**Transcription of Interview with Susana**

Place: Popular Community Centre

Día y hora: 28 de Noviembre, 2022, starting at 17:15 hrs

Duration: 40:13 mins

Additional observation notes:

The interview is at the Popular Community Centre, on the terrace. This is the first of all the interviews I will be doing, so it serves as a pilot, in addition to the conversation I had with Waldo about the interview questions. I arrived several minutes early to familiarize myself with the place, since it is a public space. Susana did not want to have a participant's diary because she has care activities that do not allow her to dedicate time to it.

Participants: Interviewer [A] ; Susana [S]

TRANSCRIPTION

A: If you like, we can start with a very general introduction of yourself.

S: I am Mrs. Susana, I am 67 years old. At the moment I am a housewife, I don't work anymore. I worked for a long time, but I don't work anymore. So I am at home. My schooling is only up to the second year of secondary school. And I was married, but now I am divorced. I have three children who are married too.

A: Do you identify with any indigenous ethnic group or anything like that?

S: No

A: Can you tell me how you came to live in Santo Domingo?

S: When my parents came here. We arrived a long time before the invasion, about a year before. Then I arrived and I turned fifteen here. The invasion happened a year after we arrived. So for us, when we woke up one day, it was a surprise to see that the whole pedregal was invaded, and there were like little tented houses, but they weren't tents, they were just temporary houses. We live around there in Tlahuilli, around the Iglesia de Colores, I don't know if you know the places here.

A: Yes

S: Well, that's where we live, but when we woke up we saw that everything was already invaded. And we didn't realise that there was an invasion because as we were living there we didn't have electricity. I mean, we couldn't watch TV or listen to the radio because there was no electricity. So we didn't realise that there was going to be an invasion, because it had been announced, I imagine it was announced by the president or I don't know who announced it, that the whole area would be invaded. And I saw everything that happened there, the whole process of people carrying sheets, sticks, everything. What they wanted was to separate the land for themselves. And I was about 16 years old.

We came from the Copilco el Alto neighbourhood, that's where we rented. And it wasn't like that either, I mean there was no pavement, but there was electricity and water. And when we came here, there was none of that. So we suffered a lot because we didn't have any services, and we had to carry water from Copilco.

A: How did you manage to get water? How did you organise yourselves?

S: Well, the water issue goes back a long way, it's not just now. We used to have to carry it. And I remember that the needs were very great.

My mother had a very big bathtub and when it was the rainy season we put water there. And for us that was a luxury, because we had rainwater. We even bathed with it. So we used it for everything: washing dishes, cleaning, everything. And that's how we went for a long time in those years.

And then we had to go through the paths first, there were no roads or anything, and when more or less all the invaders started to line up, they started to see a little more where one street was going to be and where another one was going to be. And then they would send water pipes, so they would tell us to put water in some barrels so that we could store the water there and the pipe would leave the water there, and that's what we would take to the house. And that's how it was for a long time.

A: And you told me that the invasion happened from one day to the next. How did you interact with the neighbours who arrived?

S: Well, it was like we didn't know each other, it was new people arriving. The few who did get to know each other talked to each other. But those who came from other neighbourhoods, for example, we obviously didn't know them. But with time, little by little, with all the everyday things that you see them and all that, you start to make friends, not friendships, but you start to greet them and all that. But it takes time for that to happen.

Because at that time there were also "comuneros" (people who have a particualr ownership of communal land in Mexico). We had to live across the street from some communal land owners, and they already had a lot of land, they had already built.

A: And they didn't take kindly to these people arriving?

S: No, they didn't like it. My father had bought the land a year before from a communal land owner who sold it to him. Then, about a year later, there was the invasion. So the communal land owners obviously didn't like it because for them their little gold mine was gone.

A: So you say that day by day they got to know each other.

S: Yes

A: In what kind of activities? Did this involve fetching water or food?

S: Not food, but, for example, in this kind of water thing on a regular basis. Or, for example, in things related to electricity too, because sometimes they used to put in cables that brought electricity from I don't know where.

But yes, little by little, after so much time, you get to know the people.

And there were people who sold water. They brought it from I don't know where, and there were donkeys that they had carrying the water, so they put some jars filled with water on each side of their donkeys. And the people who wanted it would buy it. But yes, then little by little you got to know the people.

A: Yes, you get to know each other.

S: Yes, at first you don't even know them and you say "oh no", but then you do, because it's obvious that having neighbours and all that, you're going to get to know them. Don't think you'll get to know all the people, no, but you'll get to know your neighbours nearby.

A: The closest ones.

S: Yes, and then you get to know them because they say "we're going to fix the street, we're going to do some work, so that the street is better". And little by little you go on like that, removing stones.

A: Were you involved in the work then?

S: Yes, yes, I did.

A: Can you tell me about that?

S: Well, as I was still young, I did what I could. But for example, my parents did have to participate and everything, in the sense that they told us "let's fix here and take out stones". And so to say, maybe our part, well, we did manage it. Everyone did their part in front of their house, so everyone did their part. Everyone did their part and that's how it started to get bigger and bigger. Then, for example, lorries came in that said they were bringing rubble and they were filling in the holes in the streets. That's when the streets started to form. Because it took a long time. So when there were people in the middle of the street, they had to be removed, the people who invaded.

A: When you think back to that time, would you describe it as a nice memory?

S: Yes, I would. Well, I was young and apart from that it was a different time. And I do remember that everything was very nice. Not like nowadays when you go out in the street and cars whiz by. Before, not even cars would pass by, because you couldn't. So you could be outside, you could be in the street. So you could be outside, maybe with the children playing and everything. But for example, only the trucks that came to drop off water were the ones that passed by. Or some other lorries and so on, but as I said, they were no roads, only paths and footpaths that turned into streets later.

A: And now there are a lot of cars.

S: Yes, you can't anymore, it's very difficult.

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A: And now there are a lot of cars.

S: Yes, you can't anymore, it's very difficult.

A: And how would you describe Santo Domingo today if you had to describe it to someone who doesn't know the neighbourhood?

S: Well, what can I say if I've lived here almost all my life. I see my neighbourhood as beautiful, that it is progressing. Yes, it has progressed a lot because more than anything else, all the people are doing their own thing, doing their part.

And I do believe that there is also unity here on the side of the neighbours. And that's how things have been done because otherwise the neighbourhood would be different. When we were here before like that, the same people got together, there were people who were, for example, the block chiefs who started to do things like that. And there were people who got involved and helped a lot.

Now, however, there are almost no more block chiefs and there are no more of those. They've kind of disintegrated. But even so, now that we go to the water group, I do see a lot of unity. And the truth is that what I see in Mr. Waldo is that he is a person who always tries to tell us "neighbours, never go around provoking and if they say something to you, keep quiet and don't say anything else". He doesn't want violence, he doesn't want fights, and that's good.

And they are equitable, it's not just for us, it's even, it's even. And they have helped us a lot. Because the Committee that is formed by all the people really has a lot of involvement from the people.

A: So would you describe your neighbours as still united?

S: Yes still, almost most of them. When it comes to getting together because they need to, then almost all of the neighbours are still united. And of course, when everything is normal, everyone stays at home. But when something like this happens, everyone is united.

A: You told me that at the beginning you had to carry water, and that it was difficult. When you had to fetch water, how did your family arrange it, and did that affect your daily activities?

S: Well, we didn't always carry water.

A: Yes, you told me that when it rained you gathered water.

S: Yes, we collected some water. But it didn't always rain, so when we carried water it wasn't usually to waste it, so we had to bathe with a little water, with one of those little buckets. But we would set it aside for food, for cleaning, or for things like that, we had to set it apart. Sometimes we had to buy it, almost usually we bought it.

A: The water you say was brought in on donkeys.

S: Yes, because some people sold, for example, four of those twenty-litre cans. There were four twenty-litre cans. So people did buy it from them, but you had to wait as they arrived and as they went for water and came back, and then as it was on a donkey, it took a long time. So people did want it and it was very much in demand.

A: The water.

S: Yes, so we bought it from them. And we took good care of it. And then there were several of us. When it rained, it was very good for us because we put the water aside. That's what we used to bathe with. And we used it for everything: washing dishes, washing clothes, for everything. When you don't have anything you say: well, that's it, no other way around it.

A: And then when the pipe came in and the water arrived, let's say, more normally. How was that part of the story?

S: At that time I was already married and had three children. And they did start to put in the whole drinking water network in the neighbourhood. And we didn't believe it. We hadn't had water for so long that we didn't believe it. And they told us that they were going to start putting in the whole network so that we would have water in our houses. But for this they had to draw up contracts and everything. And for example, they had to go to Coyoacán, to where the water and sanitation offices are and everything. And then we went there to make the contract and after that they gave each of us our own water connection.

A: Did the water supply improve at the beginning, or did it sometimes not arrive?

S: Yes, they did install water and everything, but sometimes there wasn't any. In general there was water at that time, but still more or less.

A: So the service has been getting worse?

S: Yes, because there are times when, for example, lately, even if it's only at night, we get water for three days, but only for those three days and only at night. And then we have to wait again for it to arrive. But we have suffered from the water.

A: And when did you start to struggle more with this water issue? Is it something recent or has it been going on for years?

S: Well, it's been going on for years. It's been going on for a long time, when suddenly there is or there isn't water. And when there is water, everyone is happy and content. But when there is no water, there is suffering.

A: What do you have to do when there is no water?

S: We have a cistern. Here it is almost a requirement to have or make a cistern if you want to live with water. When you don't have anything to put aside water in, how do you do it? And then, for example, we have a small plot of land, and we don't have the luxury of having tanks or anything. So we use a cistern, and the water goes up to the tanks upstairs using an elecrtical pump and we store it there.

A: Has it ever happened to you that the cistern runs out?

S: Yes, it has happened to us. Because there have been times when there has been a lack of water for up to a month. So we have to ask for a pipe, and sometimes here for example with Mr. Waldo when there is no water, everyone asks for a pipe, so we have to be patient for it to arrive. And then we have to wait for them to be sent. But yes, that's how it has happened to us.

A: And when there is no water, do you contact your neighbours to ask for a water truck or for something else, like lending each other water?

S: No, not to lend us water or anything like that. Only to ask for the water truck.

A: How do you organise yourselves for that?

S: With the Committee we have a WhatsApp group and that's where we ask for the water truck. When we have water, we don't ask for one. If we have water, it's better to give it to someone else who doesn't. But when we don't, we have to ask for it. But when we don't have water, we have to ask and wait. We ask for water and we have to be patient for the water trucks to come, because there are so many of us. And they go around handing out water.

A: So in the WhatsApp group they say who hasn't had water?

S: Yes, we put our name and we put: "water truck request". And then they write us down and, according to the list, they send us the pipe.

A: And how did you start participating in this group? How did you get to know the people on the Committee?

S: Well, we've been involved for over a year now. Because where my dad lives there is a lady who lives there and she knows me, I know her and we talk to each other. So one time we were walking along and I was telling her about the shortage. I told her: "right now we don't have any water" and so I was telling her. And then she said to me: "Oh, look, if you want I can get you in this group, we are in a group, in a committee, if you want I can recommend you and get you signed up and everything, and then you can get in there". And so I said yes. I said yes, and he asked me for my number to give it to Waldo, for example, the representative. And she gave my number and yes, they put me in the group. And then I told Waldo about my daughter and she was also included. So we are here because of her, because of the lady.

A: She was the one who gave you the information.

S: Yes, she did, because that time I was telling her about it. And she said to me, "if you I can get you in the group", "and what's more", she said to me, "they're about to dig a well". And that's been going on for more than a year now.

A: And she was already in the group then.

S: Yes, she was already in the group, and so you can recommend more people to join. And that's when we got involved.

A: And since then you've started going to meetings and all that?

S: Yes, we go to the meetings and we get involved. For example, sometimes they even make the meetings virtual, or sometimes if they are face-to-face like that day we met. Or sometimes when it's about participating in something else we also go.

A: And when you started going, was the well already underway?

S: The project was already there, but they hadn't started to do anything yet. The lady that got me in told me that in three months they were going to start building the well. And I said "oh well, that's good". For me it was very good, because if the well was indeed built, we were going to have water. And when we started going there, it hadn't been built, we just went to meetings, and sometimes we went to meetings there where the well was built. But still nothing was being done because they were in talks with the authorities as well.

A: And did you know anyone else in the group or just the person who invited you?

S: Yes, some people by sight. I mean, there are people we knew by sight and everything and we also spoke to them. But not all the people we connected with, just certain people.

A: And do you think you got to know your neighbours better by participating in the group?

S: Yes, because when you have an assembly and so on then there is participation and all that. So you can't say no to socialising and saying hello. And when you're there, you suddenly start talking to someone, even if you don't know them well yet. That's when you start talking or something. That's how you get to know people too.

A: And had you had any experience of joining a neighbourhood group like that before?

S: No, it's the first time. Because we used to ask for a water truck, but it was by phone to the local government. And it was working, I mean here in Huayamilpas, but then they started to stop sending them, and they didn't send any more, so we asked ourselves: "What do we do now?" And suddenly I talk to the lady who got me into this group, I think God sent her to me because we didn't really know about the group.

A: And you already knew her.

S: Yes, I already knew her. But she had never said anything to me and neither had I because I didn't know about it, but it came about because I was telling her that there was no water and that we hadn't had water for I don't know how long. And he said to me: "If you want, I'll put you in here, we're in a water group". And so that's when it happened. And I said: "Oh wow that's good".

A: And how have you found being part of the Committee in Defence of Water this year?

S: Well, I would say very good. I mean, we have never had any problems. In this case, for example, Mr. Waldo and all the representatives, they are always very humane and kind people because they don't discriminate. That is to say, they are fair and equal. And we all participate in this. Because for example we are called sometimes every fifteen, sometimes every twenty days for an assembly all of a sudden. Or else sometimes it's virtual.

A: And if you had to describe the group to someone who doesn't know it, how would you describe it? How would you sum it up? What does it mean to you?

S: In this case the person who is our representative is a person who is dedicated to this without expecting anything in return. In other words, he doesn't profit from anything. He is not asking for money in exchange for fixing things. All those who are the representatives work unconditionally. In other words, they dedicate their time. And yet sometimes all of us who participate sometimes say "oh, I can't do it now" and we don't go. But they are always there, always. And they don't go around asking for economic cooperation or anything.

A: In other words, the objective is not money but water.

S: Yes, and they are always helping everyone evenly, not just one person, but everyone. Yes, they are very cooperative.

A: And why do you think there might be people who don't want to get involved in a group like that or prefer not to participate?

S: I really think that there are people who are not interested in this. And they may have their reasons, but not all people want to participate. I don't know if it's because of their occupations. But yes, you also have to dedicate a bit of time to the group, don't you, because if they are helping us, we also have to give our time to participate.

A: And how do you think the lack of water can be solved? What could we do as neighbours or as a society to take better care of water?

S: Our neighbourhood here is not very rich, and our water supply is very restricted. Because there are rich neighbourhoods, where there are many wealthy people, which don't lack water at all. They even wash their cars with a hose and everything. But here, they restrict our water a lot. So, is there a shortage or not? Is it just the poor people who don't get water?

Because there are neighbourhoods, for example, Jardines del Pedregal or others, for example, in Coyoacán too, and they don't lack water. And for us, all the neighbourhoods here on this side or even Iztapalapa and all that, well, they restrict our water a lot.

And I say that they should give us water even if it's every eight days, but they should send us water. We don't ask for more. And I don't know why they give everything to people who have money. And not here for us. Sometimes people need to do something like stopping an avenue so that they can attend to us. The shortage is what makes it necessary to go and stop an avenue so that the authorities will give us water.

A: And that is unfair then?

S: Yes, it is unfair. Because we should get at least one day's supply. Maybe they don't give us water every day, but it should come every eight days, for example, Saturday and Sunday, even if we don't have water all week or something like that. And then we know and we set aside our water. But sometimes whole weeks go by without water. So that's really bad.

A: How does not having water affect the neighbourhood in general?

S: It does affect it a lot. Imagine what we can do without water. Water is life. Without water there is nothing. Water is necessary for everything. Because maybe even for a day or two you can do without electricity, well, although it is also necessary. But you can't do without water, it's vital.

A: As you were saying, it is used for everything...

S: For everything. If you go to bathe, to cook, to wash, to wash up: it's used for everything. And when there is no water, you have to be there measuring it so that you have enough, even if it's just a little. In other words, you get used to everything.

A: With the issue of water, sometimes issues of care for the environment or the planet come together. Is that also important to you when you think about caring for water?

S: The environment is important because that is precisely why there are so many changes now. I think we should all feel that. For example, one participates in certain things to not pollute so much, or for example, now that they tell us to separate the rubbish, we separate it.

A: And is taking care of water also related to this?

S: Well, I think so.

A: Thinking about the Committee, has this group been important for your daily activities?

S: Yes, I mean, they are not calling us every day. It's sometimes. I mean, we do have to participate, we have a WhatsApp group and they write down in a message if we have to do something or meet. But they do give us our time, we don't have to be there every day. In the WhatsApp we do participate or we do have to send something, report something. Report, for example, if we have water every eight days, or when we haven't had water. So that's what this group is for. It's a way of being in communication.

A: Do you take more care of the water since you joined this group, or is it something you already did?

S: We have always taken care of it, it is not new. We only use it for washing and bathing, but we don't waste it on other things. And besides, we have had this culture since we didn't have water, so we don't have to waste it. So we have had that since before. We have to take care of water, and if there is no water, it's even worse. So we have to take care and set aside some water always.

A: And how does it make you feel when someone else wastes water?

S: Oh, very bad. I think of these neighbourhoods that have their gardens or have their pools. Those people do use more water. And we don't.

A: To finish off, has being neighbours been useful for the group?

S: Yes.

A: How has being part of this group helped you?

S: To begin with, it has helped us with the issue of water. We have helped each other there. And people there also share information, which is nice. Other neighbours warn us about things or give us information about something we don't know about, like events or activities. And above all, because of the well, which is the best thing for us, because that way we won't suffer so much from water. So imagine, we're going to be fine, we're finally going to be happy with the well.

A. Are you looking forward to the well?

S: Yes, hopefully it will be done soon, they say by December.

A: Were you at the explanation of the well today?

S: I couldn't, because I had to look after a little boy, but they sent us the videos in the WhatsApp group, so I was able to see them. But hopefully, God willing, that will be finished soon. But we are happy because a lot has already been achieved.

A: Is there anything else you would like to add to the discussion, anything else you would like to say about the committee in defence of water and your experience?

S: Well, I am very grateful to everyone in the Committee. Because I had never been in a Committee before or anything like this. And the truth is that there are times when someone profits from the needs of the people in other groups. But we have seen that here it is totally honest, and that the members are not dividing the people, or that they do not speak ill of one or the other. With them it's not like that, everything is transparent. And it's been good for us that they're not putting us at odds with one group or another. Waldo has always told us that if they provoke us we shouldn't say anything, we should keep quiet, and that's good so as not to provoke confrontations. That's something I like. And if not, I would have left by now [laughs] But it's been very good and let's hope it stays that way.

A: How do you imagine the future for this group?

S: I think it will be the same, to continue participating because, just because the well is gone, the organisation is not finished. At least to do some other activities or things that come up. But we will continue as long as we can. And we are happy with everything that has happened since we joined. Because our colleagues and all the representatives are very nice people, very human, to be honest. And I like that. Although the water problem continues and we are still sending messages to each other about whether or not the water has reached us or not. But the Committee tries to help, it helps to send water pipes, and that's a help too.

A: Well, thank you very much for your time.

S: You're welcome, and I hope it has helped you, at least a little.