**Transcription of Interview with Monica**

Place: Popular Community Centre

Date and tome: 12 January, 2023, starting at 19 hrs

Duration: 42:55 mins

Additional observation notes: I arrive at the popular community centre in the evening, and wait for Monica. While waiting for her to arrive, I notice that at this hour there are still few people in this space. I walked out with Monica after the interview, and took public transport to the metro station. When the interview is over, she tells me about the possibility of also interviewing her brother, who was interested in being interviewed. It is Verne, who had spoken to me and asked where to "sign up" for the interview on one of the first occasions I showed up at the Water Defence Committee meetings. Monica also tells me that she used to work and collaborate in activities at the popular community centre, but she has not been doing that for many years. She decides not to complete a participant diary.

Participants: Interviewer [A] ; Monica [M]

TRANSCRIPTION

A: Thank you very much, we can start with an introduction about yourself.

M: My name is Monica, I am 66 years old. I worked for 42 years in a company, and now I am retired. I am retired and I am now in the house.

A: How long have you lived in the neighbourhood?

M: Since the beginning of the neighbourhood, I came to the neighbourhood when I was 15 years old. I was still one of the pioneers, one of the first to arrive, because it was not yet populated. We arrived before the invasion, because we lived in Los Reyes, Coyoacán. And a man, who was the leader of the comuneros (people with communal ownership of the land) there, was the one who gave us a little piece of land here. That's why we came here long before the invasion. Then we had a hard time, because there were no streets or anything.

A: What do you remember from those early years?

M: Oh, lots of stories. It was really beautiful because the whole pedregal was just for us. I think there were like two houses, but far away. At that age, when I was 15, I started working too. I have five siblings, and it was up to my mother and me, because we don't have a father, to go to work early. So we would leave from here in Santo Domingo to the neighbourhood of Ajusco, running every morning. Because there was no transport, there was nothing. The neighbourhood of Ajusco, where the market is now, that's where we would go to get some transport. Between stones and everything, we would run there to work. And we would bring water bottles from the company where we worked, because there was nothing here.

A: What was it like not to have water back then?

M: There was no water here. So my older brother made two water holders, and he would carry up to four jugs in one little trip. Because he had to go from here to the secondary school in the neighbourhood Ajusco. That's where the water intake was, so that's where the water would come from. And on Saturdays, when we were supposedly resting in the company where we worked, we would take a break and go to the washing place here in Ajusco. There used to be some washing places there. That's where we would all go to wash. At three or four in the morning we would go to the tap with the lady. She would give us the key and we would open it, and we would welcome the people who were arriving. A lot of people from Santo Domingo. And then we would leave, and since my little brothers were young, I would still come here to bathe them at the stones. My brothers used to bathe there at a water intake.

A: And at that time, was fetching water with the water holder something that only your brother did, or did you do it yourself?

M: No, we all did it. Even if it was a small jug, but we all came with our own jug of water. I tell you, we from the company where I worked at night we would bring our jug of water. And then we'd come in the bus with our big jugs.

A: And then they would bring them from the bus stop to here.

M: Yes, because there was no transport. It wasn't until later that Jaime and Emilio, and another man who I don't remember his name, started making trips with their carts. From there from Ajusco to Santo Domingo, because it was a bit easier that way. They would carry people, and it was easier that way, carrying their jugs of water.

A: And bringing it from the company was every day?

M: Every day. And there were bathrooms in the company, we went there to bathe ourselves. Only my brothers were the ones who used to bathe here in the rocks. Sometimes they would come here, where there was a water intake by the avenue between the Ajusco, and there they would bathe. A lot of people went to bathe, well, they bathed their children. And some would wash there, and others would go to the Lavaderos in the other place there in Ajusco.

A: And he says that you would arrive, open the tap, and people would go into the washhouses, how was it that you had the key to that place?

M: We went to pick it up with a lady who lives in the neighbourhood of Ajusco. Well, she used to live there, because it seems that the lady has passed away. So we would go and pick up the key, and we already knew, because it was three o'clock in the morning. And we would open the door and people would start coming in. I don't know how much we charged, I think it was one peso to get in to wash. But yes, we took care of that. The lady would arrive at 7 or 8 o'clock in the morning and the money would be handed over to her.

There were also toilets in the washing places. But there were so many people to bathe there, that's why we hardly ever used them. That was the beginning of the neighbourhood.

A: Was that after the invasion then?

M: Yes, after the invasion. I'm telling you, we arrived much earlier, but it was just us, and carrying water was just for us.

A: And what was it like to live together in the washing places? How did you organise yourselves if there were so many people?

M: No, it used to be something else, very different. Everyone respected everything. Some people finished washing and others were already lined up for the laundries. It was more orderly. Not now, now everyone gets into fights and fights. Before it was more orderly. As we were all people from the provinces, we were afraid of the people from Oaxaca, from Guerrero [laughs] But it was very nice. Lots of relatives.

A: What part of Mexico are you from?

M: I'm from the Federal District. I was born here in Coyoacán, in Los Reyes. That's where my mother was renting, and that's how that man from the comuneros met us. And he said, "You really need a piece of land. Go there if you want". And we said: "yes, let's go".

A: And you said that at the age of fifteen you were already working. Did you have the opportunity to go to primary or secondary school?

M: Primary school, I only finished primary school. Then I went to work and I didn't leave that job until I was 57. In the same job

A: And how did the water situation change over time? I imagine from what I've been told that pipes were installed, that water trucks came in....

M: Yes, there was a tank here on Llave. They put in a very big tank and that's where people started to get water. And we didn't have to go all the way to the other neighbourhood to get water, we just had to go there. Or to buy the water trucks that they would send us. But we bought it, those water trucks too. And then they would steal the water. We made stops, as they say, in every street the water truck made a stop. And all of us neighbours would take out buckets, drums, whatever we wanted them to fill up. And then others would steal them. They would even take the pots, which one supposedly filled. And then someone more abusive would come and take it and you didn't even notice.

After that they started to put the pipes in. And there's a very nice thing I remember. One Saturday my mother saw that they were putting in the pipes and she said, "Well, when is our street going to be ready? We're still missing here. Nobody is doing anything". And one day she got up and said, "Let's go and see what's going on with the water because it's urgent". She went to the hardware store and bought two of those big ropes. And she convinced other neighbours, they tied up the machines and they brought it to her. They put it here in the street, that's why we got the water faster.

A: The machine to make the pipes?

M: Yes, to make the ditches, so that they would come. Because in our street it was at a standstill and nobody did anything. And my mum was the initiator of that. Pulling the machine with the ropes she went to buy.

A: Was your mother involved in activities here in the neighbourhood?

M: No, we worked from 7:30 to 7:30. We would arrive at 8:10 or 9 at night. No, only on days off. That's when we came to do faenas (community work) and everything. Well, I still had to hold the hammer. But my eldest brother was the one who opened with all the older ones.

A: If you had to sum up the water issue here in Santo Domingo, what words come to mind?

M: Well, it was a huge sacrifice to have some water. Sacrifice. It was quite a sacrifice, eh? Because carrying it from Ajusco to Santo Domingo is a bit of a chore. And even more so if there wasn't even a street. It was all cobblestones. Well, no, it was completely stony. But we did open up a little gap where we passed through. After it filled up, people started to pass through, and little by little we cleaned it up, and now the street is being built.

A: When the water pipe was introduced, did you notice improvements in the water supply? Did you already have it?

M: Yes, but it didn't go directly to the houses. They put taps in the streets, so to speak. So that's when we started fighting, you see. Because they put the network in, but only on the streets. There we had a tap about three houses away. That's where we would all form up to get water. And that's when the fights started, because people would say "no, I got there first", or "no, you've already filled up too much". Things like that.

A: Did the water run out?

M: No, but there were a lot of us. We were a lot and we all wanted water. And if you didn't get it from there you had to carry it. So that's how it was a lot of the time.

[laughter]

My mum also made a cart out of a tree, and she put four wheels on it. And that's where we would go to bring the water bottles from the tap. In her cart, and how my mum wanted her cart [laughs]. But she did it, eh? She did. And that's what we used to carry the water too. There was another man who was called El Moreno. He lived there on the corner of the school. He brought some burritos, and that's what he used to carry water for us. And another boy, I don't remember what we called him, and he also carried four cans and went around selling water.

A: He carried them?

M: He carried them with a water holder. And he would carry his four cans and that's where he would go. And, as they say, we started to be clients. We would say to him, "You bring me water for such-and-such a day", and he would arrive with his cans.

A: And then he went to the houses?

M: Yes, later, because that was after about ten years, I think. So that we would have drinking water. But as it happens, I live in Rueda Street, where we have suffered a lot with the water. We hardly get any water there.

A: From the beginning there was no water?

M: From the beginning there has been no water. We often had to go without water for up to a month. Even when there was drinking water in the streets, it didn't come up to there.

A: And what did you have to do in those situations?

M: Buy water trucks.

A: Were they always private water trucks?

M: The government ones were sold anyway. You had to pay for them anyway, you didn't have to tell so-and-so or so-and-so. You had to stand on the corner and see when the water truck was coming. You had to tell the water trucks when you saw them: "hey, can you bring me some water? And then you would agree if it was that much money for that.

A: So that sacrifice never ended?

M: No, not until now when the Committee came in, when they started I don't remember what year.

I've been with them for about three or four years. One day I was walking down the street and I saw a bunch of people there. And I said "what could it be? Well, I'm going to see". And I saw that it was from the water. And I said "no, I'll stay and see what comes out".

A: So that's how you heard about the Committee? Is that where you saw them?

M: I saw them in a little corner. There where we hold the meetings. And there I said "what's it about?" And when I found out what it was about I just stood there. I thought "no, I'm interested". I'm very interested in water. And from then on I haven't stopped. I've supported them and accompanied them when I can. Mr Waldo, Mr Raúl, all of them.

A: Before participating in the Committee, had you been in another group here in Santo Domingo?

M: I can tell you that here I was in the popular community centre, with the teachers who started it. I was with them, but I was about 18 years old. I was with them for a while, but then I didn't have time because of work, so I didn't do it anymore. I got out of here and left. I left them and I didn't know anything. I just dedicated myself to work.

But the need for water made me look for somewhere.

A: When you saw the people from the Committee, was there still a problem with the water not arriving?

M: Yes

A: And was it always the same or did it get worse?

M: It got worse. There were some years when there was water. And you kind of forgot about it. You thought "yes there was water, that's good". But then, lately there was no water. If you got water one day a week it was fine, but if you didn't you started to think that it wouldn't come for fifteen days, twenty days, or a whole month. I spoke to Telediario when there was a water shortage. And I told them "listen, every month they send us a water truck, or we don't have water". Every month they sent us water. And there was an interview there too, but they paid very little attention to us. Until I met the people from the Committee, then it was something else.

A: When there was the pandemic, did you have this water problem?

B Yes, yes we did. Well, that's when the water started to arrive. There was a shortage, but not so often. It used to arrive two days a week, but it was something. But then the pandemic ended and we started again. Now that the well has been inaugurated, we no longer suffer from water shortages. A trickle is falling, very lightly, but water is falling. It's just a few drops, but it's water.

A: So since the well was inaugurated about a month ago, have you noticed any improvement?

M: Yes, of course I have. It's a blessing.

A: And before you met the Committee you had to resort to asking for water trucks?

M: Yes, we had to. There were some leaders who said "if you want a water truck, we'll send it to you". And the water truck never arrived. You'd go to Huayamilpas, where they fill the water trucks, and there you'd make a deal with someone to bring you the water. They would say "I'll charge you two hundred", or "I'll charge you this". And well. Twice I had to buy a water truck after the pandemic, and 1,700 a water truck.

For two houses, because I don't even have a cistern. It's just a sink, so to speak, and the drums, or the water tanks. So that's where we divided it up. Of course, if the neighbour has a cistern, he gets most of it, but I had to give him half.

A: I mean, when you came to do that, was it between you and your neighbour? Was the water truck for both of you?

M: Yes, because I don't have a cistern, so it was for both of us, both houses. Imagine, the neighbour's cistern holds the water from three water trucks. [laughs]Well, then the little water that was left for us... but well, it's OK, the point was to have water.

A: Apart from that neighbour, did you coordinate with any other neighbours about water?

M: Yes, well, with several of the neighbours, we all suffered from the water. That whole street has always suffered from water. I tell you, it doesn't have any. But the opposite side has water, they never complain.

A: From the same street?

M: Yes, from the same street. And that's because they are lower down. Most of them are almost at the bottom. And we are at the top. So that's why I think they suffer us, but we do.

A: So the people on your side of the street used to agree to ask for water trucks?

M: Yes, to ask for water trucks. And then they would say

* No, I've got so-and-so's phone number. Do you need water?
* No, well, yes.
* Well, we'll share it out".
* Well yes, that's fine, we'll share it out".

But yes, then the water was expensive.

A: And now that you've joined the Committee, how has your experience of asking for water trucks changed?

M: Ah well, the Committee is a very different thing. I say that they are all very correct and honest people. Because honestly, all we did was talk to ask for the water truck, and sometimes it took two or three days at the most, and then we got the water truck. The committee is really very organised. I am very grateful to Waldo for his organisational skills. Because he has a great way of organising himself. He says he is not a leader, but I say he is. He's the one who runs the committee, and he runs it very well.

A: Did you know anyone on the Committee before you joined or were they all new?

M: They were all new to me. I met Martina, Tita, Sandra, Beni, Waldo. Two others I can't remember their names now, but yes, them more than anybody else.

A: Are there other people from your street who also go to the Committee meetings?

M: No, there are two others. One is across the street and the other is two houses away. There are three of us from the street who go to the meeting.

A: And how did your neighbours find out about it, just like you saw them in the street?

M: No, I invited a neighbour.

I said: "hey, they're doing this".

* And he said "where is it?
* "Here, they're doing the meetings here".
* "No, they're just talkative people who don't do anything.
* And I said, "well, let's go in, we need water".

Well, come on then, let's go". And that's when he came. And the other neighbour, I don't know who told her but she came in too.

A: And just as I asked you to sum up the water in one word. If you could think of a few words to describe the Committee, what comes to your mind?

M: Ah, well, they are warriors. They are warriors because I have seen how they defend our right to water. I never imagined that it was a right, eh? And I said, "well, yes, well, water is necessary, we need it". But the way they handle it and express it, they are warriors. I admire them a lot. When they tell us "hey, we need support". I'm delighted to go with them. They are warriors.

A: You say that you realised that water is a right. Has being in the Committee helped you to see water differently?

M: Oh, of course it has, because I didn't know anything about water. I knew that the government has to give you water, the government sends you a water truck, the government sends you this and that. But now with the committee, the way they talk, the way they express themselves and explain things to you, it's different. That we have to do a strike here, that we have to go there, that we have to go to CONAGUA and others like SACMEX and other institutions that they mention. I had never known that there was so much movement to get water. So I tell you, for me they are warriors. And we went to the delegation, here to Coyoacán, and there we were on strike twice. And they wanted to take us away from there, they said "go away, they're not going to open for you". And Waldo and Raúl were like, "no, they'll receive us here because they have to receive us. Let's go and see, and if not, you wait for us here". And we had to wait for them until they came out because how could we leave them? And we did wait for them until they came out. They would tell us the agreements they had reached, and we would leave very satisfied. We knew they were fighting for us.

Also about the water spring. I didn't know when they were there but I could tell there were problems there. And a neighbour would invite me. And I would say to her "it's not my problem, who knows what it is". If I had known it was a water movement, I would have gone.

A: Do you think that taking care of water is important?

M: Very important, without water there is no life. If you don't have water for two days, you can't even go to the bathroom. Because you are thinking about it. At home, as the family members are working, you say "if I take a bath right now I'll finish that water that's there. And those who have to go to work, who have to go to the office tomorrow and so on, what do they bathe with? No, it's better that they bathe themselves and you stay here, dirty". No, water is essential, that's the truth.

A: Do you think it's unfair that water doesn't arrive for people?

M: I think so, I think it's very unfair, how can they expect you to live a life if there isn't a drop of water? It's really annoying to be holding the urge to go to the toilet because there's no water, isn't it? Because that's how we often do it. My neighbour said to me: "my son has to go to work, and my husband has to go to work. And how are they all going to go, all filthy? no, it's better for them to bathe themselves. I'll stay like this, because nobody sees me here at home". And I tell you, it's a big sacrifice.

A: Now it affects all the activities...

M: It affects everything. You can't even have a plant because you need water. You can't wash or cook because you need water. You can't get dressed up because you need to bathe. So everything is affected.

A: And how did you push for the well? What activities did you have to be involved in?

M: I was only involved in the stoppages that took place, which I can tell you was in the mayor's office, the visit that took place here in Xotepingo. Then on another occasion we went to SACMEX (the city water system) which is in the centre, and there too. During demonstrations and protests, as they say, that's all.

A: And you keep in touch with the Committee by WhatsApp? Or how do you keep in touch?

M: Yes, it's by WhatsApp. That's where we find out what's happening on the day. If there is a leak or a water truck is needed here or there. Well, now the water trucks have practically stopped. They haven't been needed. But I tell you, we are looking at the leaks right now, and the water supply, that it arrives with good pressure. Because it is getting lower, as I said, right now there is a trickle of water in the house. But I'm satisfied with that. Just as long as there's not going to be a shortage, because then I'm going to scream, "There's no more water" [laughter].

A: In other words, they are following up on the issue of there being water.

M: Yes, we are all in contact

A: And now that the well is in place, what do you think are the Committee's objectives or goals for the future?

M: Well, I think it's to raise awareness so that we take care of the water. We've been suffering for a long time now, and I think we should be taught a lesson. We shouldn't just throw it away for the sake of it. I have a neighbour who washes his car with four big buckets. And I think "how is it possible, how is he throwing away water, gee, he could do it with just one bucket". But I can't even tell him anything, these people are difficult. Here in this street there is a lady who washes the pavement every morning with the hose. And I say "for God's sake, lady, don't you have a conscience?" Because that is a matter of conscience now. We are suffering because of the water, and the lady is throwing the water away. And no, I don't agree with that. I don't agree with that.

A: One interesting thing about the committee is that they are neighbours who live in and come from the neighbourhood.

Do you think that has been important, the fact that they are neighbours on the Committee?

M: I think so, because we are the ones who suffer from the water problem. So it is important that we are neighbours here.

A: However, there are people who don't go, and not all the neighbours are there?

M: No, there are people who don't like to fight for a service. They think, "You're going, so fix it. If you win, then we all win". But that's not the way. Imagine thinking, "Leave it to Waldo, he's already going". No, well, that's not the way either, is it? And if they call us, we say "Yes, let's go. Let me see what time I can. I can't now but tomorrow if you want I'll support you". We look for a little space, but the point is to support.

A: By being in the Committee you tell me that you have met certain people. With the people who are outside the Committee, who are your neighbours, do you think you also have contact with them? What would it mean to you to be a good neighbour?

M: Well, to have peace of mind, to live in peace. To be at ease with everyone. I say hello to everyone, and everyone talks to me. We say hello to each other, have a small conversation maybe, and it doesn't go beyond that. I'm not one of those people who go from house to house and start talking more. I just see people and maybe say to myself "oh, that neighbour is using water", or "oh, that neighbour hasn't swept". [laughs] But I keep that to myself, I don’t say anything to them, because then there are problems, and I don't like problems. I prefer to be at peace with everyone. Wherever I go I say hello and have a small chat with everyone, but it doesn't go beyond that.

A: But it doesn't go beyond that, you say

M: It doesn't go beyond that. I tell you, now with the water issue I've spoken to two or three people. And they said "Oh, yes, I'm in, of course". And they gave me a phone number, but they never went. And they ask me

"How do I ask for a water truck?"

- You have to go, you have to support, you have to be there". I tell them

-Ah, and when is the meeting?"

-I already told you, there's the phone, I'll give you everything, they've already signed you up there. "

- "Oh, well, you'll call them for me, won't you?"

-Oh, for God's sake. No" And I stopped inviting them. But now they tell me

-Ah, there's already some water, right? We've already received it.

-Yes, there is."

I don't even say anything to them anymore, what's the point? It's every person's business.

A: You've been here for many years, and you've seen how it has changed. Do you think the neighbours have changed too?

M: Quite a lot

A: What have you noticed?

M: The generations that come after us are no longer any... how can I tell you... there is no motivation, it's like we parents are now letting our children do whatever they want. Our hands are already weak when it comes to pointing things out to them. Before, it wasn't like that, before, with a shout you sat down and that was it, it was over. Not now, not now, I've seen a lot of violence there. And nobody is there, for God's sake, the father should bring order. But not anymore, the generations are no longer the same. Everything has changed.

With my neighbours too, we used to be the founders of the neighbourhood. And in most of them it's just the children, and it's a different thing. There is no longer the harmony that there used to be. Now everyone thinks differently, they think they don't care if their street is dirty, they don't care if they dump water. Young people don't care about anything anymore. It's like they're already living from day to day.

A: And do you think the Committee can help raise awareness or change that a bit?

M: I think so. Waldo told us something last time. He told us he was a bit sad because when they were opening the taps of the well, some young people, between 18 and 20 years old, came by and they were saying they were going to vandalise it and do who knows what. They were saying bad things about the well, when they know that it is going to be needed by everyone. So I tell you, there is no culture, there is nothing. Honestly, I see them and I say, if that's the future, what a mess. If we had thought like that, where would we be? Well, that's what I think.

A: It's a difficult thing. However, the well is going to benefit the whole community.

M: For the whole neighbourhood, yes. We weren't just ten people. There were 150 of us in the group. They called them and there were 50 of us. When we go to a march and so on, only 30 people go. But yes, to ask for water trucks there were 150. And they said: "my water truck isn't arriving, it's taking too long, when will it arrive?" For God's sake, they are the people who participate the least. They don't want to mobilise, and they are the ones who demand the most.

A: And do you think that the well has been an achievement of the Committee?

M: Oh, of course it was. Yes, because they had the guts to go and confront the authorities, tell them the truth, and know how to demand things. Something one doesn't know how to do. And yet those on the Committee do know. I still think they know a lot [laughs] They know a lot because they fight on this side, they fight on the other side and they go. I mean they fight in the way they demand things, not by fighting, but by demanding everyone's rights. I liked that a lot about them. If they close the doors in one place they say, "well, let's go somewhere else, let's demand things here". They are very, very organised.

A: Apart from the well, what other things have you achieved in the Committee?

M: Look, I'm not with them about the electricity, but I also know that they have fought for the electricity. And yes, the costs were very high. They even charged me for a electricity meter, the electricity man came and put it in, and then he gave me a little piece of paper with the very expensive cost. Because I put a small apartment upstairs. So I said, "I'm going to put a separate electric meter for it", not knowing what they were going to charge me. Then the electricity people arrived, they put a meter on it, and for that they asked me for thousands of papers. And I said "if it's a meter I'm asking for, I'm not going to steal the electricity". Well, they never did. Until the electricity car came and put it on for me, he said, "no, I'll put it on right away, it just gives me enough for the soft drinks". And I thought, well, that was easy for me. Name it, then I got a bill for 8,000 pesos for electricity. And I was going to fight:

"hey lady, but they gave me this piece of paper"   
-“no, here you have a debt from who knows when"  
 - "no, ma'am, this is an apartment for who knows when".  
-No ma'am, this is a new flat.  
- "prove it to me".

And they wanted me to bring the signature of the architect, of the receipts of the masons I had paid. They asked for a lot of things that I couldn't bring. So I had to pay the 8,000 pesos to get them off my back. I didn't know the Committee, otherwise I would have gone with them. But no, and I did have to pay the 8,000 pesos for a meter.

A: Do you think that the issue of light and the issue of water are related to each other?

M: I think so, because they are very necessary. They are necessary for everything as well. They are basic needs that we have.

A: And thinking about what it means to you to live in Santo Domingo, what do you imagine for the future of the neighbourhood? What would you like?

M: What would I like? That all the houses stay as they are. Well, I don't say little houses, but yes. Because right now I'm seeing that a lot of real estate is coming in. That's why I'm telling you, we are no longer the founders, and the sons are already selling the land to the real estate companies. What is this going to lead to? All of us who are poor people are going to be thrown out. Because this is now owned by a real estate company. Little by little they're getting bigger and bigger and they're getting rid of people. They're taking out those of us who have arrived.

A: Where can you see these constructions?

M: Right now there is one near here in Patos, which is just starting. Because it has signs saying that the work has been closed down. But you can see that they are going to be flats, and work is still going on, even though it is closed. And then in Tlalli there is also a huge construction project that they are doing. I'm telling you, this is going to end up in real estate and they're going to run us all off. That's why I was going to propose to Waldo that now we go after the real estate companies. That no more real estate companies come here to the neighbourhood. It's supposed to be for people in need, people who started from the bottom. But now it's the children who are selling. It's no longer the parents, now it's the children. As soon as the father dies, they say "we're leaving this ugly neighbourhood". Then they start to change. And this is going to end up with real estate agencies.

A: So you wouldn't want these companies to come in?

M: Of course not. Imagine, you have a lot where you park two cars outside that you own. To say one thing. But a real estate company is going to put how many cars? How much traffic is going to be there? How much water is it going to use? How much electricity? Everything, everything becomes more expensive, because it's already a real estate agency and it's another way of living. So yes, I wouldn't like it.

A: And going back to the Committee, do you think it has been a good experience to be in this group?

M: Yes, quite nice. It's very nice to see how united we are. And as they say, unity is strength. And with the union that has been created, there is strength. With that, changes are achieved, objectives are achieved, and I see that the water objective has been achieved. With this I see that it is a viable way to be a Committee and to have the strength of the people. Because I tell you, I was here [at the popular community centre] and I saw nothing, nothing but pure corruption. And the Committee is something very different. I saw a lot of things here [in the popular community centre] that I didn't like, and that's why I left. When I saw some things I said "no, this is as far as I go and I'd better leave". I didn't want to be part of it and I didn't want to continue working.

With the Committee it's different, because if they ask you for anything, they don't ask for an exaggerated amount, but what you can give. Ten, twenty, thirty pesos. And you, with your own criteria, say, "no, how am I going to give only ten pesos", according to your possibilities. But it's a very different thing what you want to give than what they ask you to give.

A: Is there anything else you would like to add about what the Water Defence Committee and being in defence of water in Santo Domingo has meant to you?

M: That it is an example to follow. I wish they would only follow it, to be honest. Because Waldo says he is not a leader, but for me he is a leader. And he is a person who fights hard, who knows how to guide people. I didn't know he was a teacher, and I wondered, what do they do, why are they here? Later I found out that they are teachers. And it's a vocation that they bring with them, to fight for the people, to know how to organise. And they know where to go, this way and that way. They have experience, I don't know if it's from the struggles they've had, because I imagine they've done other things that we don't know about. I can tell you that I used to see them in the light committee, in the Colores church, where they used to meet. And I said, "What are these people meeting for? God knows". And I was never interested, without knowing it was them.

A: It wasn't until the water that you got involved...

M: Yes, with the water, that's where I met the people. Otherwise, I wouldn't have even met them. The need for water was what made us look for them. And I am very grateful to all of them. I don't know everyone's names, but it's the Committee anyway and I'm very grateful to all of them.

A: Thank you very much for taking the time for the interview.