**Transcription of Interview with Teodora and Elia**

Venue: Popular Community Centre

Date and time: 8 December 2022, starting at 3 p.m.

Duration: 58:42 mins

Additional observation notes:

I arrived at the popular community centre at the agreed time and only Elia is present. We waited for Teodora to arrive and sent her a message. While we were waiting, I started talking to Elia. We talked about it for a long time, and she told me that she has memories of what the street used to be like, of people from the street who attend the church, and of what the church used to be like. Once Teodora arrives, we go up to the terrace of the popular community centre for the interview. The delay is about an hour. One detail that I find interesting is the fact that Teodora and Elia are not only neighbours, but good friends who also call each other "comadre". This term refers to a degree of intimacy and friendship greater than that of some regular friendships. Being comadres indicates a high level of friendship and trust, which is an interesting detail when conducting an interview between neighbours. After the interview, the two walk home together. Teodora agrees to complete a participant diary, but asks me to give it to her in January, after the holidays.

Participants: Interviewer [A] ; Elia [E] , Teodora [T]

TRANSCRIPTION

A: First of all I thank you very much for being here, and to begin with we can talk about you introducing yourselves very briefly, with some general information about yourselves.

T: Of course, I am Mrs. Teodora, I live in Teocalli. I have two children who are now adults, I have two granddaughters. I work in catalogue sales, I am 67 years old, and yes, the water problem is worrying. But now it's my comadre's turn to introduce herself.

E: My name is Elia, I am 58 years old, I have 6 children, 12 grandchildren. One great-grandchild. But yes, the truth is that the water problem is very worrying for the whole neighbourhood. For all the neighbourhoods, because we have seen that too many streets are being closed because of the water.

A: Speaking of the subject and the neighbourhood, Elia was telling me a while ago that she remembers what it was like to come to the neighbourhood. Can you tell me a bit about your first years here?

E: My parents lived in the neighbourhood Roma, and my father had a newspaper stand in the neighbourhood Roma and Doctores. You could say that we lived in the stall and sometimes my dad didn't have a room to rent. And then people came by and they found out that in the neighbourhood here in Santo Domingo there were plots of land that were there and that nobody was there. Overnight my parents told us "let's go". And we came. My aunts stayed near the Medical Centre, where they had a stall. They stayed there and my dad, my mum and my brothers and sisters came here. All of us kids, really. We all came here to what is now the neighbourhood. When we arrived we started to move the stones and build the walls to make our house. It must not have been very big because the grenadiers came. The grenadiers didn't allow there to be houses here yet, because I imagine they wanted everything to be the campus of Ciudad Universitaria, of the UNAM.

So when we arrived, they started to make houses out of small stones and sticks from the trees that were around. That's how we started to arrive. We arrived here, you could say about six months before the invasion. And it was scary to get here, because there were snakes, spiders, there were animals. There was everything. And we were even more afraid of the mounted police. Because when they arrived they took my mum in custody, because she was trespassing and she wasn't allowed to. They couldn't take us as minors, but they took her. They would take her away, detain her and then she would come back. My dad was never here with us for long, because he was busy there working at downtown. After my mum came back when she was older, we made the house. And the bigger the hut we built, the more the mounted police arrived.

Time went by and time went by, but then the cruelest thing was that we went to bring water to the Copilco metro.

A: And how did you bring the water?

T: In water holders.

E: In little cans.

T: In water holders.

E: Not yet, not in the water holder, because we couldn't bring the stuff and my brothers and I couldn't be seen by the people from the police. Also not all of them came, only certain brothers.

When we got here we would carry water and cook. We didn't have to make a big fire because the police could see the smoke. They saw the fire and that's where they came. At night you couldn't see anything, only the stars, and you could see from far away how there were little fires just like us, little fires, and there were more people already. But not close by, but far away.

We lived a childhood here, which can be said to be very beautiful, because I tell my children that it is different at this time. I used to run from here to Isidro Fabela with my aunt. And there in Teocalli we used to have a little walk down what is now an alley.

A: Ah, the one that is now in Teocalli.

E: As if it were a slippery slope, we would go. And we would cross the whole mountain and we would go with my aunt.

A: Because you said it was a ravine there, right?

E: Yes, it was all ravine. It was all ravines, cactus, everything. That's why when I get to see the plants that I remember were here in Santo Domingo before the invasion, I remember them very well. By the University they are still there, in the part that is in the University there are all those little plants that were there.

A: In Flores Park?

E: No, there's hardly any there. The University, going around the corner towards the Metro, that's where it is, but they're also fencing it off a lot. When we used to go to the University and to the hill and make a kite, we would go to find the rods. There we would also find what we called starfish, which we would make to eat, or bunting, or clover, which we would cook with saltpetre. Or there was a cactus that had a little chilli pepper in it, and you could eat that and make a sauce out of it. And my brothers and I would go to the hills to collect all that. Of course we had to be careful, because there were a lot of snakes.

Then my mum started to make friends with the police, and they hardly ever took her away. Then my dad came, and when my dad arrived we started to build a little house out of tin. But with the warning that they were going to take them away when they could, because they weren't allowed to live here. Especially in the neighbourhoods with all the people who would invade, because it was a federal zone. That's how my parents started to build the houses, and in some way or another my mother had to go to work and we siblings stayed there.

But we were going to bring the water from there, and then my brother started to make a stick as a water holder. And then we would go with little sticks and little jars to carry our water. From Copilco, and then later a water supply came close to the bakery here in the neighbourhood. And then the famous DIF community centre was built.

And I tell you, overnight we woke up and the invasion was already here. We heard the coyotes barking, because at that time there were no dogs, and when we woke up there were many, many people. How they came, who knows, but they came. And as I tell a lot of people, if we had had a camera at that time, we would have had too many pictures.

A: The memories

E: The memories of how my mum started to build her house. A lot of people came through there because she put up a shop and we started selling beer.

A: And what happened with the police when the people came?

E: The police started to come very aggressively, to try to get us out. But they couldn't, because there were too many of us, too many. Just think, before there were some of us here and from here to the big avenue where the squares are and from there to the metro another one, it was already full of little huts. And little huts, because I don't know how they did it, but they arrived with things, with wood and everything. What we couldn't do, because when we arrived there were little stones. I still remember that when the invasion took place we had half walls on top of each other, made of stones and sheeting.

A: So the people who arrived also started to carry water like that?

E: Everyone started carrying water, some from the neighbourhood Ajusco, and others from other places.

A: But everyone had to carry water.

E: Yes, now I'll tell you that my children's father's family, they say that they used to carry water from Ajusco. Those who were living from Atl to that area, they went to Ajusco. And we used to go from here to there to what is now known as the DIF. When the DIF was built, they had a tap back there. A tap was made and from there we used to carry water. From there we used water holders. But a lot of people went there.

A: And what was it like for you, Teodora, when you arrived in the neighbourhood?

T:

We arrived here in 79. The one who told us that there was this place where your house is now, was my comadrita's aunt [referring to Elia]. She was the one who told us that her sister was selling. So we saw it as an opportunity, so we wouldn't have to pay rent. And that's how we got here. So we spent a long time with the same little stones in place. And her aunt did us the favour of lending us half of a room that was with stones and sheets.

And so we started to carry the water. My mum and I would go down from Monday to Friday. It was also Saturday and Sunday to carry water to set aside, to bathe and all that, and to wash. Yes, because there was no other way. And we had to do it like that, just the same. Here to Copilco or Tlalli, and then when we could get closer to the closed streets, it was much better for us. And we carried it on our heads. We would make a doughnut, put it on our heads, and the bucket would go there.

A: And you didn't drop it?

T: No, it got used to it. Well, that's how we carried it in Chiapas, so that's why I was used to it and my mum too.

A: So you came straight from Chiapas to Santo Domingo?

T: No, we didn't, we lived here in the neighbourhood Doctores. But they sold that land and we went there to another avenue, which I know now is Ecatepec, and before I didn't know it was Ecatepec. That's where we lived, but when the opportunity presented itself we came here.

A: So when you arrived there were already more people

T: Yes, there were already, one or the other, there were already some little rooms formed.

E: You could say that the streets were half-open, because when they arrived they were still doing faena (community work).

T: Yes, that's right

E: They still had to do the faena (community work). Because to make streets we had to break stones. Between the big people and us who were there.

A: So you were also involved in faenas (community work)...

E: Yes, to open the street in Teocalli we had a hard time, because there were very big stones.

T: And there on the way down from where the church is, we didn't go down like that, it was like a little path....

A: Because it was a ravine there?

T: Yes

A: So you were in the faena (community work) to open up Teocalli?

T: That's right

A: Well, that's not what the street was called then.

E: It had another name. And the big people were the ones who broke the stones. In order to put in water, we had to do it there. It wasn't because the government came.

T: No, nothing like "oh, we're going to put in pipes, or electricity". No, it was up to us. And the same, we are doing this now, but before that it was also our parents' turn to struggle.

E: It's what they left, that is, that we fight for our children, like they did for us. They also fought a lot for water.

A: What did you have to do to install water back then?

E: Well, you could say that they had to open up. And before it wasn't a pipe, it was a little hose so that we could get water. So that the water could reach us, and it was connected to another hose. Later they started to make the pipes, like they are doing now. But not before.

T: But before the pipeline they distributed water to us, and we used to take out drums. On the corner of Casa and Llave streets we used to put our drums there. We had the right to only one drum per family. No more than that. And there were times when the water truck came, and there were times when a fortnight went by and it didn't come.

E: Yes, you could say that they made their stops.

T: There were several stops. And until our families, our parents, became a little bit more demanding, it was only then that every eight days they gave us water. They allowed us to have at least two tanks. Other pardons had up to three, but most of us had two.

A: So first they had to carry the water holder, and then they started to put in the water tanks...

E: The stops they made at the water tanks.

T: The stops, we call them

A: And did you know when the water truck was coming?

E: Yes, they had set aside a day for us to put it in. And what do you think, there was a great respect for the tambos (water tanks), they stayed there.

T: Yes, I mean, that's what there was between us. Respect. Knowing what was yours and each other's business.

A: Everyone knew what was each person's tambo.

T: Yes

A: And did the neighbours agree on how to share out the water when the water truck arrived, or was it one by one?

T: Look, there were the tambos, you have to realise that they were all on the street. Then the water truck would come and start filling up, all of them.

I: And you knew which one was your tambo, and you recognised yours.

T: Yes, or sometimes some people would put an initial on it, their number, or something like that.

A: And after the tambo they pulled it with a bucket?

E: With a bucket. Carrying it with little buckets inside. You can see that we suffered a lot from the water for a long time and we continue to suffer. But unconsciously because I say that before we didn't suffer from the water in our street.

T: No, I mean when they changed the pipes we didn't suffer at all for a long time. That's why we were surprised when suddenly, about ten years ago, we suddenly ran out of water from the pipe. But it was strange, because for example the people down that same street don't suffer from water. It's just the central area, that's what we call it, we struggle.

E: We're like this [gestures to indicate how the street is arranged at different heights] and that's how they have water, and those of us who are like this...

T: We don't have water

A: That's true because Teocalli has an uphill slope and then there is a downhill slope.

E: And from there from your church, there is still water on one side, and further down, but not up.

A: So at the same time it happened in your house that there was no water. Well, you live next door, don't you?

T: Yes, a door separates us. So now if my comadrita has water, I have water.

E: Or maybe you always have water in the church because the intake is all the way downstairs.

A: Yes, it also has a cistern and I think it comes from below.

T: Yes, but we have a cistern and it doesn't reach us.

A: It has to be higher up then

T: A bit higher

A: Yes, because that church is built downwards. It's like it's a basement and then another floor above. So yours is upstairs and the other one is downstairs. And that's why it doesn't go up anymore

T: It doesn't go up anymore. I don't know if it's because there are more people on the sides, but the truth is that we have suffered a lot, a lot from the water.

E: Even when the DIF was built, which is behind the schools, there was a very big football pitch there. And on the side where the school is now, all of that belonged entirely to the DIF, you could say. That's where they sold us breakfast, and that's where we would go to bathe and wash in the laundry sinks. Because they sold us breakfast there, and we went there to bathe and wash clothes.

A: Was that before there were pipes or after?

T: No, before

E: Then they built schools there, and from a field to that, well, primary, secondary and kindergarten.

A: So you told me that they were also involved in putting in the pipes. In other words, you also had to do faena (community work) for that.

T: Here it's not as if the government came and did everything for you. That's why we defend Santo Domingo. Because Santo Domingo cost us all. My comadre [Elia] is younger than me, but even though she was a little girl, she was also affected. It happened to all of us. And that's why Santo Domingo is so loved and we defend it.

A: You've known each other for many years, have you been neighbours since then?

T: Yes

E: Very long years, many years

T: Many, many years

E: You could say that I was fifteen years old.

T: Well, in 79, wasn't it?

A: And you know other neighbours on the block, neighbours and neighbours, right?

T: Yes, yes. My comadre was going to come, but she had a medical appointment with social security and had to leave. That's why she didn't come.

A: She couldn't make it, yes.

T: She's one of the ones who was there too, and several others down there. Here, Doña E is newer, isn't she? [She asks Elia and they talk about different neighbours, where they live, and how long they've lived there].

E: She's inside, well, the one next to her house, who sold, Doña G. She's inside too, but yes, she sold. There are many who sold. Many sold their little houses. I mean, this Mrs. P who lived by the church. There are many neighbours who have left, but there are also many who are still here. And others who arrived.

A: And at that time, was there unity among the neighbours?

T: Yes, yes.

E: Yes, on Sundays it was faena (community work), eh? So that we could start to work the street, that is to say, during the week everyone worked.

On Sundays we would work as a community, do the faena, and everyone took out their sticks, their pickaxes, their wheelbarrows, or their buckets and they had to carry either dirt, stone, or anything. And everyone had to do it, with no excuses. Those who sold and left afterwards were there too. The street really brought us together, because having these streets built did cost us a lot of work.

T: There was no discord, thank God. We were united.

E: Yes, yes, I mean, there was unity in the street. We just started to do faena (community work) in our street.

T: Yes, yes, exactly.

E: Well, the streets cost us all a lot of work. Also here, I don't know if you've seen the photos down there [referring to the first floor of the popular community centre]. I have a cousin who, when we arrived here, my uncle was a photographer.

T: From there from the university.

E: Uh-huh. And look at these photos, look. [She takes photos from her mobile phone and starts to show them to me. They are family photos]. I just said "look for me a lot, cousin". And my aunt said to me "I've already checked my album and there's one missing and another and another". So look, it's one of my siblings, my mother, the daughters of Doña C, may she rest in peace. Look here when they got together [showing me photos]. There's the one who lived next to the people from the mechanic's shop down by the Teocalli. There he is when he was young. And I think that yes, if I can recover photos, and if I manage to find them I can give you a copy or something.

A: Yes, they're part of the memory, aren't they?

T: If you could use them.

A: Yes, well, especially if they have to do with what you're telling me about the water issue, the drums, and after the pipeline was put in, because it's been part of all that.

T: The committee, that was very recent, wasn't it? Because it's only been going on for about three years now.

A: And how did that part of the committee come about? You tell me that first they started to fight because the water was not coming....

T: No, we asked for a water truck, we asked for a water truck at that time. We are going to ask for a water truck. It would arrive in 15, 20 days, but a month and a half, two months would go by. Then sometimes you would say, "Here, I have such and such a folio number. "No, it's expired, you have to take it out again". And for them to give you another folio, which they gave you, yes, you had to call another number, give them your folio, and they would also pass, even if you had to wait a month and a half for them to bring you your water. And don't even think that they left you a lot of water, they would say. Five minutes, right? [question to Elia].

E: Five minutes.

T: Five minutes, that's all. That's all you got, right? So, sometimes they'd go by my comadre or they'd go by the other one. Or if not, they would say "I'm not giving you anything, because I have to take it somewhere else". So, my comadre told me that there was a water meeting and that's where I was going, right? So, in the second meeting, since COVID was already in place, it was suggested that the committee be set up and, well, we all took advantage of it because the meetings were held virtually.

A: When the pandemic was in full swing, there was no water in the houses.

T: No, no. It was ugly, ugly, to be honest. Because how do you wash? They tell you to wash.

A: Wash your hands, yes.

T: I mean, you couldn't leave your house. So how are you supposed to have the hygiene you're supposed to have? That's what I say, those are the controversies that the government says. Hygiene, and from where? Honestly, I mean, where am I going to get water from? The cistern was dry, completely dry, my comadrita at that time [asks Elia] did you already have the cistern? No, didn't you?

E: Yes, I did.

T: But it was also dry, there was no water.

A: It was weeks without water.

T: No, more like...

E: Yes, it lasted about two months. Two months, or more. And until we got to the group and there in the water committee, yes, it wasn't the priority, but certainly everything that we attended, the meetings, everything helped us.

A: [To Teodora] So you say that Elia told you that there were some water meetings.

T: Yes.

A: [To Elia] And how did you find out about these meetings?

E: They had already told me that they were holding water meetings. But, as the people were in the street, I didn't feel like it, I said, "no, they're going to say, this old nosy woman, what's she coming for". But then you think that water is for everyone, it's not just for the people who want it. So once I passed by and saw that they were there, like everyone sees us now, that they pass by and see us as weirdos. They must say "oh, people with nothing to do", as I did on one occasion. Before, I used to pass by and see them all in their meeting, and I would walk past them. But when they told me there was going to be a water meeting, I said "no, it's important because we don't have water. And if there's going to be a water meeting, well, let's go". And that's when we started to be with Waldo, Tita, Martina, with Sandra, who was the one who started it, because she was the one who started the group....

A: She started it?

E: Yes, Sandra was with them, I mean, she said, "let's form a group", and yes, to make I think the WhatsApp group. The WhatsApp group and to come to an agreement.

T: But also before that we were going to close the streets. Yes, we did that too, there in Coyoacán. We went to make a protest against the mayors. And we stood there in front of them, and they didn't want to listen to us. We asked for a solution to the water issue. We have always been on the water issue. Because it is what we have fought for the most. But yes, the truth is, we have had a hard time getting them to pay attention to us. The group has benefited us because yes, there are times when we ask for water and it arrives. Right now, I didn't ask for water, my friend asked for it. I asked for it last week, on Saturday, but it arrived that day. What we didn't get before. It didn't arrive. So now we see it as convenient to be in the group, to be in the Committee. Because Waldo knows that we are there with him, and whatever is required, we are there, for whatever is needed. Even if people say that we don't have anything to do, but we are there. But he has helped us because we ask for the water truck and they provide it. In other words, he made an agreement with SACMEX so that they can attend to us. He takes care of us, when there is a lot of demand, one is attended to by SACMEX and others are attended to by Huayamilpas.

A: [To Elia] And then you were also told that there was going to be a meeting after you passed by and saw them, but at a certain point someone else invited you, or how did you find out?

E: Yes, they told me that I should go. My neighbour asked me "hey, do you have water?" and I said "no, I don't have water and I've had so many months without water, I don't know what I'm going to do", I said.

I said, "and maybe I'll even make people mad and we'll go and close a street because we don't have water". I said, "Yes, I'm going to do it, if that's what they want, yes, I'm going to do it. If that's the solution, let's do it," I said, "I'll tell the people on my block right now and we'll go" And the neighbour said to me "but there's going to be a water meeting. I asked her "where?" And she said "in Fuerza Street, is that where it was true? [To Teodora] T: Yes, in Fuerza. Because where we're doing them now is more recent.

E: And I told the neighbour "well, let's go". And I said to my friend [Teodora] "look, there's going to be a water meeting? There's going to be a meeting, let's go, let's see what they say". So we went and I don't know who else I invited, but it was only her.

And we arrived and waited, and that's how we stayed here. And they started talking about Aztecs, 215. And I said "ah, I've already heard all that with my cousin".

A: Yes, you told me a little while ago, didn't you? How did you find out about the water problem on Aztecas Avenue?

E: Because my cousin who took the photos told me everything. He was going to talk to a man about everything they were already doing there. About the sit-in, about the problems, that they were there at night, that there were several of them and there were many comrades who took turns at night and in the mornings on guard duty, but that there were a lot of them. He was carrying things to support them. It was because of this man that was going to talk to my cousin, and I stopped and listened to everything about Aztecas. So I found out a lot of things without going there, without going, when they were arrested. What a colleague of mine told me, I respect her, she's one of the good ones. And then I saw on Facebook what was happening, that the police arrived and threatened them. In other words, they did a lot of ugly things to them. Even, I don't know at what point, at what meeting, a lady came and said that one of her children got sick. And then she went to a hospital. And she came to give her testimony of how she lived. And since when her child has been a big boy. So they had been fighting for a long time. And about the electricity too, I just joined in.

A: So you already knew there was a water problem in Azteca 215.

E: Yes, and in front of it I think they were also dumping it too, they just stopped dumping it, and I think they haven't built there, do you know why? Because of the problem they have in front of it. So they've already seen it, and they're doing the same as here. But they're also going to build buildings across the street, in other words, they're going to build flats. And everywhere, if you've noticed, people are selling their houses. And what a mistake they are making, because their parents left them since when. I mean, they were the ones who came here as invaders, that is to say, to cut stones, to build the neighbourhood. And they are selling them here, all to construction companies to build flats. And yes, they are selling them off completely.

A: Yes, and you, Teodora, did you also know about Aztecas 215?

T: Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, because we talked a lot with my comadre. Then she grabbed me and said "This happened and that happened" Yes, of course she did. And on one occasion we were going to go, but I didn't even know why, we didn't go. Yes, we were sure we wanted to go, yes. Then, but I don't remember what came up and we didn't go.

A: You didn't go. But could you say that the defence of water is something that seems important to you?

T: Yes, yes, very much so. And do you know why I'm in the Committee? Because for me it's important that there is no political group, none, none. Not that I'm from the PRI, not that I'm from the PRD, not that... none of them, none of them. In other words, we, nobody says that. So, for me that has more merit. Because you don't back yourself with any party to get the works done. That's how we managed to get the well, right? But it was just the union of all of us, all of us. And the committee, my respects to don Beni, Waldo, Raúl, Sandra, Martina, Tita, all of them. My respects to all of them, because, I mean, if they tell us to support them, we support them, but they are the ones who go to the meetings and all that, they are the ones who are waiting for messages, calls and all that. And you saw, we are going to inaugurate the well.

A: How has it been with the well? I don't know if you want to talk about any part of your experience with the struggle for the well. Because I know that there have also been various obstacles, opposition, and well, it's almost done.

T: The thing is that, look, we've had the most opposition from people who want to claim for themselves what they didn't pay for. Some of them, that is to say, they are from parties. And others are the neighbours, who didn't want that part. Because they said several things. That their houses were going to be destroyed, that they were cheating us, that the water was not going to be for us, that the water was going to go elsewhere. But we, as we are always there with Waldo and all that, we are well aware of the situation, how it is. That's why we don't like to miss the virtual meetings, much less the face-to-face meetings, because we have to listen. You have to listen to see what they are really saying, what they are talking about.

A: The virtual meetings were when there was the pandemic, wasn't it?

T: Yes, the pandemic. It's only a little while ago, isn't it? [asks Elia] That we started to see that they were taken away. It's not long since they took them out.

A: But then you joined the committee, you say you signed up and since then you've been at the meetings. And the issue of the well, are you hoping that it can help to stop the water shortage?

E: Yes, yes. Let's hope so, because yes, the engineer says it's going to 40, that it's giving more power to the network than any of the wells that are around here. So, I think, I would like to see that yes. But we also have to see the other thing, that they don't start bad habits, that they start to believe that they are taking the water somewhere else and they are going to start to do something with the well. Because in another well they are taking it, I don't know, a man also said that they were taking the water to the other side, I don't know where to, and yes, his well doesn't give any water. The government says they don't have water and the well is working. So, all these questions are put to the people, because I understand that yes, this well is going to supply our neighbourhood. That's why we wanted them to do it, because they wanted us to look for another piece of land, when that space was very good to do it. So, now, if they start asking questions and other people start believing that it's a problem.

T: Those who don't attend the meetings and all that. The group is big, there are about 200 of us in the group, but how many of us are there? Right now there are a bit more coming because there is no water and they want a water truck, because Waldo said that if you don't go to the meeting there is no water truck. That's why you see a little more, because I don't know if you came to any other meeting where there were only 25 or 30 people. So we are all interested, because we all need water. And it's a struggle by us who have been more constant, but it's going to benefit all of us because it's not just your tap and mine, right?

E: Yes, and besides, it's all for our children and grandchildren. My daughter says to me "you're going to your meeting again". And I tell her "yes, daughter, because I'm fighting for you. Tomorrow I'm going to die, because I'm not going to be eternal, and the water is going to stay with you". That's why I tell them, "take care of the water, because we don't know how long the water will last. On many sides they are saying that there is no more water". Supposedly they said, I don't know if in Guadalajara.

A: In Monterrey, there were many months without water.

E: And they wanted to appropriate the river from I don't know what part, because it belonged to them, they wanted to pipe it. So there was going to be a lawsuit. I have always said that the coming war is going to be over water.

A: So you think that water is also an important good?

E: It's very important, without water we can't do anything. Do you agree? Because we have to do everything with water. Even as my comadre said, how are we going to keep ourselves locked up in our house? Yes, but hygiene, wash your hands if you went in, what did you bathe with?

What did you disinfect yourself with if we didn't have water? Water, water is what we're going to have left.

T: And then look, there is a critical situation. I almost don't like to touch it, but it is important. If you can write it down and if not, I'm just going to tell you about it.

My sister lives in Casa Street. She lives with her cousins of my comadre, my sister married a cousin of my comadre [Elia]. There we have a nephew, who will be nine years old in April, who had a stroke, we have him in bed. And no water. No, we have a very, very difficult time. Because I'm telling you, the fact that they don't send you water for two months, it didn't enter my head. How did the government want us to be fine without water? And then, it wasn't just my nephew. My uncle got sick, and my mother. My mother, because she wanted to be close to my nephew. I wanted to have her in the house, and no, she wanted to go with the child. Well, this has been going on for a long time, almost the whole time he was sick. Then, three years ago, she decided not to return to the house. She stayed there. But the pandemic came and I was affected by all that. There was my sister, my nephew, who was the first, his uncle, my mum and my sister who were ill.

A: From COVID?

T: No, no, no.

E: Sick, locked up and without water.

T: Uh-huh.

A: Not from COVID?

T: No, nobody, thank God, no, nobody got it. My nephew had a stroke, his uncle had a prostate, my mum had a heart attack, and my sister had a heart attack. So, and no water. And with the COVID, what do you do?

E: Ask for the water truck and no, they tell you "in 15 days", and then "no, you've already passed the folio number of your turn".

T: And you ask for the number and again you wait. Why? Because according to them they give you, to tell you something, fifteen hundred. And when you call they say "No, they've already passed their folio". You ask again and no, you have to wait until the number arrives again. It was very critical.

A: Yes, and as you say, you need water for everything, but when there's a sick person, you need it even more, right?

T: And I had four. My mother died first, a year ago in January. A year and a day later her uncle passed away.

A: Oh, I'm so sorry.

T: Yes, but then... Yes, and I'm telling you, we saw hard times, and ugly, because I'm telling you, water is necessary, what if they don't bring it to you? It's like right now [she says to Elia] They haven't brought water to my relative. Yes, a relative asked for it last week and they haven't taken it. They can't be on the committee because one, my nephew, another my sister is not well. And now even my brother-in-law is not well. So they can't be in the meetings. And I can't ask for a water truck, nor can my comadre ask for a water truck because they are not in the group. So they have to see where they can get it and there hasn't been any. And I tell you that my relative asked for it the week before last and they haven't taken it. And he was suffering.

E: Water is life.

A: Yes, it's a very tough situation. Water is life.

E: And as our comrade says, it must be defended. And yes, but always, I say again, there are times when this water from here, from us, I feel that they manipulate it for political ends. Because there comes a time when the water is taken away from us. It is a time when the authorities of the local government say that it is the season to take water away from us. Because how can it be possible that at one moment the water has stopped coming. What, because they fixed something in the Cutzamala, but now it's fine and we don't get water.

It made me angry because I had to tell my children "go with your father to bathe there", which is in another part of the neighbourhood. I would tell them to go bathe there because there was no water at home. And their house never lacked water, until one day the man said to me, "Elia, we don't have water". I told him, I can't believe there's no water. And yes, he showed me his cistern and the tap and there was no water. And it had never happened to them, they had never had no water. Or the neighbours who live further down in Teocalli, they've never had no water. Never. A long time ago I said to one of them, "Hey, don't you have water in the tap? You should give me a little jug of water to make food". Oh, I even got goose bumps [from the memory of what she is narrating]. And she said to me "I never lack water, any day you want, it comes down, just a little, but I never lack water". So I said, why? I mean, if there was no water, no one has water, yes or no? It would be the same for everyone.

T: But even my friend, who also lives a little further down, lacks water. And she lives a little further down.

E: And there are roadblocks. For example, yesterday my son couldn't get to school because Miguel Angel de Quevedo was closed. I told him to get off the bus and walk. He got off and had to walk from Miguel Angel to the centre of Coyoacán. And all this is being done because of the lack of water. For example, I tell Teodora and everyone on the Committee, that they should give it to us twice a week with good pressure. We fill up and look, we have water.

Then there are times when my cistern helps me and it lasts for a while.

But other times I really said "no, I'm going to ask for a water truck, because my cistern is too dry". And I had to ask, I had to ask because I had run out of water. Sometimes I say "yes I have, yes I have". But that time I tell my children "grab the can and take a bath, not right now". For example, I wash all the dishes, and to conserve water we don't wash them, we leave them in a bucket. And then, imagine, the day will come, what are we going to do, not bathe? And now, they say that the pandemic is coming again. I mean, how are we going to kill the bug without water? Without water, well, nothing.

A: And now talking about the relationship between neighbours, what has it been like for you to be on the committee? Well, you already knew each other, but did you meet other people there? What has that experience of getting to know other neighbours or getting involved in the committee been like for you?

T: Well, it was good for me. Obviously, we're not all gold coins, are we? But, well, most of them, which is about 90 per cent, are acceptable, they're nice. And all that. So far, so good.

E: And more than anything, to make the moment of being there pleasant. That is to say, to arrive and not receive anyone angry or upset. In other words, to make the moment and the time pleasant. Because here, as my comadre said, those who come to the front to give us information, they have to spend all day with these things. Like Beni says, they are there early in the morning and they come to give us information. A lot of people understand that. And many don't. And that makes us angry because many say "oh, I want a water truck, I'm in and I'm going". And no, because it is important that they feel the support of all of us in the meetings. Because imagine, there are people who say "I'll just sign up and leave, I don't want to go". But no, then we don't even know what they said at the meeting. Because people don't pay attention. And yet they did have to leave very early, sometimes without breakfast. All day long to come and inform us and defend us. Because they are defending us and they are standing up for us. Not just for me and my comadre, but for all of Santo Domingo. And even though they call us mitoteros (noisy, loud, rowdy), thanks to them we know what is happening in the well, why they are going to give us the water, why they are not going to give it to us, or why they are going to bring us the water truck. But because they are doing that and we are listening. And they are making a great effort to be like this, going back and forth, how many times do they go to the centre to deliver papers? How many times do they have to go to bring the answer? And I say that because I did it, because on my land I wanted something real solid for my family, and I did it. I had to go back and forth and for almost 7 years, I had to go back and forth. So, what they are doing is not easy. And a lot of people think it is.

T: And apart from the fact that at this new moment nobody is asking us for a penny, nothing. There's nothing about cooperation, nothing that you're going to give something underwater, nothing.

E: Everything is voluntary and unconditional. It's not like it's up to Teodora or Elia to give everyone so that they can put up the credit, so that they can have breakfast, so that they can go, nothing. I really applaud them for what they are doing for the water struggle and for the people. As they say, it is for the people. And as they say, there's no way that Waldo would just get the water or Tita on the tap. No, it's for the people, it's for everyone, not just for one person, no. And you can imagine, it's even for the people.

And you can imagine, it gives me goose bumps just to see this achievement [the well]. It was possible thanks to them, because without them who have the gift of the word and know how to defend. Because if you know Raúl, you know that he knows how to speak very well. And Waldo too, Doña Tita and Don Beni, and Martina, I don't want to make anyone lesser.

But what Pedro is, he is very firm. He questions the authorities about why they don't comply and why they don't do. And he knows everything in the little machine in his head.

So from one thing to another I say, and why can't we all do the same thing, right? To be present. If they've already gone and done it, we can accompany them.

T: There is no one else's disposition.

E: No, many occasions you don't have the time. Yes, well. I'm going somewhere. And they do have time. They leave their things, they leave their houses. Waldo that day was saying that he left from work, that he had to attend, at the risk of losing his job.

No, the truth is, I really applaud what they are doing here. And they are doing it without any intention of, "oh, I'm going to say something in a moment so that everyone will applaud me". It's pure, pure will towards the people.

A: Is there anything else you would like to add? Perhaps thinking about your expectations for the future, or what are the most valuable things you can take away from these three years that you say you have been participating.

T: Well, for me the most important thing was that the Well was achieved. To be honest, that is an achievement, as I have said, thanks, first of all to God and to the committee, we really have a great committee.

The leaders, those who are in front, they are really very good. Because without them we wouldn't have made it, because they knew how to guide us well. They said "we need, people, 10, 20". There weren't always all of them because of the pandemic, but they did say "we need, 5 volunteers". And there we went, we were always signing up. But for me personally, it was a great achievement. We feel proud to belong to the Committee and that it was achieved.

E: Yes, another satisfaction on my part, and I don't know what else you think, but I'd be very happy if the Committee didn't break up because we got the Well, the Committee disbanded, disbanded and no longer attended.

As Waldo said at the meeting a few days ago, just because you get the water doesn't mean it's over. This whole struggle continues, because we don't really know what else is coming. We have to be very attentive and make sure that the Committee does not disunite. And from our side, you know, we are always on board. Waldo tells us, you don't because you always sign up. And wherever you go, let's go, I told Waldo, wherever you go. Well, sometimes you have things further away or things to do, but wherever you go, we are there. We're the ones who are the most involved in this [laughs].

A: Well thank you very much, thank you for your time, it's a pity that the other neighbour couldn't be there, she was probably going to come too. But I'm going to be doing all this work until next year, so I'm at your disposal for any questions you may have, I'll be in touch with you. You even know where I go to church on Sundays [laughs].

T: You get in touch with us and we are ready.

E: How are we doing with the well, how are we doing with the water. I'm going to tell another neighbour too, to see if she'll be interested.

A: Well, thank you very much, and well, I'm going to stop the interview now, so that we can finish and not take up any more of your time.