included, but did not disappear completely. Rodolfo's memory of a work surface remained possible. Rosa's yard still could not be located. Elena's Sala B could have been a functional designation rather than a separate room. Each new measurement excluded interpretations and left several.

Teresa therefore added a column that was not provided for in the form: Alternative explanation. There were three options for PVC ducting. At window four. At tone five, including device behavior and traffic outside the building. The column was not a catalog of anyone. An explanation had to be compatible with at least one finding and could not contradict any definite finding.

At the end of the day, all they read was this column. At times it sounded like a building made of subjunctive moods. Teresa crossed out two possibilities that were merely conceivable but unsupported. Openness did not mean making every story equally probable.

On the fourth day, Elena came for less than an hour. She didn't want to run the room, just respond to the tentative list. Teresa read out positions, Alberto only showed a position when Elena asked. This was intended to prevent today's order from immediately replacing their memory.

At the map cabinet, Elena said it used to be further to the left. At the table she was sure it was the same guy but not the same table. She recognized the shelf by its bent top frame. This resulted in three different degrees in the list: different position remembered, identity not confirmed, identity probable. Elena found the gradations both awkward and correct.

She stopped in front of the cable strips. She knew FARO and RADIO. CANTERA considered it a later addition. At VIGÍA, she did not remember a technical function, but rather a shout: "Give me the box for Vigía." She no longer knew whether that meant a place, a project or a facility. She didn't touch the empty fifth strip.

"Was there anything written there once?"

"You write on strips because you want to read it later."

"That means yes?"

"That means I don't see anything."

Teresa took the wording almost verbatim. No readable entry; Previous labeling not detectable. The surface showed wear but no letters. Inés photographed her under slanted light. Even the magnification only showed scratches and adhesive residue.

Elena didn't hear any humming that day. When Inés asked about previous noises, she described transformers, neon lights and a refrigerator from a neighboring building. There were many sounds in the Depósito that stopped as soon as you looked for them. She didn't mean a phenomenon, but rather the difficulty of finding a single source in a workspace.

Before leaving, she checked the number on the door frame. SD-MUN-07 didn't tell her anything. In her time, the place usually only appeared on issue slips as Norte. The later identifier linked files, key envelopes and buildings; it did not prove that all older documents referred to the same administrative unit. Teresa therefore carried out the identification for each early document individually.

After Elena's visit, the list changed in nine places. No change solved the Sala B. But the metal shelf had become a piece of furniture with probable continuity, VIGÍA had become a historical working name without a certain category, and the table had become a typical, unidentified piece. Inventory became more accurate by labeling fewer things as unique.

At the end the empty fields were more numerous than at the beginning. That wasn't a failure. An empty field could show that a question had been checked and not answered. It was more accurate than hasty jurisdiction.

Before closing it, Inés went to the socket again. This time the device showed a small value. She changed the contacts, checked the fuse, and wrote the number in her notebook.

"What does it mean?"

"That I have a number."

"And later?"

"I'll check later to see if I can get the same number again."

Teresa entered PRESENT on the form. In the field for the test status she added EN REVISIÓN. She left separate fields open for function and responsibility. Alberto wrote the outside measurement on the back because there was no more room on the front. Inés closed her bag.

The gate didn't close by itself. Teresa pulled it closer. The key turned hard on the first try and turned normally on the second.

The empty fields were not gaps in the work. They were their result.

Chapter 7 – The Empty Building

INTERVIEWS AND SOURCES

After the inventory was completed, the green maintenance folder remained in the depot because Teresa assigned it to the building inventory. For my evaluation, I worked with the copies she made. The whereabouts of the original and the decision about it were recorded in the minutes.

The front room was almost empty. There was a small roll of cable on a shelf. The map cabinet was against the back wall. Dust did not cover the floor evenly. There was a light trail between the gate and the table that could have come from shoes, tools, or air movement.



Today's interior after completing the inventory: metal shelf, table, green maintenance folder, map cabinet and control box. Photo: Ana Belén Vargas, 2026.

What “Empty” Means

In the course of my work, empty proved to be an inaccurate term. It could indicate a lack of regular operations, removed movable inventory or simply an unfilled administrative field. The envelope containing the

building key said VACÍO, although the inventory inside recorded eighty-seven items.

INTERVIEW EXCERPT · TERESA VALDIVIA

"I remember the envelope marked VACÍO. It contained a key. We found eighty-seven positions in the building. So blank did not indicate a clear state, but an old administrative information."

There were several simultaneously valid descriptions for the building. It had been a warehouse, technical reserve, radio substation, workshop, shelter and possibly accommodation. No single function explained all the years. The majority of uses did not make the place more mysterious. It made it more ordinary because ordinary buildings last longer than the tasks for which they were designed.

In a first version I summarized the history of use as follows: The building was built in 1981 as a municipal warehouse and later used for radio technology. Rodolfo complained about the fixed year of construction, Elena about the temporal separation of functions and Alberto about the impression that the building inspection had been completed. The wording was understandable, but too clear from a critical point of view of the sources.

The second version read: Between 1979 and 1983, a municipal building was built north of Centro in which material from various services was stored and distributed. This formulation lasted longer. She left the radio years, informal use and decommissioning open without contradicting them.

For the period after 2004 there were three possible verbs: rested, ended, continued. None fit alone. Regular broadcasting ended. Maintenance continued. Usage was temporarily suspended. People entered the place. A building does not have a single tense.

Teresa suggested dividing the story not into states but into activities: building, storing, issuing, connecting, repairing, maintaining, protecting, dwelling, inventorying. Every verb was documented or identified as a memory. Together they did not produce an official description of the purpose, but a credible biography.

"And empty?" asked Alberto.

“Empty is not a verb,” Teresa said.

There were now four folders in the archives. The first contained construction and location documents. The second contained inventories. The third contained interviews and private photographs. The fourth was intended for contradictions and remained thinner than expected. Many apparent opposites did not resolve, but they changed types. A different word on two forms was not necessarily a conflict. A remembered yard and a plan without a yard were one. A socket with a short reading and a switched off main fuse could technically coexist.

The work therefore consisted more often of separating than connecting. Beto said he never broadcast from the depot. The back of the photo stated a provisional transmission. Instead of choosing one statement, a distinction had to be made between studio, broadcast, feed and caption. Elena remembered a room. Rosa remembered a yard. Instead of making it the same hidden surface, two memories remained with a possible contact.

In the end, the fourth folder only received nine entries. None were titled Solution.

Rodolfo Mena remembered the construction as a series of hand movements. Elena Barrientos remembered shelves, status and a Sala B. Beto Saldaña remembered technology that did not become a second studio. José Luis Gamarra remembered the gate, the turning area and the waiting time. Diego Soria remembered an electrical outlet. Rosa Alarcón remembered mattresses, schoolwork and laundry. Teresa, Alberto and Inés saw the present without therefore having control over the past.

Review of the Testimonies

I sent everyone I could reach the passages in which their statements were used. Rodolfo temporarily deleted the word from a wall, Elena corrected two quantities, José Luis added a question mark to a time, Rosa left her passage unchanged. Diego asked if the broken bike was mentioned.

INTERVIEW EXTRACT · ROSA ALARCÓN

"I remember the gate on the other side. I'm not sure. It's exactly this uncertainty that should remain in the text. A memory doesn't become more credible if you smooth over its open spaces."

I answered him: "Just for a moment."

"Then it was probably mine."

Beto was unable to review the transcription. His current whereabouts remained unclear. Therefore, his voice was edited more heavily than the others, but not supplemented. Incomprehensible parts remained incomprehensible. A sentence whose ending was missing did not receive an invented ending. The gap was part of the material, not an invitation to imitation.

Elena also read the others' passages as they pertained to her building. At Rosa's courtyard she was silent for a long time. Then she said a family might have lived there without her knowing if it was after their time. The door behind the map cabinet still led into a room, not outside.

"Could the room have been opened later?"

"Everything can be opened later. Don't write that it was like this."

Rosa read Elena's statement and stood by her account of the yard. She didn't claim to remember the same space. "Maybe her door was my door, maybe not." This willingness not to force agreement made both voices more credible.

José Luis recognized the open area in the construction photograph, but could not say whether he had ever driven into it. He corrected the turning surface on a sketch and moved the truck by almost a vehicle length. For him, this was the most important change of the whole chapter.

Rodolfo heard a clip from Beto's band. The voice said nothing to him. He recognized the sound of the chair at the end as a normal wooden chair on concrete, although no one could prove what floor the interview had taken place on. This assignment was also not included in the main text. People often recognize familiar things in general sounds.

I recorded the feedback in an overview with the categories confirmed, corrected and left open. Nobody asked to reinforce an unusual place. Several participants, however, asked for a more precise description of the work: Elena insisted on the distinction between disordered and unclear, José Luis on the switched off engine, Rosa on the fact that the cup found was not described as her property.

The final version was created less through revelations than through limiting, comprehensible corrections.

A month later, Inés repeated the measurement. The socket again did not provide a stable value. The deep sound was weaker and could not be reliably separated from the traffic on the coastal road after the noise of construction in the neighborhood had stopped.

During a third test, Inés and Teresa initially did without measuring devices and recorded the noticeable noises for five minutes. Both heard a deep sound, but localized it differently: Teresa was closer to the floor, Inés was closer to the back wall.

“This is why perception is not a measurement,” Inés said.

“But it’s there.”

“Naturally.”

In the next room the sound did not clearly become louder. It became more prominent during pauses in conversation, which can be explained by attention to a steady background noise. This observation also did not provide any reliable evidence of origin.

Inés didn't put her ear to the wall. “If I do something specific now, that very gesture will later become a story.”

Teresa understood. Documentation creates its own images. A technician with her ear to the wall would have had a stronger impact in the book than three unclear series of measurements. But she would have explained less.

Instead, they opened the gate fully and waited again. The sound mixed with the outside world. A truck was driving far away on the coastal road. A dog barked. The corrugated panels did not move visibly in the wind, but once they made a short dry noise.

Inés summarized the test as follows: Acoustic phenomenon perceptible, cannot be reliably isolated from everyday noise. I adopt this formulation because it precisely separates observation and the limit of evidence.

The electricity meter registered low consumption. Not the same every month, never high enough for regular operation. The municipality was able to name several plausible causes: building security, an incorrectly assigned line, residual consumption of a system, temporary feed-in during maintenance. No body took responsibility for explaining the whole thing.

Teresa didn't put the bills next to the network card. Two sources do not become stronger just because they are spatially combined.

A maintenance note also documents a roof inspection without a clearly identifiable client. Apparently three slabs were attached and several stones were redistributed. This can explain the resident's observation. I treat the process as an incompletely documented maintenance task, not a mystery in its own right.

On the last afternoon the Garúa was denser than on the morning of the first recording. Cerro Dormido lost its upper line. There were two motorcycles on the path. A radio could be heard behind a wall, but not clearly enough to make out the station. A moto taxi drove slowly past, stopped at a property and honked. Someone opened a door.

The resident who had asked about the roof was waiting in front of the gate. It didn't bring any new observations. She wanted to know if someone was responsible. Teresa explained that the building had been recorded, but that technical responsibility had not been finally assigned. The woman listened and then pointed to a loose edge of corrugated board.

| *"If this falls down, who do I call?"*

Teresa gave the general number of the municipality.

| *"Then explain to me later who is responsible."*

| *"Probably."*

The open responsibility was not an abstract question for the resident, but rather concerned safety along the way. This perspective is part of

the history of the building: reluctance to criticize the sources does not release the administration from practical responsibility.

Alberto photographed the edge of the slab and sent the picture to building services that same afternoon. Two days later, Teresa received a curt confirmation. The edge has been checked and there is no immediate danger. There was no mention of who carried out the test.

The answer was useful. It didn't close a story, but it kept a record from falling along the way.

The Depósito seemed smaller in the growing environment. Las Palmeras was more densely developed than in the pictures from the 1980s and 1990s. Walls that had once announced properties now belonged to houses. Black water tanks stood on roofs that didn't exist in the old photos. The former camino de servicio was not an official main route, but people used it.



*The Depósito Norte in the late afternoon in deep Garúa. The same building appears different due to moisture, buildings and a slightly different position, without changing its shape.
Photo: Ana Belén Vargas, 2026.*

For the final shot, I documented the interior again. The metal table, the green folder, the map cabinet, the cable labels and the slightly askew network card were still in the logged locations.

The final inspection revealed no new findings. The Sala B remained a precise memory of use without a confirmed location, the courtyard existed in three different memories, and Depósito Sur remained an unattributed pencil note.

Finally, I also checked the image selection. At least half of the recordings show work or use: building, sorting, sending, delivering, learning and measuring. Unclear features such as the window from the radio years, the wall on the building photograph and the light line on the network map were not graphically highlighted. The images should show what is recognizable and reveal their limitations in the captions.

I took the current exterior view twice from slightly different heights. This changes the apparent proportions of the gate and roof. The caption states the different point of view so that a perspective effect is not read as a structural change.

The night shot also only shows a closed gate with no visible interior light. It cannot confirm or rule out a small residual current or a line behind the wall. Photography limits a statement; it does not close off a place.

Before completion, all available interlocutors received their passages for review. Rodolfo changed two measurements, Elena added the previous use of three objects, and Beto had explicitly distinguished between a technical experiment and a broadcast in his archive interview. This difference was retained in the text.

José Luis put question marks behind two times that were too precise. Rosa asked that her uncertainty about the gate be retained. After reading it, Diego remembered a second toolbox, but couldn't assign it to the Depósito with certainty; I therefore did not adopt this late addition.

Teresa read the chapters last. She marked each occurrence of was and asked whether it should actually be remembered, entered or appears in the photo. Not everyone had disappeared. Rodolfo was a foreman. Elena was responsible for expenses. The building was locked when Teresa entered. Precision did not consist in making all sentences cautious, but in tying certainty to its source.

Some participants continued to contradict each other. Elena thought long-term accommodation was unlikely. Rosa stayed with the afternoons and single nights. Alberto saw no sure sign of a former opening in the material joint; Rodolfo thought a temporary separation was possible. These differences were not resolved in a final version. They were part of the state of tradition.

The personal register only recorded functions and periods that were documented or mentioned by the people themselves. Nicknames stayed where they were used in conversation. Illegible signatures were not given assumed names. A man in the night recording remained an unidentified person, even if two interviewees independently mentioned the same first name. This was not enough to identify the image.

I was equally cautious when it came to place names. Las Palmeras, La Cantera and Los Pinos changed their borders. B.L.A. remained an abbreviation on a map, VIGÍA could indicate facility, section or working name, and D. SUR remained a later pencil notation. I did not transfer names without stable geography to a modern-day map.

My aim with this book is not to define the building with a single statement. I want to show how much ordinary work has to be reconstructed before deviation is even noticeable. Rodolfo's information explains the Dachsteine as a working practice, Elena's lists classify additional objects, Beto's technical objections limit the interpretation of the tape hiss, and José Luis makes the night understandable as working time.

Rosa and Diego expand this usage story to include homework, a bicycle and a socket. Their statements show how a public building could be used for unforeseen needs during operational gaps. Teresa, on the other hand, did not assign personal proximity to possession: a cup remained a cup as long as its origin was not proven.

In an early draft I ended the book with the network map. The bright trail to the abbreviation B.L.A. However, this would have given it disproportionate weight. Therefore, the map is followed by the current interior, the documented return of the key and the closed gate: not as a solution, but as a return to the management of a real place.

The decision also affected the title. "The Empty Building" would have worked as the name of the entire volume, but it repeated the

misleading label on the cover. “Depósito Norte,” on the other hand, referred to what all sources had in common despite their differences: a built, used, maintained and finally inventoried depot in the north of San Desvelo.

After completing the texts, a practical question remained: what should be done with the things? The archivo could take paper, not cable rolls, shelves and a map cabinet. The technical department declared itself only responsible for material with a current number. Separation should be considered for everything else. Teresa did not object, but demanded that the location and condition be recorded before any movement.

The eighty-seven positions were therefore not declared a collection. Some were part of the building, others were consumables, others were waste. Documenting didn't mean preserving everything. It meant not basing a later decision on a fabricated origin. A shelf could be disposed of without denying its previous use. A map could be archived without explaining its bright trail.

The key was the only object whose path was immediately clear. It belonged back in the envelope because the envelope and key together made it possible to access it. The word VACÍO was not erased. As a historical label it was both wrong and part of the process. Someone had filled in emptiness before Teresa took an inventory of eighty-seven positions.

When I last looked it over, the word existing initially seemed too small to me. It doesn't explain the map or the sound, neither Rosa's yard nor Elena's shelf. This is precisely why it is suitable: it denotes presence without asserting function, origin or responsibility.

Rodolfo later obtained a photograph of the roof. He counted the stones and said two were lying differently than before. Elena asked about the map cabinet. At this point, Beto was only available as an archive voice. José Luis wanted to know whether the old path could still be seen in the photo. Rosa kept the copy of her sketch. Diego didn't recognize the socket in the picture of the interior.

No single memory can serve as an epilogue for the entire building. Its story arises from the limited responsibilities of those involved. Everyone knew a process, a period, an angle or a sound; no one observed the same room for four decades.

DEPÓSITO NORTE

The last outdoor shot was taken at dusk. It shows the closed gate in the light of a street lamp; the Pacific is outside the picture. It is not possible to determine from this photo whether the building is empty.

I have arranged the text and images in a comprehensible order: exterior view and construction, materials, technology, delivery routes, informal use, inventory and current condition. The sequence of images initially becomes fuller and later emptier again because objects were removed while their names remained in the sources.

For the final shot, Teresa placed the folder on the table so that it remained visible. This small change is noted in the image list. Documentary photography is also based on decisions about position, detail and arrangement.

After the recording was completed, the gate was closed. An additional night shot documents the building without any visible interior light.



Depósito Norte after closing time. The gate is closed; no light is visible in the building. Photo: Ana Belén Vargas, 2026.

Return of the Key

Teresa documented the return of the key in the archives. The torn original envelope marked VACÍO and the later added number SD-MUN-07 was preserved as part of the process and was not replaced.

INTERVIEW EXCERPT · TERESA VALDIVIA

"I remember returning the key. For the inventory I wrote existing, for the inspection status en revision. Function and responsibility remained open. Nothing more could be claimed responsibly after the inspection."

She put the key back, folded the open corner inward, and noted the return date. Function and responsibility remained unresolved; she entered "existing" as the status.

This designation is the shortest responsible conclusion of my research: the Depósito Norte exists.

Its building history, uses and memories can be documented, even where their connections remain open.