**Transcription of Participant Observation notes**

Date: 14 March, 2023

Event: Assembly from the Water Defence Committee

Location: Streets of Santo Domingo

Observer: A

Today at noon I received a message from Waldo, indicating that there will be a meeting in the afternoon, in case I want to come. I said yes, and that we would meet in the afternoon. It strikes me that there will be a meeting, as I believe that there have been no activities since last year, shortly before the well came into operation. It will be good and interesting to see people again. It rains that afternoon, which is also strange for the month of March, although the winds, regular at this time of year, are occurring.

Before inviting me, Waldo asks me if I am in Mexico City. On the way to the meeting, I get a face mask as I remember that almost all the neighbours wear them. I look forward to seeing the neighbours, perhaps setting up an interview with Waldo and talking about the newspaper with people like Martina, Magnolia, and Tita. As it rained, it feels cool when I arrive in Santo Domingo. I see a jacaranda in bloom. I get a sales catalogue. This and the signs looking for workers in various businesses are indicative of the characteristics of the local economy. I walk down Patos to the corner where the meeting will be, and the street is changing as the gathering of neighbours occupies the space. A block away, I overhear two neighbours talking as they walk to the meeting. One tells the other that she would have waited for her, and a man in a taxi greets them and asks where they are going, to which they reply that they are going to the meeting. I am interested in this exchange and encounter in the street.

I arrive at the meeting place and see about 10 neighbours already waiting. I recognise Carolina, Martina, Teodora and Elia. Teodora and Elia come with two other neighbours from their street. They bring small benches on which they sit. Other neighbours, like Carolina, also bring their seats. For the moment there is not much chatter between neighbours, who are sitting on both sides of the street, without blocking it. Martina is making the list of those attending the meeting. I greet Carolina and talk a bit with her. I also greet Martina who tells me she thought I was in Monterrey. I also greet Teodora and Elia, and we say that here we are again. Alonso arrives and I greet him too. While I am talking to him, he invites me to his singing meeting and tells me that he has been a bit ill. As we talk Martina arrives and asks for his name and writes it down on the list. It strikes me that she doesn't know his name.

After talking to Alonso for a while, and we move because they are fixing a minibus right behind us, I talk to Julia. I thank her for the diary and she tells me that she hopes I understood her handwriting. She tells me that she has gone two weeks without water. Only yesterday she got a trickle, her cistern dried up and her pump to bring water up to the water tanks is not working. I sense some frustration in her words and concern about the lack of water. I see neighbours talking to each other and I wonder if the lack of water is the reason for this meeting. It seems that there are several of them who have not had water. I see that they are talking about various things and that several of them have brought their chairs. I listen to Julia talk about not having had water as I see more neighbours arriving. Julia says that she has suffered and that it has been difficult to go without water recently. I think that must be the subject of the meeting.

More and more neighbours are arriving and I recognise several of them, like Leticia, or Magnolia. More people arrive. The meeting begins. At the beginning people gather and close the street. Before that there were still cars passing by and people repairing the minibus. All this stops when the meeting starts. Many greet each other as they arrive, and I greet some of the people I recognise.

Waldo starts the meeting by talking about how some things have been written in the WhatsApp group and it has been reported that there has been no water. It seems that some negative things were written in the group about the role of the commission in the committee, driven by the fact that there has been no water for the last few days. Waldo assures that water trucks were requested to support the neighbours who have no water, but that the priority has always been to have water in the network. Therefore, the important thing is not the water trucks, but that there is water and that the well is working properly. He says that they have been in contact with SACMEX about this, and that there is still an agreement that they will continue to provide support by sending water trucks. He says that they are not on the side of any party. He comments that the water problem is not only local but national and even global. He says that the information they have is that there have been problems in the Cutzamala, that its supply is practically exhausted, and also that the well is working well, but that the problem is that the tanks, on which this pressure depends, have been emptied and exhausted. He explained the reasons for the problem and asked the neighbours to take a less individualistic or selfish stance. The objective and the struggle are collective, not individual. He commented that water is a good collective good of humanity, and even not only of humans, but of the whole "blue planet". He therefore called for a change of attitude. He asked if the water trucks that had been requested had arrived, and the people replied that they had and thanked him. He insists that everyone must be united as a collective. He says that they must not end up like what happened in the neighbourhood of Ajusco. He refers to a conflict between neighbours who opposed an intervention by SACMEX and complained about the lack of water. He says that in that case the worst thing is that the neighbours ended up fighting and divided. That is the worst thing and what they must avoid. Water does not belong to just one neighbourhood or to just one group, but to everyone. He says that the authorities seek to divide, especially at election time. That is why it is necessary to "armour ourselves" and be protected from these divisions, to be united as a community. He regrets the expressions of other neighbours about the well taking water away from other neighbourhoods or complaining. He regrets this division between neighbours who have the same situation. The worst thing is to be at each other's throats, and it is not a question of one neighbourhood against the other, but of coming together to be stronger. After all that, he asks "do we remain united or separated?" And the people answer "united". And then he asks "do we seek individual or collective well-being?" And they answer "collective". He says that if collective well-being is sought, individual well-being will also be achieved.

Martina then took the floor and said that as a Committee they had become complacent. They have to return to the vigilance and communication as in the beginning, when they were very observant of the monitoring to report if there was a lack of water. They were confident because no one said that there was no lack of water, and they as a commission did not ask. She says that from the reports she believes that perhaps there has been no water for a month and a half. She also said that they are going to resume sending water trucks, but only for those who attend the meetings.

Beni takes the floor and says that it is not acceptable for people to criticise them in this way, as if they did not know them, and as if the well was a benefit that would only provide water for the members of the commission. He says that they have made an effort for the whole community. I notice a bit of a complaint about the attitudes in which criticism has been expressed. Beni says that this has been a collective achievement. He asks for constructive criticism and not destructive criticism.

Waldo comments that the authorities are dividing people. That there will be a meeting with SACMEX to discuss the lack of water. He asks for topics for the meeting. Apparently they will ask for reports on the lack of water, ask if there is a tandeo, and explanations about the shortage. He says that the issue with the adjoining neighbours has been resolved, largely thanks to Beni, Martina and Tita. He asked whether or not water had come on the houses of the neighbours, and asked for a show of hands to indicate this. Those who have not had any water raise their hands. He asks them which street they live in and they take note of this. They notice that almost all of them live in the same street or close to this street. This helps to get a clearer idea of how and where the problem is occurring. There are many hands raised from those who have no water. They decide that new reports of the lack of water will be made by WhatsApp on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. Neighbours will have to report whether they have water or not. Yesterday water trucks were ordered and can be ordered again if needed. They are defining the points to be discussed with SACMEX, which will include the issue of the valves. When they talk, they explain their situation and a collective discussion is generated about the realities of water. Carolina says that she has only had water according to the tandeo, and Julia says that until yesterday she had not had water for four days in a row. Mariana expresses her support for the committee members. Leticia says that her house has had no water since January. When asked for support to make the report and request for a water truck, Waldo asks Leticia to explain aloud to all the neighbours how to do it. Another neighbour takes the floor and says that the water is being taken away, to which Waldo responds that this is very complicated. One neighbour says that she thinks that the valves are being closed because many people in the same street not getting any water. Another says that since there was a leak in the street there is no more water, and Waldo asks her to send a photo and location so that a report on the problem can be made. Waldo says that there are several things to deal with but the important thing is not to be divided, to remain united, and to resume monitoring and reporting. Fewer water trucks have been requested than before, which indicates that the situation and people's lives have improved. He says that life has changed because of the struggle. Before, more water trucks were requested than now, so things have improved and their lives have changed. Along with this monitoring, they will ask for water trucks again.

Then he invites me into the middle and tells me to give a report on my progress. I say how much progress I have made, thank those who have confirmed the interview and thank everyone, and tell those who have not been able to attend not to worry. Waldo asks me if I will do new interviews, and I told him no. I will only do a second interview with some of them, but not with all of them. I tell them that I am now in the transcription phase. As I talk, I recognise a good number of the neighbours. More and more people are becoming increasingly familiar to me. Today there are approximately 60 people at the meeting. At the end Fernanda talks about a visit to a museum they made, and Tita talks about selling coffee to support other struggles.

At the end a person comes up to me who is no longer going to participate and I tell her not to worry. She tells me that she has been busy with care work and that's why she hasn't been able to make it. I also talk to Magnolia and we agree on a date for her to give me her diary. There is a line at the end to sign up for the attendance list and to buy coffee. I say goodbye to Alonso, who says he hasn't had any water and is thinking of asking for a water truck. I greet Tita, Juan and Javier and they tell me how they have been. I say goodbye to Caralampia and the neighbours who live in Teocalli. I talk to Tita and tell her not to worry about the diary, and I say the same to Fernanda. Waldo says goodbye and leaves. I walk with Juan to the metro, and he stays at home. Maybe there will be more meetings, so I'll keep an eye out.