

MERCADO MUNICIPAL

*People, Stalls and Everyday Life
in San Desvelo*

ANA BELÉN VARGAS



Mercado Municipal

People, Stalls, and Everyday Life in San Desvelo

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Mercado Municipal

A documentary history through voices, photographs, records, and everyday work

PLACES AND VOICES FROM SAN DESVELO · VOLUME 2

Documentation by Ana Belén Vargas

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DOCUMENTATION

On the Documentation

For a long time, I thought I knew the Mercado well. My mother bought vegetables there before I was old enough to cross the street alone. I knew which entrance smelled of fish in the morning, which vendor kept sweets beside the scale, and where not to step on the tiles during the garúa. When I began documenting the building, I discovered that I did not know when any of these places had come into being.

The commission that prompted this work was smaller than what it became. The Municipalidad asked me to assemble twelve historical photographs for an exhibition marking the market hall's sixty-fifth anniversary. Each image was to be accompanied by a short text giving the date, the direction of view, the identifiable part of the building, and, if possible, the names of the people pictured. Three weeks seemed sufficient for a series of this kind. After the first week, I had seven possible opening dates, four numbering systems for the same row of stalls, and no reliable answer as to where the former fish section had been.

The Mercado is not an obscure building. Everyone in San Desvelo knows what it is. That was precisely the difficulty. A fish seller describes it in terms of delivery times and ice. A cleaner describes floors, gradients, and water. Vendors give stall numbers, drivers give gates, and customers name the people they have bought from for decades. The Municipalidad has records of concessions, inventory numbers, hygiene protocols, and construction files. None of these descriptions is wrong. None describes the whole Mercado.

I therefore did not investigate whether memories were correct. I examined what they referred to, where they agreed with other sources, and where they diverged. The conversations have been shortened and their language lightly edited. Dates that could be established only approximately remain approximate. Reconstructed plans and document pages are explicitly identified as reconstructions; they reproduce legible content and are not substitutes for lost originals.

A Place in Use

A place in constant use consists of more than its physical structure. It is also made up of activities, routes, schedules, and memories that accumulate there over decades. In the Mercado, walls were moved, stall numbers changed, places of business passed down within families, and storage rooms put to new uses. A refrigerator replaced an

ice chest. A window became a coffee counter. A sign disappeared while the space behind it remained in use.

Despite these changes, I heard the same sentence in almost every conversation: “It has always been this way.” I do not treat it as an error. It usually does not mean that something has existed unchanged since the Mercado opened. It means that it has come to be taken for granted over the course of a person’s working life, within a family’s history, or in the daily routine. The task of documentation is then to establish how far that “always” extends.

For this work, I compared construction and repair records from the Archivo Municipal, concession lists, private photographs, stall plans, and inventory extracts. I accompanied deliveries, spent a full working day in the market, documented two overnight cleaning shifts, and spoke with vendors, drivers, cleaners, and former employees. I had the measurements and technical terminology checked. The interpretation remained separate from that process.

This book is neither an official inventory nor a complete history of the market. It is my ordered account of what can be said about a very familiar place when it is not treated as mere background. The Mercado is loud, ordinary, and in use at almost every hour. That is subject enough.



Figure 1. The Mercado Municipal shortly before its regular opening time. Several stalls were already receiving deliveries. Photographic reconstruction based on Ana Belén Vargas's documentation concept, 2026.

Chapter 1 - Before the Hall

The Square in Front of the Building

I found the earliest name that can be reliably associated with the site on a city map, probably updated in 1958. The parcel in question is marked PLAZA DE ABASTOS. The term refers not to an enclosed building but to a marketplace for provisions. Two thin lines suggest canopies; no fixed rows of stalls are shown. A list of municipal levies from the same period contains eighteen names but no stall numbers.

At first, Julia Mendoza recognized no one in a privately owned photograph. She recognized the arrangement of the tables. “The fish was here,” she said, pointing to a dark area at the left edge of the image. When I asked what year it was, she shrugged. The photograph might have been taken in 1950 or several years later. The clothing, the format of the print, and the visible buildings allowed it to be dated only to the first half of the 1950s.

“My mother sold there before the hall was built. Not in the same place every day. Whoever arrived earlier stood at the front. When it was windy, everyone stood somewhere different. Today you ask for the number. Back then you asked: next to whom?”

Julia appeared as a child in a second photograph. Her mother stood behind a wooden table with onions, potatoes, and herbs. The image was blurred because a customer was walking across the foreground as the photograph was taken. Written in pencil on the back were the words: Mercado - domingo. No year, no name. Julia remembered the handwriting as belonging to an aunt. Other members of the family believed the note was in her father’s hand.

The absence of a date does not diminish the photograph’s value. It shows that the family was already selling at the site before the hall was built, and it shows a way of working that appears in no concession list: baskets beneath the table, a tarpaulin whose supporting pole was shared by two stalls, and a child standing where a permanent concrete column would later be built. It does not show which present-day stall occupies that spot.

Names Instead of Numbers

In conversations with older residents, the market before 1961 was rarely called Plaza de Abastos. Most people simply said el mercado or la plaza. One woman called the lower section plaza del pescado, although there is no identifiable official designation by that name. For her, the place was divided according to smell and activity.

Vegetables were kept on higher, drier ground. Fish was sold closer to the water. Bread was identified not by an area but by the family that brought it.

The concession cards alter this picture only in part. They record names, categories of goods, and fees, but initially provide no stable information about location. One card from 1957 was overwritten three times. Verduras became abarrotes, then verduras again. The surname remained the same. The goods on offer or the administrative category presumably changed; the card does not reveal whether the table was moved.

Julia explained the arrangement in terms of who stood next to whom. For a time, her mother stood beside a woman who sold dried herbs. Later, she stood beside a man with two scales, only one of which worked. A cousin joined them afterward. When I asked Julia to draw a map, she did not. She wrote names in two rows and connected some of them with arrows. “That’s how it was,” she said. The drawing was of no use for a spatial reconstruction. As a record of the social order, it was more precise than the plan.

What Remained on the Site

Nothing from the open market can be clearly identified above ground. The present concrete floor, gates, and rows of stalls date from later phases of construction or repair. The street level also changed. Older stones were found during work on a drain in 1984; there is no evidence as to whether they belonged to a market path, a courtyard, or an earlier drainage system.

The routes proved more enduring. Vendors came from the coast, along the northern approaches, and from the hinterland. Customers coming from Centro usually approached from the west. The later main entrance stands where several early photographs show the largest gap between the tarpaulins. This does not prove that there was a formal entrance there. It shows a habitual route that may have been incorporated into the design of the hall.

When I asked Julia what she remembered most clearly about the old market, she did not name a stall. She said, “The wind beneath the tarpaulins.” She then described two men holding the poles while the others continued selling. The problem did not disappear entirely inside the hall. The high openings in the roof still let the coastal wind through, but it no longer lifted the entire market.



Figure 2. Open-air market on the later site of the market hall, around 1950. Scene reconstruction based on early views of the city and oral accounts.



Figure 3. Mother and daughter at a vegetable stall, early 1950s. Reconstruction of a private family photograph; the precise date remains uncertain.

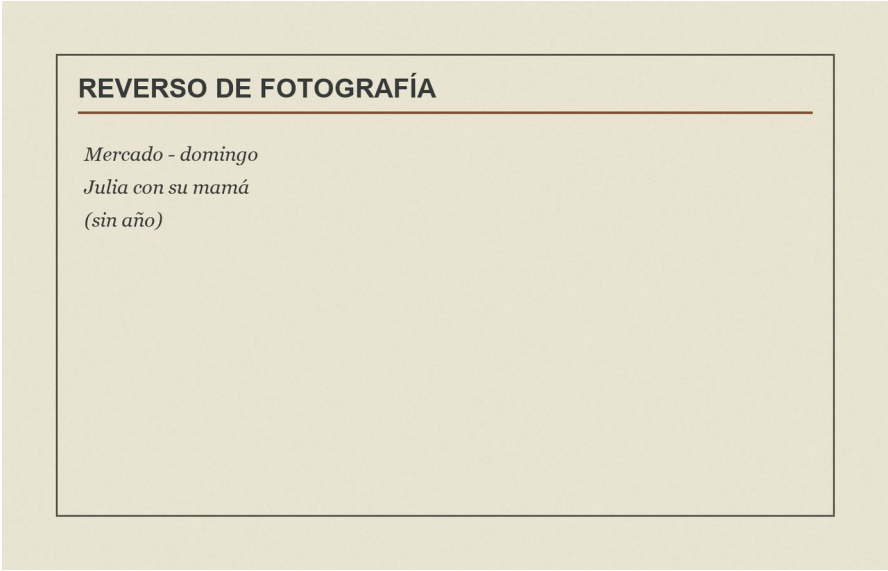


Figure 4. Typographic reconstruction of the handwritten reverse of the photograph. The note contains no year.



Figure 5. Reconstructed section of the 1958 city map bearing the label PLAZA DE ABASTOS.

A Photograph Without a Center

The early wide view of the open market has no clear center. People stand in small groups, tarpaulins overlap, and several kinds of goods can be seen on the same table. This disorder is not a shortcoming of the source. It reflects a place whose boundaries were formed by work and custom rather than by permanent fixtures.

When I enlarged the image, three things caught my attention. First, the boards used for fish do not stand directly at the edge of the square but along a shallow drain. Second, two stalls share the same scale. Third, a masonry ledge is visible behind a tarpaulin and does not appear in any later photograph. It may have belonged to a neighboring property, an earlier water point, or a temporary plinth. I did not include it in the reconstructed floor plan because no second source confirms its function.

Julia was less interested in the ledge. She pointed to a basket in the foreground and said that baskets of that kind came from the hinterland. Her mother had not owned them but had used them for a small fee. Two other people I interviewed remembered vendors having baskets of their own. Both arrangements may have existed. The market before the hall was not more uniformly organized simply because the photographs are black and white.

Sunday

Within the family, the note Mercado - domingo was treated as a means of dating the photograph, although it gives no year. Sunday was not simply a day of the week. It meant the larger market, when relatives came along, additional goods were brought in, and customers arrived from the surrounding areas. A photograph taken on a Sunday may therefore make the market look denser and larger than it was on an ordinary Tuesday.

For the exhibition, I could easily have captioned the image "Sunday Market, c. 1952." The year would have been plausible, but invented. The caption in this book therefore reads: early 1950s; Sunday, according to the note on the back. This wording is longer. It shows which information comes from the image, which from the family, and which from my own assessment.

Chapter 2 - A Market for San Desvelo

The Decision and the Building Site

The decision to build a permanent market hall was made in 1959. The records describe the existing market as unhygienic, difficult to clean during the garúa, and too small for the growing population. The language resembles that used for similar municipal projects of the period. It says little about how vendors experienced the place. In two petitions, vendors asked not for a new building but for better water points and reliable shelter.

The first design provided for twenty-four numbered stalls, two large entrances, a separate fish section, and a small administrative office. The hall was intended neither as a monument nor as a tourist attraction. Concrete columns supported a simple roof, with broad working aisles between the fixed rows. Construction funding was approved in several stages. The invoices show that the doors and water connections were ordered later than the original schedule had called for.

A photograph of the building site, probably taken in 1960, shows three concrete columns, a partially enclosed wall, and workers among piles of sand and formwork timber. The floor appears unfinished. In the background, sacks of cement lie unprotected. The image does not correspond to the orderly sequence described in the construction report, according to which the foundation, structural frame, roof, and interior work were completed one after another. On the building site, much of the work took place at the same time.

“We didn’t wait for everything to be finished,” a former laborer recalled. “As soon as one section of roof was up, someone put a table beneath it. It wasn’t open yet. But it wasn’t just a building site anymore, either.”

Opening in 1961

The opening in 1961 is documented by photographs, a budget note, and several concession cards. The exact date remains uncertain. An invitation gives a Sunday, while a later anniversary text gives the Saturday of the same week. The discrepancy may reflect an official inauguration and a first day of trading, but I found no evidence of this.

In the surviving group photograph, municipal politicians, vendors, and families stand in front of the new gates. Children run across the foreground. Crates have already been set down at one entrance. The image looks less like a ceremony brought to a

close than a market pausing briefly for a photograph. The banner names only the Mercado and the year. It promises no modernity beyond the building itself.

The first complaints after the opening concerned water, shade, and the allocation of stalls. Some vendors who had worked beside one another in the open square now found themselves in different rows. Others were given permanent neighbors with whom they had previously had little contact. Numbering simplified administration and the collection of fees. It did not immediately replace the older arrangement organized around individuals.

Julia remembered that the first permanent table was too high for her mother. A board was placed beneath her feet. This adjustment does not appear on the plan. In a photograph from 1963, a narrow board can indeed be seen in front of a vegetable stall. Whether it was the same one cannot be determined. Small changes of this kind are part of the building's history, even if they were never recorded as alterations.

Expansions

The hall was expanded for the first time between 1968 and 1972. Fish and meat were kept more clearly separate, additional water connections were installed, and several outdoor stalls were roofed over. The records variously refer to this work as *ampliación*, *adecuación*, and *mejoras*. It is therefore misleading to speak of a single year of expansion.

The southern storage and delivery wing was built between 1975 and 1977. A 1976 plan shows four storage rooms numbered 14 through 17. There, the numbers refer to the rooms, not to sales stalls. Later lists abbreviate *almacén* as ALM. and *depósito* as DEP. This seemingly minor distinction became crucial to their subsequent identification.

A major overhaul of the water and drainage systems followed in 1984. An electric refrigeration system was entered into the inventory in 1989. In 1996, the administration renumbered some of the stalls; in 2003, the large metal gates were replaced. The outdoor stalls were altered in 2011, and the roof and electrical systems in 2018. Today's Mercado contains elements from almost every one of these phases. No single configuration survives as the original market.

The construction records did not culminate in a finished building, but in a sequence of decisions. Some were planned; others addressed a problem that had become apparent only once the market was operating. For the vendors, the hall was not the completion of the market. It was a new set of working conditions.



Figure 6. Construction of the first market hall, probably in 1960. Scene reconstruction based on municipal construction photographs.



Figure 7. Opening of the Mercado Municipal in 1961. Scene reconstruction based on local photographs; the distant ridge reflects the spatial setting documented in other images. The ceremony was small and took place while preparations were still underway.

MERCADO MUNICIPAL DE SAN DESVELO

PLANO 1961 - RECONSTRUCCIÓN TIPOGRÁFICA

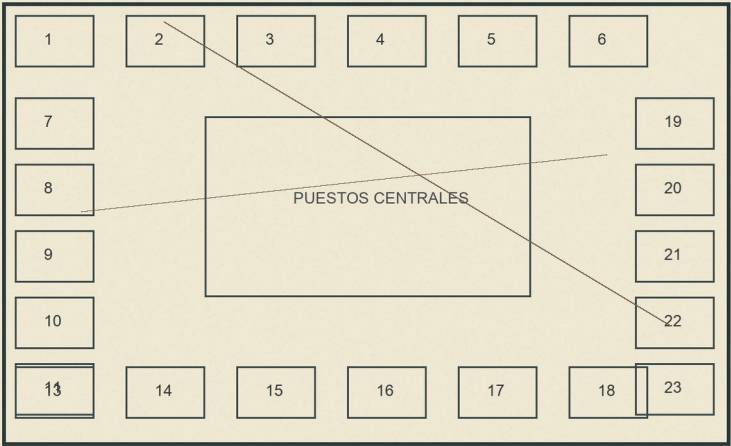


Figure 8. Reconstruction of the original floor plan, with 24 stalls and two main entrances. Sources: municipal plans and photographs.

TARJETA DE CONCESIÓN

Puesto: 23
Titular: Mercedes Mendoza
Giro: frutas y verduras
Renovación: abril de 1972

MERCADO

This figure shows a typographic reconstruction of a concession card. It has a light beige background. A dark beige rectangular area contains the title 'TARJETA DE CONCESIÓN' in bold black uppercase letters, followed by a horizontal line. Below the line, the card lists details: 'Puesto: 23', 'Titular: Mercedes Mendoza', 'Giro: frutas y verduras', and 'Renovación: abril de 1972'. In the bottom right corner of this area, there is a smaller dark beige rectangle with the word 'MERCADO' in bold red uppercase letters.

Figure 9. Typographic reconstruction of a vegetable-stall concession card. The card documents a person and a category of goods, not the exact location of the former table.

FICHA DE OBJETO RETIRADO

Objeto: letrero metálico
Texto: MERCADO MUNICIPAL
Color: verde sobre fondo claro
Ubicación actual: depósito municipal

REGISTRO

This figure shows a typographic reconstruction of an object record card. It has a light beige background. A dark beige rectangular area contains the title 'FICHA DE OBJETO RETIRADO' in bold black uppercase letters, followed by a horizontal line. Below the line, the card lists details: 'Objeto: letrero metálico', 'Texto: MERCADO MUNICIPAL', 'Color: verde sobre fondo claro', and 'Ubicación actual: depósito municipal'. In the bottom right corner of this area, there is a smaller dark beige rectangle with the word 'REGISTRO' in bold red uppercase letters.

Figure 10. Reconstructed object record for an earlier market sign. The Spanish wording remains part of the documented object.

The Building Today

The main hall is a simple, lofty space. Concrete columns divide the rows of stalls without forming a monumental axis. The roof has been repaired in sections; its underside shows different profiles and fastenings. Some bands of skylights predate the visible wiring, while others were replaced during the 2018 renovation. The hall therefore cannot be assigned a single date on the basis of its materials.

Three large metal gates stand on the western side. Above them, the lettering reads MERCADO MUNICIPAL DE SAN DESVELO. The first M in MUNICIPAL is loose at one end. In the wind, it lifts slightly away from the wall. An invoice dates the renewal of the lettering to 2003, but the letters do not all appear to be the same age. Some were probably replaced or reattached individually.

The northern side has smaller entrances and the coffee counter. The window was not included in the 1961 plan. A photograph from the late 1990s already shows an opening there, though without a ledge. Víctor later took over the business and had a wider metal hatch installed. It is possible to narrow down only the period in which the opening became a permanent coffee counter.

The eastern side contains utility equipment, water connections, a cold room, a waste area, and rooms formerly assigned to the market administration. Several doors changed function without being relocated. On one wall, older tilework ends about forty centimeters short of the present frame. The distance is small, but it shows that the entrance was altered later.

Chronology of the Existing Fabric

Until about 1958, goods were sold at the site in the open or under partial cover. In 1959, the city approved construction. The first section of the hall opened in 1961. Between 1968 and 1972, the hall was expanded and fish and meat were kept more clearly separate. The southern storage wing was built between 1975 and 1977. The water and drainage systems underwent more extensive alterations in 1984, and electric refrigeration was entered into the inventory in 1989.

A partial renumbering of the stalls began in 1996. The western gates were replaced in 2003. Some outdoor stalls were remodeled in 2011; sections of the roof and the electrical systems were renovated in 2018. In 2026, the Mercado remains an active municipal market. This sequence is more reliable than isolated exact dates. It shows how almost every generation can remember a different “original” state.

Chapter 3 - The Workday

03:45 — Deliveries

I began my full workday at 03:45 at the western entrance. The Mercado was officially closed. Two delivery vehicles were already waiting at the southern gate. A man dragged crates across the damp asphalt; lights were on inside the building. At that hour, the designation closed meant only that regular customers were not supposed to enter.

Carlos Huamán arrived at 03:52. He backed into the southern lane, adjusted his position once, and switched off the engine before another driver needed to pass. For him, the market began not with a gate, but with the question of whether a vehicle could turn around. “When the crates are there, the lane is narrower,” he said. “Anyone who says it is always the same width has never been here with a truck.”

04:30 — Fish

The first fish delivery arrived in plastic crates filled with ice. Héctor Salazar did not inspect every crate in the same way. With some, he merely lifted the lid; with others, he touched the fish and asked what time the shipment had set out. Driver and vendor confirmed its origin verbally. The delivery slips often listed only a general designation for the coastal route.

Héctor’s family has traded in fish for several generations. His father worked for a time in the open square and later in the hall’s first fish section. Héctor himself remembers refrigerators more precisely than years. He identified one new refrigeration unit by the sound it made when it shut off. For him, the shift from ice to electric refrigeration was not a technological era but a change in the work: less replenishing of ice, different checks, new kinds of breakdown.

“A plan shows you where the fish is sold. It does not show you when it is still cold.”

05:15 — Cleaning

Rosa Medina had not just arrived at 05:15; that was simply when the round I recorded began in the fish section. She had already been in the northern aisle. Rosa describes the Mercado through its floors. She knows where water will pool before it becomes visible, and she knows which gate sticks in damp weather.

She pushed water toward the drain with a long floor squeegee. At one point, a bent piece of wire held up the small drain cover. The wire is not an official repair. It keeps the cover from becoming lodged in debris. A work instruction from 1984 mentions a

temporary measure to keep the channel open; whether it refers to the same place is unclear.

06:00 — Coffee

At the northern window, Víctor Ramos opened the metal hatch. His workspace is so small that two large thermoses take up a substantial part of the counter. He sells café pasado, bread, sugar, and occasionally something left over from the morning. His first customers are drivers and cleaners, followed by vendors, and later by people passing on their way to the Municipalidad.

Víctor knows the market through its transitions. He knows who is ending a night and who is beginning a morning. When I asked when he opened, he said, “When someone needs coffee.” When I pressed him for a time, he said five forty. The following day, he opened at five twelve. Both answers were accurate enough for the way he runs his business.

07:00 — Opening

The western gate was fully raised at 06:48. The first regular customer had not waited outside; she had come through a side entrance and was already speaking with Julia. At seven, the number of people increased visibly. Sounds that could be distinguished one by one during the early hours now overlapped: metal shutters, knives, scales, calls, crates, water, and radios.

A photograph can provide only an incomplete account of the market at around eight. The wide interior view shows people and goods, but not the speed at which routes close and reopen. A handcart appears to be in the way. Seconds later, it forms part of a clear passage because three people have shifted position. The spatial order of the Mercado is fluid, even though the stalls are fixed.

Noon to Closing

Around noon, the smells and temperatures changed. Hot oil and cooked food became more pronounced, while the fish section grew quieter. Julia sat down behind her stall without interrupting her work. Rosa filled a bucket at another connection because the nearer tap had too little pressure. Carlos returned, this time not with goods but to collect empty crates.

In the afternoon, quantities dwindled and the aisles widened. Some stalls closed; others continued selling. Officially, the market day ended at 18:00. By 18:30, the western gate was closed, but inside, people were still cleaning, counting, and

rearranging. The work with which the next morning would begin was already underway.



Figure 11. Fish delivery before sunrise. Photographic reconstruction, 2026.



Figure 12. A fish vendor's hands at the work surface. The scale, crates, and ice are part of the documented working context.



Figure 13. The main aisle at around 8:00 a.m. People, carts, and crates reorganize the fixed arrangement of stalls each day.



Figure 14. Coffee at the north window. The small exterior counter connects drivers, cleaning staff, vendors, and early customers.

LISTA DE PRECIOS

Limón S/ 4.00
 Papa yungay .. S/ 2.00
 Cebolla roja . S/ 2.50
 Jurel S/ 7.00

Figure 15. Reconstructed handwritten price list. The Spanish product names and prices follow local usage.

Héctor Salazar — Fish, Ice, and the Coast

Héctor speaks quickly while he works and slowly when asked about a year. He can give delivery times to within five minutes. He dates the installation of an earlier refrigerator to “before my father threw away the blue apron.” In a family photograph, his father is wearing a blue apron; the image is undated. For Héctor, the sequence remains clear.

He distinguishes fish not only by species and condition, but also by route. In his account, handling jurel that arrives via La Playa involves a different workflow from handling the same fish in a pooled delivery from the north. The crate is inspected differently because the journey time and temperature were different. This knowledge appears in none of the market records. It belongs to the operation of the place.

Héctor showed me the place where, as he remembers it, his father used to crush ice. The current stall plan designates it as an aisle. A low structure can be seen there in a photograph from the 1970s. Whether it was used for ice cannot be determined from the image. I marked the point as a remembered use, not a confirmed installation.

Rosa Medina — Time in Water

Rosa’s workday is often described as cleaning before and after trading hours. In fact, she moves between sections whenever the work allows. She does not wait until an entire aisle is empty. She makes use of small openings: at one stall, crates are lifted;

another receives a delivery; a third closes briefly. The floor is restored section by section.

In my time log, Rosa therefore appeared in several places almost at once. At 05:17, she was in the fish section; at 05:22, in the western aisle; at 05:29, back by the drain. The distances are short; the tasks are not. Describing her work in terms of fixed shifts would have been inaccurate.

She knows sounds that others barely notice. A drain gurgles differently when water is running farther east. A hose knocks against an edge as the pressure drops. These observations are not technical measurements, but they help her trace the pipes and check for problems.

Víctor Ramos—The Window Between Shifts

Víctor keeps no guest book. Even so, he could describe from memory who comes for coffee at each stage of the morning. Drivers arrive alone and in a hurry. Cleaners sometimes set their cups on the ledge because they need both hands. Vendors send family members. Municipal employees come later and stay to talk longer.

The coffee window is socially larger than the space it occupies. Information about deliveries, a sticking gate, or an unexpected absence passes through the window without being officially collected there. Víctor does not claim to know everything. He simply often knows who knows the person with the answer.

When I took the photograph, I asked him not to reenact the exchange. He handed the cup out through the window as usual. The customer is only partly visible in the image. This reflects the function of the window: people rarely stay long enough to become fully part of the space.

Chapter 4 - Stalls and Families

Julia's Stall

Julia Mendoza now sells from a stall that her family has used since the early 1980s. That is the most precise formulation I can substantiate. She says her family has “always been here.” By this she means that they have traded in the same part of the city, not necessarily from the same numbered space.

In a family photograph dating from around 1983, a younger Julia stands beside her mother. Behind them is a concrete column with a damaged corner. The column still exists. Its plaster has been patched several times, but the shape of the damage matches the older image. This structural feature made it possible to establish the direction of view with confidence.

The sales table is not the same one. The present structure has metal edging and stands at a different height. Julia remembered two replacements and one major repair. An invoice from 1997 lists wood, screws, and an angle bracket, but no stall number. Even so, the phrase “the same table” endured in the family. What they mean is the workplace.

“When I say this is my mother’s table, I don’t mean every board,” Julia said. “Otherwise, my body would no longer be mine either.”

Passing It On

Concessions were not inherited automatically. In practice, children often worked alongside their parents for years before the names in the records were changed. One person might run the stall while the concession remained in the name of an older family member. This creates overlaps between records and memories that cannot be resolved with a single correction.

In Julia’s case, the sequence is relatively well documented. Her mother, Mercedes, appears on a card from 1972. Julia is mentioned as a family member working at the stall from 1986 and is listed as the person primarily responsible from 1991. In a photograph from 1983, she is already visibly engaged in selling. The reality of the work preceded the administrative change.

Other family histories are less clear-cut. One fish stall passed among brothers, a brother-in-law, and a daughter. In interviews, each of them said that the stall had remained in the family. The concession list shows three different surnames. Both accounts can be true if family is understood socially rather than only in official terms.

Comparative Views

For the comparison photograph, I stood where the earlier photographer had stood. I could not reproduce the position exactly; a new structure blocked the vantage point. The old and new photographs show the same column, a similar sightline, and a related use of the space. They also show how much has changed: the scale, the lighting, the height of the table, the crates, the clothing, and the density of the signage.

A comparison photograph is not proof that a place has remained the same. It makes change legible because some points of reference endure. In this case, the strongest continuity is not material. It is the work of a family sorting goods, calling out prices, and recognizing customers in much the same spot.

The emotional significance of such photographs is not separate from the documentation. It must simply be distinguished from the claims that can be derived from them. Julia studied the older image for a long time and first noticed that her mother was wearing an apron later used as a rag. This information does not alter the chronology of the building. As a detail of family history, it is exact.



Figure 16. Julia Mendoza at her present-day stall. The damaged concrete column serves as a reference point for older photographs.



Figure 17. Julia Mendoza and her mother in the same work area, around 1983. Scene reconstruction based on a private color print.



Figure 18. Comparison, 1983/2026. The column and viewing direction remain recognizable; the table, lighting, scale, and signage have changed.

Customers as Memory

Family history does not reside only behind the stall. Customers also remember locations and handovers. One woman said that she had been buying from Julia for twenty years. During the first of those years, however, Julia sold from two different places. To the customer, both were the same stall because the person remained the same.

Others described vendors by their products or distinguishing features. “The woman with the sweets beside the scale” was an unambiguous direction, even though sweets had never been part of the concession. When the scale was replaced, the sweets remained. They later disappeared, but the description continued to be used for some time.

Such directions are spatially imprecise but reliable in practice. Anyone who uses a market builds a map out of people. Administrative plans work differently. The documentation must place both maps side by side without treating either one as mere anecdote.

Photographs in Family Hands

Most private photographs were not taken to document the Mercado. They show birthdays, visits, first days at work, a new stall structure, or a child brought along for the day. The building and the goods appear at the margins. That is often precisely where the most important clues lie.

When the owners consented, I digitized the originals and returned them the same day. The front and back were recorded separately. Handwriting, stains, and cut edges remained visible. A cleaned-up digital image would have been more attractive in an exhibition, but it would have removed part of the object’s history.

When identifying the photographs, I did not ask only: Who is pictured? I also asked: Who owns the photograph, who labeled it, and when was that label probably added? A name on the back may have been added decades after the photograph was taken. It remains a source, but for a different point in time.

Chapter 5 - Water, Ice, and Cleaning

Water as a Tool

In the Mercado, water is not merely a utility. It carries dirt away, provides cooling, structures cleaning time, and causes interruptions. Rosa knows every connection by how long it takes to fill a bucket and which way a hose can be laid without blocking a main passage.

The documented state of the pipework in 2026 corresponds only partly to the 1984 plan. Some connections were moved; others were taken out of service. Two visible pipes cannot be clearly matched to any plan. One runs above the southern storeroom doors and is secured with wire at several points. The wire does not support the pipe itself, but keeps smaller cables and a thin hose away from it.

In the reconstructed water plan, I marked three categories: confirmed pipes, routes reconstructed from structural features and records, and older, unconfirmed runs. This distinction prevents a plausible line from appearing to be a surveyed fact. The plan therefore contains more uncertainty than a plumbing plan, but less than memory alone.

Rosa and the Floor

Rosa began working at the Mercado in the early 2000s. She cannot say how often individual areas have been repaired. She distinguishes repairs by color, grain, and the way they behave when wet. To her, a pale patch in the fish section does not date from 2018, as an invoice suggests, but from “before the new hose.” She remembers the hose being purchased in 2016. The two dates cannot be neatly reconciled.

“People notice the floor when they slip,” Rosa said. “I notice it before they do.”

At one drainage channel, wire keeps the cover open. The solution is technically simple and administratively invisible. A hygiene inspection report from 2019 criticized the lack of a permanent fastening. A later note reads *corregido*. The wire is still there. Perhaps a different fastening was corrected; perhaps the existing solution was deemed sufficient. I could not determine which.

Ice and Refrigeration

Before electric refrigeration, ice formed part of the daily route taken by the goods. Héctor remembered blocks arriving in sacks and the sound they made as they were dragged across the concrete. Later, crushed ice was delivered in crates. The

refrigeration system installed in 1989 reduced the need for ice but did not eliminate it. Ice remained necessary during outages and for transport.

The old cold-room door bears several layers of paint. The thermometer has been replaced; the drill holes from an earlier instrument are visible beside it. An inventory tag reads SD-MM-CR-03. In one list, the letters CR are expanded as *cámara refrigerada*; in another, as *cuarto refrigerado*. The room remains the same; the designation changes.

The refrigeration system is an example of how technical modernization is incorporated into an existing rhythm of work. Vendors did not change every procedure at once. Some stored their goods differently, some continued to rely on ice, and some used both. The Mercado did not become electrically refrigerated in a day. It learned over years.

After the Fish Sale

As the fish section emptied in the afternoon, the floor remained as a record of the day: fish scales, water, small pieces of ice, cardboard fibers, and traces left by crates. Rosa did more than clean up. Her work revealed how the space had been built. Water collected in depressions, disappeared into channels, or stopped at edges added later.

The most interesting finding in this chapter is not a concealed pipe. It is the market's dependence on labor that is rarely photographed. Without cleaning, ice, drainage, and monitoring, the operation so easily taken for granted would cease within hours. The social infrastructure of the Mercado lies partly in its floor.



Figure 19. Rosa Medina cleans the fish area after trading has ended. The water reveals the slope, repairs, and depressions in the floor.



Figure 20. Drainage channel with its cover held open by wire. A simple working solution, photographed in 2026.

AGUA Y DESAGÜE - ESTADO DOCUMENTADO 2026

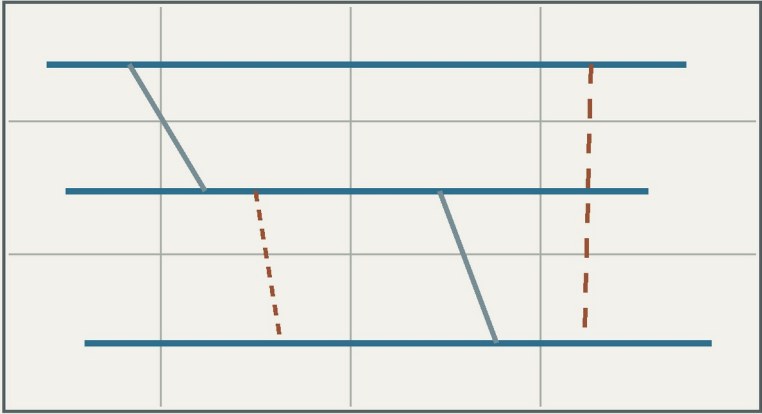


Figure 21. Reconstructed water-supply and drainage plan. Confirmed, reconstructed, and unconfirmed routes are identified separately.



Figure 22. An older cold-room door with a thermometer and numerous traces of repair. No single coat of paint represents the entire period of use.

MUNICIPALIDAD - ORDEN DE REPARACIÓN

Objeto: canaleta sector pescado

Material: rejilla, alambre, cemento

Observación: mantener paso de agua

Fecha: 14 de agosto de 1984

EJECUTADO

Figure 23. Typographic reconstruction of repair instructions for the drainage area, 1984.

FICHA DE INVENTARIO

Equipo: unidad de refrigeración

Código: SD-MM-CR-03

Ubicación: cámara fría

Estado: operativo con observaciones

1989

Figure 24. Reconstructed inventory card for the refrigeration system. The abbreviation CR was expanded differently in different lists.

Smell and Control

Smells belong to the market, but they are difficult to archive. Fish water, limes, hot oil, coffee, cleaning products, damp cardboard, and metal come and go. They mark activities and times of day. I recorded them only when the location and time were known.

A smell is not chemical evidence. Even so, it can corroborate a work process. Coffee was detectable on the north side before the opening came into view. The smell of cleaning products became stronger after the first pass with water. In the afternoon, the smell of damp cardboard gathered where empty crates stood. These observations do not explain the entire space, but they keep the documentation from becoming exclusively visual.

Rosa distrusts the idea that a clean market should smell of nothing. What matters to her is whether a smell fits the activity under way and whether it disappears once the area has been cleaned. Her categories are practical: normal, check, act immediately. They do not correspond exactly to a hygiene form, but they complement it.

Repairs Below Eye Level

Many changes to the Mercado lie close to the floor: smoothed edges, gradients added later, filled holes, tracks, and drain covers. They are rarely discernible in historical wide shots. For the survey, I therefore photographed the same routes from a low angle.

There are at least four distinct repair patches in the western passage. Two correspond to invoices from 2018, one is older, and one cannot be dated. The newest patch is not the lightest. Cleaning products, abrasion, and moisture alter the surface faster than age alone.

The technical findings do not explain unusual observations beyond their scope. They show how cautious spatial claims must be. The flow of water can change because an edge only a few centimeters wide has been renewed. Anyone who compares only the overall plans will miss the reason.

Chapter 6 - Deliveries

The Routes Goods Take

Carlos Huamán does not like to draw routes on maps. He names bends, waiting times, and places where a vehicle can turn around. For him, El Faro is not a point on a map but a sequence: pickup, a narrow stretch, and a place where he can briefly pull over. He describes La Playa in terms of when the traffic begins.

The supply routes to the Mercado link the coast, the northern approach, and the hinterland. Fish often comes in through El Faro and La Playa, though not every catch arrives directly. Some of it is collected at other points. Vegetables reach San Desvelo through traders who serve several markets. Drinks, gas, ice, and packaging follow schedules of their own.

The schematic map in this chapter shows only recurring directions. It is not a complete delivery plan. Some drivers changed their route according to the time of day, roadworks, or their load. Carlos took a different route when carrying fish than when carrying empty crates, because the weight and smell called for different decisions.

“A road isn’t the same when you’re carrying a full load,” he said, patting the truck bed. “You can add that to the map.”

The South Alley

During the day, the south alley is full of things that do not appear on a building plan: handcarts, crates, buckets, open doors, people, a hose left lying on the ground. Its usable width changes from minute to minute. Even so, it is the most reliable access point for deliveries.

The alley dates from the construction of the warehouse wing in the 1970s. The wall opposite was later partially rebuilt. Pipes and cables run above the doors. Some fittings are neatly screwed into place; others have been reinforced with wire. The ground slopes slightly to the west. During a thorough washdown, water therefore runs toward the street, provided no crates block its path.

Doors 14, 15, and 16 are visible in the daytime photograph. The fourth door has no number. During the fieldwork, it drew little notice. People went in and out, crates stood in front of it, and an open door leaf obscured the spot where the plaque was missing. The sequence became clear only in the straight-on survey photograph.

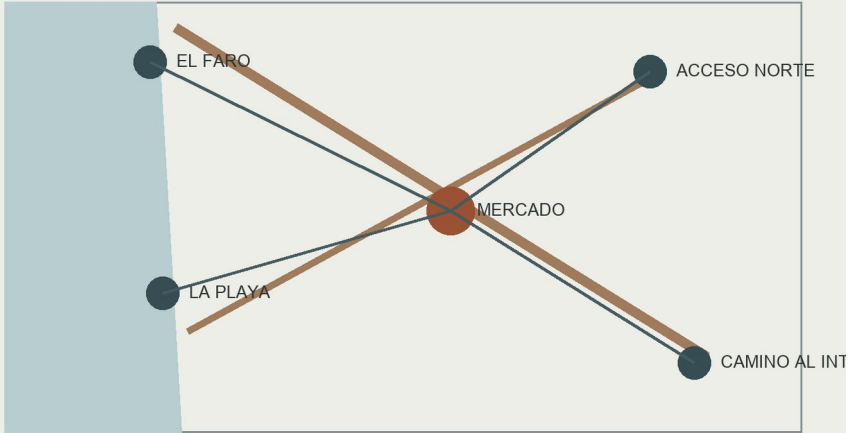
Arrivals and Returns

Deliveries do not end with unloading. Empty crates, damaged packaging, remnants of ice, and waste leave the market by routes of their own. Some containers belong to vendors, others to drivers, and still others are part of a circulating pool in which ownership is distinguished in daily practice only by color. Written markings have faded or conflict with actual use.

Carlos listed three places on a sheet of paper: EL FARO, LA PLAYA, MERCADO. Their order varied. He did not add times because, as he explained, they merely allowed someone to see that there had been a delay without knowing why. His logbooks therefore record departures and arrivals, not every point in between.

The Mercado expands the city's geography without itself moving. Its stalls hold the coast, the hinterland, roads, and working hours within them. To document only the hall is to describe the place too narrowly.

RUTAS DE ABASTECIMIENTO - ESQUEMA



Rutas aproximadas según entrevistas y registros de entrega.

Figure 25. Schematic goods routes between the coast, the northern approach, the hinterland, and the Mercado. The lines show recurring directions, not complete daily routes.



Figure 26. The southern delivery alley during the day. Crates, handcarts, and open doors continually alter its usable width.



Figure 27. Carlos Huamán beside the delivery vehicle. On his routes, turning points and waiting times matter more than straight-line distances.

FICHA FOTOGRÁFICA

Motivo: carro de pescado
Lugar: acceso sur del mercado
Fecha aproximada: 1974
Original no localizado

RECONSTRUCCIÓN

Figure 28. Reconstructed image card of an earlier fish cart. The original, whose location is unknown, is not presented as a surviving photograph.

Carlos's Schedule

One morning, Carlos took me along his usual route. We left the Mercado with no load and headed toward the coast. He did not point out landmarks. He showed me places where a mototaxi stops in the morning, a bend with poor visibility, and a stretch where mud collects on the rare occasions when it rains.

With the empty crates, the truck was noisy. The containers shifted at every bump. Carlos could tell from the sound whether a row had slipped out of place. At full speed, the same noise would not have been audible. His perception of the route changes with the load.

The recorded journey time could not serve as a standard. On another day, he waited twelve minutes for the approach to clear; the following day, he drove straight in. In a set of statistics, the difference would register as a delay. For Carlos, it was simply the market as usual.

Waste and Return Flows

A supply system is described incompletely if only arrivals count. Cardboard, organic waste, damaged crates, and packaging must be separated or collected. The waste area on the east side was moved several times because routes, odor, and access were competing demands.

For a time, the market administration kept lists of returned crates. Vendors used markings of their own. A red crate could therefore be associated with a person, a supplier, or simply a category of goods. In photographs, colors appear unambiguous; in practice, they were not always so.

In the afternoon, Carlos took away more empty containers than he had brought that morning. Some belonged to a delivery from the previous day. The Mercado does not operate in self-contained daily cycles. Goods, containers, and debts circulate back at different rhythms.

Chapter 7 - Numbers

Stall, Concession, Inventory

I began with the stall plans because I had assumed that numbers would be simpler than memories. That assumption lasted until the second list. A stall could have a sales number, a concession number, and an inventory designation. Crates were also marked according to the stall they normally belonged to. A crate marked PUESTO 28 could therefore stand in front of stall 17 without anything being amiss.

The 1996 reorganization did not affect every row. Some numbers were reassigned; others remained. The outdoor stalls were given a sequence of their own, parts of which were later incorporated into the main numbering. During one transitional month, two lists used different systems. Vendors continued to use the numbers by which customers knew where to find them.

*"That was stall 22," a vendor said.
 > "The plan says 19," I replied.
 > "Then the plan wasn't here."*

The answer was dry, but it made sense. The plan showed an administrative arrangement at a particular point in time. The vendor was describing his workplace over a longer period. Before the two accounts could be compared, it was necessary to establish which numbering system each referred to.

Four Doors

The 1976 plan of the southern section shows storage rooms 14, 15, 16, and 17 in a row. Today, the first three doors bear the corresponding plaques. A lighter rectangle is visible on the fourth. Two screw holes and scuff marks show that something was once attached there. I was unable to determine when the plaque was removed.

The obvious inference is that this was formerly number 17. It is plausible, but not fully substantiated. The wall divisions may have been altered, and later inventory numbers do not necessarily refer to the same spatial units as the building plan. A door in the same position is strong evidence. It is no substitute for a continuous documentary record.

An inventory extract lists ALM. 17 — LIMPIEZA. Another list gives DEP. 17 — PESCADO. Both sheets survive only as copies. The first bears a stamp without a complete date; the second may have been produced after the renumbering. Three accounts assign different functions to the room. None could be clearly corroborated by the records examined so far.

The Missing Plaque

I photographed the entire row first, then the area of paint where the plaque had been. The close-up shows more surface detail, but no more history. It supports conclusions about attachment and wear. It does not make dating possible. The lighter area may have formed because the paint beneath the plaque remained protected. Adhesive residue may indicate that a later sign was attached there.

Rosa remembered the door as having had a number, but she was not sure which one. Héctor said it had been without a number for a long time. Carlos had never paid attention to the plaque; he knew the room by the object that often stood in front of it. A former administrative employee called it *el de limpieza*. None of these names clarifies the formal numbering sequence.

It would be easy to make the unmarked door the focus of the book. That would enlarge its significance and diminish the Mercado. The door is a carefully documented unresolved finding within a building where almost everything has been altered through use. It need not be anything more.

Limits of Attribution

Numbers seem stable because they are brief. In the Mercado, however, the things they referred to changed. A stall number designated a space, later a concession, and occasionally a family or a crate. A storage-room number could appear in the inventory as a room code. Without a date and a system, the number alone is insufficient.

The central conclusion of this chapter, then, is not that number 17 is missing. It is that stall, storage-room, concession, and inventory numbers are not the same thing. Anyone seeking to verify a historical statement such as “It was stall 28” must first ask: in what year, on which list, and for what activity?



Figure 29. Storage-room doors 14, 15, and 16, and the unlabeled fourth door. Straight-on documentation in neutral daylight, 2026.



Figure 30. Detail of the missing plaque: a lighter area of paint, two screw holes, and abrasion. The surface evidence does not establish any previous number with certainty.

MERCADO MUNICIPAL DE SAN DESVELO

PLANO 1976 - RECONSTRUCCIÓN TIPOGRÁFICA

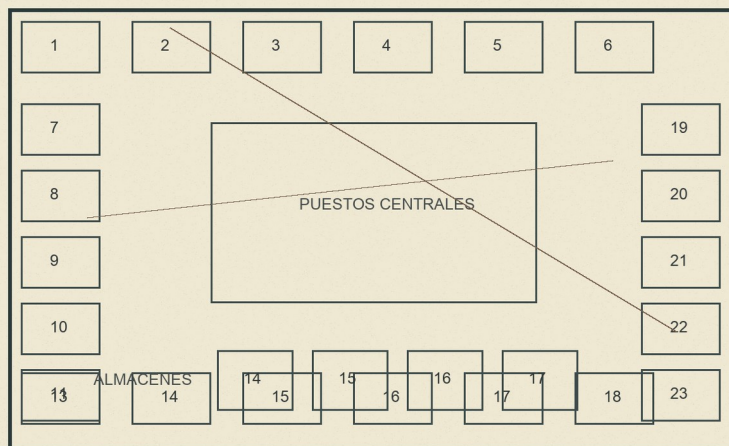


Figure 31. Typographic reconstruction of the southern wing in the 1976 plan. It shows the sequence 14, 15, 16, 17.

EXTRACTO DE INVENTARIO

ALM. 14 - CAJAS

ALM. 15 - HERRAMIENTAS

ALM. 16 - HIELO

ALM. 17 - LIMPIEZA

COPIA

Figure 32. Later inventory extract bearing the entry ALM. 17 – LIMPIEZA. It has not been established that this is the same physical space as the room shown on the plan.

RELACIÓN DE DEPÓSITOS

DEP. 14 - ENVASES

DEP. 15 - MANTENIMIENTO

DEP. 16 - ARCHIVO

DEP. 17 - PESCADO

SIN FECHA

Figure 33. Undated list bearing the entry DEP. 17 – PESCADO. A different designation is not evidence of an additional room.

REGISTRO DE LLAVES

14 - entrega

15 - mantenimiento

16 - depósito

s/n - puerta sin placa

COPIA

Figure 34. Reconstructed key record. The designation s/n means sin número and describes the door without a plaque.

How a Number Moves

A concession number can move with a person while the stall number remains tied to the location. A crate can retain its marking even after it is passed on. An inventory tag can end up on a replacement piece of equipment because the administration carries the asset forward, not the metal itself. Each of these practices is understandable; together, they create apparent contradictions.

For every number I found, I therefore created a record with four fields: source, date or period, what the number designated, and its spatial reference. Only then did I compare sequences of numbers. The method seems cumbersome, but it prevented identical digits from automatically being taken to mean identical places.

For storage room 17, gaps remained. The 1976 plan identifies a room. The inventory lists may refer to that same room, an administrative unit, or a later assignment. The door's present position matches the sequence on the plan. Between the plan and the present, there is no continuous series of dated records.

Accounts of the Fourth Door

Rosa initially called the room the cleaning room. In our second conversation, she said that cleaning supplies had once also been kept in room 15. Héctor remembered fish

crates outside the fourth door, though not necessarily inside the room. Carlos knew it as a door that had to be kept clear. A former employee mentioned old forms.

These accounts contradict one another only if the room is assumed to have had a single permanent function. A storage room can serve several purposes over the decades, and objects standing outside it do not establish what was inside. The most reasonable summary is this: the room was remembered differently and was probably used in different ways.

I did not ask anyone about voices at night or any special significance attached to the door. Such questions would have produced answers that did not arise from the documentation project itself. The investigation concerned numbering and use, and that remained its scope.

The Lighter Rectangle

The plaques on doors 14, 15, and 16 are made of a light-colored material with dark numerals. The spacing between their screws resembles that of the holes in the fourth door, but is not exactly the same. This may be due to a different plaque, a repair, or imprecise installation. The paint beneath the former sign is lighter and less worn.

I measured the rectangle and the spacing between the holes because they could be documented. The measurements do not prove that the plaque read 17. They will allow a comparison if an old plaque, invoice, or photograph later comes to light. Documentation can prepare questions for future sources without answering them in advance.

Chapter 8 - When the Market Is Closed

02:45

For the nighttime documentation, I set up the camera opposite the western entrance at 02:45. All three gates were closed. A single light was visible through an opening above. No one was on the street. The scene lasted for less than ten minutes; then a cleaning vehicle turned into the side street.

The market was quieter than during the day, but it was not silent. Fans, refrigeration systems, and water formed a steady bed of sound. A loose piece of metal struck irregularly in the wind. Engines could be heard in the distance. None of these sounds was unusual. Tracing them to their sources nonetheless required several circuits of the building, because the walls and alleys altered their apparent direction.

Night as Working Time

Cleaning was logged at 02:40. At 03:20, the first delivery reached the southern entrance. At 04:05, a refrigeration unit audibly changed cycles. Fish receiving began at around 04:30. One morning, Víctor opened the coffee counter at 05:12. The official market opening came later.

This means there is virtually no clear point at which the Mercado is entirely inactive. “Closed” is an administrative category: the status of the gates, customer access, supervision, and sales changes. The building itself moves gradually from one work shift to the next.

The nighttime photograph of the south passage shows the same row of doors as by day. The crates and people are gone, and the pipes stand out more clearly in the light of the yellow lamp. This makes the unmarked door more conspicuous. The difference belongs to the photograph, not necessarily to the place. Empty space in an image gives details greater weight.

Audio Log, 03:12

At 03:12, I made a longer audio recording. When I reviewed it later, I could identify fans, refrigeration, water, a rolling metal shutter, and suppliers’ voices. At one point, brief rhythmic blows can be heard. Rosa said, “Probably someone with a knife.”

According to my time log, the fish section was still closed at that point. This does not rule out other work areas, an inaccurate clock, or activity beyond my field of vision. I could not identify the source.

I did not conduct a frequency analysis. There was no reason to turn an unidentified work sound into a different category of evidence. The recording was filed with the time, location, and known ambient sounds.

The Morning Begins

Shortly after four, a side door opened. The cold light outside was still scarcely brighter than the night, but the work became visible. Two men carried crates of fish from the vehicle into the passage. A third took empty containers back out. The sound of the crates was now unmistakably the same sound that had been impossible to identify earlier from farther away.

Night in the Mercado does not end at sunrise. It ends when enough activities are taking place at once that no one speaks of night work anymore. That moment, too, cannot be fixed to a precise minute.



Figure 35. West façade at around 2:45 a.m. The gates are closed; a work light remains on inside.



Figure 36. The southern alley at night. The same location as in the daytime photograph, now without delivery traffic.



Figure 37. The morning's first fish delivery. An open side door makes the transition from night work to market operations visible.

Visibility and Emptiness

An empty market looks more orderly than it is in operation during the day. The doors form a row, the pipes can be traced, and the floor seems to open into larger expanses. This visual clarity can be deceptive. It removes the objects that ordinarily define the space.

For the nighttime photograph, the camera remained still longer than it did for the daytime images. As a result, surfaces appear sharper and light sources more intense. I did not artificially reduce the contrast in editing, but neither did I increase it. The task was to reproduce the documented conditions, not to recreate a familiar nocturnal atmosphere.

Between 02:45 and 03:30, three people passed through areas that are empty in the first photograph. One was Rosa. The other two were part of a delivery. A photograph establishes emptiness for a fraction of a moment, not for an entire night.

A Market Without Customers

Even without customers, the Mercado remains socially active. Cleaners talk to drivers, drivers to vendors, and vendors to the people checking the refrigeration or the gates. Prices are not yet being called out, but goods are already being assessed. Coffee is served before regular sales begin.

This phase is not secret. It is simply seen less often. Anyone who knows the Mercado only during opening hours encounters a building that seems suddenly ready each morning. The work done at night explains this readiness without requiring every sound to be explained individually.

Chapter 9 - What Remains

Repairs During Business

During my final week of documentation, stall 23 was repaired. A worker replaced a metal edge and drove screws into the wooden structure while sales continued beside him. Tools lay on a cleared surface. Customers shifted half a step to one side. No one treated the repair as an interruption to the market.

This scene encapsulates much of the building's history. The Mercado remains the same because work is continually done to it. Gates, pipes, tables, and numbers change. Its activity continues through these changes, not despite them.

In the records, repairs appear as individual work orders. In everyday life, they form a continuous layer. A handle is replaced before an invoice exists. A board is wedged underneath until materials arrive. Wire holds a cover open. Later, no one can say exactly when the temporary solution became part of the permanent fabric.

Generations

During the documentation, a younger relative sometimes worked at Julia's stall. She sorted goods, packed purchases, and knew the prices. Whether she will eventually take over the stall remains uncertain. Continuity within a family is not an automatic succession. It begins with time spent working together.

The photograph of several generations was not posed as a family portrait. That is precisely why it conveys the process of succession more clearly: different hands reach into the same stock of goods; a customer speaks to the older woman while the younger one is already preparing the next purchase. The future appears as work, not as explanation.

Old and New

When I placed the 1976 plan beside the 2026 survey, the differences were immediately visible. Some rows of stalls survive in a similar form. Exterior areas and storage assignments have changed. The four southern rooms appear on both sheets, but they are not labeled consistently.

What is old about the Mercado? Not necessarily the gates, the tiles, the signs, or every stall number. What is old, in part, are routes, the locations of particular uses, delivery times, and relationships. The fish section moved but remained tied to water and deliveries. The vegetable stalls were renumbered but remained rooted in families and

customers' habits. Coffee began at a small window and within a few years became something that had supposedly always been there.

The Mercado's continuity does not lie in an unchanged physical structure. It lies in its capacity to carry on. This is not a romantic quality. It requires daily work, repairs, administration, and conflict. That is precisely why it can be documented.

What Remains Unresolved

The former number of the unmarked door cannot be reconstructed with certainty. The exact routes of some older pipes remain unconfirmed. Some photographs can be dated only to broader periods. The expansion of the southern wing can be narrowed to between 1975 and 1977, but not to a single day.

These unresolved identifications are not a failure of the documentation. They mark the limits of what can be inferred from the available sources. A market used continuously for six and a half decades does not leave a complete file for every change. It leaves traces of use.



Figure 38. Repairs to a market stall during business hours. Trading continues around the work.



Figure 39. Two generations at one stall. The photograph was taken during work, not posed as a family portrait.

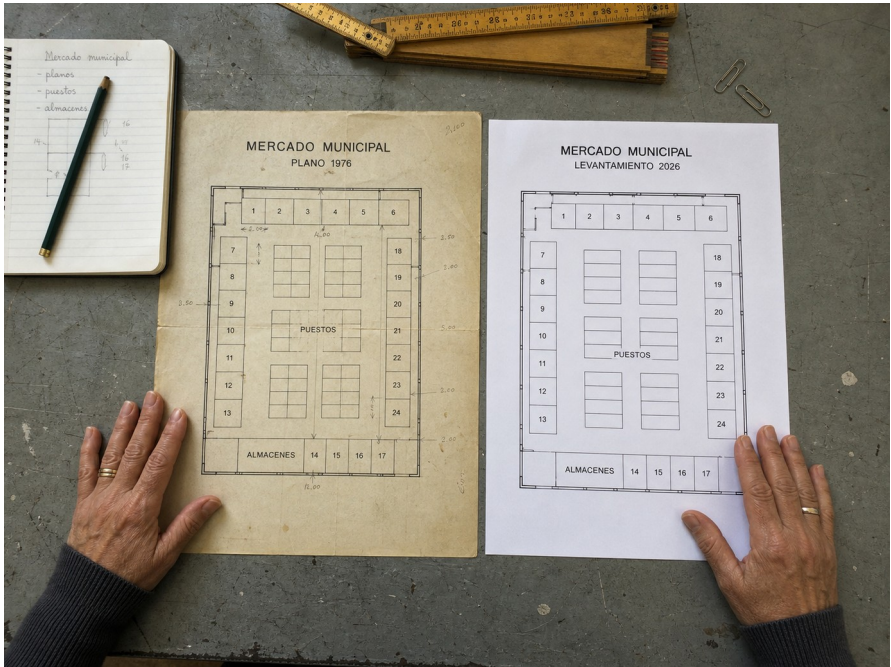


Figure 40. The 1976 plan and the 2026 site survey on the worktable. The same sequence of rooms can carry different administrative labels.

Sixty-Five Years

In the end, I did not choose the twelve oldest images for the anniversary exhibition as originally planned. I chose photographs that showed different forms of continuity: a route, a family, an activity, a repair, a sequence of numbers, and a morning routine. Age alone would have presented the Mercado as a past already concluded.

The anniversary refers to the market hall built in 1961. The market on this site is older. Some of its present-day components are younger than many of the vendors. These three timescales needed to remain visible side by side. The Mercado can be sixty-five years old, older than the hall, and in some parts only a few years old, all at once.

The exhibition was eventually displayed in the entrance area. Vendors corrected captions, added names, and disputed a stall number. I recorded their objections. Two resulted in changes; one was retained as a differing recollection. Documentation does not end when it is hung on a wall.

Note on Sources

The document pages reproduced in this book are typographic reconstructions. They bring together legible entries from source materials that were damaged, incomplete, or preserved only as copies. The reconstructions have not been made to look artificially like photographed originals. Reconstructed historical scenes are likewise identified as such.

The contemporary photographs follow the documented photographic approach: natural light, restrained color editing, no removal of intrusive objects, and no staging of work processes. Within this fictional documentary project, people were depicted with their consent. Visible lettering remains in Peruvian Spanish because it is part of the place; the explanatory text is in English.

CHRONOLOGY, VOICES, AND SOURCE STATUS

Documentation Appendix

Chronology

Before 1958: An open or partly covered provisions market operates on the site. Its spatial arrangement is determined by tables, tarpaulins, water points, and neighboring stalls. No fixed numbering system is documented.

1959: The Municipalidad decides to build a permanent market hall. The stated reasons are hygiene, cleaning, protection from the weather, and growing use. At the same time, vendors call for better water points and reliable roofing.

1961: The first section of the hall opens with twenty-four numbered stalls, two large entrances, a fish section, and a small administrative office. The invitation and a later anniversary publication give different dates for the opening.

1968 to 1972: Expansion and adaptation. The fish and meat sections are separated more clearly; water connections and exterior canopies are added. The records refer to several phases of work under varying names.

1975 to 1977: Construction of the southern storage and delivery wing. A plan from 1976 shows the sequence of rooms numbered 14, 15, 16, and 17. Completion cannot be narrowed to a single month.

1984: Major work on the water supply and drainage. New channels, repaired surfaces, and altered connections are documented. Not every present-day route corresponds to the plan.

1989: An electric refrigeration system is added to the inventory. Ice continues to be used for deliveries and temporary storage. The transition changes working procedures gradually.

1996: Stall numbers are partially reorganized. Not every row is renumbered at the same time. For a time, old and new numbers continue to be used side by side in everyday speech.

2003: The western metal gates are replaced, and work is carried out on the façade lettering. Individual letters later show different mounting methods.

2011: Several exterior stalls and entrances are remodeled. The north side acquires its present working arrangement of small openings; the establishment of the coffee window can be dated only approximately.

2018: Sections of the roof and the electrical system are renovated. Repairs to the floor and individual stalls continue over the following years.

2026: The Mercado remains an active municipal market. The hall contains recognizable elements from almost every phase of expansion. The documentation for the sixty-fifth anniversary grows from a series of photographs into this book.

Primary Voices

Rosa Medina has worked as a cleaner since the early 2000s. Her accounts were used primarily in relation to floors, water, transitions over the course of the day, and everyday repair solutions. When Rosa dates a feature, she often does so by referring to work equipment or changes in procedure. Such information is not retroactively converted into exact years.

Héctor Salazar is a fish vendor and belongs to a family with a long history in the market. His accounts concern deliveries, ice, refrigeration, coastal routes, and changes to the fish sections. He often remembers sequences and sounds more precisely than calendar dates.

Julia Mendoza sells fruit and vegetables. Her mother worked in the earlier market. Julia provided family photographs and described neighboring stalls, transfers of stalls, and the significance of the workplace across changes in materials.

Víctor Ramos runs the small coffee window on the north side. His perspective connects the night, cleaning, deliveries, and regular opening hours. His references to time reflect need and habit more than a fixed shift schedule.

Carlos Huamán makes deliveries between coastal towns, access roads, and the Mercado. He describes the city through the movement of his vehicle, turning points, cargo, and waiting time. The goods-route map follows the directions he provided; it does not claim to show a complete route.

These five voices do not represent everyone in the Mercado. They were chosen because their work reveals different dimensions of the place. Accounts from other vendors, customers, former workers, and municipal employees were included where they added to specific findings.

Source Categories

Observation refers to what is currently visible and can be photographed: structural elements, surfaces, routes, numbers, work processes, and events recorded at specific

times. An observation does not automatically establish how long a particular condition has existed.

Memory refers to statements by interviewees about past and present use. Memories are not treated as unreliable substitutes for records. They have value as sources in their own right, but must be described in relation to the person, period, and subject concerned.

Document refers to plans, lists, maps, invoices, photographs, notes on the reverse of photographs, inventory extracts, and administrative records. A document can be precise and still refer to a different administrative unit from the one with which it is later compared.

Interpretation refers to a traceable connection between several findings. Where, for example, a pillar, the direction of view, and a family's account coincide, the identification of a stall is more robust. Where the only match is an identical number, the identification remains less certain.

An open discrepancy is a finding that cannot be conclusively resolved from the available sources. Examples include the former plaque on the fourth storage-room door, conflicting accounts of how storage room 17 was used, and service-line routes that have not been fully confirmed.

A reconstruction is a newly created representation based on sources that describe it or survive only in part. The historical scenes in this volume are not presented as original photographs. Typographic reconstructions of documents preserve legible information and identify its source in the accompanying text.

Notes on the Images

The present-day images are conceived as documentary photographs. They show natural light, worn surfaces, cables left in place, buckets, crates, and traces of repairs. People are shown mostly at work. Occasional motion blur is part of the activity being documented.

The historical reconstructions vary according to the type of source they are intended to represent. Images from the 1950s are modeled on softly focused small negatives and private prints. The 1960s construction image follows the conventions of municipal documentary photography. The 1980s family image has the flash, color cast, and unsettled framing of a private snapshot.

Text within the images remains in Spanish and follows Peruvian usage. This includes Mercado Municipal, Puesto, Almacén, Cámara fría, Limpieza, product names, and

prices in Soles. This edition does not replace these labels with translations within the photographed space, but explains them in the captions and text.

The captions distinguish between present-day depictions, historical reconstructions, typographic reconstructions, and schematic graphics. This allows an image to work atmospherically without concealing the nature of its sources.

THE MARKET CONTINUES

Epilogue - Tomorrow Morning

It was not an unanswered question that brought me back on the final morning. I wanted to photograph the western gate opening from inside. The Mercado was already lit. Crates stood beside the work surfaces, Rosa had drawn water across one section of the floor, and the smell of coffee came from the north.

The man at the gate reached down and lifted. Metal moved along the tracks. Outside, garúa hung over the street. For a moment, he was visible only as a dark figure between the light inside and the brighter gray of morning. Then he stepped aside to let a crate through.

Julia sorted limes. Héctor checked the ice. Víctor filled a cup too full. Carlos had not yet returned to the alley, but a handcart stood ready. Rosa drew the remaining water toward the drain. A vendor called out a price before the first regular women shoppers reached the aisle.

I took the photograph and remained at the edge. The Mercado did not begin. It continued.

The next morning, it opened again.



Figure 41. The western gate opening shortly before the first regular women shoppers arrive. Inside, the work surfaces, crates, and lighting are already prepared. Photographic reconstruction, 2026.

End