The University of Sheffield

The environmentalism of the neighbour: everyday life and local organising in water-scarce Mexico City

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abstract

This thesis observes the neighbour relationship as a site of environmentalism. Focusing on everyday life and social practices, it works with a qualitative case study approach. It focuses on the Water Defence Committee of Santo Domingo (WDC), a neighbour-based organisation (NBO) that confronts the consequences of intermittent water supply. It works with three research questions to explore a) how and in what ways are urban neighbour relationships affected and reconfigured in contexts of water scarcity; b) how local, neighbour-based organisations contribute to the practice of urban environmental justice in contexts of water scarcity; and c) in what ways are neighbour-based organisations a form of social infrastructure, and how has the WDC generated a neighbourhood waterscape.

After presenting the conceptual framework and the methodological approach, this thesis addresses each question separately in its empirical chapters. It argues that water scarcity led to a redefinition of neighbour as a political identity and the pragmatic construction of the neighbour as an ally, with the WDC influencing this process. Using the concept of resonance to observe the consequences of protest, it claims that NBOs contribute to environmental justice by linking resonances to the relational reconstruction of place attachment. It analyses how organised neighbours generate a waterscape by contesting the infrastructural connections within it. Finally, it argues that NBOs can be observed as a form of social infrastructure because they enable recognition between neighbours on multiple scales and lead to recognising neighbours as public figures.

This thesis presents insights from the Latin American context and cities of the Global South, contributing and adding to discussions on neighbouring, environmental activism and justice, and infrastructures of water scarcity. It addresses neighbouring under ecological extremes as a theme that has not been the main focus of attention in studies of neighbour relationships or environmental movements.

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Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Abbreviations

AGPC - General Assembly of Peoples, Neighbourhoods, Communities, and *Pedregales* of Coyoacán

WDC - Water Defence Committee of Santo Domingo

UPM - Urban Popular Movement

NBO - Neighbour-based organisation

SACMEX - Water administration system of Mexico City

Chapter 1: Introduction

Research problem and focus

On the last days of December 2022, the residents of Santo Domingo, in south Mexico City, received a new water well in their neighbourhood. The well would inject water directly into the pipe network and increase the amount that flows into their houses, particularly in the central area of this neighbourhood. This news was received with much anticipation in Santo Domingo since the well would help to face a situation of intermittent water supply that had affected the daily life of residents during the last 15 years. While a new water well could be seen as a matter of concern only for the water administration system or engineering companies, this process involved a group of locally organised neighbours.

Particularly attentive to the progress and functioning of this well were the members of the Water Defence Committee of Santo Domingo (WDC). Facing the consequences of intermittent water supply and water scarcity, neighbours from Santo Domingo organised in early 2020 to coordinate their protest and campaigns over water supply, which led to the emergence of the WDC: a local, neighbour-based organisation for activism around the shared problem of water access and campaigned for the construction of the well. So even though it might seem that the daily operation of this infrastructure depends on SACMEX (Mexico City's water administration system), the WDC organised a symbolic "delivery" of the well and sent a message to local news outlets to celebrate its construction as one of their achievements (Gomez Flores, 2022).

The well extracts underground water from a subterranean aquifer and injects the liquid into the pipe network. SACMEX directed the drilling and construction of the well and connected this

infrastructure straight to the pipe network, but the WDC campaigned and protested for its construction to be approved. The pipe network, its valves, and the flow and distribution of water through them, not only in Santo Domingo but across Mexico City as a whole, are also administered by SACMEX. Members from the WDC met with engineers and received updates about its construction, motivated by a shared need for water and the desire to improve the living conditions in their households and the entire neighbourhood of Santo Domingo. Differently from how other water wells function, residents cannot individually obtain water directly from the ground using this well. All the water this well extracts is conducted directly towards the pipe network administered by SACMEX. Therefore, the aim of building the well was to increase the amount of water flowing through the pipes, enhancing the water pressure in the system and ultimately leading to more water reaching the taps of households in Santo Domingo.

A picture of the exterior of the well site after it was concluded is shown in Figure 1, while Figure 2 is an image of the interiors of the well.

Figure 1. The well after its completion in 2023
Source: taken by researcher 01/06/23
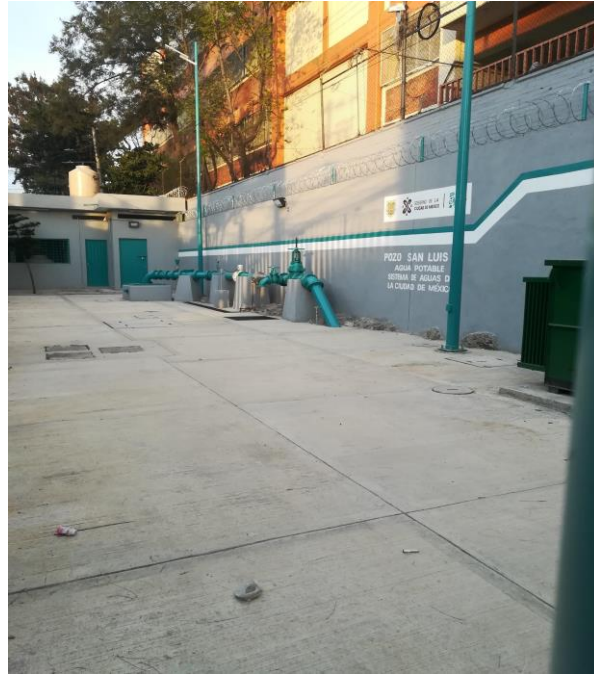
Figure 2. Image of the interiors of the well
Source: taken by researcher 17/01/23

Neighbours formed the WDC. Its members have in common that they live near each other, in the same streets and areas of the neighbourhood. Another thing they have in common is the need for water. They shared information about water supply and distribution, organised street assemblies and protests, and met with local government officials. By observing this story of organising, it is possible to explore how neighbour-based organisations matter in the context of water scarcity or facing environmental problems.

This thesis will observe how the neighbour relationship can work as a site of everyday environmentalism through local organising. It will analyse how neighbour environmentalism works and why it works this way. It will examine how this process takes place in the case of the WDC and the context of water scarcity in Santo Domingo.

Ecological deterioration and persistent inequalities in the distribution of their consequences, including but not limited to water scarcity, have become urgent challenges for contemporary cities. These problems affect the wellbeing and everyday life of local communities and vulnerable people (Agyeman et al., 2003; Russell, 2019). These problems can be observed within the environmental justice framework, highlighting how environmental quality and social inequality intersect (Agyeman et al., 2016). On the neighbourhood scale, environmental justice struggles and issues are intrinsically related to the neighbour as a socio-spatial relationship.

Urban environmental crises, particularly prevalent in the context of the Global South, can be important for studying neighbour organisations as possible sources of solidarity and a first line of response to inequality. Local organizing becomes a vital resource that can help to affirm forms of life in a situation of urban precarity (Bhan et al., 2020). In the context of water scarcity, it is crucial to examine how and in ways the neighbour relationship may be a driver of environmental activism and social support at the local scale.

The neighbour can and sometimes becomes a friendly face and a source of favours and help. But neighbours are not always friendly and these relationships can lead to difficulties. Neighbours are characterised by spatial proximity and social ambiguity (Bulmer, 1986; May et al., 2021; Neal, 2022). They are a form of acquaintance in space (Morgan, 2009) and a near-dweller (Painter, 2012). Without assuming that living nearby leads naturally to cooperation or conflict, studying neighbour relationships implies exploring the boundaries, negotiations and exchanges between people who live nearby (Crow et al., 2002; Kusenbach, 2006; Heil, 2014). It also involves observing neighbours as a crucial relationship that forms part of and influences everyday life (Rosenblum, 2016; Cheshire, 2022). Neighbour environmentalism, however, is a theme that has not been the focus of attention in studies of neighbour relationships or environmental movements.

It is possible to identify multiple aspects of environmental concern that have a particular significance in urban localities, but this thesis will focus on water scarcity. With the increase in urban populations, inequality, and extreme weather events, water scarcity has become a matter of concern for cities across the world. The risk of a global water crisis has been identified by international organisations such as UNESCO and UN-Water since more than 2 billion people already experience water shortages for at least a month every year, and the number of people who lack safe drinking water access in cities may double by 2050 (Harvey, 2023). This situation forms part of a global picture of inequality in access to safe drinking water (WHO & UNICEF, 2021). Access to drinking water is a human right, and alongside access to sanitation services, it is essential for public health and human survival.

Social inequality is an undeniable aspect of contemporary water crises in and beyond Mexico, in which urban populations see their daily needs affected by the interruption or absence of basic rights and services. The presence and absence of water affect how people experience an uneven water landscape, or waterscape, in their everyday lives (Rusca & Cleaver, 2022). More details about water scarcity in Mexico City and its characteristics are explored further in this introductory chapter.

Water scarcity and its consequences in the scale of the neighbourhood can also be understood as part of an overall context of urban precarity, observed through the insecurities and absences that may influence everyday life in cities (Campbell & Laheij, 2021; Lombard, 2021). This concept is explored further in the next chapter, but it relates to vulnerabilities and insecurities that may characterise contemporary cities that affect everyday life through anxiety and uncertainty (Kasmir, 2018; Lancione, 2019; Campbell & Laheij, 2021). While not the focus of this thesis, this context of urban precarity is an overarching setting in which water scarcity forms part of the

fragilities and insecurities that reduce the wellbeing of local populations (Lombard, 2021). This precarity is illustrated by empty pipes and water taps in households, with residents not knowing if (and when) water will come out of them. In such a context, organised neighbours could become a front line of action for social care, support, and political activism towards environmental justice.

In Santo Domingo, a celebration around the opening of a water well and the efforts of a neighbour-based organisation (NBO) to produce it show how infrastructure is a crucial element of urban precarity. Infrastructure has gained attention in social research and activism when facing the emergence of environmental crises, including the theme of urban water, in multiple geographies (McFarlane & Rutherford, 2008; Simone, 2018; Lemanski, 2020). In this context, social infrastructure can be a crucial element to consider alongside other forms of infrastructure (Klinenberg et al., 2020).

During the summer of 2023, the WDC held an event in front of the well in which all members were present to celebrate the construction of this infrastructure. This event involved playing music and displaying banners with slogans allusive to the history of the neighbourhood, presenting a photo exhibition of the construction, drawings from children that live in Santo Domingo, and a memorial for members of the WDC who had passed away. The organised neighbours of the WDC closed a street and brought chairs to sit and a canopy to block the sun (Figure 3) (Figure 4).

Figure 3. The well inauguration (1)

Figure 4. The well inauguration (2)

This colourful and lively well "inauguration" forms part of how organised neighbours are crucially involved in what would apparently be only a matter of water administration institutions. Through telling this story as a case study in contemporary Mexico City, this thesis aims to observe the consequences of water scarcity in neighbour relationships, the role of neighbour-based organisations in environmental justice struggles, and the intersections of this process with the neighbourhood space and different forms of infrastructure. Studying the case of the WDC, this thesis explores the research problem of neighbour environmentalism.

<u>Research questions</u>

This study will involve three empirical research questions:

- RQ 1: How and in what ways are urban neighbour relationships affected and reconfigured in contexts of water scarcity?

- RQ 2: How do local, neighbour-based organisations contribute to the practice of urban environmental justice in contexts of water scarcity?

- RQ3: In what ways are neighbour-based organisations a form of social infrastructure, and how has the WDC generated a neighbourhood waterscape?

Each empirical chapter will focus on these questions separately. Chapter 4 discusses RQ1, with Chapter 5 focusing on RQ2 and Chapter 6 answering RQ3. However, these questions are interrelated and involve themes that are transversal and present throughout the thesis.

<u>Observing neighbours, neighbour-based organisations, and neighbourhoods</u>

This research problem involves distinguishing between neighbour relationships, a neighbour-based organisation where neighbours campaign collectively around a shared issue, and the neighbourhood as a locality. These three scales of the research problem are reflected in the different aspects of the research questions. They are also part of the initial description of the research problem in which neighbour relationships as an everyday reality, from a micro-sociological focus, connect with local organisations as a different scale and with the neighbourhood and its materiality as another scale of analysis.

The conceptual toolkit used for the research is described further in Chapter 2. It will incorporate studies on neighbours as a social relationship, covering everyday informal exchanges and in more formal spaces of organisations, as well as discussions on environmental justice, activism, and urban social movements. Finally, it will also consider how water, materiality, and infrastructure are relevant in the neighbourhood locality.

Relationships between neighbours, however pleasant or irritating as they may be, are an undeniable part of everyday life. As mentioned earlier, neighbours involve spatial proximity *and* social ambiguity. From a sociological perspective, neighbours are a personal and informal relationship and a fundamental part of everyday life. Neighbours are a form of "acquaintances in space", recovering a description developed by Morgan (2009), which helps to locate them as a simultaneously spatial and social relationship with an experiential dimension (May et al., 2021). The outcome of a neighbour interaction is uncertain, and the "radical ambiguity" of the neighbour (Painter, 2012) represents a possibility of ethical and political engagement as a site where public and private intersect (Neal, 2022). Neighbours could appear to be no more than a familiar stranger until something makes us realise they matter (Rosenblum, 2016).

Furthermore, neighbours require identification or recognition to distinguish them from other relationships in everyday spaces. Therefore, neighbours always involve a relational element in their definition. This definition can be influenced by the activities of groups such as the WDC, which can be an aspect of sociological observation.

This research will also concentrate on neighbour-based organisations (NBOs) like the WDC as spaces for interaction, activism, coordination, and encounters. These organisations are another scale of the research problem. NBOs are defined in this thesis as voluntary associations

constituted by reciprocally recognised neighbours, which emerge to coordinate action around the meaning and characteristics of the neighbourhood as a shared, local and immediate space. The focus on the neighbour-based organisation helps as an analytical mechanism for empirically observing the environmentalism of the neighbour.

Compared to groups formed by the local government to promote political participation in different mechanisms, NBOs are voluntary. While more formal than informal everyday interactions, NBOs are not officially managed or supported by a local government. Examples of themes for organising can include managing security and policing studied in different urban contexts (Muller, 2010; Cooper-Knock, 2014). Another common theme for local organising can be caring for shared spaces such as community gardens, streets and parks (Pink, 2008; Anguelovksi, 2013).

Their existence also involves forms of social care, suggesting their role in covering of functions traditionally associated with the welfare state in the Global North. However, these organisations can also be crucial spaces for contestation (Martin, 2003a) and get involved in grassroots campaigns for environmentalism (Agyeman et al., 2010). The research questions and problem involve a constant movement between different scales.

The third scale of this research problem is the neighbourhood as a local space, involving materiality and everyday relationships. Neighbourhoods can be studied as places of proximity that can be reached on foot and spaces for the immediacy of everyday social relationships (Giglia, 2009; Mayol, 1999). Institutions and organisations also produce a definition of neighbourhoods, with the most common forms of definition related to urban planning and zoning. Neighbourhoods can also be framed and produced through activism (Martin, 2003b). Finally, the neighbourhood is

also an atmosphere of relationality (Simone, 2021) and a space where everyday life is reproduced (Martin, 2003a). Neighbours and neighbourhoods are connected as different scales of analysis.

The context of water scarcity and urban precarity can lead to changing the ways of understanding neighbours and drawing insights from a Global South perspective. While neighbours have been observed through a focus on the everyday balances to keep a friendly distance or as involved in collective action, this thesis will offer a nuanced approach, with insights from the Mexican context, that helps to identify their political potential without ignoring their sociological specificity. This thesis situates the discussion of neighbour environmentalism in Latin American cities and observes how this becomes an experiential reality and an arena for political action.

The thesis has set the task of exploring the different roles of the neighbour relationship in a context of water scarcity, observing it simultaneously as relevant in everyday personal life, political activism, part of a network of interdependency, and even with infrastructural conditions, which influence the making of a neighbourhood space. By telling the story of a neighbour-based organisation in Mexico City formed to face water scarcity, this research contributes to a range of contemporary debates covered in more depth in Chapter 2.

A qualitative methodology will be used to observe the different scales of this research problem, with a focus on social practices and everyday life as a site for sociological observation. The following section outlines the research design and gives a quick overview of the methods discussed in Chapter 3.

Research design and methodological overview

This research uses qualitative methodologies to carry out an interpretative study of practices, places, and meanings (Mason, 2017). It works with a 'nested' case study approach, which involves selecting a case study city, a neighbourhood within the city, and a case study organisation within the neighbourhood. Focusing on a case study helps to understand how a local process unfolds in a specific context, seeking to learn from its characteristics to construct analytical reflections with theoretical and empirical significance (Mitchell, 2000; Stake, 2008). This case study builds knowledge about neighbouring as a site for environmentalism with insights from the Mexican context.

The case study is the Water Defence Committee of Santo Domingo (WDC), a neighbour-based group in the municipality of Coyoacan in South Mexico City formed to confront the local consequences of water scarcity, as discussed in the opening section of this introductory chapter (Quintero, 2021; Gomez Flores, 2022). All of the research participants are members of this organisation, recruited through snowballing and with key gatekeepers to represent this group's social mix. Details about this case study and the recruitment process are discussed further below.

Data collection involved an immersive fieldwork experience of nine months (between October 2022 and June 2023) to analyse social practices and neighbour relationships with a focus on everyday life (Ingold, 2014; Pink, 2009). The methods were sit-down interviews, participant diaries, walking interviews, participant observation in public events of the WDC, and observational walks in the neighbourhood of Santo Domingo. A thematic analysis and narrative analysis were carried out to study and utilise the data produced through the fieldwork. More details

on data collection, the relationship between methods and research questions, and the data processing and analysis are described in Chapter 3.

It is important to note that, to select this case study, crucial elements such as the neighbour-led or neighbour-based nature of the local organisation and its focus on an environmental issue (which in this case is water access) were necessary. Neighbours are a central element of this group, and its emergence shows how contemporary cities face environmental challenges such as water scarcity. Furthermore, structural factors of inequality are part of the setting of this case study and the description of Santo Domingo. These factors were considered during data collection and examination, particularly given their impact on environmental injustices. Ethnicity, age, gender, and class are significant elements that form part of the context of this sample and case study, even if they are not the focus of the thesis or explicitly part of the research questions.

Observing the reality of neighbour relationships in everyday life helps to locate their practices as part of contemporary trajectories of community and belonging (Delanty, 2010) and the forms in which environmentalism and being a neighbour relate to everyday practices. This research, drawing inspiration from the attentive and descriptive approach associated with ethnographic methods, focuses on everyday life to centralise and locate the neighbour as a figure and relationship and to observe how lives are negotiated and "made liveable" amid water scarcity (Back, 2015). Such a focus on the everyday helps to bring new insights into the micro-social consequences of a large-scale water crisis with multiple structural factors at play.

The focus on everyday life brings relevant insights to understand how neighbours become a site for everyday environmentalism. From a focus on everyday life, it is possible to observe how water connects to the routines, experiences, and practices that constitute a neighbourhood and how

it is reflected in the stories of people who became research participants. Water scarcity is why research participants like Alma wake up and feel anxious before opening the water faucet. It is part of a wider setting of urban precarity in which participants like Alonso, Javier and Adriana go to a tap a couple of blocks from their house to fill jugs. It is the context in which research participants like Marisol decide not to wash dishes and clothes for a day and why Elia sends her children to a family member's house to shower.

Water scarcity is also why Waldo calls for a meeting with other residents of Santo Domingo on a street corner to talk about this problem. It is a problem that research participants like Martina, Juan, Tita, and Beni try to solve when they meet with government officials and receive an update about the water well in their neighbourhood. Water scarcity is part of the memories of people like Susana, Magnolia or Verne, who remember the early days of Santo Domingo before the pipe network was installed.

Finally, a focus on everyday life helps to describe how water is what motivated research participants like Sandra to walk out of her house and knock on Pilar's door to ask if they could think of something to do about this situation. Water is what has brought not only them but all the research participants of this research together in the WDC.

The context of the case study

<u>Mexico City as an urban agglomeration</u>

Understanding the context in which this thesis is situated involves a discussion of Mexico City as a contemporary place and case study city and of Santo Domingo as the case study neighbourhood. Mexico City is the largest urban agglomeration in Mexico and one of the largest in Latin America, with 9 million inhabitants within its boundaries and a metropolitan area of 21 million people (INEGI, 2021). It is the capital of Mexico and a major centre of political and economic power in the region. It experienced a period of intense urban growth in the XXth century, driven by internal migration from rural areas in Mexico of people searching for work. Population growth and rapid urbanisation came with social tensions related to urban poverty, housing conditions, and the difficulties that the population of informal settlements had to endure (Bennett, 1992).

The dynamics of urbanisation have transformed the environmental setting in which Mexico City has grown to be one of the largest metropolitan areas in Latin America and the world. As Vitz (2018) observes in a thorough description of this process, the urbanisation of nature (Heynen et al., 2006) has involved the confrontation of political projects and visions for the city, influenced by human and non-human elements. This city has grown to impact the lakes, rivers, and forests that once were the Valley of Mexico. The city now faces a situation of vulnerability towards water supply related to urban and population growth, local aquifer depletion, lack of investment in infrastructure, and changing environmental conditions (Kimmelman, 2017; Watts, 2015).

The water crisis of Mexico City

The campaign effort around a water well in Santo Domingo could suggest a situation in which water infrastructure is lacking or non-existent, but in Mexico City, over 98% of the population

have access to a water tap connected to the pipe infrastructure within their household. This number only reveals the extent of a network that, in many neighbourhoods, only provides water during certain days of the week or hours of the day (Garcia Cabrera, 2022; Barragan, 2024). The problem of water scarcity in the city is therefore experienced through intermittent water supply and rationing, the reliance on bottled water, private or government-owned water trucks, and saving as much liquid as possible in any storage tanks available for a household. Declining amounts of water in the sources that the city depends on, climate change-induced severe droughts in recent years, a growing population, and increased urban density driven by real-estate development have resulted in a reduced and intermittent distribution of water through taps that are there but are dry.

Drought has combined with population growth, underground aquifer depletion and infrastructural decline to produce the contemporary crisis that the city faces. In 2023, the reservoirs and dams that serve as the backbone of this system faced their lowest levels in almost 30 years, causing the federal government, which regulates the functioning of this system, to reduce by 25% the amount of water sent to the Metropolitan Zone of the Valley of Mexico (ZMVM) (López Herrera, 2023). Academic studies have estimated a possible 10–17% reduction in the water availability of the city's supply by 2050 due to environmental conditions related to climate change (Martinez et al., 2015).

In Mexico City, the municipal infrastructure is operated by the Mexico City's Water System, also known as SACMEX for its Spanish acronym (Sistema de Aguas de la Ciudad de México). SACMEX is the institution that faces the day-to-day operation of a water system affected by aquifer depletions and reliance on external water sources. While the percentage of homes in the city that do not have water in their homes is 1.05%, this only means that they are connected to the water network within their houses without indicating the quality or the amount of water they

receive every day. Water comes to the taps in their houses intermittently, during some particular days of the week, depending on where they live, so residents make arrangements to sort out their everyday water needs.

Most of the water consumed in Mexico City comes not from local reservoirs but from external sources, making the city vulnerable to droughts and shortages (Hogenboom, 2018). The water crisis in Mexico City has an infrastructural dimension. This is evidenced by social conflicts and tensions related to the operation, implementation and improvements of water infrastructure (De Coss-Corzo, 2021, 2022). Urgent calls for improvement in the pipe network system combine with an everyday reality of austerity, water scarcity and decline, and the estimation that approximately 40% of the city water supply is lost in leakages and infrastructure failures (González Alvarado, 2023).

Mexico City presents high levels of inequality, so water scarcity adds to the profound differences in the material and socio-economic realities of people (CDMX, 2020). In Santo Domingo, as in many other urban neighbourhoods of Mexico City, water scarcity has been met with protests (Montenegro, 2024). Residents who live near each other block streets and government offices to demand a solution for water shortages. Local neighbourhoods become arenas of social conflict and protests (Quintero, 2021), which have emerged as residents manifest their opposition to changes in the built environment that may represent risks to their wellbeing and to reductions in water availability. The most affected neighbourhoods by this situation are also areas that face economic deprivation and that have fewer resources to confront environmental uncertainty.

Within Mexico City, Santo Domingo is not the only neighbourhood affected by intermittent water distribution. Reliance on water trucks to palliate the consequences of intermittent water

supply is becoming a reality that extends to different areas and wealthy neighbourhoods that were not used to this problem (Bravo, 2024). In 2021, up to 15% of the population did not receive water constantly and were in a situation of intermittent supply (Lopez, 2021). In less affluent neighbourhoods, this situation is not recent. It forms part of a persistent context of urban precarity and social inequality, and the reality of intermittent water supply has been part of their routines for at least 20 years (Barragan, 2024).

This problem is not exclusive to Mexico City but extends to other areas of Mexico. In the country, only 52.3% of the population has a constant water supply, even if connected to the pipe network, with an important decline from 62.4% in 2019, indicating a worsening issue (Guillen, 2024). Affected by heat waves, soaring temperatures and drought in more than half of its territory, this country is facing new crises related to water availability for its population. A problem that was exclusive to Mexico City has extended and has become a governance issue in many of its major cities (Guillen, 2024).

The rapid urban growth of the XX century in Mexico City had environmental consequences and also occurred in a context of social inequality, informal urbanisation and precarious living conditions. Many new neighbourhoods were produced through self-built housing, which can be observed as popular urbanisation (Streule et al., 2020). One of these neighbourhoods is Santo Domingo. While Santo Domingo will be the focus of this thesis as a case study neighbourhood, it is crucial to mention that the social inequality that accompanies urban everyday life, including the consequences of water scarcity, is not exclusive to Mexico City and relates to contemporary problems related to environmental justice across many cities of Latin America and other latitudes of the world.

Case study neighbourhood: Santo Domingo

Walking through Santo Domingo is like walking into a kaleidoscopic collage or a material and narrative mosaic. Made up of successive iterations of self-built housing over 50 years that transform an area of rocky grounds into a formalised and regularised neighbourhood, the history of Santo Domingo leaves traces in its streets and relationships. Relationships, like houses, are built iteratively through a shared history. These relationships, like inhabited space itself, change over time, advancing on what has previously happened, as iteration upon iteration, marked in the inhabited space.

Santo Domingo is a lively neighbourhood. It is well-connected with multiple public transport stations and easy to access because of its closeness to key areas in the municipality of Coyoacan. In the busiest and main streets of Santo Domingo, many vendors occupy the sidewalk and turn it into a marketplace, extended into the first floors of many of its houses. People walk in and out of shops and stalls carrying fruits and vegetables, different types of meat, spices, or household items. They may visit the hairdressers, hardware stores, convenience stores, dairy shops, and mechanics. They make their way between not only people in the streets, but also cars, buses, motorcycles, and bicycles. The street becomes an extension of people's homes and is crucial for the neighbourhood's economy.

Santo Domingo also carries a history of struggle against urban inequality. Born in the 1970s out of a process of land-grabbing given unsatisfied social demand for housing rights, it has a history of local organising and activism at its core. It is also the reflection of deep inequalities that connect to the class divisions of Mexican society. In the neighbourhood, it is possible to find

murals that relate to political struggles and activism, related to urban services and the identity of the place (as shown in Figure 11).

Santo Domingo is one of the largest and most densely populated neighbourhoods in Mexico City. It is in the municipality of Coyoacan, in the southern area of the city (Figure 5) (Figure 6). Coyoacan is a municipality that was originally composed of towns and rural villages, either of a pre-Hispanic origin or founded by the Spanish settlers, and that remained on the outskirts of the city. Many big houses and "haciendas" were built and administered by wealthy families in these zones, even after the Mexican independence. Until the 1950s, much of Coyoacan was not urbanised and remained as a peripheral exit from the city, but the 1960s and 1970s saw rapid urbanisation of the area, driven by the construction of the University City campus of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) and by residential developments (Cisneros, 1993)

Figure 5. Coyoacan within Mexico City.
Source: Yavidaxiu, 2006
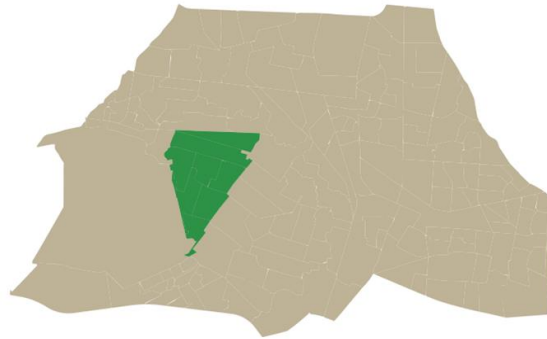
Figure 6. Santo Domingo within Coyoacan
Source: created by researcher

Santo Domingo forms part of an area known as the *pedregal* (or rocky grounds, for its English translation) of Coyoacan. This is an area made mostly of volcanic rock in which many informal neighbourhoods were born out of processes of land "invasion" and occupation connected to urban social movements for housing. This neighbourhood is an example of space production typically conceptualised as informal urbanisation, very common in Latin American cities during the second half of the XXth century (Caldeira, 2017), observed also with concepts such as popular urbanisation, understood as a form of production of built environments with the protagonism of its inhabitants (Schteingart, 1996; Streule et al., 2020).

Santo Domingo as a political space

Santo Domingo was born in 1971 through a process that involved land occupation, self-built housing and collective organisation to get urban services, resist eviction and acquire property rights (Gutmann, 2006; Lopez Rosas, 2021). The "invasion" of Santo Domingo took place in

September 1971 and involved collective organising to introduce urban services such as electricity, drainage, and water and towards formalising land and housing rights (Figure 7) (Figure 8).
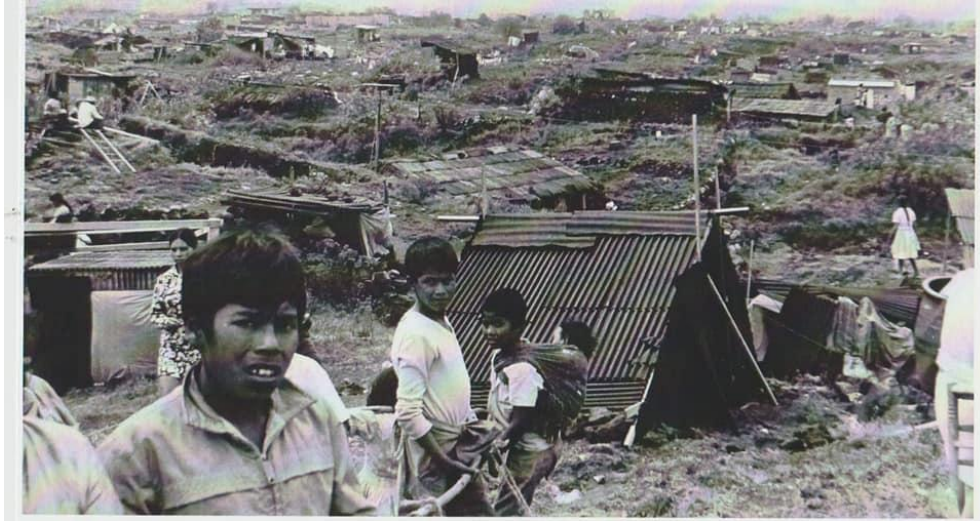
Figure 7. Early days of Santo Domingo

Figure 8. Building Santo Domingo

Following the social consequences of student uprisings and political crises in the 1970s, The Popular Urban Movement (MUP, for its Spanish acronym as Movimiento Urbano Popular) emerged in the 1980s as an alliance between different local struggles around urban services and housing rights. The MUP emerged in a context in which different local organisations cooperated toward the goal of improving the conditions of life in cities, and according to authors like Coulomb (1991), they were important in building practices of democracy within them. A tradition of autonomous organising emerged in dialogue and contestation with governmental efforts to promote social participation and was part of a democratic opening in the city during the last decades of the XXth century (Sánchez-Mejorada, 2000). Urban social movements and experiences of self-organisation have been fundamental in the struggles for popular housing and urban services in Mexico City (Sánchez-Mejorada, 2016; Schteingart, 1990).

Therefore, the invasion of Santo Domingo did not occur in an empty context but was part of an arena of urban contestation around housing and land across Mexico, as part of a common tactic of political pressure from urban social movements and, on some occasions, co-optation of urban masses by political parties. This neighbourhood was born from a collective organisation of land-grabbing and self-built housing, deeply related to the origins of the MUP in Mexico City. Every characteristic of the built environment, like water, has been contested and has been the result of what authors like Duhau and Giglia (2004) observe as the production of locality and cultures of inhabiting the city.

After the land invasion, entire days of collective work, known as *faenas*, were needed to build many houses and streets that are now a permanent part of the neighbourhood (Figure 9). This history has remained a crucial point of reference for the families that still occupy this

neighbourhood and as a narrative of the self-built spaces in which they inhabit (Giglia, 2019; Safa, 1999). Many of the present-day inhabitants of Santo Domingo can recall their involvement in the days of collective work known as *faenas* and how they were part of the process of breaking stones and making the roads that are nowadays the streets of Santo Domingo (as discussed in Chapter 3). In the 20 years following the foundation of the neighbourhood, the occupation was recognized by the government, which installed urban services such as electricity and water, but not without the involvement of the residents to pay for the materials or work in digging ditches required in these processes.
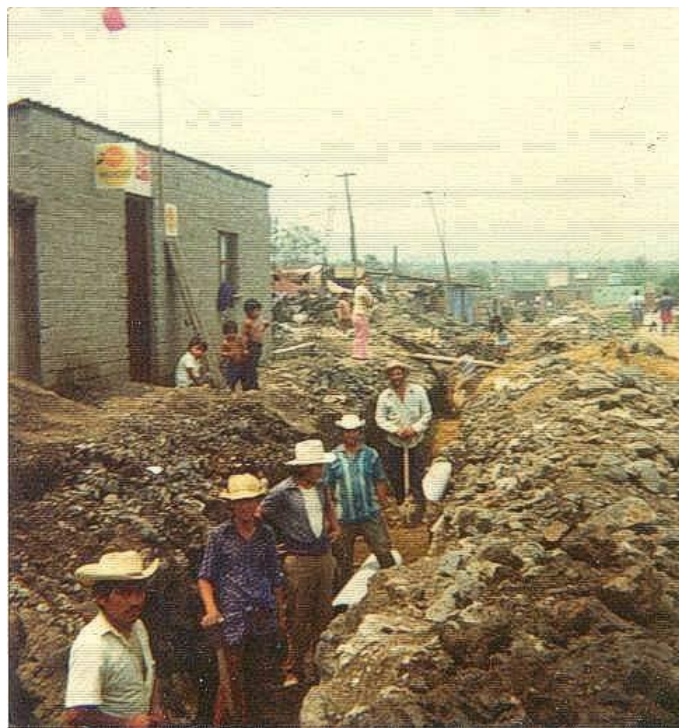
Figure 9. Faenas in the construction of Santo Domingo
Source: provided by the WDC. Used with permission. All rights reserved to the owners

Contemporary Santo Domingo

Present-day Santo Domingo is composed almost entirely of self-built constructions and streets, densely populated and used for residential, commercial, and economic purposes (Figure 10). In this context, self-built housing means that the residents used their labour to produce the houses, flatten the streets, and introduce urban services with the *faenas*. The self-built nature of the neighbourhood and houses has implications for the feelings of attachment to a now consolidated and formalised neighbourhood described further in the empirical chapters. This implies that the neighbourhood is produced through incremental and continuous improvement.

Apart from open-air street markets that place themselves on different streets and sidewalks of the neighbourhood once a week, many small businesses and shops are located in the neighbourhood, which is now entirely urbanised (Figure 11). The neighbourhood has been a living space for university students who seek cheap rent options and for mostly working-class families, many of whom have occupied it since the 1970s. Many buildings have transformed into small apartments, and the original precarious and self-made housing is now a consolidated and densely populated urbanised zone (Figure 12).

Figure 10. Santo Domingo streets and markets Source: Javo 331, 2017

Figure 11. Street in Santo Domingo
Source: taken by researcher 12/05/23
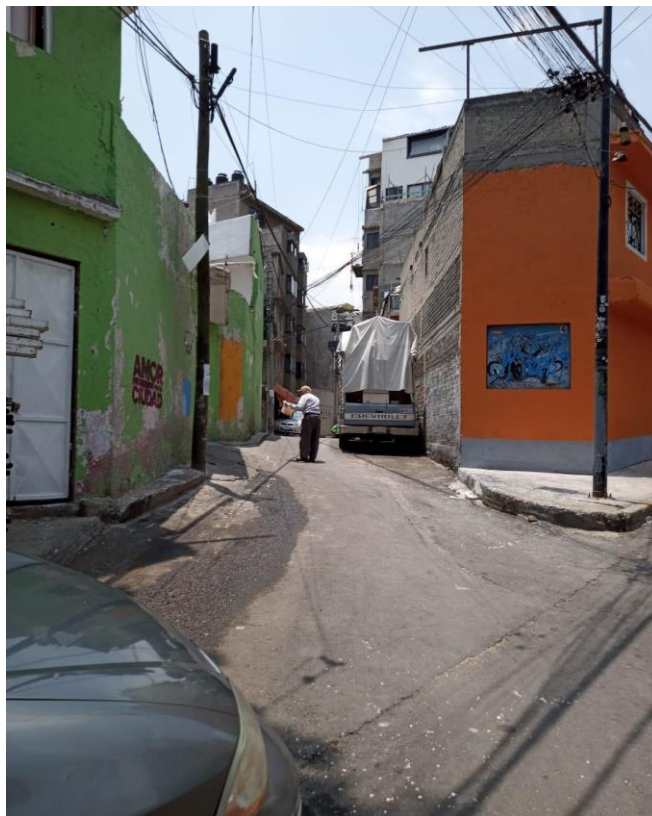
Figure 12. The built environment of Santo Domingo
Source: taken by researcher 12/05/23

The importance of this neighbourhood in the history of social struggles and of urban social movements is part of the identitarian narratives of many of its inhabitants. Figure 13, which shows the silhouette of a person breaking stones to open a road, is a picture of a mural that reads "Santo Domingo, 50 years of existence", accompanied by the hammers and picks used to break the volcanic rock of the *pedregal*. Related to this situation, Santo Domingo is also a highly researched place. The implications of this situation are discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

Figure 13. Activist identities in Santo Domingo
Source: taken by researcher 01/11/22

Water scarcity and the everyday life of Santo Domingo

The water crisis that Mexico City faces is relevant to the everyday lives, routines, and experiences of the inhabitants of Santo Domingo. While in the official statistics, this neighbourhood counts 99.8% of its census households with access to water in their homes, this number refers to infrastructure and does not consider the interruptions to water supply that inhabitants experience. This neighbourhood receives water through the *tandeo* system, a rationed provision for certain hours of the day, causing uncertainty and a de facto water shortage. Facing this situation, the municipality of Coyoacan and SACMEX offer the residents of Santo Domingo the option of asking for water trucks, which would distribute the liquid directly to their cisterns and tanks.

A lack of transparency is part of a political context of clientelist practices in which water trucks are sent in exchange for political support. Intermittent water supply implied a situation of water scarcity for a local population that had a continuous disruption of their daily life. To face this situation, residents resorted to buying water from private water trucks, usually at a very high cost, or waiting (sometimes days or even weeks) for government-owned water trucks to arrive. This situation caused clientele networks to operate, sending water trucks in exchange for political support for local parties.

The Water Defence Committee of Santo Domingo (WDC) was formed in 2020 as a way of coordinating efforts among neighbours that face these problems, particularly when the only alternative is paying for private water trucks or waiting for the ones delivered by the municipality, usually with a high economic cost and making people vulnerable to manipulation in political

clientele networks. This group focuses its activism on the scale of the neighbourhood and addresses living conditions in Santo Domingo, such as water supply.

This group asked for a transparent order and accountability in the water distribution through *tandeo* and in the delivery of water trucks as a momentary goal. They had the larger objective of getting a water well that would improve the supply in the network as a more permanent solution, aiming to modify the conditions that allow water political clientele networks to operate (Contreras, 2021). A more detailed description of the WDC as a case study organisation is introduced in Chapter 3, which discusses the rationale and implications for selecting the case study.

Water scarcity leaves marks in the streets of Santo Domingo and in the relationships between people. It is possible to find water taps, multiple businesses that sell bottled water, and water trucks moving in the streets of the neighbourhood. Among the crowded streets of a densely populated neighbourhood, the celebration of water infrastructure is accompanied by the collective effort of a group of neighbours. Santo Domingo carries a history of 50 years of organising to build houses, introduce urban services, and turn natural landscape made of volcanic rock into an urban settlement. The history of this neighbourhood and the need for water became the context for the emergence of the WDC. Understanding this context will be crucial to analysing neighbour environmentalism in the popular neighbourhoods of Mexico City.

Thesis outline

After this introduction, Chapter 2 presents a conceptual framework and literature review. This review is structured around the three research questions and covers the distinct scales of the research problems. It covers issues like neighbour relationships and organisations, environmental

justice and activism, social movements, urban water, and different forms of infrastructure. This chapter makes an effort to align various discussions.

Chapter 3 presents a methodological overview and a detailed description of the fieldwork process. It describes the logic for selecting the case study. It discusses the characteristics of the case study organisation and complements some elements from the context presented in this chapter. It also discusses data processing and analysis and the ethical implications of this research.

Chapters 4-6 are empirically driven. Chapter 4 focuses on the forms and practices of neighbouring in contexts of water scarcity. It presents a description of the process of neighbouring Santo Domingo and focuses on the implications of water scarcity for neighbour relationships. In doing so, it describes the emergence of the WDC. This chapter describes how water scarcity triggered the emergence of this neighbour-based organisation, which in turn constructed a definition and understanding of the "neighbour as an ally", which Chapter 4 observes as a political identity. The concept and practice of being a neighbour were reworked and redefined within the WDC, so being a neighbour became a political identity and acquired a meaning associated with collective struggle. This redefinition implied that when the members of the WDC identified themselves and each other as "neighbours", this meant something different and additional to being residents of the same area. Identifying as neighbours within the group involved a political and collective coming together to campaign for a key environmental element such as water. This political coming together and supporting each other within the group is the basis for a dimension of allyship implicated in what being a "neighbour" means within the WDC. As Chapter 4 argues, constructing the neighbour as an ally involves a combination of solidarity and reciprocity.

Chapter 5 examines the role of neighbour-based organisations in the practice of urban environmental justice. It describes place attachment as an element of environmental justice and examines how water scarcity disrupts forms of attachment to the neighbourhood. It then explores how neighbour-based organisations contribute to reconstructing place attachment. It uses the concept of resonance to describe the consequences of protest and local organising. It defines resonance as an affective and momentary amplification of capacity, and uses it to observe the struggles and campaigns of neighbour-based organisations. This definition builds upon multidisciplinary discussions around belonging and everyday social life in cities (Miller, 2015; Simone & Pieterse, 2017). Resonance is used as an appropriate to describe the effects of protest without assuming that collective actors are unified, homogeneous and exempt from tensions and without losing sight of the momentary and transient, while potent, aspect of changes in embodied capacities triggered by local organising. The argument built on Chapter 5, and across this thesis, benefits from this concept since it helps to observe neighbour-based organisations and their potential without essentialist or simplified accounts. This chapter analyses how the WDC influences neighbour resonances and directs them to a reconstruction of neighbourhood attachment and senses of belonging with material, temporal, and relational elements. In doing so, it shows how this expression of environmentalism is embedded in a network of personal relationships.

Chapter 6 describes how the WDC influenced a neighbourhood water landscape or waterscape and identifies how NBOs can be observed as social infrastructures. This discussion centres on the neighbourhood locality as a scale of neighbour environmentalism. This chapter describes Santo Domingo as a waterscape and shows the connections between different forms of infrastructure crucial for producing it, illustrating how water activism has a public dimension. It

also explores how neighbour-based organisations can be observed as a form of social infrastructure and describes its characteristics as a network of relationships and a setting for encounters. It analyses how these characteristics form part of a recognition between neighbours in different ways. This process involves recognising the neighbour as a public figure

The conclusion presents an overview of the main findings and arguments of the thesis and identifies contributions to the debates involved in the research questions. It critically reflects on methods and the process of data construction. Finally, it suggests further issues to explore and the social and policy implications of this study.

Conclusion

This introduction has set the study of neighbour environmentalism as a research problem and the specific research questions that will be explored throughout the thesis. It has also offered an initial description of the Water Defence Committee of Santo Domingo (WDC) as a neighbour-based organisation (NBO) and a case study. This introduction describes the different scales of the research problem. It has argued for the importance of exploring the neighbour relationship and its potential for environmentalism in a context of urban precarity through neighbour-based organisations.

Multiple lenses and approaches can frame the consequences of urban water scarcity. With a focus on everyday life, water scarcity is a crucial part of the everyday relationships between neighbours, the possibilities of environmental injustice, and the importance of multiple infrastructures crucial for survival. This focus also helps to draw light on the efforts to make life liveable in a context of uncertainty and inequality, beyond individual accounts, to observe it as a collective process. Describing everyday life helps analyse its intersections with macrostructural

crises and transformations. In this sense, this thesis helps to understand the translation of water crises in the experiences and living conditions of a neighbourhood.

In a changing and uncertain world, it is crucial to understand and observe the characteristics of neighbour organising and their potential for the current pursuit of environmental justice. Neighbour-based organisations can contribute to the practice of environmental justice through their struggle, but this process is not without limits or complexities. Observing this research problem is important to understand the possibility and limitations of environmentalism as rooted in the neighbour as a social and spatial relationship.

Not having water can be a traumatic experience. Even if it may be part of the routines of many inhabitants of contemporary cities, particularly but not exclusively in the Global South, water scarcity affects the capacity to live. It threatens the wellbeing of social and ecological systems, disrupts the quality of life and is detrimental to physical and mental health. It can also transform the practices through which people reproduce their livelihoods and forms part of an overarching situation of urban precarity.

In such a crisis, people turn to local and national governments for support or a solution. Not having water at home may drive people to turn to their most proximate social contact. This can involve knocking on the door of those nearby, their neighbours. If someone answers, they may ask each other: "Hey neighbour, do you have water?" This thesis will explore what comes after that question.

Chapter 2: Conceptual framework and literature review

Introduction

Chapter 1 introduced the research problem of neighbour environmentalism and the Water Defence Committee of Santo Domingo (WDC) as a case study. It described some contextual elements of this study and introduced the research questions. It also suggested that observing the neighbour relationship as a site of environmentalism involves different levels of analysis, reflected in the research questions: neighbour interactions, neighbour-based organisations and their campaigns, and the neighbourhood as a locality.

This chapter will present the thesis conceptual framework. It offers a literature review and a discussion of previous studies, bringing together insights from multidisciplinary and sociological approaches. It will discuss various topics and perspectives around issues like neighbour relationships, local organising, environmental justice, urban social movements, place, water inequalities, and different forms of infrastructure. It also helps to locate this research in the background of previous and existing debates.

While Chapter 1 indicated how these multiple elements matter for the research problem, this chapter describes them as part of theoretical frameworks. In doing so, it outlines a conceptual toolkit that helps to answer the three research questions and to analyse different aspects of the research problem. Therefore, this review also identifies connections between themes and fields of knowledge.

As the previous chapter suggested, local contexts are essential to understanding local organising and everyday environmentalism. The environmental politics and history of Mexico City

and the characteristics of Santo Domingo as a neighbourhood born through informal (and popular) urbanisation are elements of the research problem. Therefore, this literature review will consider the context of different studies and include insights from Mexican and Latin American cities.

This chapter is divided into three main sections, reflecting the analytical divide in three research questions. The first section will focus on neighbour relationships and neighbour-based organisations. The second section focuses on environmentalism, social movements and environmental justice in cities. The third section will discuss the neighbourhood as a locality and landscape, which involves a discussion of place, water, and different forms of infrastructure. However, it is crucial to note that these elements (and research questions) are interconnected in the research problem and are present throughout the thesis.

Neighbours and neighbour-based organisations

<u>The neighbour relationship</u>

The neighbour is a figure that carries the combination of spatial proximity and social ambiguity, making it the subject of several studies about its potential, complexity, and influence in everyday life (Ruonavaara, 2021). This section will describe how sociological and multidisciplinary approaches examine neighbours and some insights that help to understand neighbour-based organisations. It will explore these concepts as tools to observe the research problem, particularly concerning RQ1. A key argument of this section is that studies of neighbours as sites for environmentalism can help to understand how everyday geographies of urban precarity and the consequences of local organising can influence the practice of being a neighbour, bringing insights from different contexts together.

Some insights for understanding neighbours come from the field of community studies. Community studies emphasise the interconnectedness of social relations and the importance of local contexts to ground the study of social transformations on empirical observation (Crow, 2002). In this way, community studies present a "contextualized account of ordinary people's everyday lives and of how the various elements of those lives are interconnected as parts of a larger whole" (Crow, 2017, p. 1).

The neighbour is not a distinctive theme for community studies, but the relevance of "primary groups at the local level" (Bulmer, 1985, p. 443) is a constant theme in this perspective. A UK study conducted by Abrams (and written by Bulmer, 1986), defines neighbouring as a particular form of interaction, localised in a neighbourhood setting and defined by spatial proximity, and neighbourliness as a positive form of neighbouring. At the local level, neighbours have to "negotiate" a balance between nearness and distance in their social interaction to produce, in many cases, a form of reciprocal friendly distance (Crow et al., 2002). However, notions of geographically fixed communities have been contested, as will be discussed further in this chapter, and neighbours are observed as part of a wider web of social relationships in this perspective.

The sociology of personal relationships, without an explicit focus on the neighbour, is another field that helps to understand them by considering the embeddedness and relationality of "personal communities" (Morgan, 2005, p. 651). Smart (2007) emphasises the importance of going beyond individualistic notions to consider how a person is embedded in a network of relationships. Mason (2004) studies how these relationships influence personal decisions and the construction of selves. These insights can be summarised in the idea of relationality, which helps to observe how personal relationships are crucial in apparently individual decisions, trajectories, and identities (Mason, 2004; Smart, 2007; Roseneil & Ketokivi, 2015).

Neighbours can be located as part of relational networks of interdependency which include the family but extend outside of it (Jamieson et al., 2006). Personal relationships can also be relevant for local expressions of environmentalism. When discussing the connection between macrosocial processes such as climate change and everyday personal relationships and interactions, Jamieson (2019) proposes that "relational practices" are a device for discussing common points between relational and environmental sociology.

Discussions of how family responsibilities and relationships are negotiated in "practice", rather than pre-determined (Finch & Mason, 1991; Morgan, 2011) have helped to problematise static visions of personal life. Focusing on "practices" to understand how relationships are carried out helps to locate the simultaneous fluidity and regularity of everyday life and the connection between biography and history (Morgan, 2011). In this sense, Morgan (2009, p. 19) understands "neighbouring" practices as a "set of practices that can be associated with neighbours", or as small reciprocities or daily exchanges in the public or semi-public places of neighbourhoods.[1]

The sociology of personal relationships helps to emphasise the relational and "practice"-based nature of neighbouring. However, neighbours carry a spatial dimension which may not be fully considered in some of these discussions, and which distinguishes them from other personal ties. Morgan (2009, p. 21) observes neighbours as acquaintances in space, carried out by sorting the "informal norms and expectations of those who live next door or close by". This involves finding a balance between spatial nearness and the distance of social differences and boundaries.

The focus on "acquaintances in space", however, can geographically limit neighbours as a form of relationship settled in neighbourhood space (Morgan, 2009). Discussing these ideas, May

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[1] Morgan (2009) argues that not only interpersonal relationships but also a sense of neighbourhood, as a shared space inhabited by neighbours, is produced through neighbouring practices.

et al. (2021) consider the inner experiential aspects of neighbour relationships outside rigid spatial metaphors. They propose to observe how neighbour relationships simultaneously feel "sticky" and "elastic". There is an emotional and experiential dimension to the neighbour, with a sticky inescapability related to their tenacity and influence in our lives, and an elasticity related to the fleeting and open nature of these relationships.[2]

Within classical and contemporary studies in urban sociology and urban geography, neighbours are understood as a form of social life inherent to the neighbourhood, as a spatially identifiable locality or even social system where people share behaviour expectations (Keller, 1968), or as a place to explore the connections between family, kinship and community, and through the relevance of close personal ties in the local scale, as a location for community life (Young & Willmott, 1957; Grannis, 2009, p.8).

Neighbourhoods have been explained as a unit or system that involves a sense of place and community on the local scale (Mumford, 1954; Keller, 1968; Clark, 2009; Kallus & Law-Yone, 2016). However, other studies in urban sociology and urban geography have highlighted how, particularly in cities, neighbours are an unknown other (Painter, 2012; Watt, 2022). A renewed view of community through practice and connected to discussions of conviviality, interaction and exchange (Neal et al., 2018) is vital to understanding neighbours without assuming that they are culturally similar, inherently cooperative, conflictive, or even sociable (Heil, 2014; Felder, 2020; Neal, 2022).

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[2] The discussion of neighbour experiential stickiness developed by May et al. (2021) recovers elements from the sociology of personal relationships to study the tenacity of family bonds (Smart, 2007), such as sibling relationships (Davies, 2019), while the idea of elasticity related to the open and informal nature of these relationships, particularly highlighted in discussions of social interaction in urban settings (Massey, 1999; Brownlie & Anderson, 2016).

For authors like Painter (2012, p. 524), urban society implies that "the neighbour as near-dweller is typically neither a friend, nor a stranger, nor an enemy, but an unknown - one whom we approach somewhat warily." Uncertainty, unpredictability, and otherness surround neighbour relationships (Painter, 2012). A context of mutual strangership (a process of fleeting, mundane contact between strangers that can lead to minimalist, soft solidarity of co-presence and coexistence) is observed as characteristic of urban everyday life by Horgan (2012; 2017).[3] However, neighbours are not equivalent to strangers, since repeated interactions can lead to a recognition and information exchange that helps to locate them as acquaintances, even if they are anonymous (Morgan, 2009).

The presence of anonymous yet identifiable figures in urban space, as familiar strangers, is also fundamental to what Felder (2020) observed as "invisible ties", crucial for coexistence and belonging. Blokland (2018) suggests that these encounters help to construct an atmosphere of "public familiarity" among strangers, as a form of interdependency that emerges from nearness. Public spaces matter for the construction of trust and the performance of everyday acts of care that constitute relational settings of public familiarity (Blokland & Schultze, 2017; Blokland et al., 2022b).

The importance of the city as a setting for neighbour interaction is also present in recent studies on place and everyday social life. Within this broad, multidisciplinary perspective that overlaps with different fields of study, analyses of neighbour relationships connect to notions such as conviviality (Heil, 2014), performativity (Simone, 2021), and the mutualism that emerges from living next to each other (Rosenblum, 2016; Blokland et al., 2022b). With a perspective that

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[3] Such discussions incorporate sociological arguments around the figure of the stranger and its relevance for urban everyday life (Simmel, 1949, 1950; Stichweh, 1997).

focuses on everyday life and social practices, neighbouring can also be observed by emphasising the materiality and sensoriality related to living near each other (Jensen, 2024; Tkach et al., 2014). The shared materialities of proximity can link neighbours, leading to a not always voluntary communication with unknown others who live nearby (Tkach, 2023).

In high urban multicultural diversity, living nearby can imply contact with diversity (Heil, 2014; Neal, 2022), which has implications for everyday social life, helping to observe neighbouring through mutualism. An emphasis on the pragmatic, everyday construction of mutuality across differences is also present in the study of neighbour relationships in contexts of urban multiculture developed by Neal (2022). As a crucial site for examining how people negotiate and manage social closeness and cultural differences, neighbour relationships harbour a potential for everyday public engagement with otherness. This multicultural conviviality can involve cooperation, negotiation and conflict (Heil, 2014) and helps to rethink notions of community (Neal et al., 2018).

This publicness and mutualism form part of the "rough parity in give and take among neighbors" highlighted by authors like Rosenblum (2016, p. 32) in discussing neighbouring in everyday life. However, the boundaries between the public and the private are unstable. Everyday interactions, social contexts and structural transformations influence these boundaries between neighbours (Crow, 1997). In this sense, and with a different perspective, authors like Simone (2021, p. 348) also propose to observe neighbourhoods as an "overarching atmosphere of relationality" marked by a temporary arrangement of co-residence between individuals that perform the practice of "being a neighbour".

A key element of neighbour relationships, shown in these different perspectives, is their spatial quality. Neighbours are not only a social but a spatial relationship, and while Abrams derives from

this fact that everyone, even in distant or secluded areas, has neighbours (Bulmer, 1986, p.3), authors like Painter (2012, p.524) focus on the urban setting to identify and locate neighbours as near-dwellers who are initially unknown. Spatial proximity does not guarantee social closeness, so neighbour relationships are ambiguous. Even if spatial proximity produces emotional effects, their content is not predetermined (May et al., 2021).

Apart from combining proximity and ambiguity, everyday neighbour relationships are mostly informal, loosely regulated or determined by established norms. The content of neighbourly interactions is not as prescribed by social expectations as other social institutions, like the family or the workplace (Rosenblum, 2016). Reciprocal actions form part of the "elastic" nature of neighbouring since they are associated with everyday interactions that "create fragile boundaries around the elasticity of neighbour relationships" (May et al., 2021, p. 10). Rosenblum (2016) affirms that without any institutions regulating how neighbours interact, everyday encounters and negotiations are crucial to building the terms of reciprocity between people living "side by side".

These ambiguous relationships are an everyday reciprocal achievement open to experimentation and built through repetition.[4] Rather than assuming the content of neighbour roles, what would be important is to observe how they are carried out, performed, and negotiated (Simone, 2021). The practical and iterative element of neighbouring overlaps with expectations of neighbourliness (a good relationship between neighbours) associated with cultural backgrounds, which combine to form a particular relationship with moral elements (Laurier et al., 2002; Cheshire, 2022; Kusenbach, 2006), in which values and expectations influence what Kusenbach (2022) identifies as a neighbour culture.

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[4] From an interactionist perspective, Kusenbach (2006) also proposes to observe neighbouring through everyday, mundane patterns of interaction and exchange.

The fragile and pragmatic interactions between neighbours may include expressions of mutual help and care (Shulman, 1967; Brownlie & Anderson, 2016), which involve a trade-off between privacy and support (Boyce, 2006). However, good relationships between neighbours cannot be assumed as the natural outcome of neighbouring, and nothing guarantees that neighbours will support each other when needed (Cheshire, 2015). Contact between neighbours can involve conflict or intensify their divisions (Stokoe, 2006; van Eijk, 2011; Cheshire et al., 2021). [5]

Given the ambiguity of neighbours, suggesting or assuming a sense of sameness or homogeneity that derives from spatial proximity is unrealistic (Simone, 2021). Support between neighbours can emerge even if existing relationships between them are not very strong, and as Cheshire argues (2015), connected to an expectation that is attached to the neighbour role. However, under certain circumstances, the neighbour can become someone from whom to expect mutual help.[6] Neighbours can become allies, sometimes even friends, and manifest temporal social solidarities as mundane, provisional commitments articulated around specific goals (Crow, 2010).

In the context of cities of the Global South, discussions of urban neighbourliness have considered the dynamics of collective life, understood as a range of everyday practices, efforts, fragile alliances and arrangements through which people survive in a context of precarity, inequality and uncertainty (Simone, 2018b; Bhan et al., 2020). Such discussions of collective life trace these arrangements and their political potential but do not necessarily focus on the neighbour relationship and its complexity. In the Mexican context, urban sociology and geography studies

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[5] As has been studied in different geographical contexts, structural narratives and settings of social division can influence the emergence of solidarity, conflict, and even violence between neighbours (Dhattiwala, 2022; Cheshire et al., 2021; Cheshire, 2022).

[6] This form of help can be occasioned and minimal (Laurier et al., 2002; Horgan, 2017), making latency, an expectation of support without continuous manifestation, a particular element of neighbour relationships (Mann, 1954; Felder, 2020; Blokland et al., 2022).

have highlighted the forms of living, sociality, and territorial attachment in peripheral, marginalised urban neighbourhoods (Lindón, 2002; Duhau & Giglia, 2004). These insights help to observe the conditions of neighbouring in Global South cities without ignoring that the fragility and ambiguity of neighbours are also part of these settings. This thesis contributes to discussions of neighbouring developed in the Global North by extending these debates geographically and exploring how environmental precarity influences neighbouring and neighbourliness.

The inescapable "stickiness" and the potential publicness of the neighbour can connect to discussions of their relevance in crises and urban precarity, which can cause the neighbour relationship to take new meanings. This thesis will build upon previous discussions to observe this process and analyse neighbours as sites for everyday environmentalism as a theme that can receive more explicit attention. Observing this process represents an arena for building further knowledge around how everyday geographies and dynamics of local organising matter for the experience of being a neighbour and possibly including a potential sense of mutual support and solidarity between them. It is impossible to ignore the temporal, momentary, and unstable elements of social solidarities (Crow, 2010). However, neighbour-based organisations, the focus of the following sub-section, may influence everyday neighbouring and expectations of neighbourliness.

Neighbour-based organisations and their characteristics

This section will present a more explicit focus on neighbour-based organisations. These organisations represent a different level of analysis to the micro-sociological focus of the literature centred on everyday life interactions discussed so far and are pertinent for studying neighbour environmentalism. They were briefly discussed in Chapter 1, which distinguished between

everyday neighbour relationships, the neighbourhood as a locality, and the spaces where neighbours collectively join as an organisation.

Neighbour-based organisations are voluntary associations constituted by people with a neighbour relationship, which emerge to coordinate action towards a common objective, usually regarding the meaning and characteristics of the neighbourhood as a shared space.[7] Their organising structures may range from formal and institutional arrangements to more informal and improvised self-management experiences. Additionally, these organisations become a setting for intentional interaction and represent a formal expression of neighbour relationships, influencing the practices of neighbouring and expectations of neighbourliness.

Chapter 1 discussed how themes such as security and policing, urban services, identity and shared space can be reasons for neighbour organising.[8] Concerning policing on the neighbourhood scale, Cooper-Knock (2016) has observed how residents engage in "policing organisations" and informal "policing formations", and how everyday relationships between residents matter in the informal arrangements that form part of surveillance and security. From a different perspective, Pink (2012) has studied how community gardens involve residents in managing local shared spaces.

The members of these organisations are residential neighbours. They live near each other, in the same streets or within what they can identify as a space of proximity. Therefore, on many occasions, their goals relate to place attachment, an emotional connection between people and their

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[7] These objectives may vary and are pragmatically focused on specific issues that do not necessarily involve emancipatory political agendas.

[8] The relevance of neighbourhood feelings of security is displayed in strategies of community policing or neighbourhood watches across diverse geographies (Bennett et al., 2006; Muller, 2010).

physical environment (Poma, 2018). Their goals can also involve struggles over the meaning and identity of the neighbourhood (Martin, 2003b; Anguelovski, 2013).[9]

The definition of spatial proximity is dynamic and related to everyday uses of local space (Mayol, 1999; De Certeau, 1999). As discussed further in another section of this chapter, social relations and contexts influence the definition of the neighbourhood as a locality (Massey, 1991; Schmidt, 2013). Therefore, it would be important to observe how these groups define and recognise the meanings of being a neighbour.

These organisations are embedded in neighbour relationships (however they define and produce them) and built through expectations of spatial solidarity (Walter et al., 2017; Hankins & Martin, 2019). Spatial solidarity is a form of solidarity rooted in the experience of sharing space. Walter et al. (2017, p. 112) understand it as a social practice defined by "place-based concerns and shared values that emerge from the daily interactions of propinquitous living".

This discussion of spatial solidarity presented so far involves clarifying a definition of solidarity that will be important within this thesis. For authors like Oosterlynck et al. (2015), solidarity is a feeling of shared fate that leads to social order and cohesion. Criticising a notion of solidarity based only on national boundaries and cultural similarity, these authors propose a view of solidarity as rooted in "everyday places and practices in which people engage across ethnic and cultural boundaries" (Oosterlynck et al. 2015, p. 766).

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[9] When studying the dynamics of neighbourhood activism, which is not necessarily equivalent to neighbour-based organising, Martin (2003a; 2003b) identified how neighbourhoods can be constructed and framed as localities and scales of activist campaigns.

In this thesis, solidarity will be understood as a sense of unity around a common goal, usually emerging from being on a shared condition. This sense of unity leads to what Crow (2010, p.57) identifies as a feeling that "motivates people to co-operate with others". According to this author, in some contexts, solidarity is a phenomenon that oscillates and is not a permanent or static condition. Solidarity can have a shorter or longer duration as an experience, depending on the circumstances surrounding it. Concerning neighbour relationships, this author suggests that solidarity is a momentary and temporary experience. However, the duration of feelings of solidarity varies according to situations and contexts. Therefore, in this thesis, solidarity will be understood as a feeling and experience of unity that motivates people to cooperate towards a common goal, which can have different durations. This feeling is rooted in the knowledge of sharing a condition, interest, or circumstance.

Aiming to understand solidarity in diversity as a possibility for "heterogeneous populations who do not have anything in common apart from the place they share", Oosterlynck et al. (2015, p.775) identify four sources of solidarity: interdependence, shared norms and values, struggle, and encounter. A view of spatial solidarity presents connections to the discussions of encounter and interdependency as two of these sources (Oosterlynck et al., 2015) and also relates to how Horgan (2012) argues that, under certain circumstances, urban co-presence can lead to public recognition and feelings of unity.[10]

As mentioned in the introduction, the context of Mexican and Latin American cities matters. In the field of urban studies and using the case of Mexico City, neighbour-based organisations have been observed as collective actors connected to political participation,

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[10] In this sense, everyday encounters with otherness in cities can become sources of solidarity (Oosterlynck et al., 2015).

citizenship, and democratisation (Giglia, 1996; Chávez Carapia, 2003; Zermeño et al., 2002; Ziccardi, 2012). Safa (1987; 1998), Coulomb (1991), and Sanchez-Mejorada (2016) have observed how local organising around such issues connects to the political potential of these organisations. While some of these organisations are independent and autonomous from local governments, they can be formally mobilised and funded by them in strategies to stimulate political participation.

In these accounts, urban struggles and conflicts over the built environment, in which local organisations play a crucial role as formal spaces for political participation, are integral to urban politics and democracy (Safa & Ramirez, 2011b; Sánchez-Mejorada, 2017; Tamariz Estrada, 2019).[11] Additionally, a focus on neighbour identities experiences of belonging, and symbolic distinctions related to meaning-making are present in studies conducted by Safa (1995; 1998; 1999), who observes neighbours from a socio-anthropological perspective.[12]

Neighbour-based organisations are relevant for studying neighbour environmentalism but do not represent homogeneous communities. With insights from the neighbour relationship literature, focusing on social practices will be critical to observe how neighbour alliances are maintained and reproduced. The politicised spatial solidarity of neighbourhood activism matters (Hankins & Martin, 2019), but neighbours remain an ambiguous and uncertain figure, experienced through everyday acts of reciprocity. Furthermore, expectations of neighbourliness and imaginaries of personal relationships, recovering a notion developed by Smart (2007), may be at play within these organisations. Reflections on community and urban belonging can complement

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[11] In particular Sanchez-Mejorada (1996; 2016) has observed how, in spaces of urban informality, local organisations contribute to the participation of excluded people and to produce an alternative vision of the city.

[12] Studying the municipality of Coyoacan in Mexico City, this author works through the concept of neighbour identity to understand neighbour-based organisations and their involvement in the meaning, experiences, and characteristics of their spaces of everyday life and identification (Safa, 1998; 1995).

the discussions of local organising and spatial solidarity. These insights will help to avoid assumptions of sameness and unity smoothly applied to neighbours.

<u>Neighbours, community, and belonging</u>

The discussions around neighbours are important to observe the scale of everyday interaction, emphasising relationality and social practices. An additional conceptual element was introduced in the previous section, related to the possibilities of solidarity that neighbour-based organisations may trigger. However, the concept of spatial solidarity may not capture the nuances of the neighbour on the scale of local organisations. In this sense, a dynamic, open view of community and belonging can complement the discussion of social solidarity.

For Oosterlynck et al. (2015), taking responsibility for shared places, such as neighbourhoods, promotes a sense of interdependency, which can be an additional source of solidarity. Interdependency is a concept that refers to a mutual dependence of people, and that is crucial for relational thinking.[13] Additionally, this concept helps in understanding communities not as static formations but as a form of "being with" others (Studdert & Walkerdine, 2017; Wills, 2017; Neal et al., 2018).

Social interdependency connections can involve emotional attachment to the neighbourhood and the neighbours. Through these attachments, "place identities become

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[13] The sociological concept of interdependency helps to explore the interplay between individual selves and social structures and relational thinking (Crossley, 2021; Elias, 1978; Mason, 2004; Dépelteau, 2018).

collectively formed and recognized" (Blokland, 2001, p. 281).[14] These emotional connections are also relevant in sociological studies of belonging (Leach, 2005; May, 2011, 2013).

Belonging is a sense of ease with personal selves and their connection to social and physical surroundings (May, 2013). It is constructed through everyday relationships with the built environment, other people, and a social context (Lewis & May, 2019). May (2011) argues that belonging helps to understand social change without assuming that personal selves accommodate themselves to structural social changes, but instead, observing how selves actively and creatively connect to society. For this author, belonging is a continuous, dynamic achievement rooted in everyday habits and "not a given or something that we accomplish once and for all" (May, 2011, p. 372).

Belonging can include the identification with immediate, local surroundings, but studies of this process have helped to show this is also dynamic, resulting from a performative process of place-making (Benson & Jackson, 2012). For Bennett (2014; 2015), neighbourhood belonging includes a material and active dimension related to the caring of a shared place as an everyday practice.[15] Relationships with acquaintances such as neighbours, even if not very strong, can help in fostering a sense of belonging related to a particular place, turning it into a familiar location (May, 2013). However, it is relevant to consider how this dynamic and transitory aspect of belonging differentiates it from static notions of place identification and how "belonging is not tied to a specific place" but rather "emerges in many situations, contexts and also in the imaginary" (May, 2013, p. 83).

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[14] These forms of identification with place have also been part of discussions of neighbourhoods through a focus on local space and meaning-making (Rivlin, 1982).

[15] Recovering elements from Mauss related to community building through gifts, this author argues that caring for a place can be understood as a form of gift exchange between neighbours (Bennet, 2014).

As suggested in this literature review, community is not a straightforward concept but a disputed and contested research problem (Hoggett, 1997; Day, 2006; Delanty, 2010). A traditional notion of community focused on clear boundaries can be changed, to observe it as an "open-ended system of communication about belonging" (Delanty, 2010, p. 152). For Delanty (2010), a fluid notion of community allows observing their creation through practices and multiple manifestations of belonging.

This analytical move helps to view community through social practices and dynamic personal networks, even understanding it as a nexus of stories (Crow, 2002; Morgan, 2008). As May (2013, p. 126) argues, "approaching community from the perspective of belonging means that 'community' does not become a question of self-evident boundaries". Instead, it is possible to problematise the social elements that impede expressions of belonging to particular settings or groups.

An open and dynamic view of community as "being with" related to conviviality (Neal et al., 2018), linked to arguments of how reciprocity matters for neighbouring and neighbourliness, can complement the concept of spatial solidarity for observing neighbour-based organisations. In dialogue with this active perspective of the concept of community, authors like Jackson (2020, p. 521) observe "practices of belonging" as a key to understanding diverse forms of attachments in practice without dissolving their importance into assumptions of unity.

With the previous discussions, some conceptual tools that help answer RQ1 have been outlined. Observing neighbour-centred environmentalism, both in terms of informal everyday interaction and as a motivation or theme mobilised by local organisations, can extend the knowledge and discussions of neighbours further. The following section will focus on environmental movements and justice, which will be important for the analysis of RQ2.

Environmentalism and urban environmental justice

Environmental justice, environmentalism, and place attachment

This section will discuss some conceptual elements concerning environmentalism, urban environmental justice, and protest as central elements of RQ2. It will first focus on the environmental justice framework for research and activism, discussing its origins and contributions. It will then focus on urban environmental justice and urban social movements. In doing so, this section will discuss environmentalism rooted in everyday life and social practices. This section will argue that while place and community have been identified as relevant elements of environmental justice, studying neighbours as protagonists of environmentalism can develop some of these insights.

After presenting some insights related to the study of environmentalism from an environmental justice perspective, it will discuss urban protest with a perspective that emphasises social practices and everyday life. This section argues that such insights, while valuable to understanding environmental movements, can be complemented by a look beyond the unity of the collective actor. Similarly to how an assumption of sameness is a risk when discussing spatial solidarity, assumptions of collective action that do not consider the nuances of protest will be avoided.

Environmental justice is a claim constructed in grassroots organising. It has been mobilised by diverse actors denouncing the links between ecological quality and social inequality (Agyeman et al., 2003). Bullard & Johnson (2000, p. 558) propose a definition of the term as "the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, colour, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws,

regulations, and policies". According to Agyeman et al. (2016, p. 321), the environmental justice movement emerged during the last decades of the 20th century in the United States to contest "the inequitable exposure of communities of colour, and communities in poverty, to environmental risks due primarily to their lack of recognition and political power".

The environmental justice movement has simultaneously developed across diverse resistances in different places. These movements challenge an uneven distribution of environmental hazards among social groups, relating ecological inequalities to race, class, and gender differences (Bullard & Johnson, 2000; Pulido, 2000). In geographies across the Global South, this movement incorporates values that Martínez Alier (2002) identifies as an "environmentalism of the poor", characterised by a defence of nature as a crucial element of the livelihood of marginalised communities. The relevance of this understanding of environmentalism for the present thesis is developed further in this section.

In Latin America, the connection between environmental and social issues has been mobilised mainly through a social notion of territory (Leff, 2012; Haesbaert & Mason-Deese, 2020; Porto-Gonçalves & Leff, 2015). [16] In this region, environmental justice struggles involve dimensions of territoriality, understood as the appropriation of space that links to the "defense of collective ways of living and surviving" (Hernández Vidal et al., 2022, p. 372).

The recognition of unequal distributions of environmental burdens has led to the need to claim power and generate knowledge over the production of the environments where everyday life unfolds. Environmental justice has thus evolved as a framework that helps to challenge a view of

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[16] According to Escobar (2015), environmental movements in Latin America have included an ontological element of dispute over the very definition of nature and its cultural meaning.

the environment as an untouched, wild, pristine and harmonious nature and to situate the environment as an everyday experience (Novotny, 1995; Katz & Kirby, 1991). Within this framework, the environment is defined in connection to the locality: "where we live, work and play" (Agyeman et al., 2016; Novotny, 1995). The implications of this change are both epistemological and political, summarised in what Agyeman (2005, p.2) identifies as a redefinition of "the term environment so that the dominant wilderness, greening, and natural resource focus now includes urban disinvestment, racism, homes, jobs, neighbourhoods, and communities".[17] This thesis will follow and build upon insights from the environmental justice framework, complementing them with notions developed within urban political ecology studies to discuss environmentalism.

Environmentalism can be understood in different ways. While it is essentially an effort and conviction to preserve and protect the natural environment, there are diverse understandings of what this implies or of how to define the environment. Studying the inspirations involved in conflicts around environmental issues and observing the protagonism of marginalised people around the world in this process, Martinez-Alier (2002) distinguishes between different ideological currents that gather around environmentalist claims, with some entanglement between themselves: a concern over conserving wilderness, expectations of technical efficiency and eco-management, and what this author names as the "environmentalism of the poor". Revisiting this debate, Anguelovski & Martinez-Alier (2014, p.167) argue that this form of environmentalism gathers "those who have a material interest in the environment as a source and a requirement for livelihood and a preoccupation for today's historically marginalized residents". These authors do not imply

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[17] This reframing of the environment enables political action and just sustainability campaigns to protect both human communities and natural ecosystems (Holifield, 2001; Agyeman et al., 2003; Agyeman et al., 2010).

that poor people carry an inherently environmentalist ethos since this would suggest an essentialist and romanticized view that ignores contradictions. However, particularly focusing on rural conflicts in India and Latin America, they suggest that since impoverished rural populations depend on the environment to survive, they "often have a strong motivation to be careful managers of the environment" (Anguelovski & Martinez-Alier, 2014, p.169).

According to Anguelovski & Martinez-Alier (2014), the environmental justice framework presents connections and overlaps with the tenets represented in movements related to the "environmentalism of the poor". These authors indicate that the struggles associated with these movements do not seek the "preservation of nature for its own sake", and working with an example of resistance against tree felling, show that movements against deforestation in Latin America were primarily and strongly motivated because of how the material livelihood of local populations required the trees to exist, and secondarily inspired by how this material conditions also connected to their territorial identity and cultural values (Anguelovski & Martinez-Alier, 2014, p.169). Furthermore, the people involved in these movements would not classify themselves as "environmentalist" in the classical sense of the word, associated with conserving an untouched, wild and pristine nature. Therefore, this form of environmentalism can be summed up as a defence of the environment as an element of everyday livelihoods and identities, in which social justice and environmental defence are interconnected. The connection between protecting the environment and its relevance for marginalised residents' livelihood in everyday life is a central focus of this thesis and its use of the term "environmentalism". In sum, the environmental justice movement, influenced by the principles of the "environmentalism of the poor", challenges and defines the meaning of environmentalism. Furthermore, as was previously mentioned, the environmental justice framework also destabilises and widens the meaning of the "environment".

As previously mentioned, the environmental justice framework has reframed the meaning of notions such as environmentalism and the environment and expanded them beyond seeking the conservation of nature and eco-efficiency in economic growth. Authors like Novotny (1995, p.77) have identified how collectives involved in the environmental justice movement frame the environment as rooted in the spaces of everyday life, such as the home, the workplace or the playground, as well as produce new definitions of environmentalism to include "the social conditions and historical experiences of working-class and persons of color". According to this author, reframing the environment as where people "live, work and play" implies a diversification in thinking about the environment that connects ecological deterioration with social and economic injustice and racial exclusion.

This reframing of the environment has led to the inclusion of a wide range of issues in environmental justice struggles. In urban contexts, the inequalities and injustices addressed by these struggles involve not only the exposure to pollution but also themes related to the allocation of services and environmental goods and the overall material conditions of an urban environment (Heynen et al., 2006; Agyeman et al., 2016). This research will work with notions from urban political ecology to complement the insights from the environmental justice framework.

Urban political ecology is a conceptual perspective characterised by observing the production of urban spaces as a process that integrates the agency of social and natural elements. In this perspective, cities are viewed as socio-natural hybrids or assemblages influenced by power relations and political arrangements (Heynen et al., 2006; Loftus, 2012). As Heynen et al. (2006, p. 12) argue, "environments are combined sociophysical constructions that are actively and historically produced, both in terms of social content and physical-environmental qualities", indicating that the city is one of these environments, and asserting that "there is nothing apriori

unnatural about produced environments like cities". Viewing the city as a socio-natural formation can lead to radical political engagement to transform it in everyday life (Loftus, 2012).

In the context of this thesis, the neighbourhood is a scale in which it is possible to observe an everyday engagement with urban nature, and that can also be understood as a socio-natural assemblage. The neighbourhood has been a location for struggle in urban environmental justice movements. Focusing on how deprived neighbourhoods reflect social and environmental inequalities, Anguelovski & Martinez Alier (2014, p. 171) review research that, in different geographies across the world, has focused on how these neighbourhoods display inequalities in access to parks and green spaces, face absent or unsatisfactory of water and sanitation services, do not count with a regular and reliable source of electricity, have few ways of access to fresh food shops turning them into food deserts, involve unhealthy housing conditions, overall lack an adequate transport infrastructure and are more exposed to climate risks. In summary, protecting the material conditions of an environment, when they are directly implicated in the existence and livelihood of a population, becomes a crucial motivation for environmental justice struggles (Anguelovski & Martinez-Alier, p.171).

There are overlaps between urban political ecology and environmental justice struggles, particularly for their emphasis on exploring how an environment is experienced and contested in different spaces, and therefore making the definition and production of urban natures and inherently political process. Politicising the definition and production of the environment can have advantages for questioning exclusionary definitions of environmentalism that do not consider social justice as an issue to address. In this way, social justice cannot be dissociated from environmental and ecological quality (Agyeman et al., 2016). However, the expansion of "environmentalism" as a claim and agenda can risk losing the analytical focus and precision of the

concept, making it difficult for campaigners and researchers to define what counts as an environmental claim and what doesn't. Therefore, in what follows, a definition of environmentalism will be presented.

This thesis recovers a perspective of the environment as something lived in everyday life spaces within cities (Novotny, 1995; Anguelovski & Martinez-Alier, 2014) and an understanding of environmentalism as the effort to preserve and improve the material conditions of everyday life settings (or environments) and argues that the neighbourhood, as a socio-natural assemblage (Heynen et al., 2006; Loftus, 2012), is one of those settings or environments. In this thesis, efforts gathered around the material conditions that influence the liveability of neighbourhoods (viewed as socio-natural assemblages) will be crucial aspects of an everyday form of environmentalism that involves organised neighbours.

Therefore, this thesis will observe environmentalism as the collective effort to protect and improve the material conditions of an environment (which includes neighbourhoods as socionatural assemblages) because they impact the livelihood of a population. In the context of this case study, environmentalism is also understood as an engagement with the material conditions of the neighbourhood, which is viewed as a socionatural assemblage and everyday setting (or environment) where life occurs.

With its consolidation and development, the environmental justice movement not only helps to elaborate new definitions of environmentalism (which can be complemented with perspectives from other frameworks) but also incorporates new themes to the struggles associated with this term. In this sense, recent discussions and struggles connect a distributional initial focus with themes like citizen participation, political recognition, community empowerment, place attachment, and the reparation of past grievances (Bullard & Jonhson, 2000; Agyeman et al.,

2016).[18] Schlosberg (2013) has observed how environmental justice has expanded as a discourse. This expansion leads to a pluralistic definition that adds to a distributive and, on some occasions, individualistic standpoint. In this sense, it is possible to identify different dimensions of environmental justice: distributional, procedural, and restorative.

There are also emotional elements related to environmental injustice, which can be added to its distributional, procedural, and restorative dimensions. As an example, in studies of water scarcity in Latin America, themes such as anxiety and suffering related to a dimension of emotional and embodied distress that undermines the conditions for well-being in a locality (Ennis-McMillan, 2001; Wutich & Ragsdale, 2008). The concept of solastalgia (Brown, 2023), as distress related to ecological disruption and the loss of ecosystems, also helps to describe some of the consequences of environmental injustice. [19]

The extension of the environmental justice framework also has implied attention to attachment and community as basic elements for human existence. According to Schlosberg (2019, p. 55), a disruption to everyday life that "undermines our attachment to place, our relationality and entanglements with the human and nonhuman communities in which we are immersed" is a form of injustice.[20] Similarly, Groves (2015) has argued that disrupting place attachment and community connections is a form of environmental injustice. This undermining of attachment is not only related to physical displacement but also to what Nixon (2011, p. 19) observes as

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[18] Empirical studies around unequal exposure to pollution have explored the everyday consequences of social exclusion and a lack of political recognition in Latin America as dimensions of environmental justice (Auyero & Swistun, 2008; Gonzalez, 2019).

[19] Accountability and reparations are crucial aspects of restorative justice. This process involves present and past grievances (Forsyth et al., 2022).

[20] Schlosberg (2019) identifies such disruption in the Anthropocene as a world human alteration of ecosystems beyond repair.

"displacement without moving", or "a loss that leaves communities stranded in a place stripped of the very characteristics that made it inhabitable".[21] The cumulative effects of institutional and political inequalities, and the physical hazards that exacerbate threats in everyday life are what Corburn (2017) analyses as toxic stressors, such as discrimination, racism, exclusion, lack of green spaces, or deteriorated environments, that affect communities.

Environmental justice acquires additional meanings when connected to urban settings, manifesting in studies of the unequal spatial distribution of environmental risks (Gelobter, 1994; Pulido, 2000) or oppositions to local unwanted land use (Anguelovski, 2015).[22] Analysing resistance to displacement, Anguelovski (2013, p. 161) observes how urban local "activists use their environmental initiatives and projects as tools to rebuild a broken community and remake place for residents". The right to live in a place (or to not be displaced) becomes a crucial aspect of contemporary struggles and protests for urban environmental justice and a key element for health and well-being, according to Anguelovski & Martínez Alier (2014).

Empirical studies of environmental justice in cities have helped to highlight how place and community matter in everyday struggles. This additionally relates to discussions on the materiality of the neighbourhood as a locality and landscape, which will be the topics of another section of this literature review. However, just as community is a contested concept (Hoggertt, 1997), place attachment can be a complex process, and there are no straightforward meanings of place, but this can be a contentious process.

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[21] Using a perspective that emphasises temporality to discuss the consequences of environmental degradation, this author describes such loss as a form of slow violence (Nixon, 2011).

[22] In urban settings, the consequences and politics of land use changes are crucial to understanding the dynamics of environmental injustice (Gelobter, 1994; Anguelovksi, 2015)

In this way, place attachment can be observed as part of the dynamic and active process of belonging, described in a previous section (Leach, 2005; Benson & Jackson, 2012; May, 2013). There are connections between the discussion of belonging and the concept of place attachment. Place attachment, particularly at the local scale, can be understood as a factor that influences a sense of belonging, as a process that can involve (but is not limited to) the connection between people and their places of residence. Poma (2018, p. 4) describes place attachment as an "affective bond between people and places" and studies it as a powerful and mobilising bond in environmental struggles.

The study of urban environmental justice can benefit from the empirical exploration of how community and place are "reconstructed" and "disrupted". Furthermore, despite the focus on community and place, the environmental justice framework does not consistently engage with the neighbour as a figure. This connection will be explored as the main focus of RQ2.

This thesis will build upon and contribute to discussions of the environmental justice framework to include considerations of neighbours as an everyday social relationship and as crucial figures in local organising and their campaigns. Additionally, it will contribute by showing what the case of water scarcity in Mexico City adds to these discussions. The discussion of this contribution is developed further in Chapter 5 and reviewed in Chapter 7. The following sub-section will introduce more concepts related to urban protest and social movements, particularly from a Latin American context, which can aid in understanding everyday environmentalism and environmental movements in cities.

The extensive literature on urban social movements has analysed processes in which a local population, observed as a collective actor, mobilises in protests concerning the production of space, the material conditions of living, and the exercise of political rights (Castells, 1983; Lefebvre, 1996; Meyer & Boudreau, 2012). With an initial influence of structuralism, Castells (1974) used the concept of urban social movements to describe disputes over collective consumption conditions (housing, services, transportation). This initial focus has been replaced by studies on how "collective actors" mobilise claims around identity, democracy, and the right to the city (Castells, 1983; Borja, 2010; Meyer & Boudreau, 2012).[23]

Important insights concerning urban social movements come from the Latin American discussion on territories and local organising (Halvorsen, 2018; Haesbaert & Mason-Deese, 2020). In this context, such movements have been studied for their role in producing alternative forms of territoriality (Melé, 2016; Mason-Deese et al., 2019) or forms of appropriating, using, and conceiving a territory, understood as a crucial space for the livelihood of local communities.[24] According to Merlinsky (2017b), a characteristic of environmental justice movements, particularly in Latin America, is that they emerge when affected people perceive a threat to their livelihood, but can lead to new forms of perceiving and appropriating local territories.[25] In Latin America,

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[23] The right to the city emerged as a claim that assembled different strategies and agendas. It relates to the role of urban inhabitants in the production and emancipatory appropriation of space (Harvey, 2012; Lefebvre, 1996). This claim reflects a resistance to exclusion and a struggle for the right to "have rights" in the city (Hernandez Vidal et al., 2022).

[24] Authors like Melé (2016) have observed how urban conflicts lead to appropriations of territory, mobilising different expectations and notions of proximate space.

[25] Focusing on the role of territory allows for conceptualising connections between space and the material conditions for community empowerment (Clare et al., 2017).

defending territories becomes part of struggling for the right to exist (Hernández Vidal et al., 2022, p. 381).

In Latin American cities, disputes over land use, water, and housing give way to experiences of political organising and citizenship (Castro, 2004; Holston, 2007; Merlinsky, 2018). Informal or peripheral urbanisation has involved and triggered the defence of neighbourhoods as territories for the reproduction of life and arenas for political engagement (Caldeira, 2017; Clare et al., 2017; Streule & Schwarz, 2019). The concept of popular urbanisation, used to analyse how residents are actively involved in producing the built environment (Streule et al., 2020), can also help to observe this process.

Numerous studies about autonomous organisations and struggles for housing and services in Mexico City have also signalled the importance of political action and urban social movements (Coulomb, 1991; Sánchez-Mejorada, 2016; Schteingart, 1990). In Mexico, the urban popular movement (UPM), as a confluence of campaigns and protests oriented to improve living conditions in cities during the second half of the XXth century, has been a focus of sociological research and attention (Moctezuma, 1990; Bennett, 1992; Coulomb, 2021). Studies of the UPM have helped make visible the political activity of traditionally marginalised groups in the institutional political horizon in Mexico, such as the urban popular classes and women (Massolo, 1992; Bennett, 1995; Safa & Ramirez, 2011a). For Bennett (1992, p.257), one of the aspects of these movements is how they use and discover the neighbourhoods "as a political vehicle and of the potential of that vehicle for forging social change".

Many of these struggles have commonalities with the environmental justice framework, found in their struggles around the concreteness of urban life in diverse issues such as transportation, housing, water, sanitation, food, and climate justice. The concreteness of urban

everyday life connects environmentalism to social reproduction issues (Aldana Cohen, 2016), with new claims and agendas that relate to environmental deterioration and climate change (Zeiderman, 2016). In urban protest, the transformation of everyday life, as the immediacy of the "here and now", becomes a driver for political action in cities (Beveridge & Koch, 2018, p. 146). The material conditions of "urbanity" influence political action embedded in everyday life and social practices (Boudreau et al., 2010).

Focusing on urban everyday life gives insights into the role of neighbours in environmentalist struggles. This focus complements and thickens considerations of spatial solidarity, community, and belonging introduced in a previous section. Furthermore, the study of how environmentalism becomes a theme of neighbour organising would benefit from thoughtfully analysing spatial and material characteristics of cities.

In urban sociology and geography, the notions of diversity and density have been key elements in understanding cities and, by extension, any possibility of urban communities (Wirth, 1938; Sennet, 2006).[26] However, the diversity and density of cities have also been observed as sources of the unpredictable (Massey, 1999).[27] Constant experimentation and improvisation in urban precarious settings leads to fragile connections, without a deterministic allegiance to an overarching narrative of identity through sameness (Simone, 2018a; Simone & Castan Broto, 2022).

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[26] This perspective has inspired continuous arguments over the nature of sociability in cities, in debates that range from considerations of anonymity as inescapable to the discovery of forms of solidarity and creativity in urban settings (Simmel, 1949; 1950; Anderson, 1962; Sennet, 2019).

[27] This unpredictability influences protest as a process that involves and mobilises multiple places, sites and scales (Cochrane, 2018; Pierce et al., 2011).

The struggles for justice in the city covered so far happen in a context of urban precarity. Urban precarity refers to the insecurity, uncertainty, and overall fragility of contemporary urban existence that affects vulnerable populations (Kasmir, 2018; Campbell & Laheij, 2021). Urban precarity refers to the absence of basic (and many times expected or possible) services and rights, which affects the prospect of living in contemporary cities and is experienced as an exposure to an uncertain future (Lombard, 2021; Campbell & Laheij, 2021). Precarious living conditions impact the fragile arrangements that make urban collective life (Simone, 2018a). Multiple insecurities and uncertainties define urban lifting, with emotional, embodied effects that reduce well-being (Lancione, 2019; Lombard, 2021).

Studies of urban social movements show the potential of contestation in cities. In contemporary contexts of urban precarity, they can help to observe how environmental struggles link to contestations over the right to the city (Harvey, 2012; Hernandez Vidal et al., 2022). These struggles can be particularly important for survival in the Global South, such as Latin American cities, where environmental problems and inequalities have accompanied urbanisation (Hardoy et al., 2001), particularly for the social inequalities that have characterised it, disproportionately affecting less affluent populations (Satterthwaite, 2003).

Studies of urban social movements, while helping to explore the connection between environmental justice and the city, may not offer a nuanced observation of neighbour relationships and neighbour-based organisations if they focus on the unity of collective actors. Furthermore, a simplified view of collective actors can imply an understanding of environmentalism as a one-dimensional claim with a clear meaning for everyone involved in a protest. Yet, as the environmental justice framework helps to observe, environmentalism is not a homogeneous or abstract claim. Similarly, neighbour-based organisations are not just collective actors or an abstract

entity. The following sub-section presents this argument with more depth and proposes conceptual alternatives as useful tools that are crucial for analysing the topics of RQ2.

Protest and social practices beyond collective action

Similarly to how the concept of community may be criticised for a static view of social reality, the description of urban protest that exclusively centres on the unified collective has epistemological and ontological implications. Descriptions of homogeneous actors (and environmentalism as an abstract, one-dimensional claim) do not consider the nuances of neighbour relationships, or the variations in their political involvement. Neighbours and their differences are drowned analytically in the unity of the collective.

Discussions around the problematic assumption of the unity and collectiveness of social movements identify the complication of action-centred and collective-actor-centred perspectives (Gillan, 2020; Estrada Saavedra, 2016). This problem emerges particularly from conceiving the collective actor as a "being or entity that shares a history, an identity, a consciousness, goals and strategies" (Guerra Blanco, 2013, p.78). A focus and terminology centred on collectives, as argued by Yates (2015, p. 242), "can obscure the relationships between more and less politicized people, and the different ways in which the same practices can be performed". With a different research problem but also discussing residential localities, Cooper-Knock (2014, p. 582) criticise the notion of the "mob" as an anonymous, sovereign collective and argue for focusing on "intimate crowds" to observe how policing formations involve interpersonal relationships.

This thesis understands resonance as an affective amplification of capacity that emerges through protest and local organising and uses it to observe neighbour-based organisations and their

struggles. In this research, resonance is a concept that helps to observe the consequences of neighbour-based organising and protest, complementing and going beyond the focus on collective action and the unity of the collective. Studying governance and policy implementation in cities of Africa and Asia, Simone and Pieterse (2017, p. 16) use the term resonance to describe the "affective process of people and things associating with each other". For these authors, this notion implies a coming together of human and more-than-human elements to produce something new, as a possibility that amplifies the capabilities of individual agents. However, this process involves pragmatic and fragile infrastructural experimentation (Simone, 2018b). In short, the amplified capabilities of individual agents, produced through meaningful but pragmatic and unpredictable arrangements, cannot be taken for granted. As Simone (2004; 2018b) suggests, constant uncertainty, experimentation and improvisation are involved in these crucial connections. Therefore, the concept of resonance will be used to observe the consequences of protest and neighbour-based organising without ignoring fragilities, contingencies and ambivalences.

The concept of resonance, in this thesis, will be used to observe how protest and local organising imply a relational coming together of things and the effects of this process. This focus on resonance as an affective and experimental process of association that increases capabilities (Simone & Pieterse, 2017) offers an understanding of affectivity as an embodied change in capacity, which has been part of discussions of how the spatial arrangements of the city influence everyday experiences of encounter and sociality (Amin & Thrift, 2017; Lindón, 2019). Additionally, this focus on capacity connects to a discussion of affect in cities that "hinges on adding capacities through interaction in a world which is constantly becoming", as has been recovered and developed by Thrift (2004, p.61). Therefore, in this thesis, the concept of resonance

will be used to describe an affective change in capacity as one of the consequences of protest and local organising.

Aiming to study belonging in urban everyday life, Miller (2015) reviews different uses of resonance as a sociological concept. This author understands resonance as a temporary experience and sense of togetherness or sameness, made possible in everyday life through embodied copresence and observable in contingent situations of belonging and intimacy (Miller, 2015). Furthermore, resonance requires embodied and practical connections[28] but is "distinct from the social interactions from which it emerged" (Miller, 2015, p. 9). This implies that resonance generates something new, even if it operates as a temporary and momentary experience.

Following the ideas proposed in discussions of urban belonging and everyday social life (Miller, 2015; Simone & Pieterse, 2017) (and the acoustic metaphor of resonance), it is possible to affirm that resonance implies a process of amplification or reverberation that emerges from contingent and fragile connections which generate something new and unexpected. It is also possible to suggest that resonance is a fleeting and temporary, even if significant and potent, experience. In this thesis, resonance will be understood as a momentary and affective amplification of capacity and as one of the consequences of protest and local organising. As explained in Chapter 1, the goals of the WDC were deeply related to getting a well built in Santo Domingo to improve water access. This was an attainable and visible goal that could be achieved in the duration and temporality of their campaigns. The momentary nature of resonance makes it helpful in observing local organising around delimited and determined goals.

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[28] Such embodied connections between people make resonance a deeply relational process. Ingold (1993, p.163) observes this process as a "rythmic harmonization of mutual attention" carried out in practical inter-activity.

An important and influential use of this concept is present in theoretical proposals developed by Rosa (2017; 2019). This author works through the notion of resonance to discuss connection in a context of alienation produced by social acceleration (Rosa, 2017). While presenting crucial elements related to the experience of being affected by something and responding to it, this perspective was developed for critically observing modern society. It is not particularly suited for studying social movements without further conceptual work. [29]

An advantage of using the notion of resonance relates to how it contributes to discussions around everyday life, which is a key aspect of observing the neighbour relationship as a site for environmentalism and the consequences of activism. Sociological perspectives conceptualise everyday life as a site of "translation and synthesis" where the macro and micro meet and co-constitute each other (Neal & Murji, 2015, p. 813). As Felski (2000) proposes, studying everyday life requires considering the routines and activities that produce senses of home, habit and familiarity. Focusing on everyday life implies being open to observing overlooked aspects, complexities, and contradictions, which is possible with a discussion of resonance.

The notion of resonance contributes to observing protest with a focus on its experiential consequences, by highlighting the momentary and affective change in capacities that is involved in social movements. In this way, using this concept adds to discussions on the study of social movements (Yates, 2015; Gillan, 2020). This conceptual focus is particularly pertinent to understanding the connections between everyday life and urban protest (Boudreau et al., 2010) and corresponds with the discussion of the ambivalence of neighbouring practices (Morgan, 2009). The concept of resonance as an amplification of capacity can be useful in observing how

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[29] This concept has also been previously used to explain how narratives become relevant in diverse contexts for their role in problem-solving or moments of emotional connections among people (McDonnell et al., 2017; Lang et al., 2023).

neighbour-based organisations rebuild community and reconstruct place attachment without hiding the nuances of neighbour relationships, and without ignoring the temporal and momentary aspect involved in this amplification. This thesis will not suggest that neighbour-based organisations are unified collective actors that pursue an abstract, even if local, form of environmentalism. Instead, it aims to observe how the neighbour relationship, as an unstable and fragile connection, is an element of local organising.

Building from these insights, the next section of the chapter will focus on the neighbourhood scale, discussing issues like place, materiality, water, and infrastructure. It presents concepts that help to understand the neighbourhood as a locality and landscape. These are two components of RQ3. Linking to the case study, it directly highlights urban water as an element of urban everyday life. It will also discuss the role of different forms of infrastructure as another element included in RQ3.

Water, infrastructures and the neighbourhood

Neighbourhoods as localities and waterscapes

This section will present a more intentional discussion of the neighbourhood scale as a relational and spatial setting for everyday environmentalism (Loftus, 2012), exploring issues such as place and materiality. These elements are relevant to understanding the neighbourhood and defining it as a locality and a water landscape as a crucial aspect of RQ3. These definitions and conceptual foci are crucial for this research, given the embeddedness of neighbour relationships and environmentalism in everyday life and the heterogeneity and dynamism of social practices. The spatial and material emphasis links to the sociality of the neighbourhood. The concept of social

infrastructure will be useful to explore the link between place, materiality, and sociality. Social infrastructure, in turn, is another fundamental element of RQ3.

The first sub-section will discuss the notions of locality and water landscape, or waterscape, as two concepts that, through this emphasis on place and materiality, help to understand neighbourhoods. The second sub-section presents a discussion on infrastructure and its roles, to then give way to a third sub-section on the characteristics of social infrastructure. A crucial argument of this whole section is that understanding the creative, active and animating qualities of neighbours and neighbour-based organisations can help to develop the knowledge of social infrastructures and water landscapes on the neighbourhood scale.

Human geography offers pertinent conceptual perspectives to analysing neighbourhoods as localities. Massey (1991; 1993; 1994) argues that localities are interaction settings and, like every other place, the product of interweaved social relations without a static identity or an a priori essence. For Massey (1991, p.277, emphasis on the original), "localities are *constructions* out of the intersections and interactions of concrete social relations and social processes in a situation of copresence". Conflict and diversity are inherent qualities of every locality. Localities are not exempt from disputes and negotiations around their identity.[30] These ideas may not be developed with an explicit focus on neighbourhoods, but using them for observing the neighbourhood scale will be relevant for this thesis.

Focusing on everyday life and social practices also helps in defining cities and neighbourhoods without assuming conceptual definitions from an overarching narrative (Mayol, 1999; De Certeau, 1999). For Mayol (1999, p.8), a neighbourhood is a portion of public space

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[30] Localities have no static boundaries. They are always in connection to other places and scales. Studying them is not a form of evoking idealistic or nostalgic ideas about their essence (Massey, 1993).

recognised as familiar by its residents, produced through routinised practices and encounters, as "reciprocal habits" of mutual recognition, and especially by the process of walking. This appropriation of space is observed in the context of Mexico City by Giglia (2009), for whom "inhabiting" a place involves the recognition of everyday places as a process of locating and situating subjects in a meaningful totality. [31]

The relationships that constitute the neighbourhood as a locality can expand to include other people and the materiality of the built environment. This exploration of materiality and sensoriality connects to other themes presented in this chapter. It is present in discussions of environmental justice through its connections to the concept of social reproduction (Katz & Kirby, 1991; Di Chiro, 2008). [32] According to Martin (2003a, p.365), the neighbourhood can be defined as a "location where human activity is centred upon social reproduction", but it is also a site of political conflict and contestation, whose meaning becomes more relevant "when acted upon—when residents seek to protect or define neighborhoods for some political and social purpose" (p. 380). The importance of materiality and sensoriality is also present in how place and the built environment matter for belonging (Blokland, 2001; May, 2013; Lewis & May, 2019).

Cities are viewed as socio-natural hybrids marked by uneven power relations from the urban political ecology perspective (Swyngedouw, 1996; Swyngedouw & Kaika, 2014; Heynen et al., 2006). This perspective helps to observe the historical and political process through which

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[31] This process transforms space into a recognisable, familiar, and inhabitable area, and influences the collective production of locality and local identity (Giglia, 2019).

[32] Social reproduction refers to the activities related to the satisfaction of basic needs necessary for survival and for the sustainment of a form of living. Related to these debates of materiality and environmentalism are views on the role of the non-human in everyday configurations and networks connected to consumption and other environmental practices (Evans, 2011; Meyer, 2019; Schlosberg & Coles, 2015).

socio-natural landscapes reproduce power imbalances and the struggles to democratise urban natures (Cronon, 1991; Angel & Loftus, 2018; Silver, 2019).[33] This research will build from these approaches to propose a view not only of the city, but of the neighbourhood, as a socio-natural landscape.

Different themes can be studied as environmental justice and urban political ecology issues. Disputes over pollution and hazardous waste, access to water, green space, urban transportation, residential energy use, and food availability are some examples of the challenges disproportionately faced in a locality (Bullard & Jhonson, 2000; Heynen et al., 2006; Agyeman & Evans, 2016; Merlinsky, 2017b).

From all these issues, as mentioned in Chapter 1, this thesis will focus on everyday contexts of water scarcity and their connection to neighbour relationships and environmentalism, both informally and in more formal spaces of organisation. In the context of water scarcity, neighbour relationships have been observed as relevant for water sharing (Wutich & Ragsdale, 2008; Wutich et al., 2018).[34] Zug & Graefe (2014) identify "water gifts" between urban neighbours as a social practice that depends on the characteristics of water access and moral frameworks.

An important perspective on the role of urban water is present in the work of Watson (2017, 2019), who highlights the importance of water as part of cultural meanings and practices. Water actively mobilises embodied, strong, emotional responses related to its materiality for this author. Water is a crucial element of public space that can enrol "people in new social connections" as

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[33] Studying the growth of Mexico City over a lake, Vitz (2018, p. 6) affirms that the non-human environment is "inextricably joined to the built environment in the process of urbanisation".

[34] A systematic review of water sharing as a household practice has been produced by Wutich et al. (2018), who observe it as part of a larger context of complex social and political relations, norms, and infrastructural conditions.

publics that assemble to defend it (Watson, 2017, p. 970).[35] This view of embodiment links to a discussion of the landscape in connection and complementariness with the body (Ingold, 1993).

Water, particularly in cities, also carries an element of inequality connected to power asymmetry (Swyngedouw, 2004; Gandy, 2010; Graham et al., 2013). Power and social inequalities mark the production of uneven "waterscapes", a concept used within political ecology to describe the geographies of water presence, absence and flow, which involve the hybrid combination of physical and social elements (Rusca, 2023). Power relations are involved in defining these unequal geographies and landscapes (Swyngedouw, 1999).

Waterscapes, or water landscapes, can be observed from a perspective that focuses on everyday life and social practices, which can "create spaces of possibility for more equitable and inclusive water access" (Rusca, 2023, p. 288).[36] Waterscapes are altered by processes of contestation and influenced by the existence and combination of biophysical, socioeconomic, cultural, and infrastructural conditions (Ahlers et al., 2014). The concept of waterscape helps to observe these contestations, movements and conditions.

Urban water is central to experiences and struggles for environmental justice in Latin America. Focusing on the neighbourhood scale in Buenos Aires, Merlinsky (2017a; 2018) describes how a situation of flooding risks gave way to the emergence of an association composed of neighbours, activists, and academics. Studying the case of Mexico City, Castro (2004) emphasises how protests over water linked urban services with citizenship rights. Authors like

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[35] When discussing urban environmental justice with a pragmatic approach, local neighbourhoods can also be observed as a crucial arena for the spatial configuration of affected publics (Barnett & Bridge, 2013; Holifield, 2018).

[36] For Rusca & Cleaver (2022), this perspective is complemented by considering the institutional contexts and mechanisms that stabilise forms of producing the city.

Aldana Cohen (2016) and Millington (2018) observe, in different studies, how an urban water crisis in São Paulo gave way to conflicting views and experiences of scarcity. In all these cases, material and infrastructural conditions of everyday life intersect in experiences and responses to water shortage.[37]

After identifying elements that help to define neighbourhoods as localities and waterscapes, it will be relevant to understand how neighbours, informally or in local organisations, engage with the everyday material conditions that reproduce them through their social practices. Concepts related to localities and waterscapes will aid in empirically observing the WDC and its role in Santo Domingo and in answering RQ3. Focusing on social practices gives crucial insights to understand the contestations about water landscapes. Observing the neighbour as a central figure in this process can contribute to understanding neighbourhoods as specific settings of relationality rooted in everyday life conditions and relationships. This thesis will contribute to existing discussions on waterscapes by empirically describing how neighbours actively and creatively engage with the neighbourhood materiality.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the WDC has articulated its campaigning around obtaining a water well as a crucial form of water infrastructure that would influence everyday life in Santo Domingo. The discussion on infrastructures, which will be the focus of the following sub-section, can be useful in understanding how neighbours become involved in the everyday configuration of a water landscape.

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[37] In Mexico City, Medina-Rivas et al. (2022) have identified spatial patterns of uneven water household consumption, influenced by factors such as dependency from external sources, altitude, entertainment supply and socioeconomic factors.

Infrastructures and their role in the neighbourhood

A closer look into the disputes over everyday life conditions in neighbourhoods implies observing the social interaction and organisation around infrastructures. Infrastructure has claimed the attention of multiple reflections within the social sciences that have observed the assemblages of not only technological and material elements but also organised practices (Star, 1999). A focus on infrastructure has helped to visualise the politics involved in the movement of resources and its influence on the everyday experience of cities (McFarlane & Rutherford, 2008; Larkin, 2013).[38] Rather than observing them as a form of material hardware with inherent qualities, this thesis will build upon the insights developed by Star (1999) to analyse them relationally, in connection to practices and embedded in social contexts.

Infrastructures, in many cases related to water, are a crucial socio-technical assemblage in urban materiality (Graham et al., 2013; Graham & Thrift, 2016; McFarlane, 2019). In the context of Mexico City, De Coss-Corzo (2021, 2022) has observed how the infrastructural repair of the city's water pipe network involves an ongoing and iterative process. This requires human labour of adaptation, improvisation and creativity to face austere conditions and the possibility of socio-environmental collapse.

The materiality of infrastructure is relevant because of the human and non-human associations embedded in it and the possibilities for collective action that it enables (Amin, 2014).[39] However, local communities are not homogeneous, and it is necessary to analyse how the

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[38] Infrastructures have been observed for their relevance in creating social atmospheres and incarnating varied political projects (Larkin, 2013; Lemanski, 2020; Beveridge et al., 2024) and for their effects on citizenship experiences (Anand, 2011, 2012).

[39] Infrastructures are noticed more in situations of collapse and crisis, particularly in urban environments where repair and maintenance become crucial for survival. Therefore, their management becomes an arena for political contestation

internal dynamics and structural factors, particularly important in informal settlements of the Global South, influence the conditions for any intervention in the built environment that aims to improve its conditions (Spinardi et al., 2020).

An everyday practical engagement with their functioning in a heterogeneous landscape may represent a space for political action and possibility (Truelove & Cornea, 2020). Analysing the "repertoires of infrastructure production" mobilised by diverse actors and by focusing on infrastructures as "points of convergence" for both hegemonic and emancipatory agendas, as proposed by Tellez Contreras (2024, p.15), is crucial to observe this process. Furthermore, infrastructural production and provision are linked to how urban residents experience and practice citizenship (Lemanski, 2020).

An open and relational perspective has also been used to define infrastructure. This point of view can lead to a discussion of not only physical infrastructures associated with the material substrate, relational practices and knowledge required for the distribution of goods or information, such as grids, roads, pipes, sewers, and other forms of technology (Star, 1999; Graham & Thrift, 2016) but also of *social* infrastructures.

The concept of social infrastructure has been used to describe both settings for encounters and networks of social relationships that impact how people access resources, information, and social connections (Simone, 2004; Klinenberg, 2018). This thesis will simultaneously work with two definitions of social infrastructure, understanding them as spaces (or settings) for encounters and as a relational network.

(Graham & Thrift, 2016). Furthermore, repair and maintenance, as continuous activities with multiple ramifications, are a crucial aspect of the everyday functioning of cities (Thrift, 2005).

The first form of describing social infrastructure is through networks of everyday social relationships. A proposal developed by Simone (2004, 2014) emphasises observing how social relationships become forms of infrastructure with transient probabilities of existing and through practices of incrementalism and experimentation. Silver and McFarlane (2019) have used the concept of social infrastructure to include the everyday actions of marginalised local communities in urban spaces as an infrastructural display. For these authors, the "practice of connecting people and things in socio-material relations that sustain urban life" is crucial to understanding and defining social infrastructure (McFarlane & Silver, 2017, p. 463). This idea of infrastructure helps to observe how it influences, in an experimental and fragmentary way, the flow of crucial resources and information for the reproduction of life and the possibilities of inhabiting contemporary cities (Simone, 2004).

The second form of understanding social infrastructure is as a public setting for encounters between people (Klinenberg, 2018; Latham & Layton, 2019). This view of social infrastructure, related to the work of Klinenberg (2018), is used to analyse the social benefits of parks, community centres, libraries, coffee shops, and other shared spaces. There are different forms in which such spaces are administrated and appropriated, and for Latham & Layton (2019), the political process involved in their provision and maintenance should not be overlooked.

According to Klinenberg (2018), this infrastructure is as necessary as "hard" or "material" infrastructure when facing problems such as social isolation, polarisation, and climate change.[40] For this author, social infrastructure can refer to both places and organisations because they matter

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[40] Observing social infrastructure is also relevant for understanding responses to natural disasters in vulnerable communities (Klinenberg et al., 2020). Studying the social factors involved in the consequences of a heat wave in Chicago, Klinenberg (2002) identifies how social infrastructure and structural conditions influence the emergence of care networks that can make a difference in facing a threat.

for face-to-face interaction on a frequent and recurrent basis. Social infrastructure, understood through this perspective, is important for the well-being and public engagement of a population. In multiple studies, there is evidence that social isolation is detrimental to well-being, that social relationships can impact health, and that social inequality affects public life (Umberson & Montez, 2010; Bayon & Saravi, 2013).[41] However, Layton & Latham (2022, p. 756) identify that this concept helps to observe how places support multiple forms of social life and argue that social infrastructure is not the same as public space since it allows for different connections that are not always related to a single dimension of publicness or civic engagement.

When studying contexts of urban multi-culture, Neal (2022) observes neighbour relationships as a social infrastructure. These relationships are crucial for supporting situated social life. They enable connections, have an element of publicness, and involve a pragmatic and affective component. Furthermore, neighbour relationships are informal and less governable than other forms of infrastructure (Neal, 2022).

This thesis will build on these conceptual proposals and extend the focus from neighbour relationships to neighbour-based organisations, exploring how they can be a form of social infrastructure. The following sub-section will introduce some concepts that help in understanding this process. However, the connection between social infrastructures and the waterscape, and the characteristics of neighbourhood organisations as social infrastructures, are two elements of RQ3 that will be explored with empirical observation and not only conceptually.

A word of caution is necessary when discussing social and physical infrastructures simultaneously. The analysis of different forms of infrastructure can lead to assuming a separation

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[41] From a quantitative perspective, there is evidence of how neighbour relationships influence variables such as social cohesion, a sense of community, and their connection to well-being (Farrell et al., 2004; Ibarra Salazar et al., 2023).

between dimensions of urban everyday life. This would imply thinking that the physical and social dimensions of the city were disconnected between them or even opposed to each other. Instead, it will be relevant to observe the connections between different infrastructures and the entanglements of the physical and the social that constitute cities, as has been argued by Middleton & Samanani (2022). In this research, these connections are crucial for analysing different aspects of neighbour environmentalism, focusing on the scale of the neighbourhood as a locality and landscape.

Furthermore, another risk of the discussion on social infrastructures is how it could also lead to favouring some aspects of the sociality of these infrastructures, ignoring the nuances and complexities that they involve (Middleton & Samanani, 2022). A focus on the creative and active engagement with local spaces of organising, embedded in everyday life and social practices, is fundamental to identifying the nuances of neighbour relationships in these infrastructures. This thesis aims to understand the infrastructural qualities of neighbour-based organisations without ignoring their particularity and describe how they can be a form of social infrastructure.

Observing neighbour-based organisations as social infrastructures

Neighbour-based organisations, when analysed through the concept of social infrastructure, have some specific characteristics. While they can rely on and produce a setting for encounters, this is not permanent but contingent on the rhythms and spaces of their meetings. Furthermore, while they rely on a network of everyday relationships and voluntary participation, they represent a more formal, public expression of neighbour relationships than informal interactions. This section will focus on street assemblies as a characteristic of neighbour-based organisations, particularly of the

WDC, and as a key for understanding its infrastructural qualities both as a setting for encounters and a public expression of relationships.

Similarly to observations of communities and personal relationships, focusing on the social practices of the WDC will be a useful tool for the analysis. One of these practices is holding street assemblies as moments for interaction, public recognition and dialogue. Street assemblies are public meetings that occupy open spaces like sidewalks, squares and streets of a neighbourhood. They have a specific temporality and a limited duration. The themes discussed in these assemblies relate to the goals and campaigns of local activist organisations or social movements.

Authors like Corsin Jimenez and Estalella (2013, 2014) propose to observe neighbour street assemblies as a form of infrastructure and atmosphere.[42] An idea of social "atmospheres" is developed from how Thrift (2009, p.124) uses it to describe "surrounds or shelters, self-animated spaces that give their inhabitants the resources to produce worlds". This connects to the discussion developed by Amin (2015, p.254), of how resonances between bodies and environments generate specific "atmospheres of place" that can influence and animate social and political life. Corsin Jimenez and Estalella (2013, p. 121) use the concept of social atmosphere to study street assemblies as rhythmic occupations of space that produce the neighbour, as "an effect of ambience-experimentation", that results from "the assembling of atmospheric interventions in and with the urban fabric".

The studies conducted by Corsin Jimenez & Estalella authors about the 15-M movement, which involved public space occupations and protests against austerity in different cities of Spain,

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[42] These authors build upon the work of Thrift around atmospheres (2009), who in turn recovers philosophical insights around space and spheres from Sloterdijk.

offer important insights into understanding the infrastructural work of assemblies that turned public spaces into sites for encounter and deliberation, as atmospheres for experimentally producing the neighbour. Through deliberation and encounter, "people are 'assembled into' neighbours around shared concerns, even if they hold antagonistic or actually conflicting positions." (Corsin Jimenez & Estalella, 2014, pp. 161-162). This process involves the production of a rhythm or temporality of encounter, and the periodical process of place-making through the occupation of space (Estalella & Corsin Jimenez, 2013).[43]

Within discussions in urban sociology, spatial copresence in the street is also important for everyday experiences of community and interdependency. Spatial interdependency is at play in the relational settings of public familiarity, in which belonging is a possibility and practice that derives from the simple condition of "being next to" and "being with" each other (Blokland, 2018). Therefore, street assemblies can be observed as settings for social encounters.

The relevance of encounters in public spaces is also present in how Morgan (2009) argues that neighbours differ from strangers since they carry an element of social *recognition as* an everyday achievement. Furthermore, as suggested by Horgan (2012; 2017), there can be a form of "minimal solidarity" and coexistence between strangers that leads, through recognition, to different forms of solidarity in urban everyday life. Therefore, it would be important to observe how neighbour-based organisations connect to this everyday recognition (of people and places) that helps to constitute the neighbourhood as a locality, explored in a previous subsection (Mayol, 1999; Giglia, 2009; 2019).

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[43] However, neighbours are characterised by their possible disappearance, and their presence is not assured, so the intervention of public space influences how neighbours can appear (Corsin Jimenez & Estalella, 2013, 2014).

Another element related to neighbour-based organisations is how they stabilise the network of relationships that defines social infrastructure. A spatial and localised social infrastructure implies not only the encounter and interaction of neighbours in the street but also the experimentation and fragile solidarities and alliances for survival in contexts of urban precarity (Simone, 2004; 2014). In this sense, the neighbour-based organisation can be an experimental space for the formal expression of neighbour relationships, and it will be pertinent to observe how their pragmatism produces conditions that temporarily stabilise and strengthen neighbour alliances towards mutual care in precarious settings (Silver & McFarlane, 2019). This process can be particularly relevant in spaces with a history of popular urbanisation (Streule et al., 2020).

With these conceptual insights, it is possible to empirically study how neighbour-based organisations, and particularly the WDC, function as social infrastructures. A particularly relevant area for study is how these spaces matter as atmospheres for interaction and recognition and how they represent a more formal, public expression and construction of neighbour relationships. In this sense, the role of these organisations in producing atmospheres where neighbours recognise each other and become actively and creatively involved in the public expression of neighbour relationships will be a focus of the analysis that helps to develop existing discussions of social infrastructure.

Conclusion

This chapter reviews various studies from different disciplines and perspectives. It identifies connections between them and presents an effort to align them. In doing so, it also situates this thesis within a background of previous and ongoing reflections. It brings the discussion on

neighbour relationships and everyday environmentalism together, constructing a conceptual framework to study neighbour environmentalism in conditions of urban precarity.

This chapter also relates studies from diverse geographies that can complement each other. The sociological literature around neighbours would benefit from including insights from the experience of neighbouring in the cultural and social context of cities in the Global South, which can involve informality or precarity. Additionally, while the discussion of environmental justice has considered themes like place attachment or community, it has not emphasised the neighbour as a figure.

The focus on social practices was relevant for the alignment of different discussions. Social practices are central to understanding neighbours, community, belonging, activism, and infrastructure, either directly or for their connection to other concepts. This emphasis on social practices will also be part of this thesis. An example of this is how resonance will be a concept used to observe people momentarily coming together and increasing their capacities without assuming the unity of a collective actor. Another example is how this thesis will approach neighbour relationships as a dynamic and continuous reciprocal engagement.

The significance of everyday life also showed how different literatures align. Everyday life was particularly relevant throughout discussions of neighbours, environmental justice, and urban water. In this thesis, the centrality of everyday life is evident in studying processes of mutual recognition, the production of water landscapes, or the different dimensions of environmental injustice through mundane, emotional, material, and sensory elements. This focus implies engagement with and attentiveness to embodied, lived experiences.

As this chapter has indicated, this thesis highlights the practical engagements, meanings, and lived experiences of neighbouring and organising under environmental extremes. The next chapter will present the methodological approach to studying neighbour relationships, environmentalism, activism, and local organising. It will describe the methods, the case study context, and the procedure and ethical factors of data collection, processing and analysis.

Chapter 3: Methodology, case study, and fieldwork

Introduction

The previous chapter offered a conceptual framework to study how neighbour relationships and environmentalism intersect. However, researching social processes involves not only discussing concepts but also a process of relational data production and analysis as a crucial step for constructing knowledge. The empirical work on the everyday environmentalism of the neighbour is not very developed and is an area for research that this thesis contributes to. This chapter will discuss the methodological approach for this thesis. It will also discuss the details and context of the case study and describe the steps for data collection and processing, offering some ethical considerations about this research.

The previous chapter also made a case for observing this research problem through a focus on everyday life and social practices, which has methodological implications. Most of the studies mentioned in the previous chapter used qualitative methods to explore issues like personal relationships, communities, environmentalism, protest, localities, and infrastructure. This chapter discusses this point further when commenting on the methodological antecedents of this research.

This chapter discusses a qualitative approach to explore the connection between neighbourhood relationships and urban environmental justice struggles in water-scarce Mexico City. The methods for data collection, all related to specific research questions, are sit-down semi-structured interviews, participant diaries, walking interviews, observational walks, and participant observation.

This chapter will also discuss the usefulness of a case study design, describe the context of this case study, and introduce the research participants. Doing fieldwork involves personal and ethical implications and a decision-making process. Therefore, this chapter will also present a summary of the data collection and analysis processes and reflections on the ethics and experiences of the fieldwork.

The combination of methods and carrying out fieldwork will be part of a process of interpreting lived experiences through the perspective of research participants. By walking with others and engaging in different forms of conversation with them, I aim to describe and understand the neighbour as a site for everyday environmentalism. This process of interpretation involves being open and open to follow in the routes that participants lead. It implicates being attentive to details, listening to stories, and creatively immersing myself in the setting of the neighbourhood. It also requires identifying the mechanisms through which local organising transforms the "here and now" of everyday life.

Methodological approach

<u>Methods and rationale for their selection</u>

The overall aim of this research is to understand how neighbour relationships become a site of everyday environmentalism. It describes how neighbour environmentalism works and why it works in this way in the context of water-scarce Mexico City. As presented in the introduction, it approaches this goal with the following research questions.

- RQ1: How and in what ways are urban neighbour relationships affected and reconfigured in contexts of water scarcity?

- RQ2: How do local, neighbour-based organisations contribute to the practice of urban environmental justice in contexts of water scarcity?

- RQ3: In what ways are neighbour-based organisations a form of social infrastructure, and how has the WDC generated a neighbourhood waterscape?

Different qualitative methods and strategies will help to answer these questions. The specifics of each of them are explored in more depth later in the chapter to explain their usefulness and offer a more detailed description of the data collection process. These methods are sit-down interviews (discussed further on page 30), participant diaries (page 31), walking interviews (page 33), observational walks (page 35), and participant observation (page 36). The connection of these methods with the research questions is outlined below.

- Sit-down interviews with research participants. The interviews were semi-structured and took place in different spaces of Santo Domingo (homes, community centre, coffee shops). They lead to constructing knowledge through a dialogical exploration of stories and experiences and helped to answer RQ1, RQ2 and RQ3.

- Diaries completed by participants over a two-week or three-week period. Participant diaries helped to address RQ1 and RQ2 since they helped to pay attention to the details involved in everyday life, the meanings of neighbour relationships, and the practices of social reproduction in water-scarce contexts.

- Walking interviews with research participants. These were conducted in the streets, parks, and sidewalks of Santo Domingo. Walking interviews, as a form of walking and talking in a tour decided by and guided by the participants, helped to give insights into the connection between place, practice, and everyday life and to answer RQ1, RQ2 and RQ3.

- Observational walks (by myself) in the streets of Santo Domingo. The walks, conducted throughout the fieldwork at different stages, aimed to observe neighbourhood life at various moments of the week and offered insights that helped to answer RQ1 and RQ3.

- Participant observation in activities organised by the WDC. These include meetings and street assemblies. Conducting participant observation and engaging in the activities of this group gave insights into the dynamics of protest around neighbourhood issues, helping to answer RQ2 and RQ3.

This thesis follows a qualitative approach with a constructivist and interpretative strategy. This qualitative methodology will be crucial for observing social practices, meaning-making, place-making, and networks of personal relationships (Mason & Dale, 2011; Mason, 2017). This approach will also help to produce an in-depth understanding and description of mundane and sometimes overlooked dimensions of everyday life (Back, 2007). This implies an openness and creative, pragmatic engagement with the role of material, relational and sensory aspects (Pink, 2009; Neal & Murji, 2015; Hall & Holmes, 2020).[44]

Using different methods in this research is not directed towards generating a triangulation strategy that allows for the maximum extraction of data but to ethnographically explore the

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[44] This perspective is influenced by phenomenological concerns on the experiential aspect of social life and an emphasis on the social significance of the materiality involved in everyday interaction (Pink, 2008; 2012).

multiple aspects defining a complex research problem (Mason, 2011). As Brownlie (2011, p. 472) argues, using diverse methods contributes to exploring the complexity and multifaceted nature of personal life through different forms of reflexivity and is not a process of "triangulation, a way of 'nailing' the reality of what being there in the research definitively means". The reflective use of multiple methods helps to construct diverse research relationships and narrative environments (Davies & Heaphy, 2011), producing spaces for dialogue with participants during fieldwork.

Methodological antecedents

Many of the studies discussed in Chapter 2 use a qualitative approach to study neighbour relationships, struggles for environmental justice, and practical engagements with neighbourhood materiality. However, this is not the only way of exploring these issues. Neighbours and neighbourhoods have been studied using a diverse range of methods, drawing from different theoretical frameworks and epistemological positions (Kallus & Law-Yone, 2016). Studies about neighbours and local communities use quantitative data (Volker et al., 2006), mixed methods approach (Blokland et al., 2022a), social network analysis (Crossley, 2021), and qualitative approaches using sit-down interviews, mobile interviews, diaries, and ethnographical and participant observation (Crow et al., 2002; Heil, 2014; Bennett, 2015; Clark, 2017; Neal, 2022).

Discussions of environmental justice can also use various methods, including spatial analysis, quantitative analysis, and ethnographic description (Agyeman et al., 2016). Qualitative studies of urban social movements and community organisations conducted in the Mexican context incorporate document analysis, ethnographic observation and interviewing (Giglia, 1996; Castro, 2004; Guerra Blanco, 2013). Additionally, studies of infrastructure and social infrastructure in

different locations, from the perspective of anthropology and human geography, also incorporate qualitative and ethnographical methods (Star, 1999; Latham & Layton, 2019; De Coss-Corzo, 2021). The specific focus on water can lead to descriptions of spatial patterns of consumption (Medina-Rivas et al., 2022) or accounts of its influence on everyday life and social relationships (Zug & Graefe, 2014).

The qualitative methods described in this chapter aim to simultaneously produce rich, profound, and sensitive data that reconstructs and represents lived experiences of neighbouring, environmental justice activism, and local organising. As Back (2015, p. 821) suggests, taking the mundane seriously helps us to consider what is "at stake" in our daily encounters with people in urban spaces. For this author, studying everyday life, and taking the mundane seriously, involves considering the implications of different narratives and remaining attentive to overlooked details (Back, 2007, 2009).

Case study and research participants

The usefulness of case studies and the ethnographic approach

This thesis will work with a case study approach. This approach will help to observe how a local process unfolds in a specific context, seeking to learn from the case. I selected a case-study city, a case-study neighbourhood in the city, and a case-study neighbour-based organisation. This will help to build knowledge about the multiple scales of the research problem.

The case study approach is a commonly used strategy within social research, particularly in qualitative research designs, to test hypotheses, generate theoretical insights, and describe of how a particular situation unfolds. A case study is the focused analysis of a bounded process that generates knowledge through a careful description and analysis of both its characteristics and its

context (Mitchell, 2000; Stake, 2008). According to Mitchell (2000), a case becomes significant when contrasted with other analytical insights and experiences. These insights and experiences are pertinent for constructing research questions, with which a case becomes meaningful and effectively delimited from its context. The analytical usefulness of case studies is found not in the intrinsic elements of a case but rather in the possibility of making logical connections between them, leading to analytical proposals which can serve to discuss general processes.

One of the issues to consider when working with case studies is the possibility of generalisation. For Lincoln and Guba (2000), the case study approach should not aim to produce universal and deterministic generalisations. Instead, case studies aim to identify the role of local conditions that influence the case in question, enabling an understanding of how a specific process works. According to these authors, deep knowledge of the social environment in which the situation develops is key for determining the possibility of transferring analytical insights from the context of a case into another. The context is also crucial in defining what a case study can offer as findings, as a frame in which it is possible to understand phenomena.

Selecting the case is a crucial matter of discussion in case study research designs. For Stake (2008), cases are determined using an instrumental or intrinsic interest. An instrumental interest in the case implies that the situation is meaningful according to its relation to an external element, often related to theoretical hypotheses. An intrinsic interest in a case study signifies a desire to understand a singular situation in its particularities. According to this author, cases should not be selected as if they were a sample that, mirroring statistical reasoning, represents a larger population. Instead, a case is chosen because of the opportunities to learn from it (Stake, 2008). The more it is possible to learn from a case and its qualities, even if they are not typical of a larger community, the better.

This research will approach the neighbourhood of Santo Domingo through a detailed description, attention to the rhythms of everyday life and taking part in the sensoriality and social relationships of the locality. The data collection involved a process of immersive fieldwork during nine months - between October 2022 and June 2023. Descriptions of the social context and built environment of Santo Domingo as a setting for interaction, constructed with this fieldwork, are crucial throughout the data analysis.

This research design involves an immersive fieldwork process and a detailed description of contexts. These elements relate to ethnography as a method (Ingold, 2014; Mason, 2017; Biskupovic & Brinck Pinsent, 2018). The selection of case studies and the intense involvement of research participants as active voices in data collection through different forms of conversation and practical engagement with their activities are also components of ethnographies. Therefore, the ethnographic approach has a clear influence on the research design of this thesis.

Ethnography is a method that aims to generate knowledge through the profound description of a cultural, social, material and practical setting (Pink, 2009; Mason, 2017). The perspective and routines of people in their own lives are crucial for this approach, which is characterised by the attentive observation of everyday rhythms, traditionally over an extended period, intending to become immersed in a social setting (Mason, 2017, p. 55). However, and recognising the differences between observation and ethnographic methods, for this research, I prefer to use the term "observation" to describe my walks and participation in activities. All of this, without denying the influences of the ethnographic approach in my analysis.[45]

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[45] Ethnography and observation are not equivalent methods, as has been argued by Mason (2017). Building upon some insights proposed by Ingold (2014), this research used participant observation with an ethnographic approach to get a direct experience of social interactions, materiality, and place, which are fundamental to describing a locality. While the ethnographic approach is highly influential in my research design, the goal of this study is not to retrospectively

Context and case study: Santo Domingo as a neighbourhood

This thesis will work with the case study of the Water Defence Committee of Santo Domingo (WDC) [*Comité en Defensa del Agua de Santo Domingo*][46]. This case offers an opportunity for learning and generating insightful analytical connections between its elements (Mitchell, 2000; Stake, 20008). As was mentioned in Chapter 1, this group consists of residents from Santo Domingo, many of whom live in the same area or streets within the neighbourhood, who became organised due to the consequences of water scarcity (Quintero, 2021).

The WDC offers a good opportunity to examine the links between neighbours and environmental activism. This organisation is integrated by neighbours (with a definition specified later in the chapter), and its goals and campaigns centre on urban water access and the neighbourhood as a locality, which can be framed as environmental justice claims. It offers the opportunity to study the connection between neighbours, local organising, and the context of urban water scarcity, a problem that, as mentioned in the introduction, is not exclusive to Mexico City or this neighbourhood.

Chapter 1 presented a brief outline of Santo Domingo as a neighbourhood and the WDC as a neighbour-based organisation. This section will describe this neighbourhood, the conditions of intermittent water supply, and the characteristics of the WDC in more detail.

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describe or write about a group (Ingold, 2014) or to offer a thick description that helps to interpret a culture (Geertz, 1973).

[46] The name of the group in Spanish.

With 89,704 inhabitants, Santo Domingo is one of the largest and most densely populated neighbourhoods in Mexico City. Located in the municipality of Coyoacan in south Mexico City, Santo Domingo was born when approximately 5,000 families occupied, or "invaded", lands that form part of the rocky grounds [*pedregales*][47] of Coyoacan in September 1971 (Diaz Enciso, 2002). After the land occupation came a process of self-built housing and organisation to negotiate with the government of the city, resist attempts of evacuation, introduce urban services like water, electricity and drainage, and make roads through days of collective community work [*faena*][48] (Lopez Rosas, 2021). This process was accompanied by intense social organisation and political mobilisation in connection to the origins of the Popular Urban Movement (MUP, for its Spanish acronym) in Mexico City.

As discussed in Chapter 1, this context and history matter for understanding contemporary struggles and local organising. Santo Domingo is an example of how informality and popular urbanisation form part of urban growth in Mexico and Latin America (Caldeira, 2017; Streule et al., 2020).[49] In this thesis, the concept of "popular urbanisation" (Streule et al., 2020) will be used to describe this history and context.

Compared with other neighbourhoods of Coyoacan and Mexico City, Santo Domingo has a relatively low social development index and high levels of socioeconomic deprivation. Most of the blocks in this neighbourhood have a status of Low or Very Low according to the Social

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[47] The word *pedregal* is used to describe areas of Mexico City with mostly volcanic stone.

[48] The word *faena* is used to describe days of collective work required to build roads and introduce urban services during the early years of the neighbourhood.

[49] Santo Domingo was born through land invasion, self-built housing and regularisation described in Chapter 1. For its transversal engagement with the fringes of official politics and its connection to inequality, it can be observed as an informal mode of urbanisation. However, given the role of residents in producing the built environment, this can also be conceptualised as a process of popular urbanisation.

Development Index of Mexico City (SDI-CDMX). This index, measured in 2020, is calculated by the Evaluation Council for the Social Development of Mexico City (EVALUA CDMX) and is composed of the dimensions of housing quality, urban services, education, social security, and access to health services (EVALUA CDMX, 2021).

A map of this index, applied to the blocks in the municipality of Coyoacan, is shown in Figure 14. This map, generated using the web page of EVALUA CDMX, uses darker shades of red to illustrate blocks with lower scores in the SDI-CDMX. In it, a concentration of blocks with lower SDI-CDMX is observable in Santo Domingo, located in the southwest of the municipality, particularly noticeable when compared to other neighbourhoods within Coyoacan (Figure 15 shows Santo Domingo within Coyoacan as a reference).
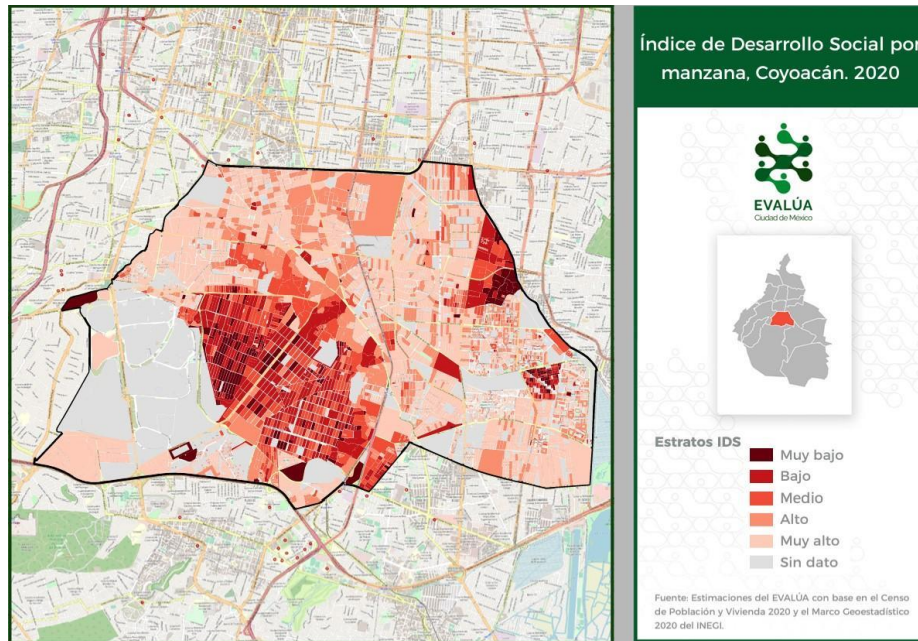
Figure 14. SDI-CDMX of Coyoacan. Source: generated by EVALUA CDMX (2021)
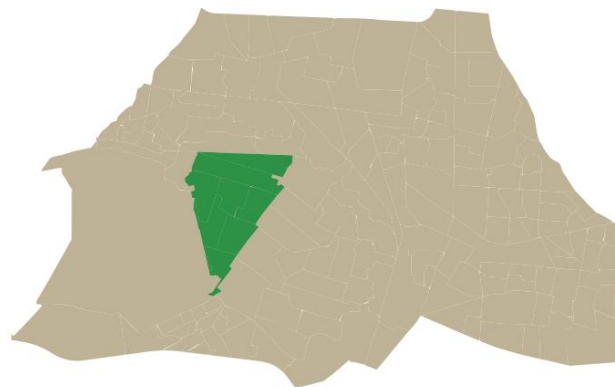
Figure 15. Santo Domingo within Coyoacan (2) Source: created by researcher

A socio-demographic description of Santo Domingo, done with data from the Population Census of 2020 and the Inter-Census Survey of 2015 realised by the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI 2016; 2021), will help to contextualise this case study. The median age in

Santo Domingo is 33 years, which indicates a relative youth of this neighbourhood. The median age of the inhabitants of Mexico City is 35 years, but the city has a shifting age profile and an ageing population.

This neighbourhood did not reflect many international migrants in the data from 2020 and 2015. A different picture can be observed when focusing on internal migrants since 21.5 % of the population of this neighbourhood was born in other states and regions within Mexico. However, only 2.9% of the residents of the neighbourhood were living in another entity in 2015, which means that while many people from other places of Mexico, most of them are not recent migrants but people who arrived in the city more than five years ago, many of which are related to the first occupations on the neighbourhood.

In terms of ethnicity, 3% of the population in Santo Domingo speak an indigenous language, which is higher than the 1.4% of Mexico City. In Santo Domingo, 1.7% of the population identify as African Mexican or African descendants, which is similar but lower than the 2% for Mexico City. These are the only ethnic differentials in the INEGI census. 5.9% of the households in Santo Domingo were classified as Indigenous in 2020, lower than the 9.28% of Mexico City. Concerning religion, the proportion of the catholic population in Santo Domingo is 75.2%, similar to the 75.9% in Mexico City. People without religion in this neighbourhood are 17.9% of the population, while protestants and evangelicals represent 6.6%, and 0.2% have another religion. Therefore, most inhabitants share ethnic and religious identifications.

Many inhabitants of Santo Domingo work in the services sector or small manufacturing and commercial activities. However, only 65.6% of the population 12 years or older are economically active, which indicates a high proportion of people dedicated to studying or care-

related work. Of the economically active population, 2.4% are unemployed. It is important to mention that 30.5% of the population does not have access to the social security system that allows public or private employees to access government health services, and only 2.3% have access to private health services. Given the relationship between access to this social security system and formal employment status, these percentages can serve as a proxy for self-employment and the precarity and informality of employment in this area. 25.3% of the population has higher education instruction, lower than the 34.6% of Mexico City. In this neighbourhood, the number of homes with more than 2.5 inhabitants per room is 26.2%, a higher proportion than the 4.43% of Mexico City and a higher proportion than the national percentage of 6.7%, suggesting a situation of overcrowding.

Santo Domingo has experienced the consequences of a reduction in water availability that has affected all of Mexico City, described in Chapter 1 (Watts, 2015). Interruptions to the water supply have been a constant reality in the neighbourhood, with residents facing uncertainty regarding the times of the day and even the days of the week when water will "arrive" at their household taps. Therefore, many of the households of this neighbourhood, while connected to the urban water services, receive water by a system of "turns" [*tandeo*][50], which consists of the restricted provision of water, usually related to certain hours of the day or days of the week.

The *tandeo*, which is not implemented in all of the city and has affected specific zones and neighbourhoods, has provoked a de facto water shortage in Santo Domingo. It has triggered a rationing reality for its inhabitants, a source of uncertainty regarding the times and days that water arrives, and inequality related to households' capacity. If a home counts with a water tank or a

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[50] The word used to describe intermittent water supply in Mexico City. It is related to the Spanish word for series, turn, or relay.

cistern, it can take advantage of the hours of the day that water "arrives" to fill them, but not all of them have that possibility.

Facing this situation, the government of the municipality of Coyoacan and SACMEX, the water administration institution of Mexico City, offer the inhabitants the option of asking for water trucks, which would distribute the liquid directly to their homes. Residents call the municipality, register on a list and wait for their turn to receive the water trucks [*pipa*][51]. However, the distribution of *pipas* can be discretional, and a lack of transparency is part of the political context of clientelist practices in which they are sent in exchange for support, particularly around elections. Water scarcity and the uncertainties of *tandeo*, combined with the lack of transparency and clientelist practices in the distribution of *pipas*, give way to neighbourhood protests to pressure the authorities around these issues (Quintero, 2021).

In recent years, this problem has aggravated. However, this does not mean it is a new element of the reality of Santo Domingo. The water system was introduced to the neighbourhood in the 1980s as part of a program in which the people of Santo Domingo would contribute to the local government to ensure the pipes were introduced. Residents dug ditches to install the water network in front of their houses and charged for the materials. This history of water scarcity forms part of the identity of the neighbourhood as well, and residents make continuous references to the memory of carrying water using a "water holder" [*aguantador*] [52] as an effort of moving water into their houses.

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[51] The Spanish word used to name a water truck in Mexico City

[52] The aguantador, translated as "holder", is the Spanish word to name a device that consists of a log attached to two buckets or bottles, used to move water around the neighbourhood.

The mural presented in Figure 16 shows a woman carrying water with an *aguantador*, which reflects a history and identity that forms part of the memories of the early days of Santo Domingo. Due to water scarcity, protests, roadblocks, and sit-ins in the mayor's offices have been part of the reality in Santo Domingo and Coyoacan (Quintero, 2021). These protests and issues are not limited to Santo Domingo, but the context of self-built housing, land occupation and activism for 50 years adds an element of resistance that becomes part of contemporary neighbourhood organising.

Figure 16. Memories of carrying water in Santo Domingo
Source: taken by researcher 02/11/22

Case study organisation: Water Defence Committee of Santo Domingo

Water scarcity, political manipulation, and clientelist practices using the *tandeo* system and the *pipas* to distribute water led to protests in Santo Domingo. In February 2020, after weeks of intense water scarcity and intermittent supply, a group of neighbours from a particularly affected area in

the neighbourhood called for a protest and organised a street assembly with more neighbours who had been campaigning for water access since 2017.

This context led to the formation of the Water Defence Committee of Santo Domingo (WDC). The WDC was formed by residential neighbours with the urgent demand of improving the water supply in the neighbourhood. Chapter 4 describes the emergence of this group and how it crucially involved neighbours reaching out and knocking on each other's door.

The main activities of the WDC are neighbourhood assemblies and protests to raise awareness of the problem, gather more neighbours in the organisation, and pressure the authorities (Figure 17). Through these protests, it has accessed the possibility of meeting with the mayor's office of Coyoacan and with people from SACMEX, the water administration system of Mexico City.

They ask for a more efficient distribution through the *tandeo*. To achieve this goal, in 2020, they made tours and surveys in the neighbourhood to register the condition of water infrastructure, identify where the shortage was worst, report water leaks, and monitor the quantities and qualities of water. After this, they proposed a new arrangement in the tandeo system, accepted by the local authorities.

They have also asked for a more transparent assignment of *pipas,* while aiming to improve the supply and make them unnecessary. For this reason, the main goal of the WDC is the construction and functioning of a water well. After years of campaigning, the well was approved, and construction commenced in November 2021. SACMEX conducted the construction works. However, they were closely monitored by the WDC through daily visits and fortnightly meetings with engineers. The well was concluded and started functioning in December 2022.

Figure 17. Street assembly of the WDC

The WDC considers that the struggle for water is part of a fight to improve the living conditions in Santo Domingo. An important element that connects to the struggle over water is resistance to displacement and the consequences of real-estate speculation in the *pedregales* of Coyoacan. Figures 18, 19 and 20 show a mural painted by members of this organization in 2020. In this mural, they portray a vision for Santo Domingo, and some of their slogans are also presented, including "Water for the *pedregales*", "We want a well", and "Defend water / protect life". In these slogans, it is possible to identify a connection between the defence of water and the defence of a livelihood. The mural also presents an image of well-being for humans and non-humans inhabiting a place where water flows. As was mentioned in Chapter 1, this visual aspect is very present in Santo Domingo, and murals are fundamental in constructing the identity of residents through the narration of a shared history of struggle.

Figure 18. Water for the *pedregales* mural
Source: taken by researcher 24/02/23

The history of the struggle to transform the pedregales into an inhabitable neighbourhood influences current possibilities of protest and organising in Santo Domingo and the WDC. Many research participants expressed their memories of the land invasion and the neighbourhood's early years, describing their remembrances of fetching and carrying water using the *aguantador* and all the effort this represented. These memories were part of many interviews and participant diaries. In some cases, participants who were part of previous activism campaigns also recalled their struggle to obtain urban services like water in a pipe network or guarantee housing rights or their involvement in the *faenas* to build the neighbourhood.

As new generations inhabit Santo Domingo, it would be important to examine and observe, as part of this research, how political biographies, family stories and collective memory influence the emotional motivations behind contemporary protest. However, while the first generations of inhabitants mobilised primarily to get housing rights, contemporary inhabitants face environmental deterioration and real estate speculative practices in a consolidated neighbourhood.[53] Initial disputes over urban services connect to contemporary concerns over the urban developments that affect ecosystems, water provision facing city-wide scarcity, and climate change, as will be explored in the empirical chapters.

Figure 19. Detail of the WDC mural (1)
Source: taken by researcher 02/11/22

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[53] As will be discussed in Chapter 4, the struggle of the WDC forms part of a history of contestation and conflict. This group has a direct antecedent in an urban conflict related to the building of apartment towers that damaged a shallow aquifer in one of the limits of Santo Domingo. Some of the members of the WDC were part of the protests against this project, but most of them joined this new group without being involved in it. Even with their continuities, the goals and characteristics of the two groups are different.

Figure 20. Detail of the WDC mural (2)
Source: taken by researcher 03/05/23

The context of this case study is fundamental to understanding its analytical value and to identify elements that can be related to other settings. The struggle of this group brings forward elements related to neighbourhood activism, displacement, and environmental justice, which are not exclusive to Mexico City but are present in other cities around the world. These issues are particularly relevant in contexts of urban precarity (Campbell & Laheij, 2021). This case also brings forward elements of neighbour relationships that are important to analyse, from which it is possible to build knowledge about neighbour relationships in different geographies.

Given the centrality of the well for the campaigns of the WDC, this case helps to show the importance of infrastructure. This well, which injects water into the system and increases the availability of pressure in the pipes that go into every household, was a central element of the fieldwork process. It was also an unexpected element of the fieldwork since I was not aware of its

importance and existence before arriving in Santo Domingo in October 2022. For its characteristics as a neighbour-based organisation and the intersection of environmental justice issues with the protagonism of the neighbour, this is a good case study for the research and represents a good possibility for learning.

<u>Research participants</u>

The research participants of this thesis are all members of the WDC, which are residents of Santo Domingo. The research participants are part of the events and activities of the group, but their involvement in the group varies. While some only assisted street assemblies, others were involved in monitoring water pressure or the building of the well, distribution through *pipas*, and negotiating with government officials.

All participants can be defined as residential neighbours since all of them inhabit the *pedregal* of Santo Domingo. All of the members of the WDC live in Santo Domingo, making them neighbours that inhabit this locality. Additionally, most of the members and research participants live in the central zone of Santo Domingo,[54] so they also live within a couple of blocks from each other or, on many occasions, in the same street. Therefore, while not all of the WDC members are next-door neighbours, they are all residents of the same neighbourhood, and most of them live in the same smaller area within this neighbourhood.

Defining what constitutes a neighbour and a neighbourhood becomes complex with empirical observation. Being a neighbour is always constructed in relation to someone. The

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[54] The division of this neighbourhood into different zones (central, upper, and lower zone) is a geographical construct that forms part of the shared knowledge in this area. This organisation used this division for its activism and coordination.

difference between neighbours, neighbour-based organisations, and neighbourhoods as different scales of this study is discussed in Chapter 1.[55]

It is significant to note that the WDC constantly uses and names the figure of the neighbour as part of its campaigns, protests, and public meetings. Attendees to these meetings call each other "neighbours", and this organisation roots its goals and campaigns in having neighbours as members, making this a meaningful category and a crucial element of identity and mutual recognition in the local organisation.[56] In this research, neighbours are not only near-dwellers (Painter, 2012) but also *persons defined as such in the WDC.*

As previously mentioned, not all the research participants or the members of the WDC live on the same street or are next-door neighbours, even if they live in Santo Domingo. Furthermore, Santo Domingo is one of the largest neighbourhoods in Mexico City, and not all of its residents are part of the WDC. Street assemblies during the fieldwork were attended by approximately 60 neighbours, who were representatives of households involved in the group. During the fieldwork and data collection period, the WDC had approximately 200 active members. Given the size of Santo Domingo, the members of the WDC do not necessarily interact on an everyday basis.

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[55] Defining neighbours involves a relational element. While the concept of resident or inhabitant may refer to people who occupy a space, the neighbour is always defined relationally. Additionally, its characteristics make it not any relationship but a socio-spatial relationship. They are a form of acquaintance located in space (recovering terms proposed by Morgan, 2009).

[56] An element discussed in the empirical chapters is *how* neighbour-based organisations, particularly the WDC, influence the definition and recognition of neighbours and neighbourhoods.

<u>Recruitment and sampling</u>

This thesis involved a total of 28 research participants. A brief outline of their profile will be presented in this section, using the following table to summarise their information and details, focusing on name, gender, age, and occupation. A more extensive version of this table is included in Appendix B, with more information about the connection between participants, their education level, the time they've been living in Santo Domingo, and the methods that they took part in. Additionally, a narrative introduction of each participant is shown in Appendix A. These descriptions are built upon the information that research participants gave about themselves and that emerged during our conversations during or before the interviews.

Table 1. Participant description. Source: elaborated by researcher

Pseudonym	Gender	Age group	Occupation
Adriana	Woman	40-50	Domestic labour and care activities
Alma	Woman	50-60	Domestic labour and care activities
Alonso	Man	70-80	Retired (worked as janitor)

Beni Ros	Man	70-80	Retired (worked as driver)
Caralampia Mondongo	Woman	40-50	Schoolteacher
Carolina	Woman	70-80	Retired (worked as schoolteacher)
Catalina	Woman	60-70	Domestic labour and care activities
Elia	Woman	50-60	Domestic labour and care activities
Facunda	Woman	70-80	Domestic labour and care activities
Javier	Man	40-50	Commerce outside home
Juan	Man	40-50	Construction and house maintenance
Julia	Woman	60-70	Commerce at home
Leticia	Woman	20-30	Domestic labour and care activities Commerce at home
Lucia	Woman	60-70	Domestic labour and care activities
Miriam	Woman	70-80	Commerce at home
Magnolia	Woman	60-70	Retired (worked as secretary)
Mariana	Woman	50-60	Government service (bureaucrat)

Marisol	Woman	50-60	Domestic labour and care activities Landlord
Martina	Woman	60-70	Domestic labour and care activities Commerce at home
Monica	Woman	60-70	Retired (worked in factory)
Pedro	Man	70-80	Agriculture, construction and factory work
Pilar	Woman	60-70	Retired (worked as janitor)
Sandra	Woman	60-70	Secretary
Susana	Woman	60-70	Domestic labour and care activities
Teodora	Woman	60-70	Commerce (mail-order catalogues)
Tita	Woman	60-70	Domestic labour and care activities
Verne	Man	60-70	Taxi driver (used to work in a factory)
Waldo Valverde	Man	40-50	Schoolteacher

Of the 28 research participants, 21 identified as women and seven as men. 18 participants (more than half the sample) were above 60 years old at the time of the interviews. This reflects the social composition of the WDC. They all shared ethnic characteristics, and while none explicitly identified as from an indigenous group, all of them expressed deep respect and value for the indigenous heritage of Mexico. All of the participants are either homeowners or live in family homes and are not tenants. Waldo, Martina, Beni, Juan and Tita were actively involved in negotiations with the local authorities about the water well during the fieldwork. They have a more visible "leadership role" within the group (particularly Waldo), but crucial decisions are always made by voting in street assemblies.

It is important to note that I had previous knowledge of Santo Domingo through my research and life experiences and some crucial contacts with gatekeepers prior to commencing the fieldwork. This was crucial in accessing relationships and sites for data collection and helped me navigate the practicalities of fieldwork, discussed further in the research ethics section of this chapter.

While there was no exclusion of any neighbour that wished to become involved in the research, some participants were intentionally approached or invited to represent the diversity of the age, gender, and occupation of the WDC members. This organisation is mainly constituted by women, who represent approximately 75% of attendees in street assemblies. It is predominantly made up of people who are older than 60 years. The occupations and education in the group reflect similar conditions to the demographic characteristics of Santo Domingo, so I only distinguished people who had some form of higher education in the overview.

The first step in the fieldwork process was contacting people with a leadership role within the WDC and crucial gatekeepers, such as Waldo and Tita, and having a conversation about the possibility of focusing on their campaign as a case study. In October 2022, after having initial conversations with them, Waldo invited me to a street assembly so I could present my research aims, questions and methods to the WDC. The idea of this presentation was to outline my research to the group members and to introduce myself to potential participants. A fundamental aspect of this presentation was seeking the organisation's approval to carry out the study. The organisation approved my research project by voting in this street assembly, after which I commenced a process of recruitment and data collection through participant observation and observational walks in Santo Domingo.

This presentation and approval reflect the character of this organisation as a formal expression of neighbour relationships. This has methodological implications since it mediates in the observation of everyday relationships. Another recruitment process could help to approach neighbours, but for this research, all participants were contacted in the context of the WDC as an organisation. Conducting research with this type of support and gatekeeping also has relevant implications in terms of being accountable and responsible with research, which will be elements discussed further in the section of this chapter that discusses ethical considerations.

Street assemblies were key moments for contacting the possible research participants and introducing myself as a doctoral researcher to the members of this group. However, it is important to mention that the recruitment process involved individual conversations with each research participant, even if a presentation for the whole group was the first way of introducing myself. As will be discussed further in the section related to the ethical dimensions of this research, informed consent involves a constant conversation and dialogue with each research participant.

In the following street assemblies, during November 2022, I explained my project again, asked for volunteers, and handed out information sheets with essential aspects of the project (objective, purpose, methods) and my contact details. Most participants approached me in these assemblies, so I made sure they had an information sheet and wrote their contact details. This allowed me to reach out to them and arrange a meeting to discuss their participation further. I repeated his process throughout the first months of the fieldwork, at every opportunity I had to invite participants during street assemblies or other interactions. Appendix E shows a copy of the information sheet.

The recruitment process involved the help of gatekeepers who have a leadership role in the WDC. Close communication with gatekeepers and other neighbours, during or after street assemblies, was crucial in this process. These gatekeepers and other members also suggested or introduced me to people to invite. Therefore, my presentation and introduction to the group led to a snowballing recruitment process.

Each participant decided separately to become involved, even if snowballing was useful to contact them. Participants were informed of the goals and nature of the research and data collection process during the recruitment. Information sheets and continuous communication helped to guarantee informed consent during and after data collection.

I assembled a provisional list of research participants in October 2022 after completing the initial weeks of recruitment. With this list, I scheduled the first sit-down interviews. This list was updated with more people joining and some dropping from the research during the data collection to finally determine the 28 neighbours who shared their stories with me.

Data collection

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the methods for data collection were sit-down interviews, participant diaries, walking interviews, observational walks, and participant observations. These were conducted during the fieldwork period from October 2022 to June 2023. This section will present a summary of the data collection process and a deeper discussion on the usefulness and implications of each research method.

1. I conducted 22 sit-down interviews with research participants between November 2022 and February 2023. A total of 27 participants were interviewed, with 17 individual interviews and five pair interviews.

2. All the interviewed research participants were invited to complete a two-week diary of their everyday experiences of neighbour interaction and water scarcity. A total of 11 research participants completed a diary. Participants completed these diaries between December 2022 and March 2023.

3. After this, and derived from the information and exploratory insights of the previous methods, I asked research participants to give me a walking tour of the neighbourhood. A total of 8 walking interviews were conducted with nine research participants from April to June 2023. One of the interviews was with a pair of neighbours, and one with a participant who did not do a sit-down interview or a diary.

4. I conducted 18 observational walks of Santo Domingo throughout the fieldwork. Six of these walks happened in October and November of 2022, six in February and March 2023, and six in May and June 2023.

5. I realised 12 participant observations throughout the fieldwork. The observation took place in October 2022 and the last in June 2023. These observations happened in street assemblies of the WDC and in meetings with government officials concerning the advances of the new water well.

Each one of the research methods was included in the design as an appropriate way of collecting data that contributed to answering the research questions. However, there are multiple connections between the data. The information produced through all the different methods was essential for a transversal analysis of the three specific research questions. The experience of implementing different methods contributed to an incremental construction of reflections during the data collection process and analysis.

The fieldwork was conducted with flexibility. The different methods complemented each other to answer the research questions. This process included sensibility to how participants wished to be involved and a continuous dialogue with them. Therefore, the first rounds of data collection influenced the decisions present in the overall fieldwork experience.

This flexibility is also present in how, while having guidelines for data collection (interview, observation and diary guides), they worked as a proposition and not a hard manual. The data collection methods could be conducted differently from what the guidelines suggested. Appendix D shows the data collection guidelines.

<u>Sit-down interviews</u>

Interviews helped to explore the experiences of environmental struggle, neighbouring, and place attachment through the participants' stories. The interviews examined experiences of involvement in the WDC, relating with other neighbours, and water shortage in the neighbourhood, with a flexible and semi-structured approach that was open to registering what matters most for participants. Ten interviews took place in the homes of research participants, while one occurred in a coffee shop, and 11 took place in a community centre in Santo Domingo. This community centre, which is mostly self-managed but receives support from the local government, is an important area for gathering in this neighbourhood. Waldo proposed to use the place and helped me get permission to use it. Seventeen of these were one-to-one interviews, while one involved a conversation with a pair of neighbours, one with a mother and daughter, one with a grandmother and her granddaughter, and two with married couples.

These interviews produced a dialogical construction of knowledge as a relational production and a conversation that considers different ways of knowing and experiencing the world (Brown & Durrheim, 2009; Tanggaard, 2009). As Mason (2002) suggests, qualitative interviewing is a relational process and site of dialogically constructing knowledge. The interview process, therefore, aimed to produce an exchange and participatory conversation (Sinha & Back, 2014) and enabled diverse narrative environments in which meanings emerged (Davies & Heaphy, 2011).

It is important to mention that while using walking interviews and sit-down interviews separately, this thesis does not use each method seeking to access separate aspects of reality (Mason & Davies, 2009; May & Lewis, 2019). Instead, this thesis combined different methods to

understand place. Mobile methods are an important mechanism for researching localities. However, conventional forms of interviewing, such as the sit-down interview, are not irrelevant.

Sit-down interviews have been used to explore the relationships between places and people (May & Lewis, 2019; Pink, 2009). They can also happen in many different ways, involving the materialities of local places. Beilin (2005) uses photo-elicitation, combined with interviewing, to research the meaning of landscape for a community. These interviews can lead to a dynamic and embodied description of a place if they involve (and happen in) locations well-known by the interviewer and interviewee, covering topics such as its materiality, relationships, and senses (May & Lewis, 2019).

Participant diaries

After the sit-down interview, I invited all participants to keep a journal/diary for two weeks, extending it to an extra week as a possibility if necessary. 11 research participants agreed to complete diaries. The participants who chose to keep diaries were allowed to approach them flexibly and creatively in terms of format: written, recorded or visual. The content was also flexible, with only a guideline that suggested the following questions as starting or reference points:

- Did you run out of water today or this week? How does not having water change your daily life? What did you do to get water?
- Did you see or talk to any of your neighbours today? When, where, and why do you meet or communicate with your neighbours during a normal day?

All of the involved participants chose a written format for their diaries, using a notebook I provided. One of the participants included a drawing in the diary to explain the functioning of the

aguantador. Most of them kept the diaries for two weeks, but some participants preferred to have them longer or asked me for more time to write on them.

Diary-keeping is a method that, within qualitative research from multiple disciplinary perspectives, can be useful to observe everyday life and social practices in a detailed way (Elliott, 1997; Hawkes et al., 2009; Latham, 2003). This method can be combined with the insights derived from other methods and forms of conversation with participants to produce a rich description and analysis. Authors such as Latham (2003) assert that diaries can contribute to reimagining the research process with openness to improvisation, creativity, playfulness, experimentation, and flexibility.

Diaries are not easy or accessible for all people and depend on the availability of time, abilities, and confidence to engage in this form of reflection (Hawkes et al., 2009). Therefore, it was not mandatory to write in the diaries daily, there were no requirements about their lengths, and completing them was optional. There is also materiality involved in the diaries that can be the focus of sociological reflection on the research relationships (White, 2021). I provided the notebooks, and participants took care of them thoughtfully.

Diaries are suitable for analysing identities and belonging (Bagnoli, 2004; Bennett, 2015). When studying place attachment, Bennett (2015) uses the information from diaries to explore how residents, in a week particularly affected by cold weather and snow, engaged in practices of belonging through quotidian and ordinary acts. Diaries have also been used to observe how people describe experiences of suffering and trauma, particularly in health research (Alaszewski, 2006). Therefore, they can be relevant for researching environmental justice struggles in urban contexts.

<u>Walking interviews</u>

To complement the insights gained by the sit-down interview, and depending on what the conversations showed, I invited participants to take part in walking interviews. I was able to conduct eight interviews, which were the last data collection moments that involved direct dialogue with participants. All of them took place in the streets of Santo Domingo and involved places such as parks, community centres, the water well, schools, markets, or the streets near participants' homes. While I was open and flexible to explore different forms of mobility (driving, imagining, or riding a bike), all the interviews occurred during a walk. Seven of the interviews happened one-to-one, but one involved a walk jointly with two neighbours, who were also in the sit-down interviews together.

During these walks, participants were invited to show me and guide me through meaningful places in the neighbourhood, effectively choosing the route and having significant control over the interview process (Clark, 2017). As we walked, we talked about the places we were in and their connection to water experiences. We also discussed the memories of the neighbourhood, changes, and expectations about the future. We also covered themes like neighbour relationships and the WDC emergence.

Moving together was crucial for the construction of knowledge. It was a process of "walking with" neighbours and their neighbourhoods (Lee & Ingold, 2006). Turning participants into the leading figures corresponds to what Rose (2020) suggests concerning how walking methods contribute to deconstructing conventional research relationships.

Walking interviews help to destabilize the interview setting and introduce active engagements with places, exploring different ways of knowing (Anderson, 2004; Brown &

Durrheim, 2009; Hall, 2009). Walking helps to generate a connection with the physical and social landscape in "three-way conversations, with interviewee, interviewer and locality engaged in an exchange of ideas" (Hall, 2009, p. 582). These interviews contribute to observing social interaction in and with place, involving the researcher in the everyday embodied experience of the environment (Jones et al., 2008; Vergunst, 2010). As Ingold and Lee (2008) have observed, walking carries a social component which shows the life stories and routes that constitute places. Walking has also been used as a performative practice of place-making, useful to explore senses and affectivities associated with belonging (O'Neill & Hubbard, 2010; Harvey & Knox, 2011).

Walking is an effective medium for dialogue and engagement in qualitative research around themes like the neighbourhood (Carpiano, 2009; Emmel & Clark, 2009; Clark, 2017). For Kusenbach (2003, p. 463), walking with participants and using a phenomenological approach helps to observe their "spatial practices in situ while accessing their experiences and interpretations at the same time". Combining walking methods with other techniques contributes to data collection and analysis, particularly in understanding the complexities involved in urban environments and their transformations (Duignan & McGillivray, 2021).

Observational walks

Observational walks in Santo Domingo produced an embodied interaction with the place, informed by the discussions and dialogues with members of the WDC. I conducted these walks individually, around different areas of the neighbourhood, paying attention to the materiality, sensoriality, and relationships that take place in its micro-geographies. After the walks, I registered my insights on observational notes. During these individual walks, I observed material and sensory aspects of the built environment, social dynamics related to different registers of neighbour

interaction, and the everyday flows of water. These walks were useful to orientate and locate me in the rhythms of the neighbourhood and familiarise me with the forms in which water is present or absent from such locality.

The three rounds of walks offered different insights and influenced the process of getting to know and recognise the neighbourhood. All the walks were conducted during daylight on various days of the week. In this way, they helped to observe transformations in everyday life rhythms (Pink, 2008, 2012). These walks were part of the immersive engagement with the roles of place and materiality in a neighbourhood (Ingold, 2004; Lee & Ingold, 2006).

Walking in a neighbourhood, as a multisensory engagement with place, can contribute to understanding the relationship between participants and their environments. As Davies (2011) argues while discussing participant recruitment, this thickens the process of interviews by placing the research event. Walking has become an important method to explore embodied connections with place, the sensorial aspects of cities, and the importance of the built environment in everyday life (Middleton, 2010; Bates, 2017; Bates & Rhys-Taylor, 2017). From an anthropological perspective, Ingold (2004) highlights how walking, allowing for an embodied and connective relationship between humans and their environment, is crucial to understanding culture and practices on the ground.

The sensory element around walking can help to describe atmospheres in urban places (Pink, 2009; Rhys-Taylor, 2013). Furthermore, walking forms part of producing places with ethnography. The ethnographer aims to experience places similarly to the participants, seeking to feel "similarly emplaced" as other people (Pink, 2008, p. 193). This also helps to understand place-making as the everyday entanglement of discourse, materiality, and practices in social interaction (Pink, 2012).

It would be problematic to assume that walking provides an automatic connection with Santo Domingo or that sensing the neighbourhood generates natural knowledge that emerges only from feeling the place. This thesis aims to connect the multiple methods and link the sensory to the discursive, exploring the embodied engagement with place, not by itself, but related to other aspects of the human experience (Mason & Davies, 2009). Furthermore, the embodied experience of walking is not homogeneous across people but differentiated according to gender, ethnic, and class differences. Instead, authors like Rose (2020, p. 211) suggest the importance of analysing the "many intersections of identity" involved in how individuals walk.

Participant observation

As a crucial aspect of the research, participant observations will be conducted simultaneously with the interviewing and participant diaries. Apart from the observational walks in the neighbourhood, I took part in public events of the WDC, such as street assemblies or meetings in Santo Domingo. By being there, interacting with the neighbours, and listening to them, I gained insights that were crucial for data analysis.

Observations through co-presence focused on how neighbour interactions are influenced by place and materiality as crucial components of everyday social practices (Biskupovic & Brinck Pinsent, 2018; Ingold, 2014). My presence as an observer required the authorisation and consent of the members of the WDC, which was my first interaction with the group. I registered my impressions of the participant observation through notes that capture the general aspects of street assemblies and meetings, such as themes, locations, materials, and rules for participation.

This observation required attentiveness to detail and context to understand the case study. According to Lee and Ingold (2006), phenomenologically inspired fieldwork, which includes

participant observation, is similar to walking because it implies an immersive experience of the everyday routines and rhythms of others. This requires being attentive to the routes and place-making practices of other people.

For Ingold (2014), participant observation is a direct and practical engagement with people and places from which knowledge is built. This process is characterised by an attentive disposition. According to this author, participant observation is a way of knowing, working, and approaching the world that is attentive to others. In this sense, participant observation goes beyond just witnessing and becomes a form of co-presence with others (Biskupovic & Brinck Pinsent, 2018).

Data management

Transcription and translation

The data produced through the fieldwork was transcribed and translated from Spanish into English. The process of transcription and translation involved a deep immersion into the data. The transcription commenced in December 2022, after the first interviews were concluded, and continued until July 2023. The translation process started in January 2023 and concluded in August 2023. Overall, the transcription and translation of all the materials produced through the fieldwork took nine months. These materials are categorised in the following list.

- Sit-down interviews were audio recorded with the informed consent of research participants. Audio recordings were stored in a Google Drive and transcribed to text. I then translated these texts into English.

- Participant diaries were transcribed and scanned with the informed consent of research participants, and the images were stored in Google Drive. I translated the diaries into English.

- The walking interviews were audio recorded and transcribed with the informed consent of participants. I registered the routes and times of these walks and took pictures of some of the features that participants drew attention to. The transcriptions and pictures were stored in Google Drive. I translated these transcriptions into English.

- I registered notes in a field diary after each observational walk. I transcribed these notes, stored these transcriptions n in a Google Drive, and translated them into English. These registers were originally taken as quick notes during the walk. After the walks, they were extended and finished. During each observational walk, I also took photographs of the urban landscape of Santo Domingo and removed identifiable information from them.

- The insights from participant observations were also registered as field notes in a diary after they happened and not during the meetings I attended. Whenever it was relevant to the research, I included photographs with no identifiable information about participants. The field notes were transcribed and stored on Google Drive. I also translated these notes into English.

- Additionally, I kept a research diary during the fieldwork, starting in October 2022 and concluding in June 2023. I wrote in this diary continuously, transcribed it, and translated the transcriptions into English. The insights from this diary are reflections that capture the fieldwork process, the relationships, emotions, and unexpected situations that emerge.

Transcription involves making decisions and is also an element involved in data production (Cibils, 2019). Ontological and epistemological assumptions about research are part of the transcription process. For Cibils (2019), the challenges and decisions made around this process should not be discarded as merely logistical but examined in their full implications for knowledge construction in qualitative research.

One of these challenges is the risk of silencing or overly abstracting the personal lives of participants. Participants were allowed to see and comment on the transcribed versions of the interviews, as a process that also contributed to revising consent. None of the participants required any changes to the transcription of interviews or diaries. During the transcription, the names of research participants were substituted with pseudonyms. A separate section in this chapter discusses research ethics, including the process related to informed consent, confidentiality, and the use of pseudonyms.

The translation process also involved a moment of decision-making and working through the data for several months. This helped to transform the data from its original Spanish version into English. The implications of collecting data in one language and presenting it in another have been explored by Gawlewicz (2016). This author talks about how translation implies decision-making concerning how to represent participants and events. According to this author, it is crucial to realise this process carefully, aiming to achieve a "conceptual equivalence" (Gawlewicz, 2016, p. 32) that prevents losing relevant aspects of data in the translation process. This involves additional work, particularly since, according to the experience of Gawlewicz (2016), such adaptation required supplementing the original data transcripts with footnotes that included further explanations, which would help to understand the meaning of an expression or utterance.

The reflections of Gawlewicz (2016) on translation will also be incorporated in this thesis. Therefore, whenever the original Spanish terms are introduced in the transcription and analysis, they are firstly presented in brackets and complemented with a footnote clarifying their meaning, as has been carried out in this chapter. Furthermore, the data analysis required continuously going back to the original transcripts, produced in Spanish, to avoid missing some of the elements in the translation.

Authors such as Smith (1996) argue that the research process, independently of the language that it is conducted in (a native or foreign language), always involves an interpretation and the construction of meaning. However, this author also identifies that researching across languages and a translation process can destabilise the notions that researchers have about participants or phenomena. This can also destabilise the concepts that they use to describe them. Therefore, the issue of translation is not only a problem to be solved but also a possibility for finding hybrid spaces for the intersection of meanings and construction of knowledge, as a space of in-betweenness in which concepts can be challenged. Therefore, such disruptions of meaning in hybrid spaces between languages can "open new spaces of insight, of meaning which dis-place, de-centre the researcher's assumption that their own language is clear in its meaning" (Smith, 1996, p. 163).

Thematic and narrative analysis

The translated data was analysed during and after the fieldwork, relying on NVivo, written notes and mind maps. Depending on the nature of the data, I implemented a thematic and narrative analysis. A thematic analysis was conducted transversally with all the transcripts from interviews,

observations, and diaries through a process of coding and production of themes. Individual transcripts, referring to a specific research participant whenever pertinent, were treated as "cases" for narrative analysis.

Both forms of analysis complemented each other and involved a process of immersion into the data. The thematic analysis was beneficial in identifying patterns and constructing themes that could be followed across different transcripts and participants (Braun & Clarke, 2019). This transversal form of approaching data helped to construct themes and develop questions about them. This process is reflected in the connections between each empirical chapter.

Narrative analysis allowed to observe how different themes connected and made sense within the life, context, experiences, and overall stories that a participant told (Earthy & Cronin, 2008). This form of analysis was beneficial since it allowed to understand the complexities within stories and make sense of details. For example, a comment by a participant on an interview can be related to other comments made in the same interview and to other forms of data that this participant may have completed, such as a diary or a walking interview. Both the transversal construction of themes across data and the specific, in-depth observation of nuances around these themes in cases complemented each other in offering a sufficiently valid yet detailed and nuanced observation.

The thematic analysis then occurred through a continuous and creative engagement with the data to construct codes and themes as an interpretative process informed by the theoretical framework and the empirical experience (Braun & Clarke, 2019, 2020; Cope, 2009). The initial rounds of coding were conducted in July 2023, producing an original list of codes. After the initial coding, I revisited the transcripts and conducted two more iterations of coding of interviews and

participant diaries. After defining a final list of codes, I concluded the coding of all transcripts, including observation notes and diary reflections, in September 2023.

Appendix C includes a list of the codes that resulted after the subsequent rounds of coding. A total of 35 codes were produced after subsequent rounds of generating and then reducing the codes, guided by the empirical data and by conceptual insights related to the research questions. This Appendix presents a complete list of the 35 codes, their description, the number of files and transcripts they relate to, and their presence in a theme. This helps to see how these codes relate to the empirical analysis. For example, the five codes used the most are "built environment", "environmental justice struggle", "daily routines", "infrastructure", "neighbour everyday interaction", and "organisation in the WDC". These codes were key in constructing, by their combination with less frequently used codes, themes such as "neighbouring", "neighbour local organising", "environmental movements", or "neighbourhood materiality".

Coding involved an iterative process which was far from being only a mechanical sorting of information. Cope (2009) has observed how coding implies creatively working through the data and involves recombination of the materials and patterns of meaning. During this process, it is possible to identify new connections in the data, making it a crucial aspect of analysis.

Braun & Clarke (2019; 2020) offer a pertinent perspective into the process of thematic analysis. These authors emphasise the importance of recognising that this analysis is oriented and informed by epistemological and ontological positions and decisions from the researchers. These authors propose a "reflexive" approach to thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2020), in which themes, understood as "patterns of shared meaning underpinned by a central organising concept" (Braun & Clarke, 2019, p. 593), are active constructions by the researcher, the result of coding, and from multiple iterations of working with the data. In this sense, the resulting themes "do not

passively emerge from either data or coding; they are not 'in' the data, waiting to be identified and retrieved by the researcher." (Braun & Clarke, 2019, p. 594). Instead, they are the result of an interpretation, as stories about patterns of shared meaning that are possible to construct by the mixture of theoretical assumptions, the analytic resources of the researcher, and the data itself.

Thematic analysis was complemented by a narrative analysis of individual transcripts (from interviews and diaries) used as cases (Earthy & Cronin, 2008; Mason, 2004). As argued by Earthy & Cronin (2008), this analysis involves a social constructionist perspective and explores how people tell stories and construct their identities through them. In this sense, as an example, narrative analysis was particularly valuable to work with the transcripts of walking interviews, identifying how people tell stories and where they say what they say about themselves and their neighbourhood.

Research ethics

<u>Ethical dimensions</u>

Ethical issues are in the different stages of this research, revealing themselves in aspects such as recruitment, data collection, analysis, and writing. This project recovered what has been proposed by Pacheco-Vega and Parizeau (2018) concerning performing a "doubly-engaged ethnography", which implies engagement not only with the methodological aspects of constructing knowledge but with the protection of vulnerable communities that are involved in the research. As these authors suggest, this implies a serious and continuous self-reflection that requires recognising biases, the importance of positionality, and the extent to which fieldwork can expose vulnerable participants to further vulnerability with extractive academic practices or representation. This

commitment to reducing risks and avoiding harm to research participants is integral to the ethical dimension of this research.

Conducting this research required a permanent attitude of care and respect for the participants and continuous communication with them. This thesis, therefore, follows the principles of preventing adverse effects on the well-being of participants derived from the research, respecting their dignity, privacy and autonomy, and maintaining confidentiality. These elements are present in the Statement of Ethical Practice from the British Sociological Association (BSA, 2017).

One of the fundamental ethical elements of research relates to the confidentiality of participants. Data collection required fully authorised and informed consent, obtained not only with information sheets but also with continuous communication. As was described in the discussion of the recruitment process, information sheets (shown in Appendix E) were presented to all members of the WDC in Spanish. These sheets helped to explain the project to research participants in one-to-one conversations before any interview or diary. They also registered their informed consent, either in a written or recorded format, which was revisited after the walks, interviews, and diaries. Appendix F presents a copy of the consent forms.

While this thesis aims to contribute to environmental justice, the clarity of expectations on what it can accomplish is fundamental. Therefore, it was also important to not overstate the consequences and benefits of this research. This was part of the information sheets and of my conversations and presentations in street assemblies of the WDC.

Individual participants were not named but represented with a pseudonym to protect their privacy and personal information. The micro-geographies of the neighbourhood are also

anonymised, using pseudonyms for streets, markets, parks, and community centres. However, the WDC as an organisation and Santo Domingo as a neighbourhood were not anonymised. The WDC and Santo Domingo are named as part of a decision to show their struggles and campaigns. This decision involved recognising the visibility of a group of neighbours and of a place that has been a setting for urban struggle for decades in Mexico City. This thesis forms part of a larger conversation on the relevance of this locality as a researched place, which is an issue discussed further in another section of this chapter.

The decision to not anonymise the neighbourhood and this organisation has implications for the privacy of research participants that, while not individually named, could be identified in the local context by other neighbours with knowledge of the local dynamics of Santo Domingo. However, participants in this group already assume visibility through their protest and local forms of activism, which involve and require being identified by other neighbours and people in the locality.

Even with all these considerations, I took all the necessary precautions to maintain the ethical principle of anonymity to protect the privacy of participants. While collectives and localities are named, a different story applies to individual participants. Any reference to personal and sensitive information was hidden, and only their essential characteristics, relevant for telling their stories, were included in their depiction. Furthermore, none of the photographs involved information about the identity of research participants, and whenever possible, any details that would affect their privacy were removed.

Talking about environmental justice and neighbourliness in a deprived area of the city, which is consistently affected by a lack of water, touches on sensitive issues that involve personal lives and experiences. Therefore, the data collection and analysis were done with respect to the

vulnerabilities and possible emotional risks of taking part and talking about everyday experiences of injustice or suffering. Emotional risks also accompany the changing relationships and sensitivities among participants during the fieldwork, so this study assumed a careful approach to avoid sparking tensions among neighbours.

There are also complexities involving my position as a researcher from an international institution with the privilege of not being exposed to environmental injustices in such a permanent way as the participants, so the study was conducted avoiding extractive practices discussed by Pacheco-Vega and Parizeau (2018) when proposing a "doubly engaged ethnography". Finally, personal safety risks related to being in this neighbourhood could emerge. The research was conducted with careful consideration of my presence in spaces of Santo Domingo or at different times of the day.

Method implementation was flexible and open to what participants provided as feedback. In the initial presentation, where I introduced myself and the research process, I shared my research design with an open assembly of the WDC, who decided to approve my involvement with them as a researcher. Talking with gatekeepers during the recruitment process also helped me to get some ideas about how to use these methods. This continuous communication was part of an effort to make the methods "sociable" (Sinha & Back, 2014) and to involve participants in the materiality and logistics of the research process.

Participation was voluntary, allowing some neighbours who had initially expressed their interest to withdraw from the research. This was particularly evident with the diaries since three participants who had initially agreed to complete one changed their minds and decided to only do the interview. The location of all sit-down interviews was agreed upon with the participants and involved options like the community centre, their homes, or another place they preferred. The

decision to record the audio was revisited with them individually before each interview. Furthermore, the route of every walking interview was decided by participants, and the recording devices and notes during the walk were discreet to avoid drawing attention to them.

How communities are represented forms part of their disputed production as a moral project in which researchers carry a crucial role (Back, 2009). Therefore, the representation of research participants aims to avoid a simplistic account of their views, to instead adopt a careful commitment to listening to stories (Back, 2007). An important ethical consideration in this respect is naming research participants through pseudonyms. Participants chose their pseudonyms or could express any preference about their selection. They gave different reasons for choosing their names, reflecting the embeddedness of personal lives in a network of personal relationships, biographies, and experiences (Allen & Wiles, 2015).

The results of the fieldwork and analysis will be relevant not only for academic reasons but also because they relate to the everyday lives and experiences of environmental injustices that take place in Santo Domingo.[57] Therefore, the analysis and results of this thesis will be shared not only in academic spaces but also with presentations in local meetings with the WDC.

At the end of the fieldwork, I presented a report of my advances and preliminary observations to the WDC. A copy of the themes covered in this presentation is shown in Appendix G. I aim to present the final results to the organisation after the thesis is completed.

These presentations were a way of being accountable to the WDC and to research participants. Accountability and responsibility, not concerning academic institutions and

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[57] This is a place that has already been the focus of numerous studies in social sciences, the implications of which will be discussed further in another section of this chapter.

guidelines but to participants and local organisations, are crucial to this research project. This fieldwork involved a process of dialogue and communication not only with individual participants but with the WDC as a neighbour-based organisation. The presentations served as a way to display my goals, progress, and overall activity. They also were an opportunity to thank participants for their trust and time and to talk about the usefulness of research for this organisation. The importance of these presentations and relationships with the group is also reflected in my position as a researcher, which will be discussed further in the following section.

Positionality and fieldwork relationships

Research always includes unexpected elements, and the research field is also the result of active and relational construction inherent to the open act of listening (Back, 2007). Therefore, it was essential to observe the details and stories that participants tell without imposing my frames and narrative constructions on their experiences.

It is also relevant to consider my position as a researcher and how the relationships and emotional connections that I may establish with research participants intersect in the production of knowledge, data collection and analysis (Darling, 2014). Research reflexivity is part of recognising how relationships are crucial in the research process. My values and expectations are involved in the research design, data collection and analysis, and shaping of research questions and insights. However, they should not substitute or silence the experiences of research participants.

Reflexivity is not a simple process but a complex, ongoing and continuous effort. Rose (1997) warns against the illusion of complete transparency in this process since our identities, positions and contexts are not always evident nor easily shaken off with their declaration, but

dynamic and disputed constructions that follow us throughout all the research. As Sultana (2007) argues, research reflexivity is a dynamic and ongoing process in which the research becomes inserted in a network of relationships. Recognising our positionality through a more contingent and humble reflexivity, which recognises the messiness of research and the reciprocal constitution of researcher and participants, is crucial for the possibility of situating knowledge (Rose, 1997).

I conducted fieldwork as a Mexican student from a British university doing qualitative fieldwork in Mexico, in a city and neighbourhood that I have lived in previously. Recognising the importance of my life story in the research process requires a reflexive identification of the complexities involved in carrying out international fieldwork in a sufficiently familiar place. As Astorga de Ita (2021) observes, there are no simple physical or emotional boundaries to distinguish what being "at home" means when conducting international fieldwork in a home country. This author argues that the ethnographer is faced with a messy sense of in-betweenness, fleeting and contingent moments of belonging, and an encounter with otherness that destabilises the self, even when fieldwork involves people and places who are culturally or biographically close to the researcher.

The experience of navigating through the field is never simple. I conducted fieldwork in Mexico City, where I studied and worked for ten years before starting the PhD. I have previously lived in the neighbourhood of Santo Domingo for a little more than three years. I have many friends who live there, and I know the names and characteristics of its known streets and places. I did not live in Santo Domingo during the fieldwork but in a nearby zone of the city where I could get accommodation. However, I grew up in Monterrey, another city in Mexico, so I always carry the element of being a stranger in Mexico City, even if I know the place well. Furthermore, coming from an academic institution, my presence in the field holds an element of power asymmetry and

privilege, even if fieldwork is conducted "at home". Therefore, I am simultaneously an outsider and insider in Santo Domingo, which involves emotional and social complexities for research relationships and for the fieldwork process.

Previously to this PhD thesis, I have conducted research about socio-environmental conflicts around land use and environmental protection in Mexico City. This previous experience included building relationships and conducting research with an organisation that is actively involved in the protection of a shallow aquifer close to Santo Domingo. I met and interviewed many people involved in this organisation, some of which live in Santo Domingo. I later learned that some of these people were also involved in another local group: the WDC. This PhD thesis will not study the same conflict or assembly, use different concepts, and a different emphasis, research questions, and goals from my previous studies. However, there is an overlap in the geographies and themes of my previous research experiences. As was mentioned in another section, I knew two persons out of all the WDC from this experience who were crucial gatekeepers.

My position involves personal commitments, emotional sympathies for the inhabitants of Santo Domingo, and strong expectations of justice, which manifest in the definition of the research problem. An important part of my life story links to this place. During the fieldwork, I established new relationships with participants and with the neighbourhood. Relationships with and among participants (like the opinions, sensibilities and feelings that accompany them) are not static but dynamic and can change during research (Davies & Carter, 2021).

As already mentioned, I was simultaneously an outsider and insider even while conducting fieldwork "at home". However, I got to know participants and Santo Domingo better during the fieldwork, and by identifying similar sensitivities and emotional responses to water injustices,

connected myself to their stories and past experiences (Lang et al., 2023). [58] Using a research diary was an important way of reflexively engage with the process of building these relationships, that in turn also gave way to reflections on my positionality (Rose, 1997).

As is explored further in the methodological reflections of Chapter 7, my experiences and life story became involved in my connection with the participants. The process of recruitment involved building trust with research participants and establishing a relationship in which a sense of research intimacy. This involves opening up and sharing experiences and expectations about everyday life. Becoming embedded in a network of relationships and achieving a sense of familiarity with participants was crucial to constructing trust.

Ethical challenges of researching an over-studied neighbourhood

As was mentioned in Chapter 3 and in other sections of this chapter, there are numerous previous social studies about Santo Domingo, derived from its position as a paradigmatic neighbourhood in the history of urbanisation and social movements in Mexico City (Safa, 1999; Diaz Enciso, 2002; Gutmann, 2006; Ortega Alcazar, 2016; De la Torre & Barona, 2020). Reviewing the content of all the studies about this place exceeds the space and scope of this research. They cover a wide range of themes and approach this neighbourhood with different perspectives.

To offer a few examples, Safa (1999) discusses the experiences of citizenship related to producing the built environment and struggling for housing rights recognition. Diaz Enciso (2002)

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[58] The process of connecting to other people's stories and lives is described as "research resonance" by Lang et al (2023, p.3), who use the term to discuss how the previous experiences of participants are "lived with" by researchers in the present. This term helps to observe an emotional dimension in which researchers are affected by the stories they encounter during research.

offers a vivid and rich chronicle of how this process took place. Gutmann (2006) explores elements such as masculinity and gender relations in the everyday life of this neighbourhood. Ortega Alcazar (2016) produces a profound ethnography that explores how the networks of family life involved in multi-family residences involve social practices and meanings associated with space and the history of self-built housing.

For its relevance, Santo Domingo can be considered an over-studied place. In this section, a brief reflection will be introduced about the ethical challenges related to conducting research in an over-researched place.

One of the first challenges of researching a recurrently studied place relates to "research fatigue" (Sultana, 2007; Neal et al., 2016). Research fatigue can arise because of the experience of witnessing (or participating) in multiple studies conducted on a location. This could cause scepticism and mistrust in research participants concerning the usefulness and value of research and even refusal to participate, as has been suggested by Sultana (2007). Therefore, according to this author, it is crucial to recognize the power relations involved in carrying out field research and observe how this process is "often influenced and constrained by the politics of the place" (Sultana, 2007, p. 381).

A challenge that derives from this situation and relates to it, is the need to carry out research without an extractive attitude or exercising coercion on participants. This is associated with what Pacheco Vega & Parizeau (2018) identify as a dichotomy between engagement and exploitation and the responsibility of ethnographers to conduct research in a non-exploitive way. This thesis will follow such insights with fieldwork that sought engagement without exploitation. Recovering insights from Stake (2009) and Mason (2011), the case study and methods selection come from an

interest in learning and not in "extracting" maximum information in an efficient manner out of an over-researched place.

It is important to recognise not only that Santo Domingo is an over-researched place but also that some of the research participants had previous experience in research projects. This was not the first time that many of them had been interviewed. However, this did not generate a difficulty but an opportunity. Analogous to what Neal et al. (2016) identify regarding the confidence and motivation of participants in an over-researched area of London, the research participants with previous experience had an ease in being part of the research process. They also had clarity regarding the usefulness of research and understood the elements of informed consent. Overall, they felt comfortable and familiar with the interview process. Many participants have previously experienced neighbourhood activism, speaking at meetings and protests. In this sense, conducting research with this group also became a huge opportunity to encounter highly informed and articulate narratives around themes such as neighbourhood activism, territory, and solidarity.

Additionally, the fact that this was an already researched place and that participants had been part of research projects also made evident to them what the usefulness of research was, influencing my positionality during the process. The participants were certain that having a social researcher with them is a valuable ally for telling their story and documenting their efforts and that sociological studies about their activism can aid their campaigns. But they also knew that they were essentially helping me with a research project by giving their time and talking with me.

Entering an "over-researched" place also had implications in terms of access to the field, since I had to present my project and have it approved by the WDC on a street assembly and for the process of dissemination through presentations for the local organisation. This mechanism of

presentations also evidences the familiarity of the WDC and its members with the research process, its products, implications, and usefulness.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the methods and methodological strategy of this thesis. It has discussed why a qualitative and interpretative approach is relevant and how each data collection method helps to answer the research questions. It also presented the description of the case study and research participants, insights into the data collection, management, and analysis, and some ethical considerations.

An important element to consider in this discussion is how a qualitative perspective centred on social practices and everyday life will help to research proximate social relationships, such as the neighbour. This perspective will also help to study locally situated environmental justice struggles and everyday engagement with the locality in the context of water scarcity.

This study contributes by showing how this qualitative focus and research approach is part of observing neighbour environmentalism, particularly by incorporating ethnographic elements. This process also involves attentiveness to details, openness to the unexpected, and patiently locating myself and building connections through the everyday reality and context of the WDC.

Another contribution is showing how different methods helped observe neighbour environmentalism. The various qualitative methods helped to establish a conversation with research participants and to interpret social practices, everyday relationships, and spaces of proximity. The use of these methods and their combination in the specific context of Santo Domingo also represents a new research experience in constructing data. The following three chapters of the thesis analyse the data and focus on answering each research question.

Chapter 4: Neighbouring and the consequences of water scarcity

Introduction

Everyone has ideas about how their neighbours may behave and what to expect of them in everyday life. The reality of such interactions can confirm or deny such expectations. This chapter describes the neighbouring conditions of Santo Domingo and explores how a context of water scarcity influences them. It connects directly to RQ1: how and in what ways are urban neighbour relationships affected and reconfigured in contexts of water scarcity? The data sources for this chapter will be sit-down interviews, observational walks, participant diaries, and walking interviews. It also helps to address some elements identified in Chapter 2 related to the combination of spatial proximity and social ambiguity in neighbour relationships and how local contexts matter to understand them (Painter, 2012; Morgan, 2009; May et al., 2021; Neal, 2022).

The first section describes everyday neighbour relationships in Santo Domingo. It focuses on the importance of proximity to examine the distinctions between neighbours, strangers, and friends. It considers the role of "good neighbour" expectations and imaginaries. After this initial description, the second section of the chapter presents a more explicit and prolonged focus on the implications of water scarcity for everyday neighbouring. It discusses informal interaction around water and the emergence of the Water Defence Committee of Santo Domingo (WDC) and its consequences for the experience of neighbouring in conditions of water scarcity.

After describing the emergence of the WDC, this chapter discusses how it has impacted social practices of water sharing in Santo Domingo. While water sharing can occur informally, this organisation has established mechanisms and campaigns around how people access water. For this reason, this chapter argues that this group has a role in moving water sharing beyond informal

interaction to turn it into an organised social process. This organised form of water sharing represents a combination of reciprocity and solidarity.

A crucial argument is that this organisation has effectively extended reciprocity between neighbours by combining reciprocity and solidarity. Therefore, this chapter identifies that water scarcity affects neighbour relationships through this extension of reciprocities, which involves a re-definition of the neighbour as an ally. Such reconfiguration is a crucial element in what this chapter suggests as the everyday pragmatic environmentalism of the neighbours. Discovering the neighbours as an ally is a critical finding of this chapter. These insights show how urban precarity, rather than leading to conflict or hostility in this case, can also lead to cooperation.

These findings help to advance the discussions on neighbour relationships since the literature and discussions around them have not necessarily considered neighbouring in this context of environmental pressure. Observing neighbour-based organisations (NBO) in cities of the Global South, such as Mexico City, helps to discover how neighbourliness expectations include the expectation and possibility of mutual support, particularly when facing ecological insecurity and uncertainty. In this context of urban precarity, the "good neighbour" is not only a friendly face or someone who respects boundaries but a person who shares water.

Neighbour interaction in everyday life

Neighbouring in densely populated areas

Chapter 2 introduced a sociological and multidisciplinary discussion around the neighbour relationship and the relevance of neighbouring practices (Morgan, 2009) to build this relationship. This chapter will recover these discussions to observe how water scarcity affects neighbour relationships. In the arguments developed in this thesis, the neighbour will be understood as

someone who lives nearby (Bulmer, 1986). Recovering terms proposed by Painter (2012, p. 524), the neighbour is essentially a "near-dweller". The content of this nearness, or the meaning of being nearby, can vary depending on the dwelling conditions. Living near others is experienced differently in a rural village, an apartment tower block, or an urban residential neighbourhood. However, neighbours form part of everyday life in all of these situations. Being a neighbour is also a matter of identification and recognition, and neighbours are distinguished and recognised from other figures in the neighbourhood locality.

As will be argued further in this chapter and as was mentioned in Chapter 3, the "neighbour" can also take on a political identity. This chapter will argue that neighbour-based organisations play a role in this process since they become spaces where being a neighbour takes a different meaning and can become a political identity. In this specific sense, as this chapter will argue, the neighbour can be someone defined as such by the WDC. This research explores how, in this neighbour-based organisation, the experience and definition of being a neighbour can intersect with a political identity.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, living nearby is not equivalent to getting along or being friendly, particularly in an urban context marked by high population density and social heterogeneity. Apart from living nearby, the neighbour is an ambiguous figure, or as Painter (2012, p. 524) suggests, an "unknown". This ambiguity has led authors like Morgan (2009, p.33) to argue that neighbours develop and carry out an "ethics of space", which requires them to establish boundaries and a balance between closeness and distance, while May et al. (2021) develop this argument to suggest that neighbours relationships can simultaneously feel sticky and elastic.

This ambiguity is experienced through everyday interactions, exchanges, and negotiations that give meaning to specific neighbour relationships (Rosenblum, 2016). Therefore, the everyday

life of a neighbourhood, as a locality in which neighbours identify each other, involves a range of neighbouring practices. According to Morgan (2009, p.19), "neighbouring refers to a set of practices that can be associated with neighbours and is generally a positive term". Neighbouring practices vary according to cultural and social contexts, but they usually involve efforts to have a positive relationship with a neighbour (Morgan, 2009). In this thesis, neighbouring will be understood as the set of practices through which neighbours relate to each other as neighbours.

Neighbouring practices typically involve doing things that neighbours expect each other to do and are influenced by "good neighbour" expectations, which can vary depending on cultural and individual relationship contexts, so having a good relationship with a neighbour can imply intense or minimal interactions depending on each case. Neighbour relationships and ideas of a "good neighbour" are surrounded by social norms since neighbours are expected to be a source of help under certain circumstances. The historical context, cultural norms and relational situations are key to understanding the extent and nature of this help (Rosenblum, 2016), but this implies that neighbours combine spatial proximity with social expectations relative to specific contexts. After these conceptual clarifications, this chapter will discuss and identify different forms in which neighbouring is carried out in the context of Santo Domingo and the effects that water scarcity and the WDC as a neighbour-based organisation have on neighbouring.

Santo Domingo is a busy neighbourhood. People constantly move around it, either to commute to other places, or to work and do their shopping in one of the many small businesses there. Its inhabitants may be long-term residents or some of the many tenants that rent while they study or work, so familiar faces and strangers are both expected in the everyday encounters in the street. High spatial density, the materiality of self-built housing, and the relevance of the street for informal economic exchanges influence everyday interaction.

During observational walks in the neighbourhood, it was possible to identify how this situation influences the possibilities and motives of interaction in public and semi-public spaces. This situation is reflected in hand-written posters, signs, or advertisements on walls or driveways, as the following extracts from my field notes illustrate.

> I notice hand-written signs on the street. Among the signs, there is an invitation to children to sign up for a costume contest and a Day of the Dead [*Día de Muertos*] parade.[59] The same house also has a sign, posted on a door, that offers W.C. services (31/10/22).
>
> I walk and notice different signs on this street: people looking for a puppy, advertising land for sale, or offering support in regularising the legal status of housing. (11/11/22)
>
> Walking down this same street, I see a house with a sign that says: "if you want tortilla toast [*tostadas*][60] ring the bell". (24/11/22)
>
> In the street, there is a car with a sign that says, "is not abandoned, only under repair". It has the name of the person who left the sign. […] I go back through another street and see a sign with information about people selling cosmetic products and household items. (24/02/23)

In Santo Domingo, people in the streets regularly interact through economic exchanges when selling food or household goods to satisfy everyday needs. On some of the walks, after turning around a corner, I would find a street market, or *tianguis*[61], extending for several blocks. Communications in these posters, directed not only to residents but also to unknown persons walking by, also involve, for example, family relationships (invitations to a birthday or wake), religious services, parties, neighbourhood watches, advertising rooms for rent, the use of shared

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[59] The Día de Muertos is the name of a traditional holiday in Mexico used to remember family members who have died. Close in the calendar to Halloween, it has become a day for dressing up with motives associated with the dead.

[60] A dish consisting of a toasted tortilla as a base for other food such as rice, beans, or meat.

[61] A tianguis is an open street market with stalls in which it is possible to find numerous products, ranging from food to household items. These markets are intermittent and occupy the street on certain days of the week.

spaces like sidewalks, joining on day trips, exchanging football cards, health, and nutrition clubs, or adopting pets, among other messages observed in these walks.

These exchanges constitute a basic level of "neighbouring" as an everyday practice related to sharing knowledge (Morgan, 2009). However, an element of these everyday neighbouring practices relates to a social context in which the informal economy and sustaining everyday life form part of interactions in the neighbourhood. These informal interactions in the street reveal a connection between private and semi-public areas. These interactions can also be associated with the infrastructural quality of informal social exchange for their relevance in sustaining life (Simone, 2004; Silver & McFarlane, 2019).

The previous descriptions refer to communications that seek interaction with a stranger or a neighbour who can be there. These communications show the relevance of an everyday other in the street, a figure, sometimes invisible, which holds the possibility of being present. Nevertheless, there are also communications that evidence efforts to avoid interaction and suggest possible conflict. These conflicts relate, for example, to the informal regulation of shared spaces such as sidewalks. Figure 21, a photograph taken in a driveway, shows a "no parking" sign. Figure 22 presents a tree with protective plastic and a sign that indicates "Do not harm the plants". Interestingly, in the driveway photographed in Figure 21, some signs invite residents to a reading club directed to children. These signs exhibit a simultaneous effort to produce an expected interaction and to avoid unexpected interactions.

Figure 21. Do not park here
Source: taken by researcher 24/02/23

Figure 22. Don't harm the plants
Source: taken by researcher 13/12/22

In places like Santo Domingo, the inescapability of neighbours, observed by authors like Rosenblum (2016) or Cheshire (2021), can relate to a continuous exchange of information, desired or not. When people live in intense social proximity and near one another, it is almost impossible not to communicate, learn something, and ignore the presence of others who are potentially always there. Relationships in the neighbourhood are not limited to face-to-face interaction but extend in time and space to moments when people are not physically co-present, as an element of the experiential "stickiness" of neighbour relationships, using a term suggested by May et al. (2021) to discuss the pervasiveness and experiential inescapability of neighbours. Neighbours influence everyday life experiences even when they are not physically present but potentially there.

The relevance of this tenacity and stickiness can be highlighted in water scarcity conditions, as will be explored further in this chapter. Neighbour "stickiness" also forms part of everyday interactions related to water in Santo Domingo, as observed during the walks.

> I walk back down Cuicatl street, and I stop in front of a business selling purified water. People bring their jugs to be washed and filled up with clean water. These businesses are quite common because people do not drink water from the tap. As I look at this business, a worker comes out of the place, greets me, and explains the costs, opening hours, and the procedure to get water.
>
> (Observational walk, 10/11/22)

> I notice a water tap in the street, and a sign that warns against the misuse of water. People use this tap to fill their buckets or jugs and carry them home whenever they have intermittent water supply. The sign warns against carrying out specific actions such as washing a car with water from the tap and asks people to avoid wasting water […] As I walk further down the street and turn around the corner, I walk past an auto shop and catch a glimpse of a person using a hose to wash a car with water. Ironically, this occurs just a few steps from where the sign warned against it.
>
> (Observational walk, 24/11/22)

> I return to Tochtli street and see a person distributing water jugs on a motorbike. Water purifying businesses offer the delivery of water jugs to households as one of their services.

153

I hear him shouting "el aaaagua" (waaaater) in a particular tone, very noticeable. This announces his presence, and the presence of purified water that has been moving around the neighbourhood in small carts and jugs. This is different from the water in trucks or *pipas*, which is not purified.

<div align="right">(Observational walk, 02/06/23).</div>

Figure 23. Water purifying business
Source: taken by researcher 10/11/22

Some of the interactions in the streets of Santo Domingo relate to water access, either from a water purifying business (Figure 23) or a public tap. The flow, presence and absence of water are part of the everyday informal interactions and communications in Santo Domingo. The relevance of this flow and the presence of water is explored further in Chapter 6, discussing the neighbourhood water landscape.

In the context of water scarcity, neighbours are sticky in a new way. Due to spatial proximity, they become part of the experience of accessing water at home or in the neighbourhood. In a context of urban precarity, this tenacity is noticeable in how water consumption practices that are seemingly private and individual can be observed and even judged by others who live nearby. The stickiness of neighbours relates to water use in public spaces, as shown in the description of the sign against wasting it, or to the exchange of services around it, as shown in the description of the purifier water businesses. However, it is crucial to differentiate between strangers, friends, and neighbours to make this argument more precise.

<u>Strangers, friends, and neighbours</u>

With many people moving around in Santo Domingo, residents have to continuously distinguish between neighbours and other acquaintances, such as friends or strangers. I explored this during a walking interview with Alonso, a research participant and a man in his 70s. Most of this section focuses on different moments of this conversation as a narrative. However, it is important to mention that similar opinions emerged in interviews with other research participants.

Alonso took me to the streets and homes of people he knew and his home. As we walked, he identified who lived where and talked about his relationship with them. He distinguished between friends and, using his words, people with whom he interacts like neighbours.

> Alonso: Now that we're passing by Atl Street I'm also going to mention people who I know that are very participative in the group [WDC]. Not that I know them too much so that they are like friends, right? More like neighbours.

> Andres: What would it mean to be like friends? Chatting a bit more?

> Alonso: Yes, more intimate, with those things of friendship only.

<div align="right">(Alonso, walking interview, 26/04/23)</div>

In the previous extract, Alonso referred to a degree of intimacy corresponding to friends and not to his neighbours. He suggested that he knows more personal details about his friends than about neighbours. However, for Alonso, neighbours can also be friendly to a certain extent, and their friendliness is displayed in public.

> In this part of the neighbourhood we are, well, at least friendly, we are courteous, and the neighbours greet each other. We say "hello, how are you", and all that to each other. […] But there are neighbours, for example, who don't. You only know they live here because sometimes when you walk by you see them, but they don't even say "hello, good morning, good afternoon", no, nothing like that.
>
> (Alonso, walking interview, 26/04/23)

Alonso talked negatively about neighbours who do not greet each other, showing the importance of friendly greeting neighbours. However, he also mentions that it is possible to recognise and locate people on the street, even if they are unfriendly. Public recognition, which helps distinguish between strangers and neighbours, is a crucial element of neighbouring in Santo Domingo. Recognition is explored further in Chapter 6. This presence between neighbours contributes to building what Blokland (2018) names public familiarity, a characteristic of urban spaces. During our walk, Alonso also distinguished between homeowners and tenants, introducing a temporal aspect to neighbour identification.

> Some are temporary, and they are not here renting all the time. You see them for a while, a few months, you identify them, and when they are no longer here you say "oh, man, this guy used to live here, and now he's left, or he rents somewhere else".
>
> (Alonso, walking interview, 26/04/23)

The distinction between neighbours and strangers through mutual recognition on the street, the advantage of being friendly among neighbours, and the importance of residential status for building such connections were recurrent issues mentioned by different participants. Neighbours are not strangers in an urban context (Horgan, 2012) but recognisable and spatially located acquaintances (Morgan, 2009; Felder, 2020). Other research participants, like Susana (a woman in her 60s), also expected friendly recognition (Kusenbach, 2022) and neighbouring through occasional activities (Laurier et al., 2002), particularly in ordinary circumstances.

> 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 [water scarcity] happens, everyone is united.

(Susana, interview, 28/11/23)

Susana describes that everyone stays at home in "normal" situations, illustrating a form of latent neighbourliness observed in the literature (Mann, 1954; Blokland et al., 2022b). But she also suggests that when "something" (referring to water scarcity and protests) happens, this situation produces another form of neighbouring. These differences between different forms of neighbouring relate to expectations of what it means to be a good neighbour and how they can influence relationships in contexts of water scarcity.

Expectations of neighbourliness

Different ideas are involved in discussing the definitions of a good neighbour. In the rest of this chapter, these ideas will be referred to as expectations of "neighbourliness", understood as a good relationship between neighbours (Bulmer, 1986). These expectations form part of a

neighbour imaginary. Smart (2007, p.49) discusses the imaginary to understand how different personal relationships and networks, like the family, exist in thoughts and imagination. The imaginary is also relevant to observing how expectations and imagination influence neighbour relationships. A particular neighbour imaginary, which does not determine but influences forms of being a neighbour, was explored in conversation with research participants.

Many participants expressed how neighbourliness contributed to their wellbeing. The following extract comes from an interview with Monica, a woman in her 60s for whom neighbourliness relates to living in peace with everyone.

Andres: What would it mean to you to be a good neighbour?

Monica: 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.

(Monica, interview, 12/01/23)

Monica talks about having small interactions and chats with everyone and respecting the limits and privacy of others. Her account gives an example of a combination of friendly recognition (Kusenbach, 2022) and, more evidently, a friendly distance between neighbours (Crow et al., 2002; Morgan, 2009). Catalina, a woman in the same age group as Monica and living in the same area of Santo Domingo, expressed similar ideas.

Andres: What would it mean to you, in general, to be a good neighbour?

Catalina: Well, not to offend each other, not to fight, to get along well. In other words, to say "good morning, good afternoon". If something is needed, we are there to do a favour, or whatever. Yes, it's nice to coexist [*convivir*][62]. Coexistence [*Convivencia*] is very important, because you are happy and you don't have enemies anywhere, right?

Andres: Do you think it is good to have good *convivencia* with your neighbours?

Catalina: Yes, I greet everyone. No gossip, just "good morning, good afternoon".

Andres: Do you ever help each other with things you need?

Catalina: When they need a favour and they ask us for it, of course […] for example, if the neighbour needs a ladder, I'll lend it to them, or things like that. They help us too if we need anything. It's nice to *convivir*, and fighting is not. It doesn't help.

(Catalina, interview, 18/01/23)

Monica and Catalina recognise that mutual respect is essential to maintaining peace and avoiding conflict. Her accounts suggest how the stickiness of influencing one another and the reciprocal exchanges of elasticity (May et al., 2021) are part of neighbouring experiences. Catalina uses the Spanish words *convivir* (verb) and *convivencia* (noun), which relate to living next to, or with, each other, and even mentions reciprocal favour exchanges.

In the conversations with participants, expectations or imaginaries of neighbourliness were varied. While most neighbours involved friendly recognition as part of them, some included occasional favour exchanges, while others valued respecting boundaries and keeping distance. However, many participants repeatedly expressed that they expected mutual support from their neighbours and even solidarity in times of need.

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[62] The Spanish verb Convivir, which can be translated as to coexist, is a form of naming a process of "living with each other". The word Convivencia, which can be understood as coexistence, describes a form of relationship in which this is practiced continuously. This concept relates to the negotiations involved in neighbour conviviality identified by Heil (2014).

Elia and Teodora, two women who live on the same street, commented on this during a walking interview. During a 45-minute walk, they greeted different people, particularly around the street they lived in. Nearing the end of the interview, I asked how they felt about recognising people and if they valued getting along with their neighbours.

> Andres: And just now while we were walking, I saw that you greeted a lot of people. Is it important for you to have a good relationship with your neighbours?
>
> Teodora: Yes, for me it's very important because at a certain moment you don't know when you might need that person. If something happened to me there on the street corner and someone recognises me, they could help me.
>
> Elia: It's having a friendship so that it becomes a relationship so that when… and I hope nothing happens to us… but if something happens to us someone that was close by could see us and help us, or they go and tell others, right?
>
> Teodora: Or if we see something, do the same too. We should also tell others. That's to look out for each other, obviously for the people we know.
>
> (Elia and Teodora, walking interview, 12/05/23)

In the previous extract, Elia, who is in her 50s, mentions a link between neighbour support and even friendship, which involves the possibility of mutual help, crucial when facing the dangers of "something happening" in the street. The conversation revealed that this "something" could refer to health and insecurity.[63] Their expectations involved a sense of reciprocity since Teodora, who is in her 60s, mentions that they are willing to "do the same" for others, especially if they know them.

Expectations of neighbourliness involve a dimension of care through mutual support that is also important to consider. They also involve a degree of publicness (Neal, 2022) since these

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[63] As mentioned in previous chapters, one of the most recurrent themes of neighbour communication and support relates to safety and protection. During my walks, I could observe "neighbourhood alarms" installed by the local mayor's office to alert police of any crimes and have a quicker response whenever called, and information about "neighbourhood watches".

acts of care may relate to public space. These elements are explored further in the following empirical chapters. Chapter 5 describes the WDC as a group that helps people care for each other, and Chapter 6 conceptualises NBOs as social infrastructures.

Most participants presented similar views concerning mutual support, favours, and an overall peaceful coexistence and friendliness between neighbours, as recurrent patterns discussed in this section. However, while presenting overall similarities, there were also differences in the expectations of neighbourliness expressed by research participants. There was neither a uniform feeling nor an identical form of experiencing neighbourliness between all participants. Instead, it was possible to identify different views and expectations about how neighbours should behave. This ambivalence is a feature of neighbour relationships (Painter, 2012) and keeping it in mind helps to observe them without assumptions of identical opinions or values.

Determining a cause behind different views around neighbourliness, for example, correlated or explained by socio-economic diversity, is beyond the scope of this research design and the characteristics of the participant sample.[64] However, it is possible to suggest that previous life experiences may influence this expectation. People who have been helped by their neighbours in the past, particularly in the context of popular urbanisation in Santo Domingo (Streule et al., 2020), may expect it as a future possibility.

Social and cultural contexts influence, without determining, understandings of neighbourliness (Crow et al., 2002). While most people in the sample agreed that being good

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[64] As mentioned in Chapter 3, the sampling of participants was not random, without aiming to represent the entire population of Santo Domingo but instead seeking to reflect the composition of the WDC as a group. Only one of the 28 research participants is younger than 40, only six are men, and none is a tenant. This composition influenced the typical characteristics of research participants, who are all members of the WDC and, in most cases, women above 50 years of age who own a home or live in a multifamily household property.

neighbours related to offering help when needed, it is important to remember that all participants are part of the WDC. This membership and experience of activism can influence these expectations. The role of this group is part of the arguments explored further in another section of this chapter that discusses the extensions and limits of reciprocity and identifies how, even in a context of ambivalence, the tenacity and pragmatic alliances of neighbouring prevail.

Even with the different expectations of neighbourliness among residents of the same locality, water scarcity can become "something" (a word used by both Elia and Susana in different extracts) that changes neighbour everyday reciprocities, triggering the support and even solidarity of the neighbour. Therefore, in contexts of urban precarity, mutual support and care in public spaces can be part of neighbourliness expectations. These expectations suggest an idea of neighbours as allies, as figures that support each other, usually with a common purpose, which will be developed further and explored in more detail in another section of this chapter. Neighbouring is not only experienced through hostility or competition but also leads to the possibility of mutual help related to the role and imaginary of neighbours (Cheshire, 2015). The consequences of water scarcity for neighbouring will be explored more explicitly in the next section of this chapter, first as a theme of informal interaction and afterwards as a motivation for organising.

Neighbouring in a context of water scarcity

<u>Water as a theme of informal interaction</u>

Water scarcity is part of the informal interaction, information sharing, everyday identification, and favour exchanges explored in the previous sections. It influences the routines and experiences that

configure everyday life in a neighbourhood. The following diary extracts from two participants, Adriana (a woman in her 40s) and Alonso, help to illustrate how this process takes place.

01 Dec 2022

Hello, good morning. Well, today Thursday the lack of water is more noticeable because when you walk through the streets of the neighbourhood, you can easily find 5 pipas carrying water, there is a lot of movement regarding the trucks, apparently today they are actually covering the need of the neighbours. Also, as of today, Thursday at 12 pm, water was supposed to fall according to the tandeo, but then the day was over, and not a drop fell in our house.

[…]

05 Dec, 2022

Hello, Monday has arrived, but the water did not come. Because of the tandeo system, today is the last chance we have for it to fall, and it didn't. So I hope that the little water that there is in our cistern tank will last until more water arrives again. Today, as it is a street market day, there are no pipas here, but the neighbours do talk in the street about the lack of water and seem worried about it.

06 Dec, 2022

Hello, it is now Tuesday, and we still have very little water in reserve, at least it is enough for bathing, washing dishes, washing hands and the water that is recycled for the toilet. Again today we are starting to see the movement of pipas, so we can already see the shortage of water without the need to enter other people's homes

(Adriana, diary)

02 Dec 2022

Hello Andres

Good evening. I hope you are well. And let me tell you that today all day long, the trickle of water continued to come, and we all had the opportunity to collect little water in buckets to prepare for the case where we didn't have any more in the following days. We are hoping that it will come with more pressure. What I observed is that other houses near mine do not get water. I saw some neighbours carrying water from the tap next to the well with bottles and jugs. Besides that, it was a normal day for me.

[…]

06 Dec 2022

Hello Andres, I hope you are well. Here everything is almost normal, with the problem of water. Discussing with some neighbours, I found out that not only my family has the problem. My neighbours also have little water supply. I saw some movement of pipas in much of the neighbourhood. I hope that with the tandeo starting on Thursday, we will have even a minimal supply of water.

<div align="right">(Alonso, diary)</div>

In these diaries, the lack of water is experienced firstly as a disturbance. It is a source of anxiety and stress, a toxic stressor (Corburn, 2017), discussed further in Chapter 5. Both diaries were completed during the same couple of weeks and show how two residents, who live within a couple of blocks of one another but do not interact with each other outside of the activities of this group, experienced the same problem simultaneously.

These diaries also show how water scarcity becomes a theme of conversation, interaction and information exchange between neighbours. Water scarcity is also noticeable outside the private space of a household, in the public and semi-public spaces of the neighbourhood. In Santo Domingo, it is possible to observe people carrying jugs from a water tap in the street or receiving a *pipa* in their homes. It is also possible to listen as neighbours turn on water pumps that move water from an underground cistern to tanks [*tinacos*][65] on their roofs. The notes from my observational walks in a previous section also hint at this public visibility of water. While water leads to informal interaction between neighbours, there is also a possibility of an organised and

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[65] The word *tinaco* refers to storage tanks used to collect water, commonly located on the roofs of houses. Water pumps, owned by households, are used to move water from underground cisterns into the *tinacos* in many neighbourhoods of Mexico City when there is not enough water pressure.

more formal expression of neighbouring, through the Water Defence Committee of Santo Domingo.

Joining the Water Defence Committee of Santo Domingo

In February 2020, residents from the central zone of Santo Domingo had spent several weeks without water and were paying large sums of money for private *pipas*, or waiting days for free *pipas* sent by the local government. Adding to this situation, as will be discussed concerning environmental justice in the following chapter, political clientele networks were operating to influence priority water distribution through *pipas* depending on political party allegiances.

In the middle of this situation, Sandra and her husband decided to call a local news station and tell their story. Sandra, a participant and a woman in her 60s, walked across the street and knocked on the door of Pilar, a neighbour that she knew was involved in the struggle for obtaining urban services in Santo Domingo during the 1980s, to tell her about their idea and suggest that they organise a protest with more neighbours in the street when the reporters come. Pilar agreed and proposed to invite Waldo Valverde, a neighbour she knew was involved in local activism. Both of them reached out to more neighbours, sent text messages or knocked on doors in their street and nearby streets, calling them to the meeting. The following extract from my interview with Pilar, a woman in her 60s, describes this process.

> We formed the group with other neighbours here because one day we had no water, and when we were tired and the pandemic was upon us, Sandra came to my house and knocked and told me all about it. She lives back there on the other street, she's the daughter of my neighbour who now rests in peace. She wanted to do something, form a group. I told her about inviting Waldo, who she didn't know back then, but I knew he was one of the people defending the aquifer here. […] Sandra was going to bring the people from the news to do an interview with all of us. So, I told her about inviting Waldo, and then I spoke to him on the phone so he could also speak with the journalists because I know he speaks very well.

So that's when I started knocking doors and going house to house and invite my neighbours and tell them all about this meeting.

<div style="text-align: right">(Pilar, interview, 30/11/22)</div>

Pilar called Waldo Valverde, a man in his 40s, because she knew he was involved in activism against water waste in a real-estate development project nearby and to regularise water distribution in the network, and because, as she mentioned, he "speaks very well".[66] Waldo responded and came along to the protest with some other members of an activist group defending a shallow aquifer nearby: the General Assembly of Peoples, Neighbourhoods, Communities, and *Pedregales* of Coyoacán (AGPC). In this initial protest, they decided to join efforts with the affected people of the central zone of Santo Domingo and look for a solution to water scarcity, effectively forming the Water Defence Committee of Santo Domingo (WDC).

Carolina, a woman in her 70s who is also Waldo's mother, used her participant diary to register recollections of how WDC started and emphasised a continuity between struggles and a context of contestation in the neighbourhood. In her diary, she mentions that the AGPC had been campaigning since 2017 to gather evidence of water scarcity and connect it to the protection of the local aquifer. Her insights help to show how the context of disputes and tensions around the neighbourhood, water, and the city forms part of the context in which the WDC formed

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[66] The AGPC was formed in 2016 to protect a shallow aquifer in the limits of Santo Domingo, damaged by a real-estate project. It is possible to identify a sense of continuity in the neighbourhood protest of this group and the WDC, given the geographies, temporality, and concerns of activism, but the great majority of their members are not the same, and the specific goals of the groups are also different. Waldo and other research participants were involved in this experience.

With the residents of the neighbourhoods that were represented in the AGPC[67], visits were scheduled by neighbourhood to check tanks, wells and valves. It became evident that the *pipas* were used for political purposes, as they requested people's vote credentials through some intermediaries. These visits also demonstrated the lack of water in the network.

[...]

On February 28, 2020, we had a meeting in Llave street. Some reporters came. Neighbours denounce water shortages. Live broadcast on television. In February 29, neighbours from the streets Fuerza, Patos, Arbol, Cueva and Llave join the group. They will support the well for Santo Domingo. We formed a Commission for a meeting at SACMEX. Pilar, Sandra and her husband are there.

(Carolina, diary)[68]

The narration described so far, and in the other extracts of this chapter section, helps to show how water became an articulating issue for neighbours in activist campaigns. The story of how Sandra crossed the street and knocked on Pilar's door, who knew and called on Waldo to join their struggle, who then came along with a larger group of neighbours and joined the people in the central zone of Santo Domingo connects to the discussion of neighbouring in everyday life in the first sections of the chapter. This story shows how recognition, material conditions, and life stories help to identify neighbours and illustrates the relevance of personal relationships and spatial proximity in this process. The continuities (even with their differences) between different NBOs serve as an example of how networks of relationships mobilise and articulate around shared concerns.

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[67] The AGPC is integrated by residents not only of Santo Domingo, but of different neighbourhoods, from the same area of Coyoacan, which are located near the building that affected the shallow aquifer. This is another aspect of the continuity but also difference between neighbourhood struggles.

[68] Carolina used her diary as a memoir in which she registered some stories concerning the past. She did not add a date to her diary entries.

Following the first weeks of protest in Santo Domingo and the offices of SACMEX (Mexico City's water administration system) and the Coyoacan municipality, the WDC obtained regular meetings with local authorities concerning water distribution. The organised neighbours in the WDC also maintained regular street assemblies every fortnight to coordinate actions and make decisions as an organisation. Crucially, they also started campaigning for a new water well in the neighbourhood that would inject more water directly into the pipe network. The WDC proposed this well as a solution to intermittent water supply and an overall improvement to the quality of life.

As was previously mentioned, this well extracts water from an underground aquifer and injects it directly into the pipe network administered by SACMEX. This situation implies that instead of specific residents accessing water directly from this well, the liquid is directed to a network that serves the entire neighbourhood and city, administered by the government of Mexico City through SACMEX. Therefore, according to the expectations of the WDC members, this well would improve their living conditions by increasing the amount of water they receive and reducing the waiting that intermittent water supply has represented. Furthermore, the members of the WDC campaigned for this well as a way of resolving the causes of intermittent water supply, impacting not only their particular houses but all of the neighbourhood.

With the well, the WDC aimed to influence and increase water flow. The parity that this infrastructure implies means that, while being able to pressure the authorities with strategies such as protests or negotiations with SACMEX, the WDC cannot control or restrict water access in the neighbourhood. The water well is therefore conceived as a benefit for the community of Santo Domingo and not only the members of the WDC, involving strong expectations of securing water

access as a human right. The WDC campaigns with the expectation that the water made available by the new well benefits the whole population of Santo Domingo.[69]

After many months of these meetings, assemblies and protests, a well was finally built and set in operation during the last weeks of 2022, as mentioned in Chapter 1 and in Chapter 3. During this time, the WDC proposed a change in the *tandeo,* the system through which water is rationed and delivered intermittently to specific zones of the neighbourhood during a week, described further in another section of this chapter. As a short-term and emergency measure, they also asked for more straightforward and accountable access to the free *pipas* while negotiating for the well, as described by Carolina in the following extract.

> The people from the Coyoacan government and SACMEX told us they would send us *pipas*. And we said that we would accept them because we didn't have water, as a temporary solution, but what we wanted is the water in the network, because that is what we have the network for, and that is what we worked for. To have the network.
>
> (Carolina, walking interview, 23/05/23)

The group members are all residents of Santo Domingo, and while most of them live in the central zone of the neighbourhood, others come from different sectors of this large urban settlement. As discussed in Chapter 3, all the members of the WDC call and recognise each other as "neighbours". Neighbours become the essential building block of the organisation, making it essentially neighbour-based. As will be argued further in this chapter, this organisation also

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[69] The data collected in this research does not allow for an exploration of the specific amounts of water flowing in the households of Santo Domingo. Describing how SACMEX administers the water extracted using the well is beyond the scope of this research. However, the research questions and data illustrate how this expectation of water access for the community of Santo Domingo motivated the members of the WDC and impacted the meaning of being a neighbour.

produced the possibility of assuming a political identity around the meaning of being a neighbour for its members, based on the engagement of collective activism and organising, and on the expetations related to everyday neighbouring.

As part of its activities, the WDC encourages public participation in regular street assemblies, in which people with leadership roles share updates about the water well or water supply. The members of the WDC can also sign up to monitor the construction and operation of the well or other infrastructure such as water valves, report water supply in their homes, or communicate their need to call for a pipa. The WDC organises and coordinates neighbour interaction and communication around present and especially future water supply. In its activities, it is possible to see how a less informal way in which water extends beyond the private household into the public space of the streets and local organising.

These insights relate to the discussion of previous sections. With them, it is possible to suggest that the WDC has a role in the re-definition of neighbouring and influences the imaginary of neighbourliness in the context of water scarcity and urban precarity. The importance of street assemblies as atmospheres for recognition is discussed further in Chapter 6. This organisation provides a space for interactions and triggers a form of practical engagement that, as argued further in this chapter, changes everyday neighbouring to turn the neighbour into an ally to achieve common goals. This process of change does not happen in a vacuum. It incorporates existing expectations around being a good neighbour, manifested when participants identified other residents of Santo Domingo as a potential source of help and support in case of trouble, as was suggested by Elia and Teodora in another section of this chapter. Constructing the neighbour as an ally within the WDC recovers the idea that neighbours can be a source of support in case of trouble and incorporates expectations of mutual support associated with urban struggle, in which a notion

of ally is suggested. However, this process of organising in the WDC gives new meanings to such expectations and relates them to a form of allyship between neighbours in a political sense, understood as the process of coming together, cooperating, and becoming a source of support for a collective goal. Thus, this construction of the neighbour as an ally represents an understanding of being a "neighbour" as a political identity, which is involved in organised practices of water sharing.

Good neighbours share water: from informal to organised water sharing

In a previous interview extract, Catalina described being a good neighbour as exchanging greetings and being ready to do a favour when needed. During our interview, I wondered if water was involved in these favours.

> Andres: And has some of those favours had to do with water?
>
> Catalina: Look, when we don't have water, and then we get the pipa, I feel like everyone gets envious. It's like they notice that we get the pipa, and they feel bad because they don't. It's normal, because as the drivers follow the list order, it arrives to one person and then it arrives to others. But we're not going to fight or shout about it, because we have a number and an order, and someone from the group [WDC] informs us when the truck is coming to us, so we must wait. If we have a little bit of water left and the neighbour asks us for it, we say "leave it to them".
>
> Andres: Has that ever happened to you?
>
> Catalina: Yes, sharing it. Once, when there wasn't any water and I had plenty and a little left over from my house, because my cistern is not very big, so I decided to give some to my neighbour here.
>
> Andres: And have people also shared with you?
>
> Catalina: No. No one has ever had water to spare, can you believe it? [laughs] Who knows, they might have a bigger cistern. Because ours fits about half a pipa, so it's not that big.
>
> (Catalina, interview, 18/01/23)

Water sharing can happen informally, as briefly described in Catalina's story, as an "occasioned" situation of interaction that triggers the possibility of expressing reciprocity (Brownlie & Anderson, 2016; Laurier et al., 2002). This form of discretional and informal water sharing depends on a degree of friendliness and trust contingent upon personal connections between the neighbours.

Catalina also described how waiting is a part of the process and how "someone from the group", referring to the WDC, lets people know when a pipa is coming to their home, so she has to wait for her turn. Her description helps to understand how the WDC impacts everyday neighbouring in contexts of water scarcity. This group establishes rules and mechanisms for water access around the neighbourhood and channels neighbour communication around water access. The WDC organises water sharing as a social practice and moves it out of informal interaction, influencing water distribution with *pipas*, *tandeo*, and the water well construction.

In a study of uncertain water supply in an urban locality, Wutich & Ragsdale (2008) identify that anxiety and distress emerge because of the social and economic elements involved in negotiating informal water access. For these authors, the absence of clear procedures around access was more relevant for emotional distress than water scarcity by itself. In this case, the motivations of many people around the WDC relate not just to an overall situation of scarcity but to the complexity, injustice, and costs of accessing water.

When studying water sharing as a gift exchange, Zug & Graefe (2014) identify that social relationships and moral frameworks are crucial to understanding how such gifts occur. Either organised or informal, sharing water by becoming involved in the organisation to defend water implies neighbourliness expectations and becomes an element of the definition of a "good neighbour". Good neighbours, in the context of the WDC, are expected to share water by joining

in the organised defence of water. However, there are different interpretations of the meaning of neighbourliness, and uncertainty persists.

The WDC prompts organised practices of water sharing. This group establishes rules around water sharing and pushes this practice beyond informal interaction. For its role in the everyday movement of water around the neighbourhood and negotiating water access through *pipas*, *tandeo*, and (more importantly) through the well, the WDC is a group that has an important role in turning water sharing into an organised social practice. Understanding this role is crucial to answering what the consequences of water scarcity on everyday neighbouring are.

The first form in which they organise water sharing is through the distribution of *pipas*. In the street assemblies or through a WhatsApp group organised by the WDC, the members of this group share information about water availability in their homes, register their attendance through a list, and express their need for a *pipa*.

Whenever people ask for a *pipa*, their names and addresses are checked on the attendance list of the most recent assemblies, which helps to guarantee that they are actively involved in the group. After this, they have to wait for their turn, as Catalina described. Things like waiting, showing up, and signing up become elements of water sharing.

Accessing these *pipas* is possible outside the WDC,[70] but this group ensures faster access, free of charge, as long as people sign up in the attendance list. This group is helpful because, as participants mentioned, paying for a private pipa is very costly, and not everybody can afford it. This list registers not individual names but a household representative, so participation and water

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[70] In the interviews, research participants described the experience of informally organising with their neighbours to ask for private water trucks before being part of the WDC. This usually involved paying high costs and longer waiting periods compared to asking them with the support of the Committee.

relate not to individuals but to households involved in the group. The motivation for accessing a *pipa* was present when Marisol, a woman in her 50s who had not been involved in any neighbourhood group before, talked about her experience.

> Marisol: No, I didn't even know they [The Committee] existed. I found out because a neighbour from across the street said to me: "I'm on a water committee, and we're there because we help each other with the trucks when the water runs out". That was the first information I got and that's how I know it existed. I went and I have been with them ever since.
>
> Andres: And how did the theme come up?
>
> Marisol: Talking about the fact that we didn't have water. […] We were asking each other if we had water or not. Asking and saying "hey, do you have water yet?" And then she mentioned the Committee, and how they request a water truck and there is no intermediary, no political party involved.
>
> (Marisol, interview, 30/11/2022).

The previous story shows how neighbour relationships and conversations play a role in congregating people who, motivated by resolving an everyday life problem, join an NBO. Talking about water scarcity in neighbourhood public and semi-public places like sidewalks, beyond the street assemblies of the WDC, allows for the recruitment of new people, showing how elements like public recognition and everyday small interactions matter for neighbouring, as mentioned previously in this chapter, and as has been identified in the sociological literature (Morgan, 2009). As described by Marisol, this can lead people to "help each other" to access water through the organisation.

The WDC has also proposed changes in the *tandeo* system. This system of intermittent water distribution through existing pipes is operated and regulated by SACMEX. The WDC sought and obtained modifications by negotiation with local officials. Initially, the areas of Santo Domingo that received water alternated during certain hours of the same day. However, low

pressure in the pipes meant that not enough water was reaching the tanks or cisterns of many households. Therefore, this organisation proposed that water be distributed for three consecutive days of the week to every area before alternating.

During their campaigning to approve this proposal, the members of the group would report their water supply to the WDC. Members like Waldo and Raul made a map to represent this information. This map was used to convince local authorities of the problem and the need to change the tandeo. This process is described in the following interview extract by a research participant like Martina, a woman in her 60s.

> The tandeo was divided into Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, midday, upper zone. Thursday, noon, Friday, Saturday and Sunday for the central zone. So those in the central zone had to report on Monday and those in the upper zone on Thursday, which was the day they had half a day. And according to those reports, Waldo and Raul made a map to demonstrate that water was not arriving. […] With those maps we also began checking valves so that they would close and open correctly on the days when it was the turn of the high zone or the central zone.

(Martina, interview, 17/12/22)

Once the proposed days for the tandeo were approved, the members of the WDC continuously monitored and reported their water supply, which is still not guaranteed. They also can plan, hoping that water becomes available depending on where they live. These changes represent a larger scale of organised water sharing throughout the neighbourhood, which also involves waiting, monitoring, and sharing information. Furthermore, this process also involved mapping, which forms part of recognising where neighbours and their necessities are in the locality. The relevance of recognition between neighbours within the WDC is explored further in Chapter 6.

As repeated continuously by the participants, the main goal of the WDC for many months was related to the construction of a water well. This water well represents a benefit for the whole neighbourhood community, improving water access and eliminating the reliance on *pipas* and *tandeo* for water distribution.

> Teodora: 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, not just one person. It's a benefit for all of us because it's not just your tap [talking to Elia] or mine, right?
>
> (Elia and Teodora, interview, 08/12/22)

Teodora explains that water in the pipes can't only reach certain households, so the well would benefit the entire neighbourhood. The characteristics of water infrastructure make this well a more radical and open form of water sharing, in which living nearby becomes a crucial motivation for solving a shared problem.

The WDC has less control over water sharing if water distribution in the pipes is improved, which is its central goal. Therefore, the WDC brings neighbours together towards a concrete, pragmatic purpose. Furthermore, it is crucial to emphasise that many research participants commented that they did not require *pipas* regularly. They supported the group seeking to improve water access through the well. In this sense, organised water sharing also carries an element of environmental justice and resolving an everyday need for the wider community, as a theme explored further in Chapter 5.

Different forms of infrastructure were involved in the collective struggle of the WDC. The role of different infrastructures is discussed further in Chapter 6. In the context of this chapter, it is important to note how these infrastructures influence the conditions of water sharing as an organised practice. In particular, there is a clear difference between the strategy of accessing water

trucks with the mediation of the WDC and the changes represented by the water well connected directly to the pipe network to improve the pressure along the pipes and managed by SACMEX.

By organising access to water through the trucks, the WDC can distinguish between members and non-members and assist its members in accessing water. Furthermore, the organised neighbours can identify which members support the group by signing up on the attendance list after an event and assist them with accessing water with the trucks. While this can stiffen the distinction between members and non-members of the group, a different form of water sharing is possible with the well. With the water well, the WDC cannot control which households receive the water that goes directly into the pipes and, according to the expectations of its members, benefits the whole community of Santo Domingo. In this way, the well represented a widening of water sharing without excluding specific residents. Thus, different infrastructures allowed for diverse mechanisms of water sharing, with implications in terms of the identity and expectations of solidarity and reciprocity directed towards other members of the WDC or the residents of the neighbourhood community.

An element to consider is the degree to which a notion of "community" is reflected in the struggle of the WDC. The name of this group, the Water Defence Committee of Santo Domingo, implies that water is defended as a benefit for the whole neighbourhood. The notion of defence, in this sense, involves a factor of publicness, recovered and discussed further in Chapter 6, which also explores how this publicness forms part of the motivation mentioned by participants of benefiting the larger neighbourhood "community" with their campaign. In the narratives explored through interviews with research participants, the term "community" was used to refer to Santo Domingo as a neighbourhood.

In the discussions with research participants, it was possible to distinguish between the goal of defending water for a few neighbours or the larger neighbourhood community, as discussed in Chapter 6. This distinction, as well as the expectations of feelings of community reawakening by the neighbour-based organisation related to senses of belonging that will be explored in Chapter 5, suggest that the term "community" is correlated to an idea of Santo Domingo as a neighbourhood locality. In this chapter, the implications of defending water with a well connected directly to the pipe network, which was the main goal of the WDC since its emergence, shows that the struggle of the organised neighbours is oriented by a sense of mutualism and the expectation to benefit Santo Domingo as a whole.

The parallel between an expectation and notion of "community" and the neighbourhood as a locality has implications for the activities of the WDC and is related to the history of struggle in Santo Domingo mentioned in previous chapters. Local organising was crucial to introduce urban services, including water, in a neighbourhood produced through self-built housing. For the research participants, Santo Domingo as a built environment is perceived as a result of the effort of the whole "community" correlated with the neighbourhood as a space. The activism of the WDC aims to benefit a "community" with a long history of struggle and resistance. Furthermore, this activism is characterised by feelings of solidarity with this community.

With these insights, it is possible to observe how, in contexts of urban precarity, the nearness of neighbours can lead not only to conflicts or intense efforts to maintain boundaries. It can also lead to the possibility of mutual support as a dimension of neighbouring, as suggested in the first sections of this chapter.

A shared experience of scarcity can lead to mutual help and even spatial solidarity, a place-based sharing of values and objectives related to everyday living in proximity (Walter et al., 2017).

However, the spatial solidarity of water sharing connects with reciprocity. A crucial argument, explored in the next section, is that this organised form of water sharing involves both reciprocity and solidarity, and relates to the construction of political identities within the WDC.

<u>Neighbour alliances, solidarity, and reciprocity in the WDC</u>

Reciprocity is an essential element of neighbour relationships, as has been identified by different authors (Bulmer, 1986; Morgan, 2009; Rosenblum, 2016). It is a valuable concept for observing neighbour relationships without assuming their content as either kindness or hostility (Painter, 2012) and for observing how the experiences of being a neighbour involve an element of "elasticity" (May et al., 2021). Through reciprocity in everyday social practices, the complexity of simultaneous spatial proximity and social ambiguity is resolved.

Reciprocity is the expectation of exchanging gifts or favours, and in the context of neighbours, it relates to the types of interactions that proximity makes probable or easier. This expectation has been thoroughly explored by Rosenblum (2016), discussing a "pragmatic mutualism" between neighbours, closer to interdependency and everyday intimacy than to a formal services exchange.[71]

Informal reciprocities were explored in a previous section of this chapter that discussed expectations of neighbourliness: participants are willing to provide a friendly greeting in the streets, the occasional favour, and even help, and they expect this offered back to them. The importance of exchanging gifts or favours to understand neighbour reciprocity is explored by Bennett (2014). As discussed in Chapter 2, this author identifies that belonging has a material

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[71] Reciprocity is a voluntary and indeterminate process, not a rationally calculated or formal transaction (Rosenblum, 2016, p. 59).

dimension related to reciprocal acts of caring for a place, which becomes a gift exchanged by neighbours (Bennett, 2014). This material dimension of belonging and "gifted places" is also explored in Chapter 5 when discussing neighbourhood attachment.

All of the previous accounts help to observe reciprocity in informal everyday interaction, but this case study helps to observe how reciprocity interacts with solidarity, as a sense of unity around a common goal, within the more formal space of NBOs. These insights will help to understand the consequences of water scarcity for neighbour relationships.

Conceptual clarifications are important for understanding the difference and relationship between reciprocity and solidarity (and their connection to being an ally) presented in this chapter. As mentioned in Chapter 2, solidarity is a feeling of unity around a common purpose that emerges from the knowledge of being in a shared condition or circumstance and can have different durations. Reciprocity, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, is a practice of exchange in which the parties involved engage voluntarily to obtain mutual benefits. Allyship is a form of relationship which is rooted in the condition of being an ally, which implies cooperating with or supporting someone else for a purpose. Feelings of solidarity and practices of reciprocity can be involved in motivating and maintaining such alliances.

For neighbour relationships and organisations, reciprocity can be understood as a mutually beneficial give-and-take that derives from the parity of living near each other (Rosenblum, 2016). Reciprocity requires a sense of exchange, in which people not only expect to receive support, a favour, or a greeting from each other but are willing to offer it. The content of such reciprocities can vary since neighbours may choose to remain close or distant from each other and benefit from it.

Solidarity, in the context of neighbour relationships and organisations, is a sense of unity usually related to adhering to shared goals. It derives from the everyday experiences of living near each other and can lead to relationships with mutual support at their core (Walter et al., 2017). Solidarity does not involve the notion of exchange at its core but of commitment to a shared goal and to support each other.

The emergence of the WDC involved feelings of both solidarity and reciprocity. Solidarity is expressed as a sense of commitment between participants to support each other,and especially to support the wider neighbourhood community, in facing the need for water and to improve the conditions for water access in the whole of Santo Domingo. Solidarity is evident in the shared goal of the water well, which would represent a benefit for the whole community of Santo Domingo.

Reciprocity was also involved in the emergence of the WDC, particularly for what this implies among its members. As will be discussed further in the following section of this chapter, the WDC generates a new definition of the neighbour as a political identity. This political identity involves neighbouring practices, converting the neighbour (as a member of the WDC) into a source of support in a different sense than under normal circumstances. Around this support, there is a sense of reciprocal commitment directed towards the members of the WDC. Members of the WDC expect more from each other than under normal circumstances, leading to a deepening of existing reciprocities among them.

This process combines reciprocity and solidarity as crucial components of the political identity of the neighbour as an ally within the WDC. The feeling of solidarity, however, is not restricted to members of the WDC but directed towards the whole of Santo Domingo, which includes the neighbours who are a part of this group. Therefore, the emergence of the political

identity of the neighbour as an ally, as will be discussed in the next section, involves both reciprocity and solidarity.

Reciprocity is deepened as an expectation and sense of mutual obligation between the members of the WDC, which accompanies the meaning of being a "neighbour" as a political identity constructed by the neighbour-based organisation. Reciprocity can be related to the membership of the WDC. Solidarity connects to Santo Domingo as a larger community and reflects the expectations around the relationship between not only the members of the WDC but also those directed towards other residents. This feeling of solidarity and the understanding of Santo Domingo as a "community" are rooted in the political experience of organising to occupy and produce the built environment of this self-built neighbourhood.

The different infrastructures also connect to the dimensions of reciprocity and solidarity involved in neighbour-based organising. The process of organising to access water trucks makes the commitment to attend street assemblies, and in this way, support the activities of the group, a condition to access water, and sets the tone for expressions of reciprocity as an element of organising. On the other hand, the effort to obtain the water well, by representing a benefit for the whole community of Santo Domingo, is associated with a feeling of solidarity towards other residents in this locality, and a feeling of belonging that will be explored further in Chapter 5.

Within the WDC, reciprocity and solidarity combine. Through street assemblies or digital spaces like WhatsApp, the WDC becomes a platform for channelling mutual support that includes but also transcends water sharing to incorporate other everyday needs. The willingness to offer this help comes from recognising that anyone can need it at some point. Julia, a woman in her 60s, mentioned this in her interview and participant diary.

People in the Committee help us, but we also help them. For example, during the pandemic, many people got sick or died. So, people in the group asked for help. It was like a voluntary support, whatever you could give economically, or whatever you could do to help people with your experience or whatever. And that's how all that has been maintained. I think it's very good, because as the saying goes, today for you, tomorrow it could be for me [*hoy por ti, mañana puede ser por mi*][72]

<div align="right">(Julia, interview, 07/12/22)</div>

10 Feb 2023

The people of the Committee used to monitor when the well was being drilled. We took turns to be monitoring and to check that the people were working. One by one we went every day to the construction site until they finished building it.

Finally, we no longer suffer from water shortages, only some days we don't have water during the day but at night it comes back, but many of us continue to take care of the water by recycling it. The Committee also helps people who need a favour or have a problem, and we all help each other with whatever we can.

<div align="right">(Julia, diary)</div>

Having a source of support in the proximity of the neighbour, as a form of help coordinated by the WDC, is more urgent in situations of need and urban precarity, in this case related to water scarcity. Julia uses the expression "today for you, tomorrow for me" [*hoy por ti, mañana por mi],* which reflects the expectation of receiving help in the future in exchange for offering it in the present. In her diary, Julia described her memories regarding the campaign for the water well and how people "took turns" in monitoring the construction site. She also mentioned how people help each other when needed.

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[72] "Hoy por ti, mañana por mi", literally translated as "today for you, tomorrow for me", is a common expression in Spanish, referring to the possibility of receiving help from someone in the future while offering it in the present.

In Julia's accounts, it is possible to notice a sense of reciprocal exchange and commitment between the members of the WDC to help each other. Reciprocity is a crucial element within groups like the WDC, as an expectation directed towards the members of the group. The members of the WDC expect each other to show up in the street assemblies, share information, sign up for the monitoring, and support the group. Furthermore, people within he WDC expect more from other members than under normal circumstances, suggesting a deepening of reciprocity within neighbour-based organisations that coexists with a feeling of solidarity directed towards the larger neighbourhood community.

Lucia, a woman in her 60s, also described a motivation to support and share with other members of the WDC. In the following interview excerpt, she also expresses the satisfaction of seeing that "things are achieved".

> Andres: And you mentioned that you like to support the group…
>
> Lucia: Yes, I like it very much. I really like both supporting in presence and supporting with other things, like when they ask to bring things to share or to give to certain people. And I like seeing that things are achieved.

<div align="right">(Pedro & Lucia, interview, 17/01/23)</div>

While both Lucia and Julia identify the WDC as a space to "share" different things, the deepening of reciprocity is not uniformly expressed by participants. Feelings of reciprocity and solidarity were experienced differently among participants, similarly to how they may embody different views and expectations of neighbourliness. But even with these differences, being a member of the WDC implies a change in the meaning of being a neighbour. This can be observed as the production of a political identity around the meaning of "neighbour" within the group, as will be explored in the next section.

Neighbour identities and alliances in the WDC

For Alma, a woman in her 50s, supporting each other in the struggle relates to a particular expectation of neighbourliness. She expresses that a good neighbour is someone who is ready to "support" in times of need and struggle, suggesting an understanding of struggle as a source and space of solidarity (as has been identified by Oosterlynck et al., 2015).

> Andres: And what does it mean to be a good neighbour for you?
>
> Alma: Well, being a good neighbour could be that, to support each other in the struggle. Supporting each other in our needs. Knowing that it's not just me, but also the other person who is in the same situation. And learning that there are other people in need, like me.
>
> (Alma, interview, 11/01/23)

According to what was expressed by different research participants, the WDC is not only a space for activism but also for neighbours who support each other and exchange information and resources. In all these accounts, expectations of neighbourliness go beyond friendly distance to include elements of mutual support. Being a member of the WDC represents a new form of "being a neighbour" in Santo Domingo, which works as a political identity and the construction of the neighbour figure as an ally.

The WDC has become a platform for cooperation between its members towards the goal of water access, but also a space in which the notion of being a neighbour has changed and became a political identity. In conversations and observations with research participants, they referred to the other members of the WDC as other "neighbours", but the term neighbour in this context carries an expectation related to, as Alma mentioned, supporting each other in the struggle.

Therefore, in spaces like the WDC, the word "neighbour" involves a political identity which involves existing expectations and is based in the engagement of collective activism.

The meaning of the neighbour is reworked and re-elaborated within the WDC to take new dimensions. As was mentioned previously, the political identity of the "neighbour" applies to members of the WDC and relates to expectations of mutual support in a shared struggle over water access. Through local organising and activism, the neighbour is constructed as an "ally", and allyship becomes a central component of neighbouring for the members of this group.

In this thesis, the term ally is used to refer to a person who cooperates with another in a campaign for a collective goal or who supports another in a struggle, and allyship is understood as the condition of being or having an ally. Allyship between neighbours is therefore understood as a collective coming together to cooperate in a campaign for, in this case, a key resource and element of the neighbourhood, such as water.

Experiencing the neighbour (as a member of the WDC) as an ally involves a deepening of reciprocity among members of the group, leading to people expecting more from each other than under normal circumstances. This deepening of reciprocity effectively links reciprocity with solidarity between members of the WDC and relates to a sense of solidarity directed towards the wider neighbourhood community. The alliances between neighbours are oriented towards a common goal, displaying a degree of solidarity that is essential for their shared struggle. In this sense, the neighbour as an ally is a political identity in which reciprocity among members of the WDC deepens, and connects to solidarity to Santo Domingo as a whole.

Within the WDC, neighbours construct and discover each other as allies. As Alma mentioned, being a good neighbour means "to support each other in the struggle". This neighbour-

based organisation produces the possibility of discovering the neighbour as an ally, which works as a political identity for its members. This process involves expectations of reciprocity and solidarity that previously existed in Santo Domingo. Thus, this elaboration of a new political identity, mediated by the WDC, can be observed as one of the consequences of water scarcity for neighbouring Santo Domingo.

This group contributes to changing the meaning of being a neighbour as applied to its members, and this is evident in its role as a space for encounter and the pragmatic engagement between neighbours during collective activism that forms part of this identity construction. The WDC emerges in a social context of public familiarity and latent neighbourliness described in the first sections of this chapter and triggered by a situation of water scarcity, influences the pragmatic definition of the neighbour as an ally, as a new political identity generated by the experience of collective activism and joining in a neighbour-based organisation and applied to its members.

Water scarcity, in a context of ambiguity and uncertainty, characterised by urban precarity, did not lead to conflict in Santo Domingo but to the reconfiguration of neighbours as allies, as a political identity applied for the membership of the WDC. This is accompanied by a deepening of reciprocities to reach new dimensions, incorporating more forms of being there for each other among members of the group than what is expected under "normal" circumstances, or than what is expected from other residents of Santo Domingo, which form part of the neighbourhood as a wider "community", as discussed previously in this chapter.

The WDC is not the only space in which an understanding of "being a neighbour" is elaborated. As discussed previously in this chapter, research participants expressed diverse understandings of what being a good neighbour implies, related to friendly recognition, favours exchange, respecting boundaries and keeping a peaceful coexistence. Depending on these

187

expectations of neighbourliness, being a neighbour and carrying it out with neighbouring practices may take different meanings for participants and imply a distinct set of responsibilities. In this sense, neighbouring practices may refer to lending a ladder, as Catalina mentioned, or saying hello to each other on the street, as Monica commented. But, as described by participants like Alma and Lucia, neighbouring can also involve supporting each other and being willing to commit to the collective forms of water sharing. This form of neighbouring is related to the political identity of being a neighbour and was appropriated and reworked within the WDC.

The political identity of the neighbour involves specific expectations that are not necessarily applied to the wider "community" of Santo Domingo. As previously mentioned, the members of the WDC are neighbours from whom other members expect more than under normal circumstances. However, reciprocity already operates in the everyday context and encounters between the residents of Santo Domingo, who may be expected to exchange greetings or favours. As was previously argued, neighbours as residents of Santo Domingo may also be expected to become a source of support in times of trouble, so being a form of ally to other neighbours is an already existing tacit expectation in everyday life that is reworked and deepened within the neighbours as members of the WDC, and given a political meaning. Therefore, the political identity of the neighbour as an ally is accompanied by a deepening of reciprocity that is applied to the members of the WDC while simultaneously not being constructed in a vacuum but in a social context.

This process involves a reconfiguration of imaginaries and expectations from a friendly but distant acquaintance in space (Crow et al., 2002; Morgan, 2009) into an ally, as a person who supports in the struggle for achieving shared goals, in this case, related to water access. Producing the neighbour as an ally involves changes in neighbourliness expectations and imaginaries, but is

connected to and rooted in neighbouring practices and experiences. Therefore, the neighbour as an ally becomes a crucial element of the reciprocity among the members of the WDC, and the solidarity expressed towards the wider community.

The WDC facilitates the pragmatic exchanges through which its members construct their relationships as allies for a common goal such as the well. The members of this group expect more from each other than under normal circumstances, and fundamentally, that they support each other in the struggle continuously. Therefore, it is possible to identify a deepening of reciprocity expectations among members of the WDC. Reciprocity between members of this group deepens, by expecting mutual commitment to support the activities of the WDC, such as showing up at street assemblies, monitoring the well construction advances, or sharing the information necessary to make the *pipas* and *tandeo* distribution effective, as mentioned by Leticia, a woman in her 20s.

> Andres: And you say that you have felt support to get *pipas*...
>
> Leticia: Yes, but, just as they gave us support, we are there too. In other words, it's reciprocal. And that's what I'm telling you, I get angry because I've seen a lot of people who only go when they need the *pipa* and not because they really want to make a change. […] This is reciprocal, and for the common good, because we all win something. That's why it's important, and that's what we ask so much that the neighbours always attend the meetings. Not just when they need a *pipa*, but always, always.
>
> (Leticia and Miriam, interview, 29/11/22)

In contexts of social and environmental crisis, discovering the neighbour as an ally can be very important for survival. However, residential neighbours can also turn on each other, and

conflicts can emerge.[73] Neighbour alliances are not a given, and neighbours helping each other in situations or risks cannot be predicted by previous hostility or closeness (Cheshire, 2015; Dhattiwala, 2022). Given this situation, and considering the different expectations of neighbourliness that coexist, groups like the WDC play a crucial role in bringing people together and helping to articulate neighbours as allies.

Leticia displays disappointment and reproach to the people who expect a benefit from the Committee without showing much support for the group's activities in return. She explicitly comments that the support they get from the group is reciprocated by showing up in the meetings. She also comments that this commitment to support the group combines with wanting to change reality, showing how the members of the WDC are neighbours that pragmatically become allies for a shared goal. This process involves an expectation of social justice, discussed in Chapter 5. In the context of neighbour-based organising to face water scarcity, reciprocity obtains new meanings, dimensions, and possibilities, but Leticia's frustration also helps to understand some of the limitations of this process, explored in the following section.

Limits of reciprocity and fragile alliances

The previous narrative should not be misleading in suggesting an idyllic relationship of togetherness among the members of the WDC. Showing up does not involve permanent contact or a profound knowledge of each other. As explored in a previous section, there are diverse understandings of neighbourliness among participants. This section will focus on the limits of

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[73] This has been studied in different context, in which, particularly driven by political tensions, neighbours can become violent (Dhattiwala, 2022). Under circumsntances of intense social divides, the small exchanges of information can reinforce prejudices and boundaries rather than dissolve them (van Eijk, 2011).

reciprocity or the reluctance to reciprocate and how it can be perceived. It will also show how, despite these challenges, tensions and ambivalences, neighbour identities within the WDC are still constructed in a way that leads to building alliances, showing the tenacity and inescapability of neighbours (Rosenblum, 2016).

Neighbours can (and do) become friendly in this group, but getting along as friends is not a requirement. There is a possibility of conflict and reluctance to get involved within the group. Chapter 6 includes a discussion of conflicts with other groups and the lack of motivation to attend the meetings of the WDC.

When Leticia mentioned that people should not only attend a meeting when they need a *pipa*, she hints at a way in which there can be limits of reciprocity within the group, particularly since people may not feel motivated to join when they don't see an immediate benefit to their water supply. Leticia was not the only participant who criticised people who asked for pipas without being involved in the WDC. Reluctance to reciprocate and the effort to distinguish between people who regularly go to meetings and those who don't was a common theme of conversation. This also shows how somebody could, on some occasions, reluctantly attend to the group activities and show support.

> Leticia: Sometimes I'm the one who checks the attendance lists for sending the *pipas*. I mean, I check that people are actually participating in the group. Sometimes I even get angry because they just want the water trucks when they come, and then when they get it sent they don't come again to a meeting. And it makes me angry. The truth is that I do understand people who say that people should come to the meeting not just when they need water, but always support.
>
> (Leticia and Miriam, interview, 29/11/22)

In the previous extract, Leticia expresses anger towards people who go to the meeting "just when they need water". Sometimes, she is in charge of revising the attendance list to check that *pipas* are not sent to people who have not attended meetings. Organised water sharing has limits and can lead to conflict, particularly if people do not respect established rules. A description of these types of conflicts around water sharing is present in the following description from Caralampia Mondongo, a woman in her 40s.

> Caralampia: On one occasion my neighbour asked the Committee to send her a water truck. And Waldo sent it. The driver arrived, she put the hose in her cistern, and got in her house. And when she came out after a little while, the hose wasn't there. Other neighbours pulled the hose into their house so it left the water there. Waldo found out about it and scolded them. He was not rude, but he told them "don't do that".
>
> Andres: So are these neighbours who are not in the Committee?
>
> Caralampia: They were in the group, but they didn't go to the meetings. Only when they needed water.

> (Caralampia and Facunda, interview, 14/02/23)

Caralampia Mondongo, in the previous extract, gives a narrative account of a moment in which some of her neighbours took water unfairly from a person who waited for their *pipa* and asked for it through the committee. The intervention of Waldo as a WDC leader helps to identify how this group organises and plays a role in water sharing, establishing mechanisms and rules for this. Apart from this feeling of unfairness and conflict around water sharing, people might be reluctant to join the group, as mentioned by Lucia in the following extract, who talks about inviting neighbours who live in her street but don't show up in the meetings.

Andres: Are there also neighbours who don't want to support [the WDC]?

Lucia: Yes, some don't want to. It's like they don't like it, I don't know… but they don't.

Andres: Why do you think that happens?

Lucia: Because they don't need to. The truth is, for example, a neighbour, I don't know why, but I never see him go out with a bucket to fetch water.

[…]

Andres: Do you still invite them?

Lucia: Yes, we've invited them, but I'm telling you, there are only a few of us. I don't know why. We've even made flyers and given them to them, but they don't go.

(Pedro & Lucia, interview, 17/01/23)

All of these accounts help to observe how the WDC is not made by people with necessary unified forms of thinking. It also shows that there are limits to how much reciprocity can deepen, related to the different expectations of neighbourliness introduced and mentioned earlier in this chapter. Considering these limits and different views helps to nuance discussions of the arrangements for collective water access in contexts of urban precarity.

The alliances and identities within the WDC involve ambiguities and fragilities. The WDC is constituted of neighbours with a temporary alliance (Crow, 2010) in which current needs, shared histories, and collective memory play a crucial role to build a political identity. This collective memory involves the experience and history of the struggle to make Santo Domingo, which implies valuing the effort and commitment of different generations, explored further in Chapter 5. Therefore, temporary and long-term solidarities are at play, with long-term solidarities related to the neighbourhood community and its intergenerational dimension, working alongside temporary and fragile alliances between members of the WDC and a deepening of reciprocity among them in

the present, built despite the fragilities and limits of local organising and related to pragmatic, visible goals.

The elements mentioned in the previous paragraph become relevant for neighbourhood attachment, explored further in Chapter 5. However, even if these alliances materialise with the role of the WDC to facilitate and reproduce them, a degree of ambivalence and possible conflict remains, as has been discussed. This ambivalence is evident in how people may not socialise beyond what is expected of a neighbour (echoing the earlier comments from Alonso) after their reciprocities extend. Marisol described that listening to other people was a positive aspect of getting involved in the WDC while acknowledging that there is not too much interaction outside the group.

> Marisol: Being involved also means getting to know other people, especially older people. Seeing things from the point of view of other people, and know them in that way, or also knowing how long they have been here.
>
> […]
>
> Andres: And interacting with these people is something that you also experience on a day-to-day basis?
>
> Marisol: I don't know many people. I know about ten or fifteen of those neighbours, at the most. And the rest, no idea. It's only through WhatsApp chatting and listening to their point of view that I get to know them.
>
> (Marisol, interview, 30/11/22)

Taking Marisol's narration seriously, which includes elements described by many participants, helps to nuance the understanding of how much unity NBOs can achieve. Neighbourhoods are not homogeneous communities, and elasticity remains a feature of neighbour relationships (May et al., 2021) even after reciprocity extends. For these reasons, observing the

contradiction and limits of neighbour alliances within the WDC is crucial to understanding their pragmatic nature.

The neighbour relationship is contingent and ambiguous. However, neighbour alliances, pragmatically oriented towards solving a common goal, are still possible and become a reality within the WDC. This shows how, even with limitations, the tenacity of the neighbour does not disappear, and alliances are built despite tensions and ambiguities.

The deepening of reciprocity of the WDC and the construction of neighbours as allies involve everyday negotiation, pragmatic exchange, and publicness, close to the "pragmatic multiculturalism" of neighbouring in urban multiculture discussed by Neal (2022). In the case of the WDC, this thesis argues that it is possible to observe a "pragmatic environmentalism" of the neighbour that carries a possibility for justice, discussed further in the following chapter.

As previously discussed, the tension and fragility of neighbour connections are not always related to hostility or conflict. In the context of urban precarity, neighbours can also help each other, become friends and be friendly, and neighbour-based organisations have an important role to play in this process. Yet, this alliance between neighbours, formed in the context of spaces like the WDC, is closer to a possibility, continuous achievement and expectation than to a certainty.

Discovering the role of neighbour-based organisations in generating an understanding of the neighbour as an ally, as a political identity that involves both reciprocity and solidarity, is a fundamental finding of this study. This finding helps to understand the neighbour as a site for everyday environmentalism and represents a new insight into existing reflections on neighbour relationships. It is also a key to understanding the pragmatic element of neighbour environmentalism related to shared problems and goals.

In the following story told by Sandra, it is possible to trace the process in which, from an individual concern, water scarcity becomes a shared issue and a collective struggle. Despite the challenges of everyday life interactions, particularly in a context of crisis and tension related to urban precarity, organised neighbours remain a critical source of help and a first line of response towards mutual support. Even with its ambiguities and tensions, neighbours are still inescapable, as identified by Rosenblum (2016). Their inescapability and nearness can lead to pragmatic alliances and everyday expressions of environmentalism, as manifested in the WDC.

> At the beginning I thought it was just me, how do you like that! But I saw my neighbours and well, recognised that we all have the same needs and the same problem, and it was not just me. Between all of us, we realised this, and said to one another: "I want the same as you". But the important thing is that this necessity becomes a shared struggle. From the individuality of each one, we were little by little uniting and agreeing to be as one. My neighbours would tell me: "I don't have water", but that wouldn't give way to a collective struggle before this. So, it was good to finally join for this. And we had to get used to each other.
>
> (Sandra, interview, 08/12/22)

In the previous narration, when Sandra realised that she was not alone in this necessity, moving beyond "individuality" allowed her to join forces with her neighbours who became members of the WDC, even if this involved patiently getting used to each other. In the same interview, she also expressed admiration for the people who have taken leadership roles within the group, feeling grateful for the time and effort they dedicate to it, and used a common Spanish expression to describe them.

> In the Committee there are very capable people with a lot of knowledge. They are great for supporting each other, they have empathy, and leadership. They are very prepared people

too. They're not just anyone, not just "any neighbour's son" [*hijo de vecino*][74], although...
well, they could actually be any neighbour's son, or any neighbour, and I include myself in
that. Yes, because, more than anything, the need for water has united us. The need to live,
like any other people.

(Sandra, interview, 08/12/23)

Sandra mentioned that the people with leadership roles in the group are not just anyone and added
that they are not "any neighbour's son" [*hijo de vecino*]. She used this common expression to
distinguish them as remarkable people. Interestingly, she immediately corrected herself to
comment that they could be any neighbour. Any neighbour who recognises the need for water and
is willing to participate can be involved in this organisation. In this sense, the leaders of the WDC
can actually come from any house in the neighbourhood. In the context of water scarcity, help can
potentially come from behind the door of any neighbour. Her story shows how the immediacy,
interdependency and mutualism of the neighbour, when turned towards local organising, can make
a difference in a context of environmental degradation and injustice.

Conclusion

This chapter explores how urban neighbour relationships are affected and reconfigured by contexts
of water scarcity. Its first section discussed the everyday conditions of neighbouring and identified
how, in this case, urban precarity did not lead to hostility but to the potential of future help among
neighbours. Neighbourliness expectations include the desire and experience of mutual support.
Therefore, urban precarity can trigger improved neighbour relationships instead of only making
them competitive and hostile. The insights from this case study contribute to discussions of how

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[74] The original expression in Spanish is "hijo de vecino", used to say that someone is just like anyone else. It is used
to refer to someone as a regular person, not necessarily exceptional.

neighbouring develops in contexts of urban precarity and the experience of water scarcity. This process can be analysed or explored further in other contexts.

The second section of the chapter explicitly focused on the implications of water scarcity for everyday neighbouring and discussed the emergence of the WDC. It examined how this group influenced water sharing as an organised social practice, establishing mechanisms and campaigns to improve water access. The chapter argued that this form of water sharing led to a re-definition of the neighbour as an ally, as a political identity that involved a deepening of reciprocity among members of the WDC with a simultaneous feeling of solidarity directed towards the larger neighbourhood as a form of community.

Neighbour reciprocity can occur informally, but the practice of "being a neighbour" is also organised in the WDC, showing the crucial role of NBOs in deepening reciprocity and producing the neighbour as an ally.. This process happens through the pragmatic engagements and imaginaries of neighbourhood activism, resolving without eliminating some of the tensions and uncertainties that form part of neighbour relationships.

Therefore, the key argument of this chapter, in connection to the research question, is that the meaning of being a neighbour can change in the context of water scarcity and that the role of neighbour-based organisations (NBO) is fundamental to understanding this process. Understanding the political identity of neighbours as allies in the WDC can also help to analyse why, in a context of urban precarity, the tenacity of neighbours did not lead to conflict. This tenacity transformed expectations of neighbourliness to include the possibility of mutual help and the new role of the neighbour as an ally, crucial to achieving shared goals. Even with the ambiguities and tensions of this process, a pragmatic solving of shared problems leads to neighbour

alliances. This process links to a material, social and political context, explored further in the following two chapters.

These insights help to develop further discussions of neighbouring from the context of the Global North by showing how the context of urban precarity and water scarcity matters for neighbour relationships. As identified in Chapter 2, observing the neighbour relationship in a context of environmental injustice and understanding how, particularly in cities of the Global South, precarity matters for neighbouring is an opportunity for learning. While urban precarity and water scarcity are not essential characteristics of any geography, they combine with a history of informal or popular urbanisation that has characterised the urban growth of many agglomerations in cities of the Global South. However, the conditions of urban precarity described in this chapter are set to become a reality in the Global North (Nilsson-Julien, 2023; Issimdar, 2023).

With the findings of this chapter, it is possible to identify that neighbour-based organisations are spaces in which new political identities around being a neighbour are elaborated. The role of these organisations in producing a definition of the neighbour as a political identity, which involves reworking the terms of neighbour reciprocity among their members, is an insight that contributes to discussions of neighbouring across the world. The balance between nearness and distance (Morgan, 2009) or stickiness and elasticity (May et al., 2021) among neighbours matters not only to maintain peace at home but also within NBOs to support each other during a struggle for the conditions of everyday life survival.

The political identities constructed by neighbour-based organisations link to a struggle to have a place to live in the context of urban precarity. They can also connect, as this case study has shown, to a historical context involved in feelings of belonging, explored in the following chapter.

Neighbour-based organisations do not operate in a political vacuum and can become in struggles over environmental justice as will be discussed in the following chapter.

Rather than assuming static identities, homogeneous points of view, and essentialist expressions of togetherness in NBOs, with the insights from this chapter, it is possible to observe these groups as a continuous accomplishment based on the willingness to become involved. Therefore, observing how neighbour political identities are constructed in other contexts and how NBOs play a role is pertinent. However, neighbour conflicts and ambivalence are always a possibility. Reciprocity can deepen only to a certain point, and as was possible to observe empirically, different understandings of being a good neighbour exist and influence the characteristics of neighbour alliances.

The following chapter explores in more detail how these alliances and identities of neighbours link to the role of neighbour-based organisations for protest and activism around environmental justice. It will describe how this process involves an affective change in capacities, rooted in the localised political activism of a neighbour-based organisation as a crucial form of facing the consequences of water scarcity.

Chapter 5: Environmental justice and neighbour-based organisations

Introduction

Chapter 4 described how neighbour relationships, both in informal and formal spaces for interaction, are affected by water scarcity. It described how urban precarity influenced expectations of neighbourliness and how water scarcity triggered a reworking of neighbour identities within the WDC, producing the neighbour as an ally. It suggested how social and environmental justice also became part of this process. This chapter will build on these findings to more explicitly explore the role of the neighbour in environmental justice as part of these expectations, addressing RQ2: How do local, neighbour-based organisations contribute to the practice of urban environmental justice in contexts of water scarcity?

The chapter will first describe the consequences of water scarcity in the everyday experiences of research participants, all members of the WDC. For analytical clarity, it distinguishes different dimensions of environmental justice: distributive, procedural, restorative, and emotional. This chapter observes environmental injustice as an experiential reality from a qualitative perspective.

These lived experiences of environmental injustice can be identified as disrupted place attachment to the neighbourhood (Poma, 2018; Schlosberg, 2019). Therefore, a crucial argument of this chapter is that neighbour-based organisations (NBOs) contribute to urban environmental justice by linking protest and activism to the reconstruction of neighbourhood place attachment. This reconstruction is intrinsically relational since it involves energising social relationships.

The chapter uses the concept of resonance to analyse the consequences of protest and activism. In this research, resonance is defined as an affective and momentary amplification of capacity, using conceptual elements discussed in Chapter 2 and insights from the empirical data. This concept represents what participants describe as the sense of togetherness and strength after joining the WDC. Ultimately, this chapter suggests that NBOs are fundamental in connecting neighbour resonance to place attachment.

After this conceptual outline, the chapter describes place attachment through material, temporal, and relational elements. This description helps to examine how the WDC contributes to reconstructing place attachment. It also aids in identifying that the environmentalism of the neighbour is not only pragmatic but also a relational practice.

Experiences of injustice and disrupted attachment

Dimensions of environmental injustice

As discussed in Chapter 2, the environmental justice framework highlights the unequal distribution of environmental benefits and burdens across societal divisions (Agyeman et al., 2010; Agyeman et al., 2016; Holifield, 2001). From an initial focus on distribution inequality, this focus has expanded to include procedural and restorative justice dimensions (Schlosberg, 2013; Agyeman et al., 2016). Another dimension identified in Chapter 2 relates to the emotional distress from environmental injustices (Ennis-McMillan, 2001; Wutich & Ragsdale, 2008; Brown, 2023).[75]

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[75] The concept of solastalgia, introduced in Chapter 2, helps to describe the emotional distress related to the disruption and loss of a known landscape (Brown, 2023).

This chapter explores these distributive, procedural, restorative and emotional dimensions as lived experiences of environmental injustice. It will discuss them separately for analytical clarity, but they have connections and overlaps.

In urban settings, environmental justice claims articulate around issues such as physical displacement from a locality, transport, water supply, energy and food access, land use changes, housing conditions, public and green space access, and vulnerability to pollution (Gelobter, 1994). This chapter, working with the case study of the WDC, focuses on water scarcity as a form of environmental injustice. As described in Chapter 1, water scarcity forms part of a condition of urban precarity (Campbell & Laheij, 2021) through intermittent supply and the vulnerabilities and absences related to water access in Santo Domingo.

It is important to note that participants did not talk about "environmental justice" or "environmentalism" as a concept explicitly, nor were they asked about that specific term. Instead, their narrations help to identify trajectories of environmental justice as an experiential reality in connection to the four dimensions mentioned previously. The following descriptions are valuable to qualitatively explore a connection between the macro scale of water crises in Mexico City and across cities of the Global South and the micro-scale of everyday life.

Since the research participants did not speak of environmentalism or environmental justice explicitly, explaining why this concept is being used for the analysis in this thesis is important. As discussed in Chapter 2, this thesis will understand the neighbourhood is a form of environment that entangles social and natural elements (Heynen et al., 2006). In this thesis and chapter, Santo Domingo will be observed as an everyday environment. The fact that, in this case, Santo Domingo is the result of self-built housing makes the combination of these elements more evident: volcanic

rocks are still visible in some of the sidewalks and houses of this neighbourhood, which is the result of a literal production of the built environment by its inhabitants for more than 50 years. This argument is also present in Chapter 6, which discusses Santo Domingo as a waterscape.

As argued in Chapter 2, this thesis understands environmentalism as a collective effort to protect and improve the material conditions of an environment. The definition of this environment can vary, and in the context of this research, neighbourhoods are understood as environments, or locations where everyday life unfolds, and as socionatural assemblages. In the context of this study, talk about environmentalism and environmental justice is justified because of how, as this chapter will argue, defending water matters not as an isolated resource but as an element of the neighbourhood landscape and as a right that connects with the right to have a place to live, which motivated the original invasion and construction of Santo Domingo. Figures 17 & 18, shown in Chapter 3, reflect a mural elaborated by the WDC, in which water flows as part of a lively, diverse and organised group of humans and non-humans that form a vision of a healthy and just Santo Domingo.

As many participants mentioned during our interviews, protecting water matters because it is a source of life. In effect, one of the slogans of the WDC is "Water is life, and life must be defended". The following sections show how participants relate the struggle over water with an overall defence of their right to live in their neighbourhood as a place, aiming to improve the experience of living in that place. They crucially display how the lack of water disrupts the capacity to appropriate and feel at home in that place. For that reason, the empirical content of this chapter is aligned with the conceptual orientation and principles associated with environmental justice research and activism. For its connection to defending the neighbourhood environment, a struggle

to defend water access will be observed as a search for environmental justice on the local scale, with a crucial component of place attachment.

Distributive dimension: inequality

Unequal water distribution and its consequences are part of everyday life in Mexico City (Watts, 2015; Medina-Rivas et al., 2022). Medina-Rivas et al. (2022) describe the spatial patterns of water household consumption in Mexico City, identifying a correlation between neighbourhood spatial inequality and intermittent water supply, reliance on external sources, geographical altitude, and socioeconomic characteristics. This section explores environmental injustice using a qualitative perspective. It examines the experiential perception of unequal distribution.

> 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? [...] I think of these neighbourhoods that have their gardens or have their pools. Those people do use more water. And we don't.
>
> (Susana, interview, 28/11/22)

The previous narration from Susana, comparing water use in wealthy and poor neighbourhoods, is one example of an idea expressed by many other research participants. This issue was particularly relevant when participants mentioned that not everybody has the money to pay for a private water truck [*pipa*] sent to their home. The distributional dimension of environmental injustice was experienced through a perception of inequality. The perception of inequality relates to how, in a generalised context of scarcity that affects the whole city, some neighbourhoods are more affected

205

than others. Research participants also connected this perception of inequality and intense burdens to recent changes in the surrounding areas to Santo Domingo, led by investment in real estate projects, as shown in the following diary.

December 26th, 2022

We are pleased to receive the news that today will be the official handover of the well from the authorities of SACMEX and the construction company to the authorities of Coyoacan. With this handover, the commitment of SACMEX regarding the construction work is concluded, but the work in the houses of the neighbours adjacent to the water well is still pending.

Waldo made a statement about the delivery of the well to be sent to the press. The news will say that SACMEX delivers a water well to Santo Domingo.

Water for the people, not for the real estate developers!

(Martina, diary)

Martina wrote the previous diary extract when the well was concluded and registered a sense of satisfaction from this fact. She finished that entry by writing: "Water for the people, not for the real estate developers!". Her words show how this form of infrastructure contributes to the struggle for distributive environmental justice. She also mentions a statement made by Waldo, illustrating the importance and potential of neighbour activism in the WDC, explored further in another section of this chapter. Similar ideas were also expressed by Tita, a woman in her 60s for whom water scarcity forms part of displacement from the neighbourhood. In both accounts, there is a feeling of mistrust directed at other stakeholders involved in land-use changes, such as real-estate developers and local officials.

We are once again suffering from water shortages, and it is a setback that we are seeing because of what has been achieved in this area. Those who are taking the vital liquid are the real estate companies. […] We know that here in the pedregal we have water, but the big constructions are the ones that are taking away the liquid and we as a people are having our ration reduced. The first thing that is happening with the water shortage is that we are

being pushed aside. They are choking us, as we say. Because the government knows we are going to be displaced little by little. It is a forced displacement that we are experiencing, because in the face of this scarcity we have to look to live elsewhere.

(Tita, interview, 17/12/22)

For its consequences in everyday life, water scarcity undermines the conditions for social reproduction in the neighbourhood, recovering a concept with connections to environmental justice, as identified in Chapter 2.[76] Inequality can also be experienced on a different level, particularly around the household distribution of labour.

As a woman, you know when there is no electricity, when something breaks down, or when there is no water. Who suffers? Well, the woman, because she is the one who deals with this. The woman stays in the house and realises this. [...] Who stays at home? Who feeds the children? Who bathes them and all that? So, as women, we do see the need for water. We have to have water to bathe them, to feed them.

(Catalina, interview, 18/01/23)

The previous extract, from an interview with Catalina, reveals how water availability adds to the burden of carrying out chores in the household, an activity that, in the context of Santo Domingo, is traditionally carried out by women. The household and gendered distribution of labour was not the focus of the research, but the collected data helps to visualize that gender is a crucial component in experiences of environmental injustice, particularly when social reproduction is considered (Bennett, 1995; Corburn, 2017).[77] Even if fieldwork showed how men could also be involved in

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[76] As has been argued by Di Chiro (2008), social reproduction concerns can lead to coalitions, campaigns and movements around environmental justice.

[77] Studies conducted around urban struggles in Latin America have offered evidence confirming this inequality and the gendered dimension of environmental suffering related to the social distribution of labour inside the household and in the neighbourhood (Massolo, 1992; Bennett, 1995; Safa & Ramirez, 2011a).

activism campaigns or household activities, what Catalina and other participants described shows how gender is structurally connected to the burdens and inequalities of water scarcity.

Procedural dimension: exclusion

Environmental injustice can also be experienced as an exclusion from the procedures and participation mechanisms for decision-making, particularly when these decisions have consequences in everyday experiences of urban environments. Merlinsky (2017b; 2018) observes this procedural dimension in contestations over urban water. This author identifies how alternative participatory channels, such as citizen forums and assemblies, are fundamental spaces for articulating claims and alliances.

> Among the neighbours, we asked each other, "Hey, did you get any water yet?", and realised that many of us didn't have it. I think that's how the committee came about. And it has been a lot of help. For example, in going to the mayor's office and making blockades and everything. It is because of our protests and sit-ins and blockades that the authorities have listened to us. Because we would say "there is no water", and they didn't pay attention to us before. But when we went and demonstrated as a group, it was a strange thing that water would come to our house that very night. And there were times when there was water even at midday. So now, as they say, it's as if the authorities want us to put pressure on them because they don't pay attention. And it was the same process for the well.
>
> (Julia, interview, 07/12/22)

In the previous extract, Julia comments on how exclusionary dynamics make protesting necessary to be heard and to solve common issues. In her narration, an initial moment of contact between neighbours leads to local organising. This process lets organised neighbours challenge exclusionary injustices and modify the conditions for water access. The procedural dimension of injustice is experienced as a form of exclusion from decision-making and participatory spaces.

This demonstrates the potential of the neighbour relationship, which can mobilise through activism as a possibility for justice, explored further in the second section of this chapter.

In their activism, the organised neighbours of the WDC not only protest but also negotiate with local government officials. Beni Ros, a participant and man in his 70s who was involved in the negotiations for the water well, described this in our interview.

> This experience of being on the Committee helped me to realise that this is also a question of knowing how to dialogue with the authorities. [...] And even if it is their job, from my point of view, you have to make the authorities work. We must see how we can come up with solutions. This way there is attention and dialogue, and that means that we are going to move forward. It is constructive.
>
> (Beni, interview, 07/12/22)

Through protest and negotiation with the government, the WDC could influence water distribution, showing how the neighbour organisation mattered to challenge exclusionary politics and injustice. Environmental justice, in a procedural dimension, involves a recognition of the rights and voices of affected people as legitimate speakers (Gonzalez, 2019).[78] Mariana's description of the usefulness of the WDC in the following extract helps to show a feeling of satisfaction related to this political recognition.

> Knowing the right people to go and see and talk to so that we can have water is very good. Expressing one's right to have water in the network. I have met the right people to be able to stand out, so that we can have the liquid. And the important thing here is to demand the right to water. Because we have the right.
>
> (Mariana, interview, 13/12/22)

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[78] Merlinksy (2017b; 2018) argues that a politics of recognition is necessary for environmental justice, while Gonzalez (2019) identifies that a "political ecology of voice" is important to understand the participation of excluded groups in Peru.

Mariana, a woman in her 50s, describes that being part of the group helps to demand the right to water since it allows her to, in her words, reach the right people. When the channels for participation are not sufficient to satisfy the needs of the members of the WDC, resulting in their exclusion from decision-making processes, NBOs can represent a possibility for justice in a procedural dimension through protest and activism that opens spaces for participation and, in the long term, modifies water access through infrastructure like the well.

This infrastructural element, discussed further in Chapter 6, is crucial to address another dimension of exclusion. Participants recurrently commented on how water trucks could become a weapon for manipulation in exchange for political support, particularly in local elections. By obtaining the well, the WDC is dismantling the conditions for political clientele and manipulation through water.

> Verne: Many of the politicians say "If you don't support me we don't send you water trucks". It was a political plunder. If you didn't support them, there was no water.
>
> Andres: So this water issue is also a justice issue?
>
> Verne: Well, it's a question of not being taken hostage, that if you don't vote for them, there is no water, or if you don't support them there are no water trucks. No, that's all behind us now.
>
> (Verne, interview, 03/02/23)

In the previous interview extract, Verne describes an element repeatedly commented on by other research participants concerning the water political clientele networks and mentions that it was like being "taken hostage". His words show how this situation affects the possibility of feeling at home in the neighbourhood. Furthermore, this situation can influence the conditions for trusting other neighbours, particularly if they are perceived as benefiting from such clientele networks.

For Corburn (2017), the cumulative effects of racism, discrimination, and exclusion operate as toxic stressors that affect and reduce health and wellbeing, not only of individuals but of local urban communities. This political dimension, related to the defence of rights and the legitimacy of neighbour voices in a context of manipulation by political party operators, is a clear motivation for joining forces in the activism of the WDC. Moreover, this experience of activism can transform the conditions of neighbour mistrust.

Restorative dimension: loss

Research participants could identify a connection between water scarcity and the wellbeing of the natural environment beyond the household. This natural environment was understood not as a distant and abstract concept but as a tangible influence in their everyday life. Drought, climate change, and ecosystem destruction were expressed as part of their problems, aggravating a condition of social inequality and political exclusion. This situation also adds a feeling of threat and urgency to everyday life struggles. While discussing their motivations to join in this struggle, Pedro (a man in his 70s) and Lucia (a woman in her 60s) expressed what can be understood as environmentalist concerns.

> Andres: What does this issue of water mean to you, Pedro?
>
> Pedro: It is precisely to fight for life. Because we all, absolutely all of us, need water. And this is a precious liquid that, in the whole world, at all times, we need. [...] Who lives without it? Absolutely nobody. Not even the plants. It is part of life. […] Imagine if we run out of it, let's suppose, how much would water be worth then? Imagine, it would be like living in the desert. And some people already waste it, and it is like wasting life. So, we see that it is a treasure, and we are fighting for it.
>
> […]
>
> Andres: Lucia, what has motivated you to support this group?

Lucia: Water is very important, starting with our health because we have to drink water, we have to live. If we don't drink water, we're dead, right? As my husband says, you die, just as the plants die, we die too. And what motivates me is to see that with the struggle something is achieved. We have already achieved the well. But what continues to motivate me is that if we are suffering now, we have to think about the generations that come after us.

(Pedro and Lucia, interview, 17/01/23)

A recurrent idea that emerged during many of the conversations with participants, which is also part of the activist slogans of the WDC, is the notion that "water is life". The narratives of Pedro and Lucia show the importance of water in the lives of humans and larger ecosystems (Schlosberg, 2013). Worrying about the natural environment was another recurrent topic of conversation for research participants, who expressed frustration from witnessing how ecosystems are "lost". Verne talks about what he identifies as a relationship between deforestation and water availability.

All our water in this area comes from the forests in the hills. That's why I'm worried that people are destroying all that. With deforestation and all that, now there are houses instead of forests. And water is an important thing, for me, it is life. Without water we have nothing. […] I feel that if we don't have a good natural setting, we don't have water, why? Because trees attract a lot of humidity, they attract a lot of water. Many years ago, I used to go to a forest nearby, and how beautiful it was. And you could always see the water running beautifully in there. And I think that trees cause all that, that's why nature is related to water. That place used to look green, and now it looks grey and white. Now everything has been lost. Everything has been changing. But mainly because we don't take care of the things that matter.

(Verne, interview, 03/02/23)

For Verne, caring for water is also part of caring for the environment, which extends beyond the neighbourhood to include the natural surroundings of Mexico City. When he commented that "everything has been lost", he expressed a sense of disruption and distress that has been linked to the consequences of environmental injustice for place attachment (Schlosberg, 2019). The

environmental injustices in a restorative dimension are experienced as a loss. This feeling of loss can relate to the concept of solastalgia. Brown (2023, p. 358) identifies that a feeling of "homesickness for a changed landscape" and changes in the sense of place from ecological disruption are elements of solastalgia as an issue of sociological research.[79]

A connection between water availability in the neighbourhood, as a micro everyday reality and the broader process of ecosystem loss or large-scale environmental degradation was also expressed recurrently in other interviews. This everyday experience of loss helps to observe the restorative dimension of environmental injustice and the motivation to join forces with neighbours to, as Lucia mentions, achieve something like the well. In her account, concerns over water link to how relationships with neighbours become a basis for organisation and infrastructure disputes.

Discussions on restorative environmental justice, as developed by Forsyth et al. (2022), help to show how accountability and repair are necessary for a thorough response to correct environmental harm and do justice to affected communities and ecosystems. In the descriptions of research participants, the idea of restoration relates to the possibility of future generations inhabiting the neighbourhood, as Lucia also mentioned, and to the notion of "losing" a natural environment described by Verne or Pedro, which has consequences in everyday water scarcity.

Emotional dimension: anxiety

Emotional and physical distress has been identified as a consequence of water scarcity (Wutich & Ragsdale, 2008) and a form of "suffering from water" (Ennis-McMillan, 2001). This suffering was

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[79] Solastalgia can also involve an emotional element since feelings of loss can lead to distress and sadness.

also described as a recurrent theme by research participants in the context of Santo Domingo and adds an emotional, embodied, and material dimension to injustice.

> Verne: Not having water always makes me tense. Waiting for a water truck all day long. Hearing the engine of something and saying, "Here comes the water truck" and no, it's something else. […] Not having water always generated nervous tension. That always had me thinking "And now what am I going to do without water?" Thinking about the water truck and waiting until it comes, and in the meantime thinking "what can I do?"
>
> Andres: And how do you feel when you do have water?
>
> Verne: I'm relaxed, I'm calm. With the well done, I even say to my wife, "now I think that we're going to have a calmer life". Because something that always worried me was not having water. And now we're going to rest a bit, and not be so nervous. I would even be upset and in a bad mood because there was no water and because I was waiting for the water truck.
>
> (Verne, interview, 03/02/23)

Verne, a man in his 70s, described a contrast between happiness and anxiety, hoping that, with the water well, he and his family would finally be able to "rest a bit, and not be so nervous". This exemplifies the everyday suffering related to urban precarity (Lombard, 2021; Campbell & Laheij, 2021) as a micro consequence of a generalised context of water scarcity. The emotional dimension of environmental injustice is experienced as an everyday anxiety caused by water absences. Exhaustion is also part of what Verne described. He mentioned the possibility of finally resting with the certainty of having more water. Various research participants also talked about this exhaustion.

There is a sense of uncertainty in Verne's question of "what am I going to do?" when water is scarce. Uncertainty and confusion are studied as an significant element of environmental injustice and suffering in Argentina by Auyero & Swistun (2008). The following extract comes

from Adriana's diary and helps to visualise the uncertainty associated with intermittent water supply.

07 Dec 2022

Hello, today we had to request a water truck from the Committee because we ran out of water. We only have recycled water for the toilet. I hope the water truck won't take too long, so we have enough water to wash the dishes and clean our dog's area.

The day is over, it's 10 pm and they haven't sent us a water truck yet. This indicates that there is a shortage of water and we are worried about the handling and management of the water distribution system. Today there was also a blockade on some streets by neighbours demanding water.

08 Dec 2022

Today is Thursday and as we don't have water, we bought jugs of water and used them to wash our faces and teeth. I had to go and get water from the tap next to the school to wash dishes and clean myself. I don't know if they will send the water truck today, I will ask for it again, and today we should get water by tandeo distribution from 12 pm onwards. I hope that it will come.

By the end of the day, we got the water truck, so I will continue to wash the clothes that had accumulated, and that's how our daily life is with the little water we have.

(Adriana, diary)

Adriana's description helps to observe how water scarcity disrupts the familiarity and rhythm of everyday life (Schlosberg & Coles, 2015) and the conditions for social reproduction. Entire households must adapt their routines to the uncertainties of water access while waiting and "hoping", as Adriana mentioned, that it does not "take too long" to arrive. Intermittencies in the supply imply an adjustment to the disruption of an apparently present service. It also triggers confusion since water networks are already installed, and there are taps in households, but they are

not working as expected. Alma also registered some of her emotions in a diary while the well was in operation.

January 16th

Today in the morning I woke up with a worrying feeling: Will we have water today like we have had the last few days? Thanks to "our" well we have not lacked it, I go to the tap in my house and with happiness, I realise that it does fall and with very good pressure.
So today we are going to clean up, wash our house and clothes without fear of running out of water, and wash dishes with totally clean water.
I like this new life with water, plus I feel proud because I also fought hard for this achievement.
It is time to begin...

January 25th
Surprise, today we have no water, who would have thought? Days and days with enough water and now nothing, the same question as every day: what happens now? I have to prioritise and choose between my chores again. Later they tell me that the water has arrived, and it is time to fill up our cistern tank again, to run out of water.

(Alma, diary)

In Alma's diary, she powerfully shows how not having water has an emotional impact. She also registers a sense of accomplishment related to the functioning of the water well, helping to show how neighbour activism connects to this emotional dimension. The importance and potential of neighbour organisations are demonstrated in how the well can even contrast some of this uncertainty and everyday worrying. This potential also manifests in the neighbourhood context through protests and activism. Adriana mentioned in her diary that street blockades emerged as a response to water scarcity.

An emotional and embodied dimension of environmental injustice is also present when exploring the relevance of water for health. The consequences of water scarcity in health have

been documented as a crucial area of concern related to contemporary social crises and injustices (WHO & UNICEF, 2021; Harvey, 2023). The following diary extract, written by Teodora, includes the painful memory of having to experience the "inhumane" consequences of water scarcity during COVID-19, which was something mentioned by many other participants.

> February 21, 2023
>
> The most difficult thing was when we had the pandemic, when we had to wash our hands, wash our clothes… and with what water? The truth is that it was very inhumane. That's why we were one of the neighbourhoods with the most infections.
>
> (Teodora, diary)

Physical and emotional dimensions of suffering exacerbate and increase each other, evidencing a link between wellbeing, health and justice. In other entries of the diary, Teodora expressed frustration, exhaustion, and suffering and contrasted these feelings to the satisfaction of having the well.

In a context of anxiety, neighbours organise and join the WDC as a platform for activism, in which they also exchange mutual support, as explored in Chapter 4. By helping each other to solve their needs, which in turn has consequences for their health and household social reproduction (Di Chiro 2008), neighbours involved in water activism trigger a dimension of social care. This extends an idea of environmental justice beyond an individualistic perspective, showing how the political potential of the neighbour organisation emerges and contributes to the wellbeing of people in local networks of interdependency.

Environmental injustices as disruptions of place attachment

The previous accounts show how water scarcity leads to experiences of inequality, exclusion, loss, and anxiety. These experiences disrupt feelings of attachment to the neighbourhood as a place, as

a reduced capability of feeling at home. Place attachment is an intense emotional bond between people and their physical surroundings (Poma, 2018). Environmental injustice undermines this form of attachment, turning the neighbourhood into a space where people feel taken hostage, threatened, disproportionately affected, and exhausted.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, Anguelovksi & Martinez-Alier (2014) argue that the "right to place", related to neighbourhood campaigns against gentrification or changes in land use, is an aspect of urban environmental justice, with Anguelovksi (2013) empirically observing how "remaking place" is part of activist campaigns. Schlosberg (2019, p. 63) asserts that "disruption and detachment from place and community" are forms of environmental injustice that increase vulnerability and argues that attachment, to people and places, is an essential human capability. Groves (2015, p. 858) proposes to observe place attachment as a component of justice and as a form of interdependence between individual, community and place that, when disturbed or diminished, is experienced as a form of "harm". The disruption of attachment can imply "displacement without moving", as a loss of habitability in a place, as identified by Nixon (2011).

When households do not have the resources to confront water inequality, they are faced with a situation of disproportionate vulnerability and the possibility of being displaced (Nixon, 2011; Anguelovski & Martinez-Alier, 2014). Exclusion from decision-making and manipulation by water political clientele networks also undermine the capacity of local populations to appropriate a place, make it their own, and influence its future, as part of their right to the city (Merlinsky, 2018). The solastalgia, risk, and frustration of losing a natural environment connect to a water-scarce reality and contribute to feelings of threat and disconnection from a landscape (Brown, 2023). Exhaustion and anxiety from intermittent water supply have a debilitating effect

and decrease wellbeing, showing how emotions connect to the affective, embodied capacity of place attachment and belonging (Bennett, 2014; Schlosberg, 2019).

The previous empirical descriptions illustrate how water access in Santo Domingo is an integral element in the capacity to appropriate and feel at home. The consequences of water scarcity can be described as disruptions of attachment to the neighbourhood that affect the capacity to live and the experience of living in a place. As this thesis has argued, the neighbourhood can also be observed as an everyday environment. In this way, defending water in the WDC forms part of a defence of the neighbourhood and involves the remaking of place attachment. This will be argued and discussed with empirical data in this chapter.

This study has shown how water access can contribute to the feeling of place attachment as a component of urban environmental justice. Furthermore, it has shown how this operates in a neighbourhood with a history of self-built housing. This history is a factor that motivates political participation in the WDC, as will be argued in this chapter. This history is also a characteristic of the popular urbanisation of Mexico City. For its social and political implications, this history forms part of the political identity of neighbours as allies, discussed in Chapter 4. Defending water as an element of the neighbourhood takes a different meaning when this neighbourhood, like Santo Domingo, resulted from an intensely political process of community organisation.

With these insights, this study contributes to the literature on environmental justice (EJ) by exploring how the context of water access in Mexico City forms part of the liveability of a neighbourhood. It has shown how the case of Santo Domingo can add a perspective of how water access functions as an element of attachment to the neighbourhood, as a theme in environmental justice research. As Agyeman et al (2016, p. 334) argue, the scholarship of environmental justice

"is coming to interrogate the "where" in environment, expanding its definitional and theoretical boundaries to acknowledge that EJ is about addressing physical and psychosocial health and connecting that understanding to place-making, place attachment, and identity (community)". This study shows how this process of attachment, community and identity, as crucial aspects of health for communities, involves water access on the scale of the neighbourhood. The remainder of this chapter will also discuss how the struggle for environmental justice can involve a group of organised neighbours.

Inequality, exclusion, loss, and anxiety are different dimensions of the lived experiences of environmental injustice that undermine the possibility of occupying a place and not being displaced. This can also give way to mistrust and disconnection towards other residents in the neighbourhood, political leaders, and institutions. In this way, while place attachment is directed to the neighbourhood as a locality, it also involves relationships between neighbours (Mayol, 1999). The neighbourhood is not only a physical location where everyday life is situated and human activity centres on social reproduction (Martin, 2003a, p. 365) but also a space for relationships and interactions between neighbours (Simone, 2021).

The emergence of the WDC illustrates how this situation can lead to political activism. Neighbour activism can counter a situation of injustice, working as a network of support and even social care through the spatial solidarity (with reciprocity) explored in Chapter 4. This contrasts with the possibility of mistrust, suffering, and even hostility that can also appear in this context. The political potential of neighbour organisations in campaigns against environmental injustices can lead to a reconstruction of place attachment, explored in the next section of this chapter.

Environmental justice in the WDC

<u>Resonance and reconstructions of place attachment</u>

One of the extracts discussed thus far, taken from a conversation with Julia, started with a description of neighbours meeting on the street and asking each other: "Hey, do you have water?" that led to political action. This narration was not the only one that started with neighbour interactions to describe how the WDC emerged. The following sections of this chapter will focus on the consequences of neighbour organising to describe how NBOs can contribute to the practice of urban environmental justice.

This section will show that the WDC linked neighbour activism with place attachment. This attachment is directed to the neighbourhood, but it involves vivifying relationships among organised neighbours, as members of the WDC. It also involves expectations, senses, and practices of "community" (Bennet, 2015; Neal et al., 2018; Schlosberg, 2019). The following discussion will work with the metaphor of resonance to observe the consequences of neighbour activism and argue that NBOs direct neighbour resonances towards the reconstruction of place attachment.

Chapter 2 explored the metaphor of resonance and made a case for its usefulness in observing protest without a focus on the unity and sameness of collective actors. Complemented with a focus on social practices (Yates, 2015; Gillan, 2020), the concept of resonance helps to observe the process of people and things contingently affecting each other (Simone & Pieterse, 2017) in intense but fluid experiences of embodied togetherness (Miller, 2015). A discussion on how this concept is used in this empirical chapter will be developed in what follows.

As was mentioned in Chapter 2, this thesis will define resonance as a momentary amplification of capacity, as an affective experience that emerges through local organising and

protest. This definition is elaborated with elements from the discussion of urban belonging and everyday social life (Miller, 2015; Simone & Pieterse, 2017). It also intersects with everyday uses of this and other terms by research participants, which will be presented in the following section.

The notion of resonance as a momentary and affective amplification of capacity recovers the discussions of affect that centre on changes in embodied capacity through everyday encounters between people and places, particularly useful for observing urban space (Amin & Thrift, 2017). Simone and Pieterse (2017, p. 16) argue that resonance is an affective process that emerges from the unexpected but significant connections between people and things 'acting as components in the enactment of operations larger than themselves and their own particular functions and histories' (Simone and Pieterse, 2017, p. 16). In this thesis, resonance will be understood as a process of amplification of capacity that involves uncertainty, experimentation, and the fragile connections of urban everyday life (Simone, 2018b). Furthermore, as Miller (2015) indicates when discussing resonance as a concept for observing feelings of belonging in cities, this is a momentary connection which involves senses of togetherness and affinities. This concept, therefore, highlights the intrinsic fragility of emergent, embodied connections that led to momentary but significant processes of amplification of capacity. In this chapter, resonance will be used to analyse how neighbour-based organising matters in a context of injustice without ignoring the temporality and fragility of neighbour-based organisations.

The following sections will use this concept and rely on empirical data to explore the consequences of local organising in the lived experiences of research participants without ignoring their momentary and fragile dimensions. The notion of resonance helps to analyse how the members of the WDC amplify their capacities without suggesting that fragilities and ambivalences

disappear. This concept will help to observe how amplified capacities connect to momentary senses of belonging.

Observing resonance as an amplification of capacity

During a sit-down interview, Marisol described her reasons for being part of the Committee and expressed satisfaction for being able to achieve objectives, realise she was not alone, and make a change in her everyday life. Using an acoustic metaphor, she said that joining voices led to a "resonance" that helped the members of the WDC to be listened to.

> [being part of the Committee involves] realising that obviously, you are not the only one with this problem. Maybe you thought you were the only one dealing with things in this way. But no, there are more people involved. And maybe your thoughts can be great, but if you are alone your voice doesn't lead to a resonance that takes your message to where it needs to go. It takes several people so together you get to the right point or the right person to deliver the message.
>
> (Marisol, interview, 30/11/2022)

During the conversation with Marisol, and interesting intersection between the conceptual and the everyday use of the word resonance became evident.[80] When Marisol talks about a "resonance", she implies that joining forces in the WDC represents a higher probability of achieving things than pursuing a struggle individually. As previously suggested, resonance helps to observe the amplification of capacity as one of the consequences of neighbour protest and organising.

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[80] Through the discussion with participants, the concepts incorporated in this analysis, such as resonance, togetherness, or community, can be reworked and developed. Concepts also matter for their use by participants or groups in everyday settings. This process has been discussed in relation to notions such as community (Delanty, 2010).

In the same interview, referring to the institutional process of demanding water, she commented that facing the complexity of bureaucratic procedures felt like being in a world of giants. However, she said that the Committee was like another "giant" that helped organised neighbours to take care of each other and face future problems.

Andres: So what does it mean to participate in the Committee?

Marisol: Well, first of all, for me it means that we are a giant. I see the Committee as a giant, which can have the power, if we can call it that, to be able to express and say that this can be achieved or something else can be achieved.

Andres: What would you say are the Committee's most important achievements?

Marisol: Well, in this case, one achievement is to reach the authorities. The city water system for example. Because I can tell you, very quickly, that if you go alone, Andrés, nobody listens to you. You have to go through several desks, right? And maybe you pass the third desk, but from there they send you back again. They make you feel like you are in a world of giants, and you don't know what to do and you get confused. But the Committee is another giant that represents the possibility to be able to take care of us. To be able to prevent future problems. To be able to face situations that in the future we probably won't be able to control.

(Marisol, interview, 30/11/2022)

The image of the giant helps to observe how NBOs become platforms for activism on the local scale and the consequences of this process. The WDC increases the strength of organised neighbours, amplifying capacities, as the reverberation of sound that relates to resonance as an acoustic metaphor. This turns the neighbour relationship into a crucial part of a network that allows people to "take care" of each other, as Marisol mentioned. Through local organising, neighbours amplify their capacity, articulate in networks of social care and change their everyday living conditions.

The amplified capacities of organised neighbours help them dismantle the conditions for water political manipulation through water trucks and influence the material flow of water in their

neighbourhood. These amplified capacities lead them to transform the built environment of Santo Domingo, connect to a previous history of struggle, and habilitate trust between people. This process also involves reworking meanings and expectations of community and belonging, explored in the next section.

Resonance and senses of belonging

Resonance, as a momentary amplification of capacity, directly generates a sense of belonging for the WDC members. In research interviews, participants described a feeling of togetherness and identification with the neighbourhood locality and other neighbours that emerged from organising and joining the WDC. Several participants recurrently talked about how the WDC allowed for the "reawakening" of bonds among other residents, conceived as a part of a more extensive neighbourhood community. Adriana and Javier, a couple interviewed together, commented on the advantages of meeting people within the group.

> Andres: And do you think that being neighbours has given you any strength in this struggle?
>
> Adriana: Yes, because we have the same problem.
>
> Javier: I feel that it has given us a kind of togetherness, a unity of knowing that by being together we can achieve many things. And I mean, that's where good friendships have come from, there's Waldo, Beni. People maybe I wouldn't have made friends with. Mr. Beni is an older person, but he's a very good person. Tita too. So I'm grateful to have met people like that.
>
> (Adriana and Javier, interview, 29/11/2023)

Water scarcity, as Adriana mentions, is a common need and can become a possible source of solidarity and alliances between neighbours, particularly if they join the WDC. Therefore, in this

context, the WDC represents a space for interaction between people who live nearby that may result in friendships and in feelings of togetherness. Javier (a man in his 40s) mentioned that these friendships would have been less probable to occur in other contexts.

> Javier: [with the Committee] we kind of reawakened a little bit of what those who really came to live here first did.
>
> Adriana. The founders of Santo Domingo
>
> Javier: Because they took care of each other, they helped each other. There was a lot of community. That doesn't exist now.
>
> (Adriana and Javier, interview, 29/11/2022)

Javier describes this process as a "reawakening" of community ties. Adriana relates this feeling of reawakening to the imaginary and narration of unity among the Santo Domingo founders. This shows the relevance of a history of activism and place-making, described in Chapter 3, and the everyday uses and wishes related to concepts such as community, particularly when they are related to the neighbourhood of Santo Domingo as a locality, discussed in Chapter 4. Therefore, the affective amplification of capacity and momentary connection obtained through local organising also involved a sense of belonging, particularly by renewing and activating feelings of place attachment directed to the neighbourhood.

Both Javier and Adriana refer to the past struggles of occupying and producing Santo Domingo through self-built, popular urbanisation. One of the consequences of local organising in the WDC is a feeling of connection not only to other neighbours in the present, but to a history of past struggles. The resonances of local organising link to senses of belonging, which crucially

involve a connection between past and present struggles. For participants like Javier, this process can be observed as community ties "awakening again".

As Chapter 2 discussed, belonging is the sense of comfort and ease with personal selves and physical surroundings (May, 2013), which can involve a connection to place and to other people. Connecting senses of belonging to resonance helps highlight the temporary nature of belonging (Miller, 2015). Notions of communities that emphasise their geographical boundaries, identity, or moral sameness have been disputed and criticised (Hoggett, 1997; Delanty, 2010; Neal et al., 2018). In this way, resonance as a metaphor also highlights contingent and temporary connections through difference. This focus is involved in a dynamic view of place and in the tenacity and liveliness of belonging (Massey, 1991; May, 2011). Recovering the ambiguity, tensions and ambivalences of neighbour relationships described in the previous chapter, and discussions related to momentary and affective amplification of capacities described earlier, the following sections will analyse feelings of togetherness and place attachment without viewing NBOs or neighbourhood localities as static and homogeneous communities.

The amplification of capacity that emerges through local organising has implications in the sense of belonging of organised neighbours. As described by many participants, joining the WDC represents a possibility for connecting between them in the present. This section has illustrated how joining this group also represents a possible connection between past and contemporary struggles, which is an element of the experience of belonging described by participants. These connections, additionally, involve a feeling of place attachment directed to the neighbourhood, discussed in the following section. As this chapter will now argue, by connecting resonance to place attachment, a sense of belonging and a practice of "being with" others, the WDC contributes to urban environmental justice.

Elements of neighbourhood attachment

Resonance is a helpful metaphor for observing the consequences of local organising in the WDC. This metaphor helps in observing amplified capacities through temporary, fleeting connections. This links to the insights developed in Chapter 4 around the pragmatic, ambivalent and fragile character of neighbour alliances (Painter, 2012; Rosenblum, 2016). It also helps to highlight the embeddedness and relationality of neighbour activism.

The amplification of capacity does not involve assumptions of a homogeneous collective actor (Guerra Blanco, 2013; Yates, 2015). Resonances are momentary experiences, so the feelings of belonging they involve lead to building community as a practice and not as a given and static collective (Studdert & Walkerdine, 2017). In this sense, the togetherness associated with resonance and belonging in the WDC relates to the everyday interdependencies and mutualism of conviviality (Neal et al., 2018, p. 82).[81]

There are connections between the discussion of resonance, place attachment and belonging. Belonging, like resonance, is not static but dynamically produced and experienced through practices (Benson & Jackson, 2012; Jackson, 2020). Place attachment is an emotional connection to place, an affective bond that people experience towards their environmental and physical surroundings (Poma, 2018). Place attachment can influence how people experience a sense of belonging (Lewis & May, 2019). However, belonging is not limited to specific places

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[81] These elements show how urban interdependency, based on mutuality and not individualism, is crucial for environmental justice (Groves, 2015; Neal et al., 2018; Schlosberg, 2019). They also illustrate how the neighbourhood as a place can become a "gift" directed to other neighbours or future generations (Bennett, 2014).

(May, 2013), can take multiple forms, and is flexible. In short, place attachment can contribute to a sense of belonging, but belonging is not restricted to a connection between people and specific places. After this conceptual clarification, the rest of this chapter will focus on analysing how the WDC connects resonance to a reconstruction of place attachment in Santo Domingo, involving elements of materiality, temporality, and relationality.

Materiality: the built environment matters

One of the forms in which attachment is experienced relates to the ability to affect and modify a place. As different authors discuss when using the notion of belonging, appropriating or identifying with a place can involve actively engaging with its materiality (Benson & Jackson, 2012; Lewis & May, 2019). During a walking interview, Tita touched upon this element as she remembered her involvement in a previous struggle for housing in this neighbourhood.

> Tita: I love my house very much, because I sowed hope there, for my children more than anything else. I tell my children to value the fact that they have a safe roof over their heads because there are people who don't even have a place to live.
>
> Andres: Are you fond of these streets?
>
> Tita: These streets, yes, because I saw what they were like before and what they are like now. We always fight to see things change, for an improvement.
>
> (Tita, walking interview, 15/05/23)

The way that Tita refers to being fond of the streets that she lives in helps to observe the importance of being able to transform and intervene in the nearby space as an important element of the emotional connections illustrated by place attachment (Poma, 2018). During a sit-down interview, Tita also commented on how she felt happy to see "the results" of the neighbourhood organisation,

referring to the struggle over the water well. Tita's feelings of satisfaction from seeing how things can change and improve were also expressed by other participants. These "results" relate to the discussion that Chapter 6 will introduce concerning infrastructures and their relevance for everyday life.

> What makes me happy about the struggles we have gone through is that we have seen the results. We have seen that our journey with our neighbours, and the struggle with our neighbours, have not been things that have come to nothing. It has produced results.
>
> (Tita, interview, 17/12/22)

In the previous extracts, Tita describes a connection to place that relates to the possibilities of survival, suggesting a sense of place that can also be observed with the concept of territory. The centrality of space for everyday life and its contested nature has been observed with the notion of territory in Latin American discussions of social movements that involve territorial contestations (Haesbaert & Mason-Deese, 2020).[82]

Haesbaert & Mason-Deese (2020, p.260) discuss how, in Latin America, certain groups construct their everyday spaces as a "territory of life, a necessary condition for the group's own existence". With these insights, it is possible to show how the defence of water connects to defending a way of living in the neighbourhood as a shared space. This value and centrality of life relates to how environmental justice activists frame the environment as where people live, work and play (Novotny, 1995).

Discussions of territory, while helpful in identifying connections between defending water and defending life, may assume an ontological and direct connection between people and places. Instead of assuming a permanent identification with place, the notion of resonance as the

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[82] These debates highlight how territories play a role in the political projects and the everyday survival and life of diverse organisations and local communities (Haesbaert & Mason-Deese, 2020).

momentary amplification of capacity links to a discussion of attachment as also a momentary and dynamic experience.

In Santo Domingo, place attachment can link to the affective affordances of local organising, particularly when they lead to transforming nearby spaces and "taking care of each other", as mentioned in a previous section by participants like Marisol and Javier. This is a momentary experience and not a static definition of places or relationships, but even with this momentary, fragile and dynamic element, resonances and reconstructed place attachment can make a difference. This is evident especially in the context of injustice, described previously. Transforming shared spaces with the resonance of neighbour organising matters because NBOs are not the only groups influencing the built environment.

> I do like my neighbourhood. I would like it to improve in many ways, with more green spaces and places where our children can have healthy coexistence. And in that way, the environment [*entorno*][83] obviously changes. But we don't want real estate developers, because that changes the environment, but for the worse. Because that brings people from a different social level, they start to put in shopping centres, they start to raise costs. And people who are from a lower class sometimes don't have the means to cover these expenses or these increases in living costs. So that's why we don't want real estate here. And we want our neighbourhood to improve, of course we do. Who doesn't want their environment to improve? But in a healthy way, in a way that benefits all of us who live in that environment [*entorno*].
>
> (Martina, walking interview, 03/05/23)

Martina refers to the neighbourhood as her surroundings and a built environment. Her description relates to insights from the environmental justice framework about the relevance of where people live (Agyeman et al., 2016). She was not the only participant who described how the neighbourhood's future is threatened by real estate development as a driver for gentrification,

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[83] Martina uses the Spanish word "entorno", which can be translated as environment, but also as surroundings.

which can disrupt place attachment. This illustrates the political potential of neighbourhood activism for claiming the right to place in Santo Domingo as an element of urban environmental justice (Anguelovski & Martinez-Alier, 2014).

In her participant diary, Marisol simultaneously described experiences of water access through the pipes, meetings with the WDC, and the well. The connection between different forms of infrastructure and their role in place-making is discussed in Chapter 6. However, this description helps to observe how the group is actively influencing the materiality of the neighbourhood.

December 16, 2022

Yesterday afternoon, water began to come with very little pressure, almost a trickle. Today we have a meeting with the committee so that representatives let us know about the progress of the construction of the well and the result of the last meeting they had earlier today with government authorities.

(Marisol, diary)

The history of Santo Domingo, described in previous chapters, forms part of how resonances influence the built environment. As was previously discussed, current struggles are seen by the members of the WDC as a continuity in the efforts to make life liveable in the rocky grounds [*pedregales]* of Coyoacan, which involved working days, known as *faenas*, in which the residents of the neighbourhood opened roads that transformed into streets and introduced urban services like drinking water. Teodora and Elia commented on how this experience of literally building the neighbourhood matters to value what they have.

Teodora: 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.

[...]

232

Elia: 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.

(Elia and Teodora, interview, 08/12/2022)

Elia and Teodora both refer to how valuing the work carried out by previous generations relates to getting involved in its defence. While local neighbour-based organising amplified capacities and directed them to the materiality of the built environment, this also involved a sense of belonging. This form of "valuing", described by Elia, Teodora, and other participants, can be understood as another expression of place attachment related to collective memory and the effort of previous generations and as a connection between past and contemporary struggles. Therefore, the reassurance of seeing the water well in operation forms part of an intergenerational "gifting" of shared places (Bennett, 2014; 2015) between the members of the WDC, directed to each other and the more extensive neighbourhood community.

Temporality: memory and future

The WDC, through a campaign for water infrastructure, integrates past and future in a narrative and practice of neighbourhood identity that operates as a reference point and call for activism, connecting to more than 50 years of struggle for urban services in Santo Domingo (Lopez Rosas, 2021). This historical context, described in previous chapters, has been considerably discussed in the academic literature (Diaz Enciso, 2001; Gutmann, 2006; Ortega Alcazar, 2016). This thesis contributes to such debates and discussions by observing how the memory of struggle becomes a structure of feeling that motivates people to join the WDC, showing how reconfigurations of place

attachment involve a temporal element. Furthermore, this historical context is involved in the production of neighbour political identities discussed in Chapter 4.

> What we think is that if the neighbours had not fought, like everything that has been fought for here in Santo Domingo, we would simply have nothing. The streets, the land, the markets, the schools, the water, the drainage, the electricity, everything has been the product of the neighbourhood struggle, of the different generations. I'm talking about those who arrived in 71, 72, who in my case were my parents. I am the second generation and now with my son, he would be the third generation, because we are fighting for water. This is a history of uninterrupted struggle for different issues here in the neighbourhood. And that memory unfortunately has not been inherited by everyone, or not everyone has had the interest to receive the anecdotes, everything that happened.

> (Waldo, walking interview, 11/05/23)

During a walking interview, Waldo mentioned that everything was obtained through collective struggle in Santo Domingo. He also commented that this memory of struggle, which has sadly not been transmitted among all residents of Santo Domingo, connects different generations. His description of how previous generations of residents have "fought" for everything links to the materiality of neighbourhood attachment as a broader history of activism and place-making. At the end of our walk, which involved going through a park with a similar history of collective organisation to claim it as a public space, I asked him about the next generation.

> Andres: Is this history of struggle something that you want to share to your son?
>
> Waldo: Well, yes, for him to know that it is up to us to do something, not to be passive beings. We have to do something about our reality. Whatever you can contribute, contribute, but don't be indifferent.

> (Waldo, walking interview, 11/05/23)

For Waldo, neighbour activism involves transmitting a lesson and retelling the history of collective labour to produce Santo Domingo. Through the activism and campaign that the WDC organises, practices of place-making link to the larger temporality and collective memory of inhabiting a place. This also involves an assertion of legitimacy, showing the political potential involved in claiming a particular identity as "neighbours" that inhabit the *pedregal*. The following extract from Pedro's diary contains a summary of this history.

> When the neighbourhood was founded, we used to fetch water from all around, which was a very tiring task. There was a spring nearby, but it was not enough.
>
> Then, little by little we were fixing the streets, and the local government was helping us to have more water, but this was very slow.
>
> We asked the government for water pipas, which they sent. They emptied water into tanks, and in some places, there were even smaller tanks. People carried water from them.
>
> We started by installing intakes and water taps in the streets, but those were not enough. Once we got the streets evened out there were more services. Then we started digging to put in pipes provided by the government, and then we put more taps in the streets.
>
> Sometime later, we went back to work, we dug up all the streets and they put in water taps and pipes, and they went into homes.
>
> And it still wasn't enough, because the big construction companies took our water, and we stayed the same. That's how it was for some time. We protested here, we protested there, and it was the same thing always, but we never gave up. And so we continued with this struggle until we achieved what we did.
>
> (Pedro, diary) [84]

Pedro used his participant diary as a register of his memories, particularly of the incremental improvement of the neighbourhood during many years and how it was crucial for obtaining water. Contemporary needs intersect with the temporality and memory of a place in the

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[84] Pedro, like other participants, did not add specific dates to his diary, but rather used it to write a series of reflection on his experience of being involved in the committee.

reconfigurations of place attachment. This connection to previous struggles, involved in the resonances that the WDC triggers, is crucial to how organised neighbours, as members of the WDC, construct their contemporary alliances and affinities. Temporality and collective memory are factors of belonging, as suggested by Blokland (2001) and Lewis & May (2019). Giving value to a collective memory of struggle can also involve appreciation for moments of community building, related to how Javier and Adriana described that the WDC "reawakened" a feeling of togetherness from a previous generation.

Nostalgia plays a role in the temporal dimension of neighbourhood attachment. Magnolia, a woman in her 60s, described that she could remember the presence of water in the early days of Santo Domingo around the natural environment of the rocky grounds [*pedregal*].

Magnolia: We used to fetch and carry water from nearby areas. […] It was hard, but at the same time beautiful. Because I'm telling you, it was like a village. We'd say "let's go carry the water" and then we'd go together. […] Then we did the *faenas* to open up the streets and everything. There were children, young people, women, everyone. […] I remember that there was no shortage of water. Because wherever we went, between the stones, water was coming out. And it was crystal clear. They were like water springs. But now we don't know anything about that water now.

(Magnolia, interview, 30/11/22)

December 3, 2023

The water problem was increasing. Out of nowhere, big buildings, stores, private schools, multi-family buildings, businesses were built. It started to get out of control, ignoring any rules.

And then the water shortage. When did the water sources begin to disappear? When did the shortage begin? We didn't even realize it, only when large groups of neighbours began to complain and close the streets to demand an answer.

(Magnolia, diary)

For Magnolia, water scarcity in a highly urbanised neighbourhood contrasts with a moment in which, even if it was necessary to fetch water and carry it from nearby areas, water was visible,

accessible and more directly available, according to her experience. The contrast between what used to be a less urbanised area, with ponds and the ecosystem of the rocky grounds [*pedregales*], and the highly urbanised and densely populated neighbourhood of the present, was another theme recurrently commented on by participants, and that relates to the dimension of loss mentioned in a previous section of this chapter. A similar sense of nostalgia could be related to neighbourhood change. Alma described how new generations are apathetic in her participant diary.

> February 7th
>
> This day will be a bit strange and difficult. A neighbour I have known for more than 40 years died. It is sad to see that all those people who struggle in the streets to have electricity, water, drainage, and better streets, are dying and now only their relatives, children, and grandchildren are left. A new generation who does not commit themselves to anything and do not want to continue fighting because they are already comfortable. One of the best generations is leaving, the one that suffered, and worked, but struggled...
>
> (Alma, diary)

In conversations with other research participants, they commonly expressed anxiety about the future of Santo Domingo and about the involvement of younger generations in neighbourhood activism. The complexity of this inter-generational connection, which Alma also mentioned in her interview, is discussed further in Chapter 6 when reflecting on the limits of infrastructure. Participants like Waldo were more confident in the fact that the experiences, teachings, and stories from current struggles can be helpful in the future.

> So as a community, that's what the Committee is there for, to solve the water problem, but if another problem comes up, I'm sure that the committee is going to fight it. And it is already a group of neighbours who have spoken out, who have a firm grasp of how this well was achieved, they have that memory of how we achieved it, and so later on, if we need to organise, it will not be so difficult. We know how to organise ourselves, how to hold an assembly, how to appoint representatives, how to go and hold a rally, how to do

whatever is required. So here is the seed of the organisation, and that is maintained for whatever is needed.

<div align="right">(Waldo, walking interview, 11/05/2023)</div>

The previous extract shows how, for Waldo, the WDC can keep alive the set of skills and the ability to organise, a "seed of organisation" which involves the collective memory and even know-how of activism. This seed is an amplification of capacity that helps to face future problems. Waldo's comments relate to the possibility of new problems emerging, expressed by Leticia, who comments that she remains in the group for feelings of intergenerational connection.

Leticia: I imagine the future to be very complicated because everything is running out, whether you like it or not. There are people who are not aware of the damage they can do. Many people don't look after the water, they throw it away, or big companies affect water too. And I tell you, we have suffered before, we are suffering now, and what will happen in the future for those who come after us? That's why I'm here, out of love for those who have already suffered, for those of us who are here, and for those who are coming. That's fundamental for me, and that's why I'm there.

<div align="right">(Leticia and Miriam, interview, 29/11/2022)</div>

The previous chapter identified diversity in the expectations of neighbourliness. Accordingly, participants expressed different perceptions about the next generation. This research does have the scope to explain these differences, but what is important to identify is that participants describe the need for an inter-generational relay. A crucial element to mention is that most of the participants, both in the sample and in the WDC as a group, are older women who have lived in Santo Domingo for most of their lives and identify as part of a larger family story of struggle. These characteristics are crucial for their current experience and influence the process of reconstructing place attachment. These characteristics may also have a role in the diverse opinions concerning the future.

From the previous insights, it is possible to observe how the reconstruction of place attachment involves a connection to the efforts of different generations inhabiting Santo Domingo, and a temporal connection to the memory of past struggles. However, even if this struggle connects to previous struggles, it also differs from them since the consequences of climate change add a sense of urgency and uncertainty around the future. As Leticia mentioned when discussing the context of water scarcity, "everything is running out". Compared to previous struggles in Santo Domingo, what used to be a campaign for urban services or housing now introduces an element of risk and threats related to gentrification, the consequences of climate change, and infrastructural decline, with already installed pipes not functioning.

Relationality: a networked environmentalism

The idea of relationality, discussed in Chapter 2, helps to observe involvement in environmental movements as embedded in a network of everyday connections (Mason, 2004; Smart, 2007; Jamieson, 2019).[85] These everyday connections, in the neighbourhood scale, involve not only families and households, but also neighbours and local organisations, and can be understood as a form of place attachment directly linked to social relationships. The connection between the individual, the familiar, and the communitarian elements of place attachment will be discussed in this section, examining relationality.

A striking finding in the interviews and observations was the extent to which family matters in everyday neighbour-based organising. Attending the meetings of the WDC was often distributed

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[85] Authors like Jamieson (2019) argue that a focus on relational practices can help to build bridges between fields like environmental sociology, usually focused on macro-structural processes, and the sociology of family and personal relationships, which observes the micro aspects of social life.

as a task among household members, as part of the activities that are related to satisfying water needs. In these meetings, as mentioned in the previous chapter, attendance is monitored using lists, and participant observation helped to identify that people would register their attendance by saying the name and address of a household representative.

Leticia (a woman in her 20s) and her grandmother Miriam (a woman in her 70s) were interviewed together. In the interview, Leticia explained how she got involved in the Committee, referring to a willingness to help her grandmother and her grandfather, who cannot attend the meetings.

> Leticia: I remember getting involved in the group. First, my grandmother told me "I need your phone number because they're going to put you in a [WhatsApp] group so that you're constantly going to the meetings to find out what's going on".
>
> Miriam: A neighbour told me that this group existed and gave me the information
>
> [...] I would ask her to please send me the water truck and then she told me, "If you want, I'll help you sign up and join the group, but it has to be using those phones".
>
> Leticia: By WhatsApp
>
> Miriam: And then I remember telling her that would be a problem because I don't know how to do that. But I also said, "Well, give me the information, and I'll tell my granddaughter about it, she is the one who understands it". And that's when she [Leticia] started going to the meetings.
>
> Andres: [to Leticia] So you were the one who started going to the meetings.
>
> Leticia: Yes, for that reason. Also if you see my grandfather now, you'll see that he can't stay standing very long. There are times when he goes to the meeting, but he only goes for a little while because he can't stand up too long, so he comes back very quickly. So I told him, "No, I'll go, don't worry". And that's how I went. Now I've gotten so involved that I like it.
>
> (Leticia and Miriam, interview, 29/11/2022)

The importance of the attendance list for water truck [*pipa*] distribution has been described in the previous chapter as a crucial element of water sharing. What this chapter can add to this description is how the "motivation" behind neighbour environmentalism does not come from a merely

individual element but is connected to a broad network of relationality that includes family members and neighbours. Catalina, another research participant, talks about how many of the members of the Committee are "daughters" of the neighbourhood founders.

[The people who go to the committee] are daughters-in-law or daughters of the founders of Santo Domingo. Because the original owners are no longer able or are no longer around. I am a daughter-in-law, and my in-laws have passed away. I go to the meetings on behalf of this property. I'm the one who goes because my sisters-in-law say they don't have time. Two live here who never go.

[…]

For example, two neighbours from across the street go, they are the daughter and daughter-in-law [of founders]. The ones across the street. From here [points to another neighbour's house], two daughters-in-law go, because the men are already old.

[...]

The people who go to the group are not the people who originally invaded, it's the sons or daughters or daughters-in-law who go, like me who goes and represents this property.

(Catalina, interview, 18/01/23)

Place attachment is reconstructed through the connections with other members of a locality and is not an individual experience. The following extracts of the interview and participant diary from Sandra represent a feeling, expressed by many research participants, of connection to family stories of activism.

I want this to be a life lesson. Just like the one that my mother left me, that it is good to achieve your goals, that is the same lesson that I want to leave behind.

(Sandra, interview, 10/12/22)

I am giving a life lesson to our children and grandchildren, that to have rights you must fight for them.

You already have the NO, look for the YES! [*ya tienes el NO, busca el SI*]⁸⁶

<div align="right">(Sandra, diary)</div>

Life stories help to show how relationships influence the construction of selves (Mason, 2004) and are relevant to understanding the present-day motivation to get involved in activism. Political biographies and networks of interdependence influence the motivation of people like Sandra and new generations of residents who get involved in the struggle to improve their living conditions.

These networks of interdependence can extend beyond the household to include and involve other relationships in the neighbourhood. These networks are deeply involved in the process through which local organisations like the WDC contribute to reconstructing place attachment and, thus, to the practice of urban environmental justice. Juan, a man in his 50s, described a situation that could also repeat among research participants who did not feel as close to their family members but were nonetheless involved in the group.

> Juan: I have struggled in this water issue, but for the community, because we haven't had that problem in my house.
>
> Andres: So what motivates you to be involved?
>
> Juan: The results. I like to fight, and not like with punches or anything, but to support the people. [...] But it's illogical because support is not always like that between families. It's better to help a community in this way because I think you have more friends, and you gain more trust even than in your own family.
>
> <div align="right">(Juan, interview, 29/01/23)</div>

In Juan's description, the neighbour is a relationship that allows for a public and pragmatic engagement with expectations of community, as an element involved in place attachment.

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⁸⁶ Sandra used a common Spanish expression referring to not losing anything from trying to change things. The capitalized words were used by Sandra to emphasise her point in this diary.

Reconstructions of place attachment are rooted in an everyday network of personal relationships, transcending the individual to include the household and the larger neighbour community. Resonances related to momentary feelings of togetherness lead to simultaneous community building and place-making in which the larger community, also mentioned in Chapter 4, plays a crucial role.

An element to consider in the activism of the WDC is that the entire neighbourhood benefits from improvements in water distribution, and not exclusively the individual residents or households who showed up to a meeting. This benefit extends from a particular individual or family to its neighbouring households and the larger community, revealing some implications of the materiality of water infrastructure, to be explored further in Chapter 6.

The environmentalism of the neighbour is not an individualistic endeavour carried out by an ecologically conscious isolated citizen but an expression of reciprocal commitment that involves other people. Furthermore, this expression of environmentalism is rooted in the resonances and alliances with other people, such as neighbours, which become organised in spaces like the WDC. It is a form of environmentalism embedded in a network of neighbour relationships, and especially, in neighbour organisations. This embeddedness shows how intergenerational and spatial networks of personal relationships that include but transcend the household influence everyday neighbour environmentalism.

The concept of resonance helps to analyse NBOs as different to a collective actor. It also helps to clarify what it means that a "community" is being rebuilt through the activism of the WDC. The temporal connection and pragmatic alliance between neighbours described in Chapter 4 involves both reciprocity and solidarity, and is not exempt of tensions or contradictions. Neighbour togetherness is an everyday achievement made possible by the political activation of

interdependency networks. Expectations around the notion of "community" were a common theme in many interviews, where research participants would express that the WDC enables them to socialise and interact.

> It is a bit complicated to get to know people nowadays because everyone is busy with work and this doesn't allow us to have much of a social life with neighbours. Many of us already knew each other because we arrived around the same time when the neighbourhood began. But we stopped seeing each other. So when the committee was formed, many of us met again. And we also met different people, new people, with other ideas, who can nourish the group […] In the meetings we socialise a little with people, to find out how they are, and if they need any help with anything.

(Martina, walking interview, 03/05/23)

Martina's description also includes an image of the committee being "nourished" by new members with different ideas. The nourishment that Martina mentions is a form of describing the process of resonance as the amplification of capacity that forms part of local organising. Furthermore, the meetings involve a public display of neighbouring and show the relevance of different forms of sociality, related to arguments on social infrastructure (Latham & Layton, 2019) discussed in Chapter 6. The public and multifaceted nature of neighbour relationships is also observed by Neal (2022), who identifies them as sites for practical exchanges and experiences for urban multiculture. The centrality of the neighbour relationship in local organising shows how the everyday environmentalism of the neighbour is not only pragmatic but also inherently relational.

The previous insights indicate how the WDC involves a local network of relationships that forms part of the reconstruction of place attachment. When considering the importance of household and general community needs, this NBO can activate such relationships, and through a process of resonance, mobilise them for a practice of mutual "taking care of each other" that contrasts with environmental injustice. The activism and environmentalism of neighbour-based organisations are rooted and embedded in a network of relationships and relational practices.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined how neighbour-based organisations contribute to the practice of urban environmental justice in contexts of water scarcity. It incorporated data from sit-down interviews, participant diaries, and walking interviews.

Based on the accounts of research participants, it first described how water scarcity relates to lived experiences of environmental injustice in different dimensions. This led to an empirical and qualitative description of the relationship between environmental justice and place attachment. Environmental injustice was experienced through perceptions and feelings of inequality, exclusion, loss, and anxiety.

Water access becomes relevant not by itself, but as an element of the neighbourhood, and it affects the experience of everyday life and place attachment. By exploring the connection between place and water, by observing the neighbourhood as an everyday environment in which access to water forms part of place attachment, and by describing the protagonism of neighbour-based organisations in this process, this study contributes to research around environmental justice in cities. In short, it advances knowledge on environmental justice by signalling how water matters as part of place attachment disruptions in urban neighbourhoods. In doing so, it also moves environmental justice beyond the discussion of distributional inequalities to connect it with the production and protection of neighbourhoods as socionatural assemblages, as will be discussed further in the next chapter.

Working with the case study of the WDC, this chapter argued that a reconstruction of neighbourhood place attachment, with implications on social relationships between the members of the WDC, is a consequence of neighbour activism. Drawing on the idea of resonance has allowed the chapter to explore the trajectories of place attachment, activism and belonging in the

WDC, but without losing sight of the tensions and contradictions of neighbour-based local organising. By becoming sites in which neighbour resonances are directed toward place attachment, NBOs contribute to the practice of urban environmental justice.

This chapter empirically showed the process through which, in this case study, local organising leads to a reconstructed place attachment. In the WDC, neighbour resonances lead to place-making and place attachment, with consequences in social relationships and senses of community. For analytical clarity, this process was observed through materiality, temporality, and relationality as distinct elements. By observing this process, it is also possible to identify how, in a context of environmental injustice, belonging remains a radically dynamic and open possibility, not mechanically undermined or destroyed by structural factors (May, 2011). Place attachment is an accomplishment and possibility that, even if undermined or disrupted, can be reconstructed.

The findings of this chapter related to the importance of defending the neighbourhood as a place to live also contribute to an understanding of belonging in the context of the Global South, particularly in neighbourhoods produced through informal urbanisation and characterised by urban precarity. These insights emerged when participants mentioned the effort of previous generations to build Santo Domingo and the importance of protecting their livelihood in this neighbourhood, as described in the section of this chapter that focused on the reconstructions of place attachment and their elements of materiality, temporality and relationality. These insights can also be found in the description of how water scarcity disrupts not only everyday routines but the possibility of feeling at home, appropriating the locality, and the capacity to live in a place, as described in the sections of this chapter that discussed disruptions of place attachment.

In Santo Domingo, and for the members of the WDC, belonging is related not only to a feeling of identification with a place but to valuing the effort of previous generations in producing

this place and assuming the responsibility of caring for it. In a context of informal urbanisation and precarity, present in cities of the Global South, belonging can be intrinsically connected to the possibility of inhabiting a place. In this sense, belonging is involved in neighbour environmentalism, as a protection of the surroundings for their connection to the livelihood of local populations, expressed in the effort of organised neighbours to defend water as an element of their neighbourhood territory.

Belonging takes a different dimension when the neighbourhood was produced by an organised struggle to construct it and when the possibility of living in this neighbourhood is threatened by water scarcity. This situation disrupts the possibility of place attachment as a capacity to appropriate and inhabit a place. In this context, neighbour-based organisations play a crucial role in rehabilitating place attachment by an active process of becoming involved in defending the neighbourhood.

A context of environmental justice does not deterministically lead to a lack of agency or even competition between neighbours but to the possibility of changing this situation through activism, and to a form of organising based on interdependency and mutuality (Neal et al., 2018). In the context of water scarcity described in the first sections of the chapter, which can also lead to mistrust, competition and conflict, the WDC not only influences the extensions of reciprocity described in Chapter 4 but also activates the political potential of organised neighbours. NBOs can influence this network of personal relationships, directing neighbour resonances for the practice of social care. Through the neighbour activism in the WDC, people "take care" of each other, using the words of different research participants.

Such insights are helpful in the description and analysis of neighbour environmentalism as intensely relational and dependent on the neighbour as a relationship influenced by neighbour-

based organisations. Building connections between organised neighbours is fundamental for the resonances described in this chapter. The centrality of neighbour alliances for this form of everyday environmentalism reveals it not only as a pragmatic but also a relational process. Neighbour proximity matters since it links not only to the pragmatic alliances described in Chapter 4 but also to a relational and locally embedded environmentalism.

The alliances between organised neighbours, in spaces like the WDC, can lead to transformations of the neighbourhood's materiality through a public form of engagement with different forms of infrastructure explored in the following chapter. Furthermore, facing environmental deterioration and injustice, neighbour resonances can articulate with a wider configuration of urban social movements through multiple scales of activism, in which the figure of the neighbour associates with other relationships. The implications and social significance of these insights are explored further in the concluding chapter of the thesis.

Chapter 6: Social infrastructure and the water landscape of Santo Domingo

Introduction

The previous two chapters helped to show the pragmatic and relational characteristics of neighbourhood environmentalism through the case study of the Water Defence Committee of Santo Domingo (WDC). This chapter will explore how the WDC involves an element of publicness related to the characteristics of the neighbour as a socio-spatial relationship. It works with empirical data to answer RQ3: In what ways are neighbour-based organisations a form of social infrastructure and how has the WDC generated a neighbourhood waterscape?

The first section describes Santo Domingo as a neighbourhood waterscape, recovering a concept introduced in Chapter 2 to name hybrid geographies of water flow influenced by power relations (Swyngedouw, 1999; Rusca, 2023). It argues that the neighbourhood waterscape is produced through the connections of physical and social infrastructure and identifies how the labour and practices of the members of the WDC make such connections.

After this reflection, this chapter also identifies how a neighbour-based organisation (NBO) is a form of social infrastructure. It argues that this involves coordination towards a shared goal and the role of contingent public settings for encounters such as street assemblies. It discusses how their role in producing mutual recognition between neighbours as public figures distinguishes them from other forms of infrastructure. It finally suggests that this helps to observe how the environmentalism of the neighbour is not only pragmatic and relational but also public.

In the arguments developed through this chapter, the materiality of neighbourhoods as localities becomes the focus and scale of the analysis, complementing the focus on micro-social interaction, activism, and local organisations from the previous chapters. This emphasis implies recovering insights related to neighbourhoods as localities and their materiality (Massey, 1991; Mayol, 1999), developed in Chapter 2, to concentrate on the neighbourhood as a scale for observing the everyday environmentalism of the neighbour.

Neighbourhood water landscapes and the importance of infrastructures

<u>The water landscape of Santo Domingo</u>

Water is all around in Santo Domingo. This seemingly obvious statement assumes a different meaning when seeing it as part of an everyday context of water scarcity. Scarcity translates into a visible water movement, not through pipes but in trucks, carts or jugs that people carry. As mentioned in Chapter 1, water scarcity is part of an overarching situation of urban precarity (Campbell & Laheij, 2021). This is experienced and perceptible, not only within households but also in the public spaces of the neighbourhood locality.

The movement, presence, or absence of water described in this section is part of a description of the neighbourhood as a water landscape, or waterscape, recovering insights from studies that focus on everyday social practices around water access and inequality (Swyngedouw, 1999; Ahlers et al., 2014; Rusca & Cleaver, 2022). According to Ahlers et al. (2014, p. 8), "a hybrid landscape is produced through the articulation of the bio-geophysical (water, land, topography, etc.) with the social and the technological". This idea of waterscape will be applied to the scale of the neighbourhood, going beyond pipe infrastructure to observe the streets and

sidewalks, the walls and the roofs of houses, the lakes and parks, to empirically explore the "material and social interactions that constitute a neighbourhood" (Blokland & Schultz, p. 245).

The following extracts come from my research diary notes, taken after an observational walk in November 2022 in this neighbourhood.

> As I walk, I notice a sign in front of a house that says that "rainwater is collected" there. This is part of a recent program of the city government, to impulse rainwater household use. I notice see a person driving a small cart with jugs, from a business that sells and delivers purified water to homes. I also can see a man walking, carrying a jug of water in the sidewalk by this house.
>
> […]
>
> I walk down Cactus Street, and notice a water truck [*pipa*], with a logo from the government of the city, parked in front of a house. I stop to see the *pipa* and see that a worker is coming out of this house and pulling a large hose connected to the truck. This hose will surely fill a water tank or cistern with water from the pipa. A woman, coming out of her house across the street, sees the pipa and approaches the driver. She asks if some water can be delivered to her house as well, but the driver says that he can only give it to the people who make a report and sign up on a list from the government.
>
> (Observational walk, 24/11/22)

Figure 24. A *pipa* delivers water to a household

Source: taken by researcher 24/11/22

Through a multisensory engagement with the materiality of Santo Domingo, it is possible to notice the presence and absence of water and locate it in specific places of the neighbourhood landscape. Water no longer circulates only in pipes but outside of them, in trucks and jugs, with the efforts of people who move it from house to house. The movement of water involves everyday practices and labour, crucial in the production of a waterscape.

Water is also present and visible in the storage infrastructure of homes, like the water tanks or on the roof of a building behind the *pipa*, shown in Figure 24, or the small carts in Figure 25.

This implies that an urban service commonly thought of and administered through the notion of individual households, such as water, "flows" and moves outside of them, on streets and sidewalks.

Figure 25. A cart full of water jugs distributing them in the neighbourhood

Source: taken by researcher 16/12/2022

Water is also in a series of public water taps that people can go to around the neighbourhood. During a walking interview with Alonso, he took me to one of them, located near the water well in the central zone of Santo Domingo. He said that people use free water from this tap when they need it and that he would also come there, wait in a queue, and fill a couple of buckets to take home. He mentioned that this tap was a great source of clean water and invited me to touch it and feel how fresh it was. I extended my hand to feel this "freshness" that Alonso talked

about, and I could feel the drops of cold, fresh water touching my skin. I took pictures of this moment, shown in Figure 26 and Figure 27.

This experience with Alonso helps to show how a multisensory approach shows different aspects of this water landscape. In particular, the descriptions of everyday neighbouring in Chapter 4 helped to show how water flow is noticeable in the sounds coming from the street or other houses. The usefulness of this multisensory approach was examined in Chapter 3, discussing how methods such as observational walks help to explore themes like place from an embodied perspective without disconnecting them from other elements of human life (Pink, 2009; Mason & Davies, 2011).

Figure 26. The tap next to the water well
Source: taken by researcher 26/04/23

Figure 27. Feeling the water from the tap
Source: taken by researcher 26/04/23

The importance of the taps that were, or still are, located in different public places of the neighbourhood and the memory of using them to collect water were mentioned by other participants in their interviews, like Caralampia and her mother Facunda, a woman in her 70s who remembered the early years of Santo Domingo during our interview.

> Caralampia: I remember there were taps outside certain houses. Here in front, in Doña L's house, next to the theatre, there was a tap there. But that one had almost no water. And down here, before you get to the corner of the street towards the school, there was another tap. And my mum and dad used to get us up early to go and queue to fill our bottles. We would wait in line, and when the water was poured very early, around six o'clock in the morning, we would start to fill them. All the children would go around carrying water to the houses.
>
> Facunda: Yes, also here in front, with Doña F there was also a tap there
>
> (Caralampia and Facunda, interview, 14/02/23)

Caralampia remembers that neighbours would wait in a queue to get water from a public tap. This moment would, in all likelihood, lead to conversations and interactions between neighbours, which may range from conflicts to collecting water together, as several research participants also remembered during our interviews.

Given the history of self-built housing in Santo Domingo, differences in the materiality of the houses of next-door neighbours influence the probability of having water, even between people living in the same block. Spatial density makes it easier to know, just by observing and listening to water pumps and water trucks moving and stopping across the streets, if a neighbour has had water or not. It is also possible to recognise neighbours in the street as they are filling their buckets and jugs from a water tap in the street or on a water purifier business.

Water is also part of the wider biophysical context of the *pedregales*[87] of Coyoacan. A nearby park in the area has a series of ponds, which I could observe during a walking interview with Waldo in May of 2023 (Figure 28). In this interview, Waldo took me specifically to this place to show me the ponds and mentioned that the existence of that park, one of the only green areas that the neighbours have access to, was the result of neighbourhood organisation. The ponds are not accessible to the public, but are only visible from a distance, behind a fence that separates the park from a restricted natural area. A simultaneous presence and absence of water is not only shown through empty pipes but also in the existence of these fences.

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[87] As mentioned in other chapters, the word *pedregales,* translated as rocky grounds, serves to describe an area in the south of Coyoacan where neighbourhoods have been built, in many cases through self-built housing, over a landscape of volcanic rock.

Figure 28. Ponds in a local park
Source: taken by researcher 11/05/23

Water is also in the collective memory of the effort to build the neighbourhood, reflected in murals around Santo Domingo. These murals reflect the activism of diverse organisations, and some allude directly to the struggle to obtain land and many urban services described in previous chapters. Figure 29 shows a mural with a woman carrying water using a water holder [*aguantador*] and people gathering in front of a big water tank. These tanks were used as water collecting points before the pipe network existed in the neighbourhood.

Figure 29. A mural in front of a community kitchen
Source: taken by researcher 18/03/23

As Ahlers et al. (2014, p. 7) suggest, it is important to observe the process of "continuous alteration of the waterscape due to contestation over which water flows where, at what pressure, and facilitated by which infrastructure". This alteration of the waterscape is not limited to previous moments of activism but to continued efforts in the present day, particularly exemplified by the campaign of the WDC for obtaining a water well. This process also involves neighbour interaction, as described in the following extract by Leticia.

> Leticia: We had to help to get signatures to take to SACMEX, so that they could see that the people were really asking for the well and for the benefit of water. So, I had to ask the neighbours that I have close by for their signatures. And I explained everything to them and told them that the well was good for everyone. And I told them "I need you to support me in this way". And the truth is they all agreed. Because we do use water, we do need it, it is vital for us. In the Committee, we have told people to take care of the water and try not to waste it. We do pay a lot of attention to that aspect.
>
> (Leticia and Miriam, interview, 29/11/2022)

After describing the process of gathering signatures for the campaign for the well, Leticia mentions that people in the Committee are told to save water and "try not to waste it", turning household water consumption into a theme of public discussion in the WDC. Water becomes a motive for interaction that modifies the boundaries of the public and private, as has been observed around neighbour relationships (Neal, 2022).

With the previous empirical descriptions of water flow, presence and absence, empirically identified through walking interviews, observational walks and sit-down interviews, it is possible to identify different forms of infrastructure at play: pipes, carts, taps, tanks, trucks, roads, parks, and personal relationships. As discussed in Chapter 2, approaches to infrastructure from the social sciences have highlighted their connection to practices, networks, political projects and experiences of the urban (Star, 1999; McFarlane & Rutherford, 2008). The neighbourhood waterscape can also be analysed through the role of different infrastructures in its configuration. This will be the focus of the next section, which begins by describing a day of participant observation in Santo Domingo.

<u>Multiple infrastructures in the water landscape</u>

On a morning in November of 2022, I walked with a group of members of the WDC into the construction site of the water well that the WDC campaigned for. The construction site became a meeting place that day as part of an activity organised by the WDC. This would involve entering the site and asking questions to engineers from SACMEX (Mexico City's water administration system) to provide information directly to the members of the WDC and counter possible disinformation about what the well will do and how it will function. In what follows, I introduce an extract from my observation notes and images from that day.

I arrive in Santo Domingo at 11:51 and head to the site of the well. In front of the site, a street market, named tianguis[88] in Mexico, has been placed. I wonder how this activity from the Water Defence Committee will affect the flow of people through the tianguis since many neighbours have gathered to listen to an explanation about the well.

I arrive and see a group of approximately 25 people and a SACMEX engineer talking with Beni and Juan. I also see Martina making a list with the names of the attendees. I talk with some of the people that I recognise when I arrive. I see more SACMEX employees and an open gate in the construction site through which I can see into the well.

Beni proposes that the neighbours enter in groups of five people. He also proposes that the people who arrived first, and who signed up with Martina, will be the first to come through. Martina calls out people according to her list and asks them to form a line to enter the well. Beni and Martina ask for patience and say that will have their turn. I write my name in the list and wait for my turn.

While I'm waiting, I see and greet Waldo. He introduces me to people who haven't signed up for an interview. While I was having these conversations, some people, who were walking down the street or in the *tianguis*, also approached to ask me or other neighbours about what is happening, so we explain. I hear a passerby asking a neighbour from the Water Defence Committee if this group is in favour or against the well, to which the neighbour replies that they are in favour of it.

(Participant observation notes, 28/11/22)

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[88] As mentioned in Chapter 4, the word *tianguis* is used to name street markets that are regularly set on the streets of many neighbourhoods in Mexico, the same day of every week. Many people in neighbourhoods like Santo Domingo make their weekly shopping of food and household items in these markets.

Figure 30. Proximity between the construction site and the street market
Source: taken by researcher 28/11/22

Figure 31. Neighbours entering the construction site
Source: taken by researcher 28/11/22

From the previous description and images, it is possible to get an idea of an intense social life in the street of Santo Domingo, with people moving in and out of a street market and a construction site, talking to each other and having conversations about what is happening in their neighbourhood. Typical of this morning was the *tianguis,* which is always on the same street once a week. However, this mixed with the atypical opening of the construction site.

During this construction site visit, and with regular street assemblies, public spaces like streets and sidewalks turn into arenas for discussing the usefulness and characteristics of water infrastructure. The following extract and picture continue the narration of this day. This helps to see how people, either on an everyday basis, like the boy filling a bottle of water, or in events when they ask questions to an engineer, engage with water infrastructure.

> When my turn comes, I walk into the site with the last group of neighbours. Before entering, I notice a boy filling a bottle of water from the tap next to the well. I have heard that this tap is used regularly by people who need water.
>
> We enter the construction site and receive an explanation from an engineer. The engineer explains that the system will be connected to the existing network in the neighbourhood, and then answers questions. He explains which streets will receive these benefits, and says that before the end of December, the well will be in operation. The engineer wants to invite people to come back to the well when everything is working, so they can see it when it's finished. Sandra, who holds a sign with the words "thank you for everything", says that it would be great to have a street party and share a meal that day. After this explanation from the SACMEX engineers, we all walk out of the construction site, which is closed again, and most people leave to continue their daily activities.

> (Participant observation notes, 28/11/22)

Figure 32. An engineer giving explanations to the WDC
Source: taken by researcher 28/11/22

When the event was over, Waldo and I went for a walk because he wanted to take me to a place I could use for interviewing if I needed it. This place is an important community centre founded in the early days of the neighbourhood by activists who still administer it to offer free workshops and courses that range from karate to math, English, dancing, bicycle riding, IT, or chess, as well as a community kitchen, garden, an open forum for events, and a community library. In 2022, this place received funds and support from the local government and developed a hybrid administration between autonomous and government-run activities.

As we walked, he explained a few things about the streets we were walking in and shared memories about people involved in the WDC as we passed by some of their houses. We stopped in one of these houses so he could introduce me to Pilar, mentioned in Chapter 4, who I invited to become a research participant. When we arrived at the community centre, he introduced me to some of its administrators, who told me where I could do the interviews after I explained to them what the project was about. He also introduced me to a police officer appointed by the local government to keep security in the community centre.

Figure 33 shows an image of the central area of the community centre and of the location in which, in fact, I conducted many interviews. This centre had also been used by the leadership of this committee for meetings as a space available to the group when necessary. As a space where neighbourhood social events take part, which can include activities or meetings from the WDC, this community centre has a relevant role in facilitating social encounters, interaction, and even organisation between neighbours.

Figure 33. View of the central area of the community centre
Source: taken by researcher 16/12/22

A significant element in the previous narration relates to the different forms of infrastructure involved in a single day of talking about water in the neighbourhood. As discussed in Chapter 2, differently from "physical infrastructure, the notion of social infrastructure helps to describe places and relationships for the connection and sociality between people (Klinenberg, 2018; Latham & Layton, 2019), with some discussions also including networks of relationships as a form of infrastructure (Simone, 2004; 2014; Silver & McFarlane, 2019).

There can also be an infrastructural dimension to the neighbour relationship. Neal (2022) argues that the neighbour can be observed as a social infrastructure and a site for exchanges that disrupt the existing boundaries between public and personal life. This chapter will extend this idea

265

and shift the focus from informal interaction to a more organised and formal expression of these relationships. In doing so, it will explore how NBOs can be a form of social infrastructure. These insights connect to the discussion explored in Chapter 4 of temporary neighbour alliances (Crow, 2010).

Rather than observing these different forms of infrastructure as separate aspects of the neighbourhood, this chapter proposes to observe their interplay and connections. When discussing the importance of a concept such as social infrastructure, Middleton & Samanani (2022, p. 778) warn against the risk of "dividing urban life into a number of discrete, even opposed domains" and instead invite to observe the social entanglements in which different forms of hard or soft, physical, or social infrastructures, combine. The following section will explore how these combinations happen, focusing on the campaign for constructing the well. It will argue that social practices and labour are fundamental in this process.

Infrastructural connections

Since its formation, one of the most important campaigns and goals of the WDC was a new water well, a hydraulic and "hard" infrastructure connected to the pipe network of Santo Domingo. The construction of this well was seen as the most significant solution to water precarity and its consequences, described and analysed in previous chapters. The relevance of this well was something Tita expressed in an interview a couple of weeks after the engineers' explanation at the construction site mentioned earlier.

> We didn't take to the streets for fun, we took to the streets out of a need to demand from the government that we wanted water in the main water network. We are not satisfied with just getting *pipas*. In an emergency, there is nothing else but *pipas*, but we wanted water in the network. So we started the struggle to demand a well from the government. […] And

the well is almost finished, but not because the government was good. This was because of the pressure from the neighbours who went to demand that a well be built for us.

(Tita, interview, 17/12/22)

As Tita mentioned, the well was not an initiative of the local government but the result of the organising of the WDC. To accomplish this goal, the members of the WDC had to overcome many obstacles and engage in the process of actively transforming the infrastructural conditions of the water landscape. In this sense, infrastructures and their functioning influence forms of political organising and everyday sociality (Anand, 2011; Amin, 2014).

An initial activity related to the campaign for the well was convincing the Coyoacan and SACMEX authorities that the water scarcity problem existed and that this could help to solve it. For doing so, the neighbours held protests in public spaces, government offices, and the streets of Santo Domingo, which led to working sessions with representatives of the municipality of Coyoacan, the central government of the city, and SACMEX. The following interview extract reveals the effort involved in attending these meetings, as described by Martina.

[being in the committee] represents many things. For me it represents struggle, tenacity, effort. Sometimes, or many times, doors were closed to us, but our insistence opened them. In many government spaces. For example, they would give us appointments, and then a quarter of an hour or even a minute before the start they would cancel them and change the date or the place, or the time. So, yes, it was complicated, but I repeat, we gradually overcame everything and it's satisfying that if you have a goal in mind, you achieve it.

(Martina, walking interview, 03/05/23)

To convince the local authorities of the need for water, the members of the WDC collected signatures of the affected people. They also organised walking tours with government officials

through the most affected streets, knocking on doors and asking if households had water or not. Finally, they organised a process of mapping and monitoring through continuous reports, sharing information about water presence between households.

With these maps, the neighbours organised in the WDC identified the blocks most affected by water scarcity. They proposed a location for the well based on this information, which would particularly help some of the streets in the central zone of the neighbourhood. These maps are a form of identifying the neighbourhood as a locality. They are also a way of recognising the neighbours and the water flow in these streets. The mutual recognition between neighbours is explored further in another section of this chapter.

> We proposed many tours, authorities from SACMEX and from the mayor's office came to visit the houses with us, because they didn't believe that water was not arriving. And we showed them with facts that the water was not arriving correctly.
>
> […]
>
> Amongst ourselves, the idea also came up in the committee to do a mapping. So we made maps of the streets that make up the central and the higher zone of Santo Domingo, where we didn't have water on a regular basis. According to this mapping, you had to report if you had water on certain days.
>
> […]
>
> We would go down and ask around in the avenues where the mapping said that the water was not arriving. And yes, we would knock on the door, go into the houses, and open the tap, and it turned out that there was no water.
>
> <div align="right">(Martina, interview, 17/12/23)</div>

After months of campaigning, construction commenced on November 20, 2021. SACMEX contracted a company to drill the well and another one to install the pumps, backfill, machinery, and electrical equipment while continuously supervising the process. After a year and a month of

construction work, the well was concluded and started its operations in the final weeks of

2022. The images in Figure 34 and Figure 35 show the well's appearance when it was concluded.

Figure 34. The water well after its completion in 2023
Source: taken by researcher 01/06/23
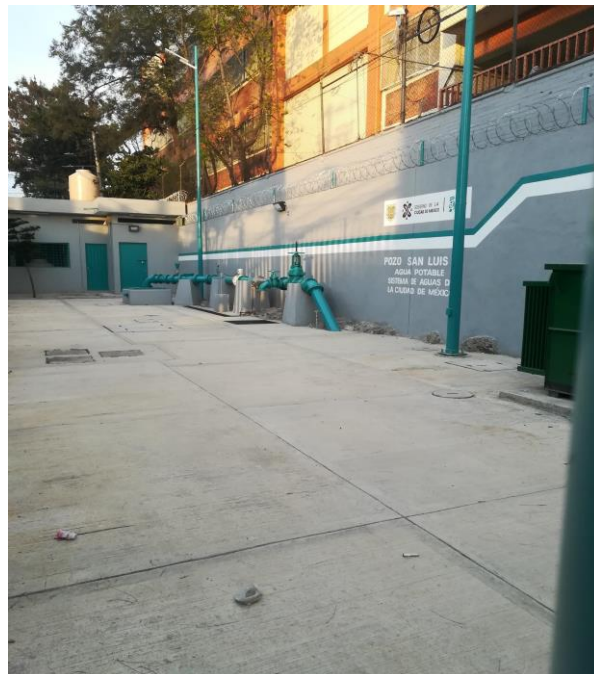
Figure 35. Image of the interiors of the well
Source: taken by researcher 17/01/23

In the context of Mexico City, De Coss-Corzo (2021, 2022) has observed how continuous work is part of the everyday functioning of crucial water infrastructure. Infrastructures are related to situated labour and social practices, particularly by the engineers and workers of SACMEX, to enact possible futures given a context of austerity and a horizon of water scarcity (De Coss-Corzo, 2022). The empirical observation of the case of the WDC signals that other forms of work and social practices may also be at play and have relevance, particularly in the connections of these infrastructures to other forms of infrastructure, such as the neighbour-based organisation and the community centre.

For all their campaigning and monitoring, the organised neighbours of the WDC performed important work that complemented the labour that builders, engineers and administrative officials effectively realised to make the water well and have it functioning. This labour is crucial in the connection and interplay of different infrastructures.

The importance of the well in this distribution helps to understand how water infrastructure can have repercussions in the conditions for environmental justice in a relational and embedded dimension, as was discussed in Chapter 5. A crucial element mentioned by Beni relates to how the well represents benefits not to private households but to the whole community, discussing the conflict with people who opposed the well, a theme explored further in the next section.

> But the neighbours [who live next to the well], some of them, were reluctant. If not all of them, some were selfish to a certain extent, because they thought that the water was going to be for just a few. But the water was not going to be for a few, the water was going to be for the community. That is important. The water is going to be for the community, it is not for a few neighbours.
>
> (Beni, interview, 07/12/22)

The benefits of the well for the larger community, and not just a few people, was a common and recurrent issue mentioned by other research participants. The difference Beni makes between the "larger community" and "a few neighbours" relates to how imaginaries of neighbouring, discussed in Chapter 4, influence activist trajectories in Santo Domingo. Given a history of community struggle, the image of a larger, general "community" can hold more value and importance for people like Beni than the narrow definition of specific neighbours. While the concept of community has been contested for its ontological assumptions (Delanty, 2010), identifying the everyday uses of this term and its meaning for participants is relevant to this analysis.

The conversation with Beni and other participants helps to illustrate how there can be overlaps and connections between the neighbour relationship and different ideas or expectations of community, as explored in Chapter 5 and Chapter 4. However, there are also differences between the expectations and meanings attached to the neighbour relationship, with its concreteness and narrowness, and the wider community. Even if neighbours are crucial components of the expectations and understanding of "community" in Santo Domingo, the community is not reducible to a few neighbours or households. The importance of differentiating between private neighbours and the broader communities is crucial to understanding how neighbour activism around water involves a public dimension.

Neighbour alliances and activism have a public dimension, visible in the shared benefits of infrastructure and in the relevance of an issue like water access, which goes from being a private to a public matter. Beni mentioned this element again during a walking interview. He even remarked that the well would benefit people who opposed its construction, showing the public advantage of water activism. The publicness of the neighbour as an active figure is evident in the objectives and results of changing a waterscape. When participants mention that water access is a

goal that will benefit the whole community and not a few households, they display the public qualities of their activism.

> There are things to continue fighting for, this is not over. Unfortunately, let's see if other people come, because several of us from the committee are now of age. So we're already on our way out, and we'll see if there are people who will continue. It is important that this is not lost, that this kind of struggle is not lost. Because it is for the benefit of the community, not to benefit three or four or five people […] even some people who were against us now benefit from that well.

<div style="text-align: right">(Beni, walking interview, 02/06/23)</div>

The previous discussion illustrates how neighbours, and particularly a neighbour-based organisation (NBO), can become a figure with public relevance and a crucial role in the production, transformation and connection of infrastructures that define waterscapes. The neighbourhood as a waterscape is constructed not only by the production of specific infrastructure but especially by the combination and connection of different forms of infrastructure that influence water flow and access. The diverse infrastructures that constitute the neighbourhood, involving everyday interactions, local organisations, water pipes, a well, water tanks, roads, parks, or even buildings, connect to define it as a waterscape.

Neighbours, through their public engagement and their organising in sites like the WDC, are fundamental in how physical and social infrastructures are produced and especially "woven" together. By creating these infrastructural connections, organised neighbours become public figures, actively involved in the materiality of the neighbourhood. When renewed and cared for, these infrastructures can function as "gifts", recovering insights developed by Bennett (2015) and explored in the previous chapter, directed towards the larger community.

In a previous extract, Beni, an older person like most participants in the WDC, insisted on the importance of remaining organised and that this tradition of activism is "not lost" by the next generation of residents. From the conversation with Beni, it is possible to identify the complexities, tensions and ambivalences around infrastructural connections, which are explored in the following section.

The challenges and fragilities of infrastructure

New experiences of infrastructural connections, led by the efforts of the neighbours mobilised in the neighbour-based organisation, are contemporary processes that define Santo Domingo as a water landscape. However, these processes happen in a context of uncertainty and generalised infrastructural fragility. The water well and the neighbour-based organisation face various challenges and limitations related to infrastructural fragilities.

One of the limitations related to the well is the existence of diverging claims about its usefulness that involved not only local government officials but also other residents of Santo Domingo. While it may be easy to assume that all of the neighbourhood recognised the importance of this well, this was not the case. A group of people who live in spatial proximity to the well, in the streets directly next to it, argued that the construction works would affect their homes, as was mentioned earlier in this chapter. According to Beni, this was caused by suspicions and misunderstandings that can be avoided with clear information about the functioning of the well.

> Some of the neighbours who live next to the well commented that they were afraid that their properties would be damaged. But SACMEX was very clear with them that they should not have any mistrust, because nothing is happening to their properties, nothing was

going to happen to them. And they were explained how the work was going to be done, how the drilling was going to be done.

<div align="right">(Beni, interview, 07/12/22)</div>

Negotiations with other residents who opposed the well were fundamental for its construction. This process involved the mediation and involvement of the WDC but was the responsibility of the local government. During the construction works, and shortly after the well was completed, the local government had to negotiate with the opposing group and agree on compensation for any possible damage to their homes. The local government was also relevant in delivering this well, even if this infrastructure was authorised via the protest and activism of the organised neighbours. As Tellez Contreras (2024) has argued, infrastructure production can involve the interaction and hybridity of both subaltern and hegemonic political projects. This idea can be used to observe infrastructural connections as a contentious process with tensions, complexities and ambivalences.

The fragility of infrastructures relates not only to the disputes around the water well but also to the complexity and tensions of neighbour interaction within social infrastructures, particularly of their meaning in a public dimension. As Neal (2022) has observed, the neighbour relationship is more unpredictable and uncertain than other forms of social infrastructure. This fragility is inherent to the ambiguous nature of neighbour relationships. In this sense, neighbour-based organisations incorporate the limitations of neighbouring as a pragmatic achievement, described and explored in Chapter 4.

The members of the WDC may choose not to show up to the assemblies or not to get involved in the organisation's activities. Research participants gave three types of explanations when asked about the reasons for this: generational transitions, socioeconomic differences, and

political manipulation. Some interviewees, like Alma, noted a generational difference impacting the motivation of younger people to participate.

> Most of the time the people who go are the older people. Because young people are very apathetic. I mean, it's really difficult to get a young person to attend a meeting. So let's say, if you invite a neighbour, the one who goes is the father, the mother, or the grandmother. But they are very old people who are sometimes sick and don't participate. But young people don't do anything. It is very rare for young people to want to participate.
>
> (Alma, interview, 11/01/23)

Even within Santo Domingo, there are differences between residents that may influence the experience of water precarity. Other participants, like Alonso, mentioned that the living conditions of the residents in the neighbourhood may impact their interest in getting involved. He referred to the low interest that tenants, when compared to homeowners, have in the future and current problems of the neighbourhood.

> The owners, or original neighbours here, were involved. But those who rent, those who come to live here in little rooms, didn't participate and they don't get involved. No, because, well, they say it's not their house.
>
> (Alonso, walking interview, 26/04/23)

While Alonso emphasised residential status, other participants mentioned that the differences in the built environment influenced the motivation to join in neighbour activism. During our walks or in interviews, when participants were asked about the apparent apathy of some people, they referred to the fact that some may be better equipped to face intermittent water supply, with large cisterns that mean they don't feel the need to get involved as much as others.

Finally, political aspects and disputes can significantly influence participation and cause disunity or apathy. This was something that Waldo noted during a walking interview. He mentioned that political clientele networks can affect and damage neighbour relationships and the willingness to get involved in local organisations.

> Andres: And you say that people's involvement has been lost, why do you think that is?
>
> Waldo: It has to do with the fact that the people are subjugated, that they are given a card with money from the mayor's office, or from such and such. That breaks political awareness, and people are used for someone's political benefit. With that, you don't encourage organisation, you encourage political obedience, that's what you are encouraging.
>
> (Waldo, walking interview, 11/05/23)

Besides the uncertainty of the political context in which social infrastructure exists, there are limitations related to the capability of different forms of infrastructure to function in the long term. In this sense, the connections between infrastructures involved expectations, not only about the present situation but also about the future. In the following extract, Adriana and Javier mention that the well does not represent a definitive protection or that water precarity will definitely end. In this context of uncertainty, what matters to Javier is sharing lessons with the next generation, which can be interpreted as the basis for the continuation of social infrastructure.

> Adriana: It would be better to say that the problems were solved thanks to the well. And with this type of situation, obviously that's how it should be, but we don't have the security.
>
> Javier: Let's suppose that the shortage is solved for a long time, we'll see how many years it will last. It could be ten years, it could be twenty years, maybe we won't even see it. But in our house, we think about our children. We are not here forever, and I think it was still easy for us, but for them it won't be. That's why we teach them to fight for their interests, for what is theirs and what they should always fight for. Nobody should forget that.
>
> (Adriana and Javier, interview, 29/11/22)

The well has represented an improvement in the quality of life of many members of the WDC since it has reduced (while not eliminated) the consequences of water scarcity described in Chapter 5. However, after its conclusion and the start of its functions, many participants commented that the struggle was not over. This is something that Tita mentions in the following extract, in which she comments that the neighbours have to be "guardians" of the well. Her comments reflect an important element about how neighbour organising matters for the future.

> We have to continue to organise and keep up the pressure. We have the well, but we are not going to allow anyone take the water somewhere else, no. That's why we are going to be the guardians of the water. That's why we are going to be the guardians of that well, the neighbours.

> (Tita, interview, 17/12/22)

Tita mentioned that the WDC has to "keep up the pressure", hinting at the political and public engagement that infrastructural production involves (Anand, 2011; Tellez Contreras, 2024). This pressure can be understood as a result of the everyday neighbour-based practices and labour through different forms of infrastructure connect and articulate and as part of a context of uncertainty in which, even with the water well constructed, the problems are not definitely solved. This pressure and engagement with infrastructure in a context of uncertainty and disrepair (De Coss-Corzo, 2022) also reflect the centrality of water for this neighbour organisation and its connection to defending where people live (Novotny, 1995) or their neighbourhoods as a territory of life (Haesbaert & Mason-Deese, 2020), an element of place attachment explored in Chapter 5.[89]

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[89] The centrality of survival and of defending ways of life, particularly in a context of urban precarity, help to show connections between discussions of infrastructural connections and Latin American concepts around territoriality (Porto-Gonçalves & Leff, 2012; Haesbaert & Mason-Deese, 2020), while also illustrating how a context of urban precarity influences the possibilities of collective life (Bhan et al., 2020).

In a previous extract, Tita mentions that remaining organised is crucial in protecting the well and their collective effort. Her words help to show the importance and potential of neighbour alliances, which can be activated even after some immediate goals are accomplished. The importance of survival in a Global South city distinguishes this organisation from other NBOs formed around themes such as clean and safe streets, gardens, or respecting privacy, more prevalent as crucial issues in different geographies.

In this section, some of the limitations, fragilities, and challenges of infrastructures relate to the inherent ambivalence of neighbour relationships. This section also has evidenced how the articulation of neighbour alliances is crucial to resolving and working through such limitations. The centrality of neighbour-based organisations for infrastructural connections was also highlighted by suggesting that NBOs can function as social infrastructure. The next section of this chapter explores some of the infrastructural qualities of these organisations, which helps in understanding how groups like the WDC influence a neighbourhood waterscape.

The Water Defence Committee as a form of social infrastructure

As was discussed in Chapter 2, social infrastructures can be observed through a focus on their role as networks of relationships (Simone, 2004; 2014; Silver & McFarlane, 2019) or as settings for social encounters where public life develops (Klinenberg, 2018; Latham & Layton, 2019). As also mentioned in Chapter 2 and earlier in this chapter, the neighbour relationship can be observed as a social infrastructure (Neal, 2022). This section will argue that a NBO can also be understood as a form of social infrastructure, both for its role as a setting for social encounters and a network of relationships. It will also discuss how this involves a specific element of publicness (Latham & Layton, 2019; Layton & Latham, 2022). A key argument of this section is that, by allowing for

mutual recognition between neighbours as public figures, the WDC functions as a form of social infrastructure with specific characteristics.

Interaction and coordination in the WDC

Beyond the informal interactions and everyday reciprocities between neighbours, described in more depth in Chapter 4, the WDC is a site for a coordinated, formal expression of neighbour relationships. In this way, it becomes a network of mutual support oriented towards a common and shared goal concerning the neighbourhood as a locality. Therefore, the sociality within NBOs has a distinctive infrastructural quality.

> Andres: How has being part of this group helped you?
>
> Susana: 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.
>
> (Susana, interview, 28/11/23)

In the previous extract, Susana commented on how helping each other and sharing information could be a positive aspect of interaction in the WDC. Information and resources flow through the networks of relationships that constitute social infrastructures, mobilising networks of personal relationships towards social trust, care and support, as explored in Chapter 5. In this sense, social infrastructures help make life possible in a locality, as observed in other contexts of urban precarity (Simone, 2014; Silver & McFarlane, 2019).

Andres: And in the struggle for the defence of water, being neighbours, do you think that has given you some advantage, some strength?

Caralampia: Yes, first of all, because we have communication.

[...]

Caralampia: A neighbour would come and knock on my mum's door, and they would leave together for the protest. Also, when the pandemic broke out and everything was online, I had to tell my neighbours what happened in our meetings because they could not go because they're older and they don't use WhatsApp. And then on some occasions, I asked for a pipa using the chat for my next-door neighbour. […] And obviously, we have to let each other when the pipa comes, because we have to go out and remove things or move cars, so they can park and leave the water, because if not, they can't. […] And also, when people from the mayor's office came to manipulate the valves and cut off our water, my neighbours would tell me, and I would quickly tell Waldo and they would go and see what happened.

(Caralampia and Facunda, interview, 14/02/23)

Caralampia describes different situations in which everyday interaction goes beyond informal exchanges and connects organised neighbours towards a shared goal. Through her comments, it is possible to identify how this group harnessed the advantages of spatial proximity towards the coordination for water access. This process can involve calling for a pipa, attending a meeting, or be part of the mapping and monitoring described earlier. The following extracts, from a conversation with Javier and Adriana, also reflect the effort of the organised neighbours to coordinate around a shared goal.

Adriana: There were records for several days of when people had water.

Javier: Yes, maybe a lot of people haven't realised this, but that's when you realise that being united and in good communication has helped a lot. Well, without the committee, the well would not have been built, it's as simple as that.

[…]

Javier: We did everything we could to keep the construction work from stopping. If it was necessary to gather things like signatures, we'd gather them. If there were cars that wouldn't allow for the machines to enter the site when the construction began, we would go and move them and park them differently.

(Adriana and Javier, interview, 29/11/22)

During the well construction, members of the WDC prepared a rotation list in which they could sign up and distribute the work of going every day to the construction site and staying there for 5 or 10 minutes, to then send a report to the rest of the WDC through a WhatsApp group and communicate if the construction was happening. In street assemblies, the members who attended meetings with local authorities would share updates given to them by government officials. All these practices show how the interaction and information sharing within NBOs have a specific quality that channels spatial proximity and its advantages.

Neighbour-based organisations become spaces for a form of interaction that is intentionally coordinated towards public issues such as, in this case, water infrastructure. For this coordination and its connection to the advantages of spatial proximity, they have specific characteristics that distinguish them from other forms of social infrastructure. As mentioned by Alma, this relates to the future of the neighbourhood as a built environment.

Andres: And thinking about the future, what do you imagine the Committee's activities or struggles to be?

Alma: Well, we say that the struggle doesn't end, the struggle begins. We already have the benefit of the well, but this is where the work comes in, because we have to continue monitoring, we have to continue taking care of it, we have to continue working on the issue.

They told us that it [the well] would last for thirty years. But if we don't take care of it, it won't last thirty years. It's going to last us maybe ten years, and what are we going to do in ten or fifteen years? So the struggle doesn't end, the struggle continues, and how does it continue? Well, by remaining united, together, by continuing to work. Continuing to live together [*convivencia*].

(Alma, interview, 11/01/22)

When discussing the effects of natural disasters, Klinenberg et al. (2020) argue that social infrastructures and organisations can be fundamental in the relief and solidarity efforts. Without denying the importance of governmental intervention for long-term resistance to disasters, this author analyses how social infrastructure reduces isolation and contributes to facing environmental threats (as also discussed in Klinenberg, 2018). In Santo Domingo, the WDC can mobilise and coordinate networks of relationships and interactions towards expressions of social care amid water scarcity. Through the active engagement between neighbours in the WDC, a network of interdependency is coordinated not towards hostility but cooperation and mutual help, showing the potential of the neighbour as a public figure. This will be explored further in another section of this chapter.

The street assembly as a setting for encounter

One of the most significant strategies for neighbour coordination in the WDC was organising assemblies on a street corner every two weeks. These street assemblies, organised by neighbours, can become spaces for encounter and face-to-face interaction. For the centrality of such meetings and interactions in street assemblies or other settings, NBOs can function as a form of social infrastructure (Klinenberg, 2018; Latham & Layton, 2019). However, specific elements related to the fragility and contingency of these street assemblies distinguish them as a setting.

I could register some of the material characteristics of street assemblies with participant observation during the fieldwork. Every two weeks, the members of the WDC would gather on a street corner for a couple of hours during the afternoon. The members of the group would slowly show up on the street corner, greet some familiar faces, sign up on the attendance list with the name of the family leader and their household address, and wait for more people to arrive. While people wait, they occupy a space, maybe standing or sitting on the street or sidewalk, sometimes using portable chairs they brought with them.

From the encounters and face-to-face interaction, people could also get to know more about each other, as Alonso mentioned during our walking interview. As we moved around the streets of Santo Domingo, he would comment where some members of the WDC lived and describe that he knew this from talking to them in the assemblies. His narration helps illustrate how such interaction can lead to a form of mutual recognition between neighbours, explored further in the next section of this chapter.

> Let's go this way, through Atl Street [as we turn in a corner] This is a good street, eh? A lot of people involved in the group are from here. In the meetings I would ask them, "where are you coming from?" and they would tell me, with the number and street of their houses. So I can tell that they are from this area.
>
> (Alonso, walking interview, 26/04/23)

These assemblies would become a recurrent and rhythmic occupation of the street to transform it into a space for social encounters, dialogue, and activism around public issues. This transformation is important, as it shows the public presence of the group. It also helps them to recruit more members. Alma mentioned the advantage of being present in a public space, getting more people to "listen and see" this group and maybe join them.

Alma: [having assemblies] helps to inform people about the situation. So that people could see what was being done and try to bring more people together. To get more people to join and make the group bigger. So that people passing by could listen and see. Some people actually did join because they heard about it this way and because they saw us there. They would see us and ask " why is this happening?", and we tell them "because of the lack of water", and they would say "Ah, I want to be on this committee"

(Alma, interview, 11/02/23)

During the well construction, these assemblies became a site where organised neighbours were discussing water access in public. This active engagement with public issues in public space shows a display of neighbouring, related to the political identity of the neighbour discussed in Chapter 4, that other residents from Santo Domingo can see and listen to. This can make them feel motivated to identify with the group. By showing up and sharing information about the well and water supply distribution during the week, the members of the WDC also carry out a form of neighbouring in public space. Alonso commented on the importance of physical co-presence as a demonstration of the strength of the group in public.

There are people who show their support by being there in the meetings in person. Because they don't ask, they don't say anything. There are some who hardly speak at all. But look, I think that it's good that they are there, because they are present. In other words, you can see the people there. [...] But I think that just going to the meeting is a useful participation. Because sometimes people might say "What a poor meeting, there are only 10 people there". And then the others get discouraged or start to criticise. But if they see that there are 30, 40, 50, no, it's a different matter. […] There is more power when you see more people. And there is also more exchange of opinions. There are people who do bring out very positive things, both to ask and to answer.

(Alonso, walking interview, 26/04/23)

As a temporary mark in the landscape, the assembly requires that the members of the WDC "show up" in the street. Something described in the previous extract is that sometimes attendance may not be very high, and Alonso insists that just showing up is a form of supporting the group. This implies that there is no certainty around the number of people in a street assembly.

From a material perspective, the organised neighbours of the WDC can occupy the space more effectively if more people show up, and the space is safer from interruptions or criticism when more people are actively involved in producing it. In this way, neighbours organised and actively made a space for social encounters. They called and relied on each other to show up. The members of the WDC deal with a form of contingency that derives from the tensions and ambivalences of neighbouring, consistently mentioned across the empirical chapters.

Street assemblies are more fragile and temporally specific than other spaces for face-to-face interaction discussed in the literature on social infrastructures (Klinenberg, 2018). Their fragility shows how, by resolving this contingency, a degree of experimentation is part of the infrastructural qualities of NBOs (Corsín Jiménez & Estalella, 2014; Simone & Pieterse, 2018).

However, the person who generally shows up and produces these settings is not an abstract and disembodied figure. Attending a meeting helps resolve collective household necessities, as described in the previous chapter. However, this task is mostly performed by specific persons within these households. Participant observation and conversations with participants showed that mostly women and older family members attend the meetings.[90]

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[90] The previous chapter briefly discussed differences in household distribution of labour. Even if it was not the focus of the research, the collected data helps to visualize that gender and age also mediated the possibility of showing up to an assembly.

The public display of the neighbour relationship is an expectation based on the possibility of showing up. However, this is a contingent and uncertain possibility, and just as showing up, not showing up has consequences. Therefore, NBOs are distinct from other forms of social infrastructure since they continuously face the ambiguity of neighbour interaction. As described in Chapter 4, the WDC is not based only on solidarities but also on a pragmatic, reciprocal engagement. The neighbour, organised in the WDC, may or may not show up for the assembly, may or may not report water provision and monitor the well construction, and this also has public implications. As Cheshire (2015, p. 1096) observes when discussing neighbour responses to disaster, "there is no guarantee the neighbours will feel the weight of their neighbourly duties and respond accordingly".

The street assembly, as a space for meeting and encounters with this inherent contingency, is also a setting with an animating and distinctive force. It can be observed as an "atmosphere", recovering insights mentioned in Chapter 2 and discussed by Corsin Jimenez & Estalella (2014), that influences the nature and meaning of neighbour interactions. Observing the 15-M social movement in Madrid, these authors argue that public assemblies in urban squares are a form of "atmosphere" that influences the capacities and subjectivities of co-residents, therefore making (or "assembling") the neighbour as an urban actor. In the WDC, neighbouring is "assembled" with an important element of publicness, explored further in the next section.

Recognising neighbours as public figures

During a walking interview with Carolina on an afternoon in May of 2023, I asked her what she thought were the more significant achievements of the Water Defence Committee. I had asked this question to other participants before, so I expected her to mention the campaign for the water well

and to hold the authorities accountable, which she did. However, she also identified the possibility of "getting to know each other" and "recognise each other again" as one of these achievements.

> The committee allowed us to get to know each other, because we were already in our own little houses, thinking that everything was fine in our world, that we already had our neighbourhood with all the services, and we weren't worried, right? Then we started to go out, because of the lack of water, and because we started to relate to each other and to recognise each other again and to be active again. [...] What we have to do is not new, we've done it before. We've seen that being together works, haven't we?

(Carolina, walking interview, 11/05/23)

The WDC helping people to "get to know each other" could appear contradictory since this group is made of neighbours, and as mentioned in Chapter 3, numerous people in Santo Domingo have lived there for many years. Furthermore, as Carolina said, they have campaigned together before and seen that it works, referring to a shared history of activism described in previous chapters. But Carolina talks about a different form of recognition related to being "active again". As she noted, with time, neighbours who used to interact intensely may stop doing so, particularly if activism cycles and campaigns end. This demonstrates the fragility and elasticity of neighbouring and the pragmatic aspect of neighbour alliances described in Chapter 4.

The WDC functions as a space that allows for mutual recognition between neighbours in multiple scales. This recognition can occur either through a first-time interaction or, as Carolina mentioned, through an experience in which they "relate to each other again". Driven by the necessity and water scarcity, neighbours come out of their houses and meet. From this encounter, they can mutually recognise each other. The multiple scales of recognition between neighbours include the following possibilities: first-time recognition as neighbours and not strangers,

recognition of interdependency and shared needs, and recognition of the neighbour as a public figure. This section will explore these multiple scales in more detail.

For some participants who didn't have previous experience of activism or even interaction with other residents, being part of this group can be a literal recognition and identification of each other for the first time, as part of distinguishing neighbours from strangers, described in Chapter 4. In the following extract, Leticia narrates a transition from initially not knowing anyone when she first went to a street assembly to the moment in which, as she says, everyone knows her and can locate her, using her own words, "around the corner".

> Andres: And did you know anyone in the group before?
>
> Leticia: No [laughs] That's what impressed me the most. When I got there, they were all staring at me because they were all grown-up people. Do you know what I mean? And they were surely thinking, "Who is that girl? Why is she here?" I look younger than I am. And everyone would ask "Who are you?" And I'd say, "Well, I come from around the corner". Now things have changed. And on Friday I told my grandmother, "Ah, now everyone knows me". Now everyone knows who I am, and I also know the neighbours.
>
> (Leticia and Miriam, interview, 29/11/2022)

To talk about NBOs as spaces for this mutual recognition through interaction has similarities with how Blokland & Schultze (2017, p. 260) argue that neighbourhoods are a relational setting of public familiarity that "provides ways of knowing incrementally about others" through repeated encounters and engagements. In the street assemblies, neighbours identify and situate each other in the neighbourhood locality (Massey, 1991; Mayol, 1999).

This form of recognition is possible because street assemblies become settings for encounters. This recognition matters since most residents of this densely populated neighbourhood are not involved in the group, and people who show up for the first time may be mostly unknown

to other members. In the following extract, Martina comments that people may not interact outside the street assemblies, describing the context of neighbours mostly keeping to themselves. There is an ambivalence around the neighbour relationship, shifting between an overarching atmosphere of friendly distance and the public engagement and sociality enabled in the WDC spaces.

> Andres: And outside of the assemblies, do you have any other space in which you can interact with the neighbours? Or is it something more like just a greeting?
>
> Martina: Yes, just like saying hello and that's all, because now we all have our own activities and it's complicated, unless it's a social meeting. You might meet three, four, five, ten neighbours, or at Sunday mass. You might meet several neighbours there. But apart from that, no.
>
> <div align="right">(Martina, walking interview, 03/05/23)</div>

This location and recognition of different neighbours described earlier by Leticia, in a (sometimes) anonymous context, is triggered by water scarcity. The connection between neighbours that is caused by water needs is something that Alma and many other participants mentioned during our interviews. However, in the following extract, Alma talks about an openness to know more about one another. Therefore, she also describes the street assembly as a space where neighbours may meet. This implies a connection between different forms of recognition in social infrastructures.

> When we go to the meetings, we see different neighbours. Not even the ones in my street, but different neighbours who are also interested, and who are also in need of water. So, to a certain extent we have a kind of coexistence [*convivencia*] there because we talk, because we ask each other "do you have water?". I don't know, little things like that. It is like getting closer. And I feel that coexistence is also important. […] [in the meetings] there is an openness to know more about the neighbour, or their needs, let's say.
>
> <div align="right">(Alma, interview, 11/01/22)</div>

Alma mentions that "the need for water" was a fundamental motivation for people who show up in the street assemblies and become part of the WDC. Recognising a shared need is a different scale of recognition between neighbours that links them as part of intentional networks of coordinated interaction. As mentioned earlier, this process overlaps with face-to-face identification described by Leticia, so the characteristics of NBOs as networks of relationships and spaces for encounters intersect.

Interestingly, this process involves interacting with neighbours from different streets than the ones where participants usually are or know people from. This recognition represents a geographical "widening" of the neighbour. This widening leads to including and incorporating more people and places into a network of mutual support. Such widening is geographical and also experiential since it leads to a new form of recognition between neighbours.

The centrality of water in this process helps to observe how it may motivate a public conversation between neighbours and feelings of place attachment and belonging. As Watson (2017, p. 965) argues, water can inspire a form of "passionate attachment" to particular forms of public space. This discussion relates to the insights developed in Chapter 5, referring to place attachment. In this case, water absence and scarcity trigger the articulation of a public, as a collective affected by a shared issue (Watson, 2017; 2019). This is a form of identifying the legitimacy of neighbour voices around a shared right to water access.[91]

A different form of recognition between neighbours, which involves identifying them as public figures, is what Carolina described earlier in this section. Recognising neighbours leads, in

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[91] A perspective of political recognition can be discussed in connection to the procedural dimension of environmental justice as an essential element to guarantee the respect of the rights of marginalised groups affected by injustices (Gonzalez, 2019), connecting to the insights introduced in Chapter 5.

her own words, to be "active again" in public spaces and around public issues. Therefore, the mutual recognition between neighbours can be experienced as a re-discovery of the potential of this figure for solving problems like water access. In this way, neighbours "recognise each other again" as public figures, particularly if, like Carolina, they have previous activism experiences as part of a local context.[92]

The neighbour as a public figure is someone involved in public issues and visible (or audible) in public spaces. This is another form of widening of the neighbour category through the characteristics of NBOs as infrastructures of recognition. Furthermore, this helps to identify how the environmentalism of the neighbour involves an element of publicness.

Neal (2022) suggests that neighbours involve an element of publicness since they allow for the intersection and blurring of boundaries of public and private spheres and because they can represent a source of social trust and care. In this case study, activism around water also connects public and private spheres. The neighbour as a public figure is actively and visibly involved in the infrastructural connections of the waterscape and their benefits for the whole community, as described in Beni's interview previously in this chapter.

A specific form of "being a neighbour" is displayed and coordinated by the members of the WDC, as discussed in Chapter 4. A shared history of struggle and the current necessities of neighbours influence this public display of neighbouring. However, this scale of recognition is also built upon the possibility of encountering each other and identifying shared needs, showing how these scales overlap and intersect.

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[92] In a neighbourhood built through collective work [*faenas*], the social context and everyday cultures of inhabiting that Giglia (2009) observes imply an expectation of mutual help in the present, particularly for the generations that, like Carolina, were part of this experience.

Recognition between neighbours as public figures connects to their proximity and ambivalence. This connection is shown in how the WDC works simultaneously as an expression of personal relationships and a setting for encounters. Different forms of interaction can happen between people in streets, markets, and sidewalks. But mutually identifying each other in the animating atmosphere (Corsín Jiménez & Estalella, 2014) of a street assembly or as part of an interpersonal network that can lead to social care (Silver & McFarlane, 2019; Klinenberg et al., 2020) causes a different form of recognition between neighbours.

The fragility and limits of infrastructure mentioned in a previous section also apply to NBOs as social infrastructures. The neighbour relationship and connection are also fragile. When it carries such expectations of public displays of support and reciprocal commitment, this connection relies on producing and sustaining trust in one another, which is not an automatic or easy process. Building trust in one another is part of the process through which the neighbour as a nearby stranger becomes someone new, not only recognisable face but also a public figure and even an ally. Carolina described this process as another long-term achievement of the WDC during a sit-down interview.

Andres: What do you think have been the achievements of the Water Defence Committee?

Carolina: Well, to remain as one, to remain united. Without the mistrust that we had before. It is logical that there is some mistrust from those who arrive for the first time. They ask us if we belong to a certain party. Or if the leaders are asking for money for who knows what, or if they want to run as candidates.

[…]

Andres: What do you think helps to generate trust?

Carolina: Well, that it's [the group] been going on for several years. That there have already been elections and things like that. And it has already been shown that they don't want to

be candidates. And we told them [the neighbours], they are free to vote for whoever they want, but we don't campaign for anyone here.

<div align="right">(Carolina, interview, 12/12/22)</div>

During our walking interview, months after the sit-down interview, Carolina talked a little more about this. While we were covering from a rain shower that surprised us under a small roof on a sidewalk, she mentioned more details of what she felt were long-term accomplishments of the WDC.

> Carolina: [In the committee] we have that trust, understanding of each other. But we do sometimes have difficulties, misunderstandings with the neighbours. Well, things that are natural in society, but we always try to resolve them in the best way possible. Trying to make everything clear, so people express their feeling or questions, and we talk about it. [...] So, yes, there are always things like that that can cause conflict, but we always try to find a way to clear them up.
>
> Andres: Does the committee help to clarify?
>
> Carolina: Yes, it's useful for many things, to resolve and to clarify and to bring order among everyone.

<div align="right">(Carolina, walking interview, 23/05/23)</div>

The previous narration helps to identify how the recognition mentioned earlier relates to the continuous achievement of trust between the members of the WDC. Carolina explained that the group allowed people to trust and understand each other, but this also involved a set of rules and behaviour expectations. For instance, campaigning for a political party was not allowed. The organised neighbours of the WDC continuously seek to "clarify" things whenever misunderstandings or conflicts arise. Her words help to understand how the recognition between neighbours, in the context of these organisations, requires effort and patience as part of widening the neighbour geographically and experientially.

Just like infrastructures like the water well need maintenance and repair, there is a form of maintenance related to neighbour relationships, particularly when considering the importance of mutual trust. These processes also help to think of other forms of infrastructural repair that relate to the social networks of kin and friendship, as Thrift (2005) suggests. In a social and political context where many political groups utilise neighbourhood organisations to advance their agendas, being able to trust one another relates to achieving common goals without being manipulated on a clientele network. This process forms part of the embeddedness of neighbourhood organisations in social, biographical, and political contexts, which is fundamental for the functioning and potential of the neighbour as a public figure.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored two essential aspects related to neighbour-based organisations (NBOs) through the case of the WDC and involved in RQ3: in what ways they are a form of social infrastructure and how, in this case, a particular NBO has generated a neighbourhood waterscape. It has incorporated data from observational walks, participant observation, walking interviews, and sit-down interviews with research participants.

A key argument has been that infrastructural connections configure Santo Domingo as a water landscape. Through the effort and labour involved in making these infrastructural connections, the organised neighbour is a protagonist in the definition and reproduction of the Santo Domingo waterscape. Using the concept of waterscape and applying it to the neighbourhood scale helped to explore how its materiality becomes an element for contestation. This focus also helped to analyse how neighbour relationships and organisations can influence the neighbourhood's materiality. Focusing on the neighbourhood as a locality and studying its material

configuration, the publicness of water activism and the importance of the neighbour as a public figure that weaves different infrastructural connections became evident.

This chapter also identifies some of the limits and tensions around these infrastructures and highlights the imbalances that may be involved in their connections. The chapter also explored these tensions, ambivalences and fragile connections between people and infrastructures as an intrinsic feature of the neighbourhood waterscape. These tensions (and how the members of the WDC navigate them) were also recurrent elements shown in different examples throughout the discussion in Chapter 4.

This chapter also identified how neighbour-based organisations can be observed as social infrastructures. It argues that they become a coordinated expression of neighbour relationships, more formal than everyday interactions. These organisations are support networks that harness the benefits of spatial proximity between members of the WDC through this intentional interaction and coordination towards shared goals. They also are settings for encounters through mechanisms like the street assembly. Their characteristics as settings for encounters make them more contingent and fragile than other social infrastructures. In these contingent settings, the ambiguity of neighbour interaction persists.

A key argument is that these organisations become infrastructures of recognition between members of the WDC. It describes multiple scales of this recognition that overlap: face-to-face identification, recognition of interdependency, and recognising the neighbour as a public figure. It emphasises the importance of recognising neighbours as public figures, which involves geographically and experientially widening the category of the neighbour. It also discusses the complexity of building trust as a continuous accomplishment implied in this widening.

As was discussed in this chapter, the neighbour as a public figure is someone visibly involved in public issues, such as water access, that impact the whole community, as an expectation with a meaning that goes beyond the narrowness of specific neighbours. This distinction between the narrowness of neighbours and the broader everyday use of community as a concept is an important aspect that helps identify how the publicness of neighbour environmentalism takes place.

The two discussions and general arguments introduced in this chapter help to show the public dimension of neighbour environmentalism. The pragmatic and relational environmentalism of the neighbours, described in previous chapters, also has a public dimension. It involves encounters in public settings that lead to passionate "attachment" (Watson, 2017) and activates a network of interdependency for cooperation (and not hostility) facing urban precarity and environmental risk (Klinenberg et al., 2020; Campbell & Laheij, 2021). These elements are also relevant to understanding the potential of neighbour-based organisations amid ecological uncertainty, a condition that will continue to influence everyday life in cities.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Introduction

This thesis has explored how the neighbour can become a site for everyday environmentalism, particularly in neighbour-based organisations. It has discussed neighbour environmentalism as a research problem that links reflections on neighbour relationships, neighbour-based organisations, environmental justice, social movements, urban water, and different forms of infrastructure. It examined the case of the Water Defence Committee of Santo Domingo (WDC) as a case study organisation (NBO) in Mexico City. It identified research questions that help explore the different scales of this research problem, which involve everyday neighbour relationships, neighbour-based organisations, and the neighbourhood as a locality. The three research questions are:

- RQ1: How and in what ways are urban neighbour relationships affected and reconfigured in contexts of water scarcity?

- RQ2: How do local, neighbour-based organisations contribute to the practice of urban environmental justice in contexts of water scarcity?

- RQ3: In what ways are neighbour-based organisations a form of social infrastructure, and how has the WDC generated a neighbourhood waterscape?

These research questions are explored with more detail in Chapter 4, Chapter 5 and Chapter 6, which present connections between themselves. Chapter 1 presents an introduction to the research problem and its different scales, and a description of the context of this case study. The next two

chapters develop the conceptual framework and toolkit (Chapter 2) and describe the methodological approach and its implications (Chapter 3).

This chapter will review and highlight the crucial findings, arguments, and contributions, with constant references to the content of Chapters 4, 5 and 6. It will also identify areas for further research and highlight the social significance of this study.

Key findings and discussion

1. Neighbour relationships in Santo Domingo include the potential (and expectation) of mutual help.

One of the themes that emerged in the interviews and observations discussed in Chapter 4 was the effort to distinguish between neighbours and other figures and the importance of neighbourliness (Bulmer, 1986) or having a good relationship with neighbours in Santo Domingo. Research participants like Alonso, Monica or Catalina described how small greetings, respecting boundaries, or the occasional favour exchange form part of the "patterns" or activities that constitute neighbour relationships in practice (Morgan, 2009).

These activities can be understood as neighbouring practices that are also influenced by an expectation related to the role of the neighbour (Cheshire, 2015) and observed in other contexts. However, an important finding relates to how urban precarity influences these everyday practices of neighbouring,

As discussed in Chapter 4, it is almost impossible not to communicate or interact with neighbours in a densely populated neighbourhood like Santo Domingo. Chapter 4 also discussed how participants like Monica attempt to maintain boundaries or avoid conflicts with neighbours.

In Santo Domingo, as in other contexts, neighbours are inescapable and influence the quality of life at home (Rosenblum, 2016; Cheshire et al., 2021). However, while this presents some similarities to the discussion of balancing nearness and distance among neighbours (Crow et al., 2002; Morgan, 2009), in Santo Domingo, the history and context of urban precarity influence neighbouring through the expectation of mutual help.

A context of insecurity, risk, and overall urban precarity (Campbell & Laheij, 2021) gives a new meaning to neighbourliness. An interview with Elia and Teodora, introduced in Chapter 4, illustrates how neighbours can be a source of help. Elia and Teodora, two participants who live on the same street, mentioned that it was good to be friendly with neighbours because "something" (referring to a problem or threat) might happen. They noted that this is a form of looking out for each other in case something happens on the street and gave examples about issues like health and security.

May et al. (2021, p. 8) suggest neighbour relationships have a "sticky" dimension as an experiential reality. This was evident in Santo Domingo, but what can be added to this description from the conversation with Elia, Teodora, and other participants is how urban precarity turns the neighbour into a source of future help. Being so close to one another means that neighbour stickiness, or tenacity, can become helpful if problems arise.

As another example, Susana, a participant introduced in Chapter 4, also commented in this chapter that when things were "normal", people would keep to themselves. However, Susana mentioned that people come together when a problem like water scarcity appears. In the context of urban precarity, the expectations of neighbourliness are not only related to boundaries, greetings or small favours but to the possibility of future help necessary for survival, adding a temporal dimension to their interactions. The expectation of future help was a recurring theme of

conversation in different interviews. Urban precarity impacts everyday neighbouring in Santo Domingo through previous experience and current expectations of mutual support. The specific case of water scarcity became an example of "something" happening to people that requires help, just as described by participants like Susana, Elia, and Teodora in Chapter 4.

The expectations of neighbourliness, as participants mentioned, can include hoping that the neighbour becomes a source of help in times of need, showing how a particular imaginary around neighbours can influence these expectations. Smart (2007) uses the notion of the imaginary to observe its influence on personal relationships. This thesis works with these insights and takes them forward to observe a neighbour imaginary. Chapter 4 also identifies different expressions of this expectation since research participants did not have a uniform view of what neighbourliness implies.

In Santo Domingo, having a good relationship with neighbours is convenient not only to keep the peace at home but to have a helping hand if and when some problem arises inside the household or in public, in the street. Teodora mentioned in a walking interview that she would be willing to help someone on the streets and sidewalks of Santo Domingo (referring to the importance of neighbours), especially if she knew that person. In this case study, urban precarity did not necessarily leads to only tensions or conflicts between neighbours. It mostly led to improving neighbour relationships and experiencing the neighbour as an ally.

2. A context of water scarcity transformed neighbour relationships and identities, particularly among the members of the WDC.

Chapter 4 described the emergence of the WDC and how it transformed the conditions for water access in Santo Domingo. It mentioned how, with different initiatives, this group enabled an organised form of water sharing between neighbours. A crucial finding of Chapter 4 is how this process affected the meaning and practice of being a neighbour within the WDC. Being a "neighbour" became a political identity based on the engagement of collective activism and organising in the WDC. Thus, this political identity is linked to an understanding of the neighbour as an ally.

Discovering the neighbour as an ally through local organising and activism modified relationships between members of the WDC. It involved a deepening of reciprocity as an expectation between neighbours who are members of the WDC and feelings of solidarity directed to the whole of Santo Domingo as a community. However, the experience of collective activism did not happen in a relational and historical vacuum but draws on existing reciprocity expectations and experiences of mutualism, as well as on the tacit assumption that, as Elia and Teodora mentioned in Chapter 4, neighbours can become a source of help.

Participants talked about supporting each other as an expectation directed to other members of the WDC, which involved a sense of reciprocity. For example, in Chapter 4, participants like Julia discussed their expectation of neighbourly help using the expression "today for you, tomorrow it could be for me" [*hoy por ti, mañana por mi*]. Leticia, another participant, also commented that just as her family received help from the WDC to access water trucks [*pipas*],

they also support this group, or using her words, supporting each other is "reciprocal". Many other participants would also comment on the importance of supporting the group just as it supports them and manifest resentment when people look only for their interests without helping others. This was observed as a deepening of reciprocity, leading to members of the WDC to expect more from each other than under normal circumstances.

A situation of water scarcity influenced neighbour communication and interaction. In some cases, neighbours exchanged favours related to water access, as discussed by participants like Catalina in Chapter 4. While this can happen informally, the WDC became a space where neighbours organised water sharing as a social practice by neighbours.

Through the role of neighbour-based organisations like the WDC, the members of a group commit to sharing different forms of help, particularly concerning water access. Their forms of being neighbours acquire new meanings in the context of water scarcity, and involve, apart from reciprocity among members of the WDC, feelings of solidarity directed towards improving Santo Domingo as a community. Therefore, this thesis has crucially identified that, in this case, both solidarity and reciprocity have a role in local neighbour organising. Solidarity was directed towards the whole of Santo Domingo, viewed as a community by research participants. Reciprocity was an expectation directed towards relationships with other members of the group. With the role of spaces like the WDC and an experience of pragmatic exchange and alliances, political identities are constructed in which reciprocity and solidarity intersect.

It is important to note that this aspect of the findings applies to this case study and the WDC. In different contexts, division and conflict among neighbours can emerge as a response to water scarcity. For this reason, the role of NBOs is crucial in understanding the response to water scarcity or other environmental and social issues.

In this process, the neighbour is discovered as an ally to achieve shared goals. This is part of a definition of the "neighbour" as a political identity within the WDC. A participant like Alma, for example, mentioned in Chapter 4 that being a good neighbour means being willing to "support each other in the struggle". The figure of the neighbour takes a new meaning, to turn into an ally in the WDC. This discovery of the neighbour as a pragmatic ally was a crucial finding and a way that water scarcity influenced the practices and experiences of being a neighbour.

This process is not exempt from conflict and disputes around the different forms of water sharing, as participants like Caralampia, Lucia and Leticia mentioned. Ambiguity and conflict, identified as fundamental elements of neighbouring (Painter, 2012; Cheshire, 2021), do not disappear with the production of new political identities. Chapter 4 examines how the alliances between neighbours are a possibility and continuous achievement rather than a guarantee. However, neighbours are pragmatically discovered and constructed as allies even when facing such complexity.

Therefore, a crucial argument of this thesis, discussed in Chapter 4, is that *water scarcity led to the construction and reworking of neighbour alliances among the members of a neighbour-based organisation. This is linked to the "neighbour" becoming a political identity within this organisation.*

In this case study, this process led to discovering the neighbour as an ally and involved reciprocity among members and solidarity with the neighbourhood community. The role and influence of groups like the WDC are crucial to defining the characteristics and content of the alliances between neighbours and of the political identity of being a neighbour. These alliances focus on common goals and problems to face the scarcity of a key resource such as water, helping to identify the pragmatic element of the environmentalism of the neighbour.

3. Water scarcity is a form of environmental injustice that undermines place attachment in Santo Domingo.

Chapter 5 discussed how water scarcity disrupts everyday life and the wellbeing of participants. Using a qualitative perspective and drawing upon the data from interviews and diaries, Chapter 5 describes lived experiences of environmental injustice from the perspective of research participants. In this exploration, participants expressed their view of distributional inequality, procedural exclusion, ecological loss, and emotional anxiety caused by water scarcity. Chapter 5 argued that the neighbourhood can be understood as a built environment in which water is an essential part and a crucial component of the everyday livelihoods of local populations. Therefore, defending water implies defending the neighbourhood and the possibility of living on it. For this reason, the struggle of the WDC was observed as an environmental injustice dispute, and the defence of water was analysed as a form of environmentalism rooted in everyday life.

Participants like Martina and Susana described the social inequalities of water scarcity in Chapter 5. Susana explained that, in her opinion, wealthy neighbourhoods are not restricted in their water access and powerfully asked: "Is it just the poor people who don't get water?" Participants like Julia said that neighbours would protest and block streets because they felt ignored by the authorities involved in water distribution, and Mariana mentioned that neighbours should "demand the right to water".

The right to water was not experienced as a complete reality in Santo Domingo. Chapter 5 shows how the lack of water led to political clientelist practices and manipulation, in which people

would receive water trucks in exchange for political support. When asked about this situation, Verne described that fighting this situation was "a question of not being taken hostage". Verne also expressed preoccupation because of the simultaneous reduction in water availability and the loss of natural areas like forests near Mexico City. On an emotional level, the diaries of Alma and Adriana showed how they suffered the anxiety and stress related to everyday routines marked by uncertainty at the moment of opening their water taps. These are only some examples of issues repeatedly mentioned by research participants.

Water scarcity can even imply a literal displacement from Santo Domingo, as described by participants like Tita. She said that people "are being pushed aside" because of water scarcity since difficult circumstances are "choking" them and forcing them to live elsewhere. With all the previous insights, Chapter 5 presents a crucial finding: water scarcity represents a disruption of place attachment on the neighbourhood scale. This was observed as a form of environmental injustice, since water scarcity undermined the capacity of people to feel at home, occupying a place, and appropriating the place where they live. Furthermore, water scarcity threatened the capacity of sustaining a form of life in the neighbourhood, understood as an urban environment and socionatural assemblage (Heynen et al., 2006). In this sense, it was possible to relate concerns over the consequences of water scarcity with a form of environmentalism understood as the collective effort to protect and improve the material conditions of an environment because they impact the livelihood of a population

The disruption of place attachment to the neighbourhood, with implications on social relationships with neighbours, is part of the experiential realities of environmental injustice. Place attachment, linked with community and social ties, has been identified as a recent theme in environmental justice activism and research (Agyeman et al., 2016). Schlosberg (2019, p. 64)

argues that this disruption is a form of injustice since "attachment – to both people and place – is a basic capability. Attachment is a basic need, essential for a functioning life." Place attachment, directed to the neighbourhood, is a human capacity that involves an emotional connection to nearby spaces (Poma, 2018), with implications for social relationships between neighbours.

In specifically urban contexts, Anguelovksi (2013) observes how environmental activists and local organisations re-make place and how this influences wellbeing. This thesis, particularly in Chapter 5, outlines how this connection happens in the case of water scarcity and describes how it is experienced as an everyday reality by participants. It also identified how the neighbourhood can be understood as an everyday environment, shaped and affected by a context of water scarcity.

4. Neighbour activism and protest in the WDC generate a form of resonance that reconstructs place attachment.

Resonance was introduced in Chapter 2 and Chapter 5 as a conceptual resource for bridging neighbour relationships and environmental activism. Drawing on the work of Miller (2015) and Simone & Pieterse (2017), and with an intersection with the everyday uses of the terms by research participants, resonance was defined as a momentary and affective amplification of political capacity. Resonance was used as a concept to observe the effects of protest and activism. The empirical discussion in Chapter 5 also showed how resonance implied a renewed sense of belonging for the members of the WDC.

Chapter 5 describes neighbour resonances as a consequence of activism and coordination in the WDC and as part of the political potential of neighbour relationships. In Chapter 5,

participants described how being part of the WDC led to a feeling of being able to achieve things, such as delivering a message, guaranteeing a right, or even modifying water distribution. This experience of increased capacity was expressed in association with discovering, or in some cases awakening, a feeling of connection to the neighbourhood and to other neighbours involved in the group.

Both the increased capacity and the feeling of connection to others accompany the realisation that neighbours were not alone in their struggle. In particular, Marisol explicitly mentioned in Chapter 5 that "if you are alone your voice doesn't lead to a resonance that takes your message to where it needs to go", and that several people are needed to make this possible. Her words showed everyday uses of the metaphor of resonance, which helped to identify how this process involves an amplification of capacity.

In Chapter 5, Marisol described the Committee as a "giant" that helped organised neighbours take care of each other and face troubles such as uncertainty and bureaucracy (understood as other giants). This dimension of social care was fundamental since it contrasted directly with the conditions of injustice described in a previous finding. The increased capacities of neighbour resonance help them to influence the water flow of the neighbourhood and dismantle the conditions for water political clientele, improving their wellbeing.

Participants like Javier and Adriana mentioned that the Committee helped them "reawaken" a feeling of community and togetherness that used to be prevalent in Santo Domingo. In this way, and by helping the members of the WDC gain some control over water access, becoming less uncertain and more at ease in their homes, this group reconstructs place attachment, with implications for social relationships. Therefore, an important finding explored in Chapter 5

is that the WDC influenced neighbour resonances and directed them to a reconstruction of place attachment through momentarily increasing political capabilities and triggering intense feelings of togetherness. In this way, neighbour resonances are a crucial part of how the WDC contributed to the practice of environmental justice.

The WDC has an essential role in this process, influencing neighbour resonances and directing them towards the reconstruction of place attachment. Therefore, a key argument, developed mostly in Chapter 5, is that *neighbour-based organisations contribute to urban environmental justice for their role in neighbour resonances and the reconstruction of place attachment*.

In Chapter 5, reconstructed place attachment to the neighbourhood was observed in material, temporal, and relational elements. The material element is related to influencing the built environment, improving it and turning it into a "gifted place" for other neighbours, using the concept developed by Bennet (2014). Martina mentioned that she wanted her environment, or surroundings [*entorno*] to improve in a way that benefited everyone, while Tita mentioned that neighbour struggle produce "results". This showed how the WDC was important in making a change in the built environment.

This insight connects to another theme: the history of Santo Domingo as a central reference point, showing how collective memory matters for place attachment in a temporal dimension (May & Lewis, 2019; Blokland., 2001). For participants like Waldo, everything in Santo Domingo is the result of collective organising. During a walking interview, he mentioned that the current struggle over water forms part of a "history of uninterrupted struggle". Finally, being part of the WDC was linked to a network of relationships, showing how relationality and embeddedness (Mason, 2004;

Smart, 2007) are relevant to understanding place attachment. In Chapter 5, Leticia mentioned that she became involved in the group to help her grandparents. Sandra wanted to leave a life lesson of effort and persistence for her children, just as her mother did for her, and Juan mentioned that being part of a fight to "support the people" was a source of satisfaction.

These three elements helped to identify the relational nature of neighbour environmentalism. They also helped to show how place attachment, as an emotional connection between people and places (Poma, 2018), forms part of the senses and practices of belonging (May, 2013; Jackson, 2020).

5. Infrastructural connections, influenced by the WDC, are crucial in the waterscape of Santo Domingo

As Chapter 6 showed, the first months of the fieldwork allowed me to observe how the struggles and resistances of the WDC articulated and used multiple infrastructures, with the prevalence and centrality of the water well as a crucial goal. Infrastructures impacted the articulation of neighbours towards a common goal and their everyday experience of their neighbourhood (McFarlane & Rutherford, 2008; Amin, 2014).

With participant observations and observational walks, it was possible to observe and describe, in Chapter 6, how water moved in Santo Domingo. These insights helped to show how infrastructural connections helped to define a neighbourhood waterscape, or water landscape, as a concept used to describe the flows, absences, and presence of water on the neighbourhood scale (Ahlers et al., 2014; Watson, 2017; Rusca, 2023).

The empirical data explored in this chapter showed how different infrastructures, like pipes, water trucks [*pipas*], tanks [*tinacos*], pumps, carts, jugs, public taps, the water well but also social relationships, parks, roads, and community centres, matter in this waterscape. Describing a day of participant observation in Santo Domingo that involved walking into the well construction site showed actively involved the members of the WDC in generating connections between different forms of infrastructure.

Therefore, a key finding of Chapter 6 is that the connections between different types of infrastructure make the neighbourhood waterscape. Additionally, Chapter 6 shows how these connections are actively produced and contested by specific groups like the WDC. Infrastructural connections help to comprehend the neighbourhood water landscape and analyse how it transforms. The neighbour, as defined in the membership of the WDC, becomes a crucial figure with public relevance in this process since it is involved in producing these infrastructural connections.

Multiple infrastructures are "woven" together to produce the neighbourhood waterscape, but as Chapter 6 argues, this is not a neutral process. Constant tensions and contestations were part of these connections in Santo Domingo. Different actors mobilise repertoires of infrastructure production as "hybrid products of hegemonic–subaltern interactions" (Téllez Contreras, 2024, p.15), which can serve diverse political agendas. Participants like Beni, Martina, and Javier described a continuous negotiation with government officials and effort for the well construction. In Chapter 6, Tita also mentioned that political parties may want to claim acknowledgement for the well or modify its functioning, so the neighbours must remain vigilant and become the "guardians" of the water.

A crucial argument of Chapter 6 is that *the WDC generates the waterscape of Santo Domingo by enabling and disputing infrastructural connections*. The labour and social practices of the members of the WDC were fundamental to making these connections, particularly for how participants became involved in the well construction.

The interview and walking interview with Beni offered insights that illustrated how water activism involved a public dimension. He particularly emphasised how the well would benefit not just a few people but all the neighbourhood in Chapter 6. He mentioned that "water is going to be for the community, it is not for a few neighbours". This distinction between a few neighbours and the broader idea of community shows the public aspect of the disputes over the waterscape and the publicness involved in neighbour environmentalism.

6. NBOs can be a form of social infrastructure that influences recognition between neighbours on multiple scales

Chapter 6 identifies some characteristics of NBOs that could help to describe them as social infrastructures. NBOs can work as a social infrastructure in two ways: as a networked expression of social relationships (Simone, 2004; 2014) and as a setting for social encounters (Klinenberg, 2018; Latham & Layton, 2019).

The first of these characteristics, mentioned by participants in their interviews, relates to how this space became an interpersonal support network. In Chapter 6, people like Caralampia discussed the advantages of quick communication for monitoring the water pipes network. Susana,

Javier and Adriana mentioned that being part of the group helped them achieve goals like the well. NBOs can function as networks that harness the benefits of spatial proximity. The interactions in these groups are more intentional than informal, everyday exchanges and are oriented towards a shared goal, such as water flow, as a public issue (Watson, 2017). In this way, they can function as social infrastructures that influence the possibility of survival in a context of urban precarity (Simone, 2004; Silver & McFarlane, 2019)

The WDC also became a setting, or atmosphere, for encounters between neighbours, particularly for the role of street assemblies, held periodically in public spaces like streets and sidewalks. In Chapter 6, Alma mentioned how the assembly helps to identify neighbours from different streets and meet new people and how, in the meetings, there is "openness to know more about the neighbour". NBOs can widen, both geographically and experientially, the category of the neighbour.

These assemblies are contingent settings that face the ambiguity of neighbour interaction. Alma and Alonso mentioned in Chapter 6 that it is essential that people show up to the meetings, which is never a guarantee. NBOs are less settled and stable than other forms of social infrastructure that also function as spaces for encounters, such as libraries, community centres, or parks (Klinenberg, 2018). However, they can lead to a public discussion of shared issues and give public visibility of the neighbour as a figure. The street assembly functioned as a device and "atmosphere" that temporally "assembles" neighbours in public space, recovering insights developed by Corsin Jimenez & Estalella (2013; 2014).

For its roles as a setting for encounters and as a formal expression or network of relationships, the WDC is a form of social infrastructure. As an NBO, it is characterised by how it deals with the advantages of spatial proximity and the inherent ambiguity of neighbour interactions.

As social infrastructures, NBOs can lead to recognition between its members on different scales. In Chapter 6, Carolina mentioned that one of the achievements of the Committee was allowing people to "recognise each other again". This recognition between neighbours was a crucial finding, identified in multiple scales: recognition as a form of identification (that helps to distinguish neighbours from strangers), recognition of interdependency and shared needs (and integration on a network to solve them), and the recognition of neighbours as public figures (a publicly visible figure who is solving shared issues such as water access).

A crucial argument is that *neighbour-based organisations can work as social infrastructures for mutual recognition between neighbours as public figures*. While this argument is developed in Chapter 6, it presents constant elements throughout the thesis, such as the importance of the well and neighbours "discovering" each other in public. A public element of neighbour environmentalism became evident through the study of NBOs as infrastructures of recognition.

Theoretical and methodological contributions

This section will highlight how this thesis builds upon previous knowledge and contributes to existing debates. These contributions are evidence-based, deriving from the case study findings. They offer insights that can be observed in other contexts, which could be a focus of further studies. The section is divided into conceptual contributions and methodological contributions for narrative purposes.

Chapter 2 links discussions on different subjects, including neighbour relationships and organisations, environmentalism and urban protest, and neighbourhood materiality, which involves reflections on infrastructure. This linking is a constant effort throughout the thesis as a fundamental part of observing the multiple scales of neighbour environmentalism. Bringing different discussions together is also part of the conceptual contributions described in what follows.

Conceptual contributions

The first conceptual contribution is bringing together debates about *neighbouring and of environmentalism through a focus on NBOs*. Understanding how neighbour identities and relationships are reworked or affected when facing environmental risk, and identifying the role of NBOs in this process, are contributions to existing debates on neighbouring on different scales. In the context of urban precarity (Campbell & Laheij, 2021), this construction of the neighbour as a political identity did not necessarily lead to conflict and hostility but to mutual support and to producing the neighbour as an ally for seeking shared goals. The WDC had a fundamental role in this process, as explored in Chapter 4.

In this thesis, the case of the WDC illustrated the construction of the neighbour as a political actor and an ally. In this process, the WDC related to a shared history of inhabiting Santo Domingo, and articulated feelings of reciprocity between its members with notions of solidarity directed towards the neighbourhood. By describing how neighbour-based organisations are involved in a process of redefining the meaning of being a neighbour this thesis advances understanding of neighbour relationships, and of how they are affected by a context of urban precarity and ecological

uncertainty. Arguing that the neighbour figure can work as an ally also illuminates the pragmatism of neighbouring countries in contexts of environmental extremity.

The description of neighbour identities has been constructed through a focus on everyday interactions and experiences (Kusenbach, 2006; Morgan, 2009; May et al., 2021). With a focus mostly developed on a Global North context, these discussions have also helped to describe the implications of balancing nearness and distance between neighbours (Crow et al., 2002; Painter, 2012). This thesis builds upon this and previous literature on neighbour relationships as a dynamic process of mutual engagement (Heil, 2014; Neal, 2022) but adds insights from the Global South context of urban precarity and an analytical focus on neighbouring under environmental extremes. As was argued in Chapters 4 and 5, the meaning of neighbourliness, influenced by the WDC, is directly related to the necessity of survival and of having a place to live. This relates to the contribution that this thesis makes to the literature on environmental justice. Authors like Agyeman et al. (2016) or Anguelovski & Martinez Alier (2014)identify a difference between the activism, racial and class composition of environmental justice struggles and mainstream environmentalism organisations. For Agyeman et al. (2016), the activism of environmental justice struggles is rooted in the spaces and practices of everyday life. This thesis contributes to such discussions by observing how environmental activism is located in everyday spaces such as the neighbourhood. Furthermore, through observing the everyday environmentalism of a neighbourhood organisation that defends water access, this thesis identifies the neighbourhood as a socionatural assemblage and an environment where everyday life unfolds, where people "live, work and play" (Agyeman et al., 2016). In this way, this thesis explores how water is an integral component involved in the possibility of inhabiting the neighbourhood and in the experience of everyday environments.

Analysing neighbour identities also contributes to discussions on environmental movements and environmentalism, particularly by focusing on the neighbour-based organisation as a protagonist of protest and the neighbourhood as a scale of organising (as discussed in Chapter 5). As described in Chapters 2 and 5, the neighbourhood can be understood as a built environment and socionatural assemblage where everyday life unfolds. Protecting the capacity of accessing water in Santo Domingo, as argued in Chapter 5, matters because it is a component of this environment, and because it influences the capacity of residents to live in the neighbourhood. In this sense, defending water access is a form of protecting Santo Domingo, and based on an understanding of environmentalism rooted in everyday life and the livelihood of local populations, this can be framed as an environmental justice claim (Anguelovksi & Martinez Alier, 2014; Agyeman et al., 2016).

Additionally, this thesis contributes to the environmental justice literature in two ways. The first way is by describing the connection between themes such as water access and place attachment. The relationship between water and attachment was described by identifying how interruptions to water services can be experienced in forms that undermine the capacity of feeling at home and appropriating a place. The second way in which this thesis contributes to this literature is by identifying the neighbourhood as an everyday environment. By observing Santo Domingo as an environment, the defence of water represents a collective struggle to protect and preserve a livelihood.

Focusing on neighbour-based organisations involved recognising that interaction in urban contexts involves uncertainty and experimentation (Simone, 2021). The neighbour is an ambivalent figure, and even with expectations related to their role, there is no guarantee that they will help each other in a moment of trouble (Cheshire, 2015). Additionally, neighbours are not

guaranteed success in their campaigns even after becoming allies. While organising helps accomplish their goals, uncertainty and experimentation are part of their collective struggle, as suggested in the fragilities covered in Chapters 4 and 6. Therefore, the construction of the neighbour as a political identity is never finished. This process can be observed further in other contexts and situations.

Furthermore, the exchanges that characterise neighbour alliances are not only related to the benefits and advantages that interested Abrams (published by Bulmer, 1986) but derive from a sense of mutualism (Rosenblum, 2016). In the context of Santo Domingo, pragmatism does not follow a purely individualistic ethos. Instead, it emerges from figuring out how to live next to each other and how to confront shared problems such as water scarcity (see also Chapter 5).

The focus on the fragilities of neighbour alliances sheds light on elements that can be overlooked when assuming feelings of togetherness and neighbour unity. This nuance is crucial, particularly when trying to understand the experience and potential of neighbourhood activism, as explored in Chapter 5. This nuance connects to the following conceptual contribution, related to the discussion of resonance to observe the consequences of protest and local organising.

A second conceptual contribution comes from *using resonance to understand the consequences of activism and local organising*. Understanding how neighbour-based organisations influence resonances is fundamental for an affective and relational exploration of social movements and protests. This has implications related to highlighting the contingency and relationality of environmentalism. Furthermore, by linking resonance to place attachment as an emotional bond

(Poma, 2018), this thesis adds insights to discussions on the importance of place for environmental justice (Anguelovski, 2013) and belonging in urban contexts (May, 2011; Bennett, 2014).

Following the characteristics of an acoustic metaphor and using empirical insights, this thesis defines resonance as a momentary and affective amplification of capacity, with discussions developed in Chapters 2 and 5. It also discussed how resonance involved a renewed sense of belonging for the members of the WDC. This definition contributes to the discussion of resonance as a sociological process (McDonell et al., 2017; Rosa, 2019). With this definition and insights, this thesis also contributes to the observation and analysis of protests and social movements.

This definition can be helpful in the observation of protest. In particular, it contributes to understanding the complexities of neighbour alliances in environmental activism beyond assumptions of collective action to focus on social practices (Guerra Blanco, 2013; Yates, 2015; Gillan, 2020). Resonance does not involve sharing values or the identity related to collective actors (Guerra Blanco, 2013; Walter et al., 2017), and as previously mentioned, the political identities of neighbours are not exempt from tensions and ambiguities. Focusing on resonance helps to observe the simultaneous strength and contingency of neighbour alliances, so this thesis contributes to discussions of urban social movements and protests that focus on everyday life (Boudreau et al., 2010; Beveridge & Koch, 2018).

As discussed in Chapter 5, this study has helped to observe environmental justice as an everyday process and an experiential reality (Agyeman et al., 2016). To understand the lived experiences of environmental justice, it adds elements from the context of popular urbanisation and urban informality relevant in many cities of the Global South (Streule et al., 2010; Caldeira, 2017) and provides insights from the Mexican and Latin American urban context.

Resonance also helps to understand how place attachment is re-configured by local organising and how it matters for environmental justice (Agyeman et al., 2016), as a crucial finding explored in Chapter 5. Notions such as community and place are part of previous studies of urban environmental justice (Anguelovski, 2013; Groves, 2015; Schlosberg, 2019). This study describes how a neighbour-based organisation is crucially involved in re-making place through resonance. It also identified how NBOs become a network for social care, an element also mentioned in Chapters 5 and 6. The crucial dimension of social care also helps observe neighbour activism as a relational process embedded in the network of relationships that constitute a neighbourhood locality.

Finally, this contribution brings insights that help to show the tenacity and dynamic nature of belonging (May, 2011; Jackson, 2020) in the context of environmental uncertainty and risk. In a place that has resulted from self-built housing such as Santo Domingo, belonging is not only a simple identification. Belonging, in this context, involves an effort to value and defend the struggle of previous generations, and is linked to the possibility of having a place to live. Furthermore, belonging is not automatically undermined by structural factors but transformed in the practices of participants. This active dynamism and fluidity of belonging correspond with the contingency and transience suggested by a notion such as resonance and relate to the fragility of neighbour alliances explored in Chapter 4.

A third conceptual contribution relates to the *centrality of the different scales of recognition to observe social infrastructures.* Understanding how NBOs produce mutual recognition adds to discussions of social infrastructure and their consequences for sociality and publicness

(Klinenberg, 2018; Latham & Layton, 2019; Middleton & Samanani, 2022). Additionally, defining neighbour-based organisations as social infrastructures contributes to analysing their role in producing a waterscape.

Observing recognition in NBOs as settings for encounters and personal networks contributes to existing discussions on social infrastructures (Klinenberg, 2018; Silver & McFarlane, 2019). As Chapter 6 shows, drawing on these insights, a discussion of neighbour-based organisations as infrastructures of recognition can help to identify their effects on the publicness of contemporary cities. By emphasising the process of mutual recognition within the "atmosphere" (Corsin Jimenez & Estalella, 2014) of the WDC, this thesis highlights an issue related to social infrastructure that has not been the focus of debates that discuss issues like cohesion or sociality (Klinenberg, 2018; Layton & Latham, 2022).

This study also expands insights related to the neighbour as a form of social infrastructure, which has been used to observe urban multiculture (Neal, 2022). Chapter 6 extends the idea of social infrastructure and applies it to local organisations, as a different scale involved in the research problem of neighbour environmentalism. Using insights from Mexico City, it showed how the infrastructural qualities of neighbours matter outside a context of cultural differences.

Defining NBOs as social infrastructures in Chapter 6 was part of identifying the infrastructural connections of a neighbourhood waterscape (Ahlers et al., 2014; Rusca & Cleaver, 2022). These insights contribute to debates around the repertoires of infrastructure production, recovering a term developed by Tellez Contreras (2024) and around the role of everyday human labour in water infrastructure (De Coss-Corzo, 2021; 2022). Infrastructures have been relevant for understanding environmental injustice in Latin American cities (Millington, 2018; Anguelovksi &

Connolly, 2019). This thesis also contributes to exploring this issue, particularly in Chapters 4 and 5, but presents insights into how social infrastructures and recognition matter in contexts of environmental risk (Klinenberg et al., 2020), as was described in Chapter 6.

A fourth and final conceptual contribution is a definition of *neighbour environmentalism as pragmatic, networked, and public*. This is a form of environmental action directed towards influencing the characteristics and experiences of the neighbourhood as a locality. It fundamentally involves the neighbour as a protagonist of local organising.

As mentioned in Chapters 4, 5 and 6, the influence of local organisations and the pragmatic discovery of the neighbour as an ally is crucial for this environmentalism. The reconstruction of place attachment as a bond with consequences in social relationships was a factor of the embedded environmentalism beyond individualism. Finally, the role of the WDC in assembling the neighbour as a public figure was a feature of this environmentalism that transcends the space of private households. However, this definition should be observed as a working hypothesis that could lead to further studies and analyses in other contexts.

Methodological contributions and reflections

Chapter 3 outlines the qualitative methodological focus on social practices and everyday life. It also argues in favour of using a case study to answer the research questions. This section will highlight the methodological contribution of the thesis and introduce some methodological reflections.

The first methodological contribution of the thesis relates to the focus on everyday life and social practices *as sites for the empirical observation of neighbours and environmental justice.* This focus on everyday life has, as Chapter 3 suggested, been central to gaining a perspective on neighbour organising through a qualitative perspective. Interpreting meanings, expectations, narratives, and social practices led to the attentive observation of lives as they are lived (Back, 2007; Mason & Dale, 2011; Mason, 2017). In this way, the methodological approach of this thesis helped to observe a particular dimension of neighbour environmentalism that may be overlooked otherwise.

For example, the links between water and place attachment, explored in Chapter 5, may not be evident without a methodological focus on the everyday. In particular, themes like emotional distress and suffering were relevant and unexpected elements that emerged from the interviews and participant diaries. This focus led to describing lived experiences of environmental justice.

With everyday life as a central element, methods such as participant diaries helped to observe routines and emotions related to water presence. Walking interviews and observational walks were important in tracing the materiality and relationality involved in spaces of everyday interaction and social reproduction, such as sidewalks and streets. The diaries and the walking methods helped to observe rhythms and repetitions as part of the everyday. The interviews, walking or sit-down, showed the stories and meanings related to environmental injustice and local organising as lived experiences. Finally, participant observation helped to grasp the dynamics of

street assemblies and meetings, with attention to details such as an attendance list or the importance of households, which could have been overlooked otherwise.

A particular element of reflection arises concerning the relevance of mobile methods, which were vital in identifying the sensory elements involved in relationships with place (Pink, 2012). As described in Chapter 4 and Chapter 6, walking in the streets and sidewalks of Santo Domingo helped in observing the tenacity and publicness of the neighbours (Painter, 2012; Morgan, 2009; May et al., 2021). These walks were also crucial to observe the sounds, textures, and memories involved in the passionate attachments around water (Watson, 2017), described in Chapters 4 and 6.

However, it is critical to mention that walking methods did not give way to "automatic" access to the everyday but were complementary, interacting with and working alongside other methods. Participant observation, conducted in settings such as the street assembly, complemented these walks in helping to observe the details related to the materiality of public encounters and continuous communications between neighbours. Additionally, more traditional, sit-down interviews also helped to explore connections to place (May & Lewis, 2019) since they took place in the neighbourhood and involved themes such as memory and changes to the built environment. Combining different methods was fundamental in this research design.

In this sense, the second methodological contribution of the thesis is its *demonstration of the effectiveness of using a blended mix of methods and a multi-faceted qualitative approach to generate data collection.* This was not only evident with the use of walking methods. Participant diaries were analysed in connection to the content of interviews to explore some of their content further. Different methods were part of an ongoing conversation with participants. This conversation differs from triangulation as a strategy since it does not seek to get the maximum

information out of people but to explore the complexity of a research problem (Mason, 2011; Brownlie, 2011). In what follows, I will present some methodological reflections.

The first reflection involves insights related to the participant diaries. It concerns *the agency of participants to influence data production about the everyday*. Participant diaries registered the routines and details of everyday life. I had a guide and a flexible plan for the diary use, but participants used them with autonomy. Interestingly, every participant approached this method differently and transmitted something of their own into the research process. Three diaries resemble a "log", where participants registered if water was absent and how they adapted to that situation. Two diaries also include emotional reflections related to water scarcity. Five participants used the diary to reflect on their memories concerning water and Santo Domingo, while one used the diary as a registry and documentation of her activism.

The diversity in the approach to data production is not a deficiency but a strength of this and other qualitative methods. Paradoxically, focusing on the adequate way to obtain information and the correct forms of implementing a method to access the everyday can make it inaccessible. This can happen if such expectations of access imply strict procedures to observe something that otherwise could appear hidden or difficult to know. However, using each method as part of a larger conversation, with all that it implies, led to a more open way of talking and listening to participants.

The second reflection relates to the different forms of interviews. It refers to the importance of *local networks of relationships as a crucial element of data collection*. The centrality of research relationships is arguably one of the essential aspects of qualitative research and is not exclusive to

this research project. However, this research helped me to identify how this involves not only relationships with participants but an already existing network of relationships at the local level.

After conducting the first interviews, I noticed that some people decided to have these conversations with someone else. Some participants preferred to be interviewed with a neighbour or family member, without my intervention or initiative to propose this. Research participants would propose to invite someone else, saying it would improve the conversation. Informed consent was always carried out with each participant separately.

All of the "paired interviews" resulted from the participants' initiative. Leticia told me to interview her with her grandmother, Miriam, and Caralampia did the same with her mother, Facunda. Elia and Teodora approached me in a street assembly and said they wanted to do an interview together. Javier told me that he wanted his wife, Adriana, to be interviewed with him. Lucia brought her husband, Pedro, along to the interview. These participants thought the other person could have relevant insights since they had been all involved in the group.

This experience made me reflect on the importance of existing relationships for the research process. Data collection involves a network of relationships in the everyday life of participants. Participants are not part of the research as isolated or abstract individuals. Furthermore, I also inserted myself as a person in these relationships. This embeddedness modified my sensibility during the fieldwork process and my relationships with Santo Domingo as a place, which is the subject of the final methodological reflection.

The third reflection involves walking methods. It discusses how *walking with others was fundamental to transforming my knowledge of Santo Domingo*. Walking methods were most

effective when they involved interactions with research participants, echoing what Lee & Ingold (2006, p.68) identify as a practice "grounded in an inherently sociable engagement between self and environment". In this process of walking with others, Santo Domingo was redefined as a site with a very active role in shaping my arguments as an animating force in the narratives of research (Neal et al., 2016).

Walking with participants is also involved in place-making and constituting Santo Domingo as a site for constructing knowledge. During the fieldwork, my sense of walking in Santo Domingo changed. After the first months of the fieldwork passed, and especially after my interviews, observations, and walking with the participants, the streets of Santo Domingo did not look or feel the same as they did before the fieldwork. I got to know the area better and could recognise the different locations of the neighbourhood, moving around them with ease. I also could identify spots where particular memories and stories told by participants happened or mentally locate the places they mentioned within the micro-geography of the neighbourhood.

Another relevant element of this reflection is how themes emerge in specific places during the walk. As Jones et al. (2008) argue, walking interviews help to connect what people say to where they say it. In this research, for example, Alonso took me to a water tap, Martina took me to a mural, and Waldo showed me a park. All of them commented, during the walks, on the changes that have been made to the built environment and expressed concerns about the future.

For example, when Waldo took me to the park, and as we walked into it, he talked about a moment of collective neighbourhood struggle to transform it from a dumping site into what it is now. He also showed me water ponds in it, and while facing them, started to talk about the importance of defending water as part of the neighbourhood. Another example comes from the walking interview with Alonso. When he stopped at a public water tap, he mentioned how

important it was to satisfy his water needs when there was none at his house. He also invited me to touch and feel the water from the tap and talked about how it was clean, cold, and fresh

Areas for further research

The constraints of time and resources of practically every research project imply that some areas and themes are not explored. Additionally, the discussions from this thesis are strongly related to a very particular local context, as with any case study, implying that the findings are context-specific. Further studies in different contexts would help to explore some of these insights and develop comparative findings. Acknowledging limitations as part of the process of planning and carrying out the thesis, this section will describe some areas for further research.

Structural factors like ethnicity, age, gender, and social class were described as part of the context and setting of social inequality in this study and not ignored in the data collection and analysis. However, they were not the explicit focus of the research questions. Given the relevance of such factors to understanding social inequalities and injustices, the insights from this thesis can be developed further in future studies that focus on some of these structural factors with more detail.

This study helps to identify new directions for researching neighbour relationships and neighbour-based organisations. From a comparative perspective, different issues can be the focus of analyses that explore a range of environmental issues not limited to water availability. More studies of neighbouring under environmental extremes can bring comparative insights about neighbour relationships and organisations, with cases related to energy access, food access, or exposure to extreme weather events such as heat waves. With this comparative approach, it would

explore the meanings of being a neighbour as elaborated by NBOs in different contexts, as suggested in Chapter 4.

Another area for further study relates to the potential of neighbour resonances and the articulation between neighbour-based organisations and other figures in activism. This research focused on neighbour activism, as discussed in Chapter 5, and its implications. However, such processes involve connections that extend beyond the neighbourhood scale. Future studies can consider how neighbour-based organisations articulate with other organisations on different scales. For example, initiatives of ecological restoration related to rivers or other elements of the waterscape can help in observing resonances that include but transcend neighbours. Furthermore, this can relate to studies on the affective dimension of environmentalism on different scales.

A final area for further research relates to how different social infrastructures produce settings for mutual recognition between neighbours. Recognition can take various forms and scales, as explored in Chapter 6, and can influence the experience of trust between neighbours or strangers in urban public areas. These studies can relate to understanding the conditions for building neighbourhood trust and familiarity. They can also discuss the roles of different settings that are not limited to street assemblies and involve other figures that are not necessarily neighbours but are also part of the everyday life of a locality.

Implications and social significance of the research

The final section of this chapter will focus on the social and policy implications of this research. As cities face the complexities of environmental injustice and uncertainty, changes in the access to services such as water will affect the wellbeing of urban localities. While urban water crises are already occurring in many cities of the Global South, these problems will not be exclusive of

particular geographies. As this research has shown, neighbour-based organisations can become a first line of defence and articulation, a source of interdependency and an organisational resource. Generating knowledge about how this happens is a crucial aspect of the social significance of researching neighbour environmentalism without ignoring the complexities and ambiguities involved in this process.

The insights from this study are relevant for policy and decision-making. Involving NBOs in decision-making networks can be a primary way of recognising and promoting the strength of neighbour-based leadership and a crucial step for urban environmental justice and social equality (Klinenberg, 2018; Agyeman & Evans, 2016). Strengthening the public engagement of autonomous, self-managed NBOs is fundamental to facing water crises on the neighbourhood scale. However, realising this has policy implications since any effort to "build" neighbour capacities on the local scale or emulate the WDC as a model for participation will be misdirected if it fails to acknowledge the importance of the autonomy of NBOs.

As previously suggested, neighbour-based organisations interact with other stakeholders, such as government institutions, to influence water infrastructure and distribution on the neighbourhood scale. This relates to the limits of the neighbour as a figure and the articulation of organised neighbours with other figures in contemporary water crises. However, while the political potential of these organisations is evident, they are not a substitute for how other public institutions influence the conditions for water access. Moreover, public institutions need to engage collaboratively with NBOs, respecting their decisions and autonomy and taking them seriously.

Involving NBOs in decision-making requires an active respect and value for the dynamics of neighbour self-managed organising, with their complexity and temporality. This process

requires thoughtfully providing mechanisms for democratic participation without aiming to manipulate local involvement for political gains. Understanding the potential of autonomous organisation, with its everyday temporalities and tensions, involves simultaneously looking at the intersections of personal and political life on the neighbourhood scale, as this thesis did.

Throughout the different chapters, it was possible to identify the tensions and fragilities associated with neighbours and NBOs. Neighbour alliances are a continuous achievement, which, even with the difference between neighbour relationships and other forms of activism, reminds of the temporal aspect of social solidarity discussed by Crow (2010, p. 58), who notes that solidarity is an "unstable phenomenon that oscillates between periods of relative quiescence and of intense expression". Studying the role of neighbours in disaster risk resilience, Cheshire (2015, p. 1096) argues that "good neighbouring cannot easily be engineered". From a policy perspective, this implies that any efforts to involve NBOs in decision-making should recognise their pragmatic and unstable dimension.

Finally, any strategy of participation on the local scale has to avoid the fragmentation of organisations through political opportunism, which is usually oriented towards short-term gains. Participation strategies for neighbours must be carried out patiently and without ignoring the conditions of everyday neighbouring that are already at play. Furthermore, any effort to direct local organisations towards the discipline of party politics can quickly erode the conditions for trust between members of neighbour-based organisations that build over time.

An important question that many neighbours also talked about is what comes after the well. After the water well started working in December of 2022, water availability improved, and intermittent supply [*tandeo*] was maintained, but fewer neighbours required a pipa sent to their

homes. Street assemblies ceased occurring regularly, but this does not mean neighbour organising stopped.

During the first half of 2024, more than a year after the inauguration of the well, Mexico City expected a reduction in water availability due to weather conditions. In this context, the WDC called for assemblies if neighbours reported that their water availability had reduced or if they had to make a decision. They also hold special events with talks and presentations related to water access or to mark occasions like World Water Day (March 22) or the start of the rainy season in Mexico (on the first week of May) (Figure 36). The well has become a location for holding these special events and a meeting site claimed by the WDC.

Figure 36. Event held by the WDC in the water well

One of the themes that recurrently emerged in discussions with research participants was the complexity of maintaining the organisation. In many conversations, participants like Tita, Alma, or Marisol mentioned that it was vital to remain organised or stay together to face any future challenges not exclusively related to water. These comments were also part of a conversation with Waldo, reflected in Chapter 5. Nearing the end of our walking interview, talking about the next steps for the WDC, he commented they now have a "seed of organisation" as a memory and experience they can use when necessary. This research has analysed how this seed is cared for and sown through the struggle of local communities that harbour possibilities of justice in their everyday lives.

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List of collected data

Interviews

Adriana and Javier, interview, 29/11/22

Alma, interview, 11/01/22

Alonso, interview, 29/11/22

Beni, interview, 07/12/22

Caralampia and Facunda, interview, 14/02/23

Catalina, interview, 18/01/23

Carolina, interview, 12/12/22

Elia and Teodora, interview, 08/12/22

Juan, interview, 29/01/23

Julia, interview, 07/12/22

Leticia and Miriam, interview, 29/11/22

Magnolia, interview, 30/11/22

Marisol, interview, 30/11/2022

Mariana, interview, 13/12/22

Martina, interview, 17/12/22

Monica, interview, 12/01/23

Pedro and Lucia, interview, 17/01/23

Pilar, interview, 30/11/22

Sandra, interview, 08/12/22

Susana, interview, 28/11/23

Tita, interview, 17/12/22

Verne, interview, 03/02/23

Participant diaries

Adriana, diary [30 November - 08 December 2022]

Alma, diary [16 January - 08 February 2023]

Alonso, diary [30 November - 15 December 2022]

Carolina, diary [27 January - 20 February 2023]

Julia, diary [01 February - 15 February 2023]

Magnolia, diary [03 December - 30 December 2022]

Marisol, diary [01 December - 16 December 2022]

Martina, diary [19 December 2022 - 19 January 2023]

Sandra, diary [08 February - 24 February 2023]

Pedro, diary [22 February 2023]

Teodora, diary [10 February - 22 February 2023]

Walking interviews

Alonso, walking interview, 26/04/23

Beni, walking interview, 02/06/23

Caralampia, walking interview, 24/05/23

Carolina, walking interview, 11/05/23

Elia and Teodora, walking interview, 12/05/23

Martina, walking interview, 03/05/23

Tita, walking interview, 15/05/23

Waldo, walking interview, 11/05/23

Participant observation

Participant observation notes, 28/10/22 (street assembly)

Participant observation notes, 09/11/22 (street assembly)

Participant observation notes, 18/11/22 (street assembly)

Participant observation notes, 25/11/22 (meeting with government officials)

Participant observation notes, 25/11/22 (street assembly)

Participant observation notes, 28/11/22 (construction site visit)

Participant observation notes, 16/12/22 (meeting with government officials)

Participant observation notes, 16/12/22 (street assembly)

Participant observation notes, 17/12/22 (WDC meeting)

Participant observation notes, 20/01/22 (street assembly)

Participant observation notes, 14/03/22 (street assembly)

Participant observation notes, 23/06/22 (street assembly)

Observational walks

Observational walk in Santo Domingo notes, 31/10/22 (Monday, 12:05 start time)

Observational walk in Santo Domingo notes, 01/11/22 (Tuesday, 15:25 start time)

Observational walk in Santo Domingo notes, 02/11/22 (Wednesday, 11:37 start time)

Observational walk in Santo Domingo notes, 10/11/22 (Thursday, 10:20 start time)

Observational walk in Santo Domingo notes, 11/11/22 (Friday, 11:15 start time)

Observational walk in Santo Domingo notes, 24/11/22 (Thursday, 10:25 start time)

Observational walk in Santo Domingo notes, 20/02/23 (Monday, 12:05 start time)

Observational walk in Santo Domingo notes, 21/02/23 (Tuesday, 15:50 start time)

Observational walk in Santo Domingo notes, 22/02/23 (Wednesday, 11:47 start time)

Observational walk in Santo Domingo notes, 23/02/23 (Thursday, 9:35 start time)

Observational walk in Santo Domingo notes, 24/02/23 (Friday, 15:21 start time)

Observational walk in Santo Domingo notes, 18/03/23 (Saturday, 13:43 start time)

Observational walk in Santo Domingo notes, 28/05/23 (Sunday, 14:05 start time)

Observational walk in Santo Domingo notes, 29/05/23 (Monday, 15:05 start time)

Observational walk in Santo Domingo notes, 30/05/23 (Tuesday, 12:45 start time)

Observational walk in Santo Domingo notes, 31/05/23 (Wednesday, 11:21 start time)

Observational walk in Santo Domingo notes, 01/06/23 (Thursday, 15:45 start time)

Observational walk in Santo Domingo notes, 02/06/23 (Friday, 12:54 start time)

Appendix A: Participant description

The empirical chapters of this thesis rely on the narrative descriptions and stories of the research participants, that shared their experiences and lives with me during the data collection process. In this section, and as part of the contextualisation of the case study for this thesis, I will introduce the research participants and discuss their characteristics. All of these research participants are members of the Water Defence Committee of Santo Domingo and can be described as "neighbours". While all the participants are co-residents and live in the pedregal of Coyoacan, not all of them are next-door neighbours, and may even live in different areas of Santo Domingo, given its size and dimensions.

These descriptions are primarily based on the information that research participants gave about themselves, and that emerged during our conversations in the interviews or during participant observation. They are also constructed based on the information about the participants at the moment of data collection.

Adriana

Adriana is a woman who has lived in Santo Domingo her whole life. Adriana is married to Javier, another research participant, and they have a young daughter. At the moment of the interview, her work consisted of domestic labour and care activities for her daughter and her family. She has university studies and does not identify with any indigenous group. I held a sit-down interview with Adriana and Javier at the Popular Community Centre, in November of 2022. I had originally planned to do this interview with Javier, and he told me that his wife would also like to be part of the conversation. While we were having the interview, their daughter was given something to draw

and colour in the Popular Community Centre. We did not have a walking interview, but Adriana had a participant diary during the first two weeks of December. I gave the diary to both Javier and Adriana, but she was the one to write on it during these two weeks. She held it until January and wrote an extra entry after the well was in operation, before returning it to me.

Alma

Alma is a 51-year-old woman who arrived in Santo Domingo in 1975, when she was 3 years old, during the early days of the neighbourhood, a couple of years after the invasion. She commented that she remembered the early years of the neighbourhood when people had to wait for water trucks. She is married and has two daughters. She mentioned that one of her daughters is in high school, while the other is in university. She is a housewife, that does not work outside of her household and does unpaid care work for her family members, that include her husband and daughters. She does not identify with any indigenous groups and has been living in Santo Domingo for 48 years at the moment of the interview. She got involved in the Water Defence Committee along with her sister and their father and was also part of a Committee that was formed against the high electricity bills, where she met some leaders of the WDC. We had a sit-down interview in her house, in January of 2023. The interview was in the living room of her house, and during our conversation, some of her family members walked around and could listen to parts of our conversation. She also completed a participant diary during the last two weeks of January 2023, but did not take part in a walking interview.

Alonso

Alonso is a man with two grown-up sons, and he is 76 years old. He is married, and moved to Santo Domingo after marrying his wife, approximately 35 years ago according to his account. He was born in Mexico City and commented that he had lived in different parts of the city before living in this neighbourhood. He also said he felt very proud of his neighbourhood, even if he was not a native of Santo Domingo. He did not own his house but lived with other family members, and was retired at the time of the interview. He worked as a clerk and janitor for a local university for 60 years before retiring. He has a secondary school education and studied one year of preparatory school, which is the equivalent of having a year of high school education. Alonso is involved in the Water Defence Committee from needing water trucks initially and remained as part of the group with an interest in being involved in the improvement of the neighbourhood. Besides the WDC, he is also involved in other neighbourhood activities, such as a music group that gathers twice a week to sing karaoke. I had a sit-down interview and a walking interview with Alonso. The sit-down interview took place in November of 2022, in the Popular Community Centre (PCC). During the walking interview, Alonso guided me first from the PCC to the water well, and a couple more streets around central Santo Domingo. He also kept a participant diary during the first two weeks of December 2022.

Beni Ros

Beni Ros is a 74-year-old man who has been living in Santo Domingo since September of 1971 when the neighbourhood started. He arrived during the land invasion and was involved in community work (faenas) that was required to make the street, introduce a water pipeline network, and even build some of the schools. He arrived in Santo Domingo with his mother, and more family members joined them afterwards as well. He is originally from another state in Mexico and moved to Mexico City at a young age. Beni does not identify with any indigenous group. At the moment of the interview, he was retired but had worked in different types of jobs, the last one of them being as a taxi driver. The interview was at his house, in December of 2022, and we had a walking interview in June of 2023, during which he took me on a walk to the schools that his daughters attended when they were young, and that he was involved in the building of. He has been involved in the Committee since its beginnings, and involved in the water struggle since 2017, and became involved after one of his daughters was also part of the protests.

Caralampia Mondongo

Caralampia Mondongo is a woman who has lived all of her life in Santo Domingo. She describes herself as originally from Santo Domingo. She is 45 years old and works as a kindergarten teacher and as a collaborator at the Popular Community Centre (PCC). She has been involved, through that community centre, in initiatives to improve the built environment of Santo Domingo. Caralampia has university studies. She got involved in the I had a sit-down interview with Caralampia and her mother, Facunda, but it was Caralampia the person with whom I had the most

369

frequent communication. The interview with Caralampia and Facunda was in February of 2023, in the living room of their house. While we were expecting their next-door neighbour to join them both in the interview, this person could not make it so I ended up interviewing only them two. Caralampia did not want to have a participant diary, but she guided me in a walking interview in May of 2023, during which she took me walking through the streets that surround her house, and also gave a tour of the PCC.

Carolina

Carolina is a woman who at the time of our sit-down interview in December 2022 was 71 years old and has lived in Santo Domingo since 1976, very near the early years of the neighbourhood. She moved into the neighbourhood when she married, but she worked in primary schools in the area nearby since 1974. She worked as a primary school teacher in different schools in the area, before retiring after almost 30 years of work. She studied to be a primary school teacher and does not identify with any indigenous group. At the time of our interview, which took place in her house dining room, she had been for 48 years in Santo Domingo. We had a walking interview in May 2023, and she completed a participant diary during the first two weeks of February 2023. Carolina is the mother of Waldo, who also is a research participant with whom I had a walking interview.

Catalina

Catalina is a woman who is 67 years old, and that dedicates herself to household activities, and unpaid care labour for her husband and her sons. Catalina cannot read or write and did not go to school, but she has two sons who have university studies. One of her sons has postgraduate studies

in social sciences. Her sons were the ones who explained and read the information sheet to her, and I also discussed the contents of the sheet with her previous to the interview. She does not identify herself with any indigenous group but she was born in a rural area far from Mexico City. She moved to Mexico City to do domestic work. We had a sit-down interview in the kitchen of her house, in January of 2023, and she did not complete a participant diary, and she also did not take part in a walking interview. She was 16 years old when she arrived in the neighbourhood, so she had been living there for approximately 50 years at the moment of the interview. She moved into the neighbourhood when her brother and more siblings heard about the invasion, so she was part of the early years of the neighbourhood. She became involved in the Committee because it was mentioned in a neighbourhood group formed against the high electricity bills.

Elia

Elia is a 58-year-old woman who has lived in Santo Domingo since the early days of the neighbourhood. She moved into the neighbourhood with her parents, at approximately 8 years old, but has stayed there for the rest of her life, her children and grandchildren were born in Santo Domingo. She witnessed the changes in the built environment and became involved in the Water Defence Committee after experiencing water scarcity and hearing about it from a neighbour. Elia and Teodora had a sit-down interview together in December 2022. We also had a walking interview together in May of 2023, but Elia did not complete a participant diary. They have known each other since they were very young, and are next-door neighbours that describe each other as "comadres", a term that derives from being a godmother of a child and that in Mexico is used to refer to a high level of friendship and intimacy. The interview was to be had with another neighbour from the same street, who however could not be present that day, so only Elia and Teodora took part in it.

Facunda

Facunda is an elderly woman that lives in Santo Domingo with her family. She dedicated herself to household unpaid labour, was born in another area of Mexico, and only moved to the neighbourhood of Santo Domingo when she got married. She commented that she moved to the neighbourhood when it was recently founded and had just started, so she witnessed the transformation of the built environment. Facunda got involved in the Committee because one of the neighbours from her street would knock on her door and invite her to join them in protests for the lack of water. When the COVID-19 pandemic made it dangerous for Facunda to go to meetings, or they became online meetings, her daughter Caralampia Mondongo started to get involved. Facunda only took part in a pair sit-down interview that we had with her daughter Caralampia in February of 2023

Javier

Javier is a middle-aged man who works as a merchant, selling and buying products. He is married to Adriana and they have a young daughter. We had an interview with both of them in the Popular Community Centre, after which I gave them a diary but it was Adriana the one who completed it. We did not have a walking interview. At the moment of our interview, Javier had been living in Santo Domingo for about nine years. He is from another area of Mexico City and moved into the neighbourhood after marrying Adriana. He commented that he had experienced water scarcity problems before, in the other part of the city he used to live in. During our interview, he also commented that both he and Adriana came to know the Water Defence Committee by chance, seeing them on the street, on a day in which they were walking to a street water tap to fill water jugs for their house.

Juan

Juan is a man that at the time of our interview was 45 years old, and who has lived in Santo Domingo since he was born in 1977. He studied primary and secondary school, and has a couple of years of the equivalent to high school, but did not finish that level of studies. Juan works in house maintenance and does various jobs that include construction and carpentry, house painting and cleaning, insulation, and internal finishes. He does not identify with any indigenous groups. Our interview was in Beni Ros' house, who let us use his living room for it since Juan did not want to go to the Popular Community Centre but also did not want it to happen in his house. Juan did not complete a participant diary and was also not part of a walking interview. He got involved in the Committee by being part first of a group that protested against high prices in electricity bills, and against the damage to a shallow aquifer in a nearby real-estate development in 2016.

Julia

Julia is a woman who arrived in Santo Domingo when she was 11 years old. At the moment of the interview, in December 2022, she was 62 years old, so she lived in Santo Domingo from the early days of the neighbourhood, in the 1970s. She has witnessed the changes in the built environment and remembers being part of the *faena* community work days as a child, carrying dirt or stones. She works by selling groceries, in a "tienda de abarrotes", or informal convenience store, set on the ground floor of her house, which has also been used as a small cybercafe. This is a common form of employment in popular neighbourhoods in Mexico City. She studied until secondary school, after which she had to start working to help her mother and siblings. She does not identify as part of an indigenous group. She began to get involved in the Committee because a neighbour

told her about it when they were talking about not having water. Apart from our sit-down interview, Julia also completed a participant diary, during the first two weeks of February.

Leticia

Leticia is a woman who is 25 years old and has lived in Santo Domingo since she was a child. Her parents lived there, and her grandparents moved into the neighbourhood when it started. Leticia took part in a sit-down interview alongside her grandmother, Miriam, in November 2022. The interview took place in the kitchen of Miriam's house. She told me that she wanted her grandparents to be involved as research participants, and it was only her grandmother who agreed to be a participant and to have a pair interview with her. Leticia studied until preparatory school or the equivalent of high school. She does not identify with any indigenous group, and at the moment of our interview only dedicated herself to unpaid labour work and care activities related to the maintenance of her household. She got involved in the Committee to help her grandparents, who needed to ask for water trucks but could not attend the meetings or use WhatsApp. She did not complete a participant diary, and she did not take part in a walking interview.

Lucia

Lucia is a woman who was born in a different area of Mexico and moved to Santo Domingo in 1981. Lucia and her husband Pedro had a sit-down interview together in January 2023. Lucia moved into the neighbourhood when she was 27 years old, and at the time of the interview, she was 69 years old. The interview happened on the terrace of the Popular Community Centre. It was originally planned to happen only with Lucia, but she also commented on it to Pedro, who agreed to be a participant as well. Lucia only works in her household activities and has no other form of

employment. She does not identify with any indigenous groups. She described that when she arrived the water situation was still very precarious, and she got involved in the Committee after being part of a group that protested against the damage to a shallow aquifer on Aztecas Avenue. She did not complete a participant diary and did not get involved in a walking interview either.

Miriam

Miriam is a 77-year-old woman who has lived in Santo Domingo since her early 20s. At the moment of our sit-down interview, which was a pair interview with her granddaughter Leticia, Miriam commented that she and her family arrived in Santo Domingo approximately 50 years before. That means that she has been in Santo Domingo since the early days of the neighbourhood. She works in a "tienda de abarrotes" in her house, similar to other participants such as Julia. She only had two years of primary school, but did not finish, so she commented that she had no scholarity. She does not identify with any indigenous group. It was by talking with a neighbour that she found out about the existence of the Committee, aiming to have water trucks faster than by asking them to the municipality. Apart from the sit-down interview, Miriam did not complete a participant diary or a walking interview.

Magnolia

Magnolia is a woman, she is 63 years old and has been in the neighbourhood of Santo Domingo since its beginnings. At the moment of the interview, she was retired but commented that she had worked in secretary jobs for most of her life. She was born in Mexico City, but her parents come from rural backgrounds in other areas of Mexico. She owns the house that she lived in. She does not identify with any indigenous groups. Our sit-down interview took place in November of 2023,

on the rooftop of her house, which has a space for us to sit. Magnolia had a participant diary for the first two weeks of December but added additional information to it in the second week of March as well. She did not take part in a walking interview. She got involved in the Committee after being part of a group that protested against high electricity bills, and in the defense of a shallow aquifer that was affected by a real estate development project, in which her son was also involved.

Mariana

Mariana is a 57-year-old woman who arrived in Santo Domingo when she was 6 years old. In the 51 years that she has lived there, she witnessed its transformation from being a pedregal (rocky grounds), into a built environment. She commented that she remembered how there was no sewage, no water, and no electricity at first. She works for the local government service. She started but did not finish secondary school. We had a sit-down interview in the Popular Community Centre in December of 2022. Mariana did not complete a participant diary and did not take part in a walking interview. She got involved in the Water Defence Committee after hearing about it from a cousin and approached Waldo to be part of the group. She commented that she had been struggling with the lack of water in her house for 17 years and that she felt very angry about the political use of water in Santo Domingo.

Marisol

Marisol is a 50-year-old woman who lived in Santo Domingo during the first months of her life, then her family moved to another region of Mexico and returned to the neighbourhood when she was five years old. From then on, she remembers the neighbourhood and its changes. Her parents

were part of the original invasion that formed the neighbourhood. She has university studies and at the moment of the interview dedicated herself only to care activities for her daughter, and to household activities, and administering a building in which she had tenants living. We had an interview on the terrace of the Popular Community Centre in November of 2022. After that, Marisol had a participant diary for the first two weeks of December 2022, but she did not get involved in a walking interview. She became part of the Committee after hearing about it from one of the neighbours that live in her street when they were discussing not having water in their homes, and being invited to join in it.

Martina

Martina is a woman who at the time of our sit-down interview, in December of 2022, was 64 years old. She studied in a technical college and worked in different government ministries before getting married and dedicating herself to the household and to other activities to generate some income by selling products. She moved to Santo Domingo in 1978, when she was 20 years old, to a piece of land that her grandparents obtained. She commented that her grandparents arrived in Santo Domingo before the invasion. She joined the Water Defence Committee after being part of the committee against high electricity bills and being part of the first moments of the organisation of the water group. Marina also completed a participant diary, and wrote on it during the last two weeks of December, to then resume writing on it for the last two weeks of January, and add final reflections during the last two weeks of March. She also guided me on a walking interview in May of 2023, during which she took me on a walk that started on the Popular Community Centre to then cover a mural and the well.

Monica

Monica is a woman who was 66 years old at the moment of our sit-down interview, and who lived in Santo Domingo since the start of the neighbourhood when she was 15. She arrived in Santo Domingo before the invasion, when her mother brought some communal land and described her memories of it being lonely before many people moved into it. She remembers the changes in the neighbourhood and was involved in the faena community work to make the streets. She also had memories of being part of a housing claimants group, related to the activities of the Popular Community Centre, where our interview took place in January of 2023. She studied until primary school, and she commented that she worked in the same factory doing different jobs for 42 years before retiring. she had to start working to help her mother support the rest of the family since she is one of the oldest siblings. She was retired when we had the interview and had been retired for 9 years. Her brother is Verne, another research participant, who also took part in a sit-down interview. Monica did not complete a participant diary and she did not take part in a walking interview. She found out about the Water Defence Committee because she saw a street assembly once, approached the group, and heard what it was about. Since she had been experiencing water scarcity problems in her house, she decided to join them.

Pedro

Pedro is a man who at the moment of our interview was 71 years old. He joined his wife Lucia for a pair interview in January 2023. Pedro was born in a rural area of Mexico and in a different region to Mexico City. He moved into the city when he was 17 years old, in 1969. He then moved to Santo Domingo in 1972, when the neighbourhood was only months from being born. He described

his memories of the early days carrying water around in the neighbourhood, and his involvement in the faena community work to build the streets and install urban services. He studied until secondary school and did not have any further formal studies, but he commented that he liked studying very much. He worked in several types of employment, ranging from cattle raising in his home village to construction and factory work in Mexico City, and even gardening for a while in the United States. Pedro wrote a reflection in a participant diary in January of 2023 but did not take place in a walking interview.

Pilar

Pilar is a woman who was one of the founders of Santo Domingo, and who was actively involved in the faenas that were necessary to build the neighbourhood during the 1970's. We had a dist-down interview in her house, in November 2022. At the time of the interview, she was 67 years old. She had been retired for four years when we had the interview, but she worked as a janitor, cleaning in different institutions before that. She was born in Mexico City, but her parents are from rural areas in other regions of Mexico, She does not identify with any indigenous groups. She got involved in the Committee because one of her neighbours, Sandra, knocked on her door and told her that they should do something about the lack of water in their street. So they called for a meeting and invited other neighbours, and she contacted Waldo to also come and join in an assembly. During our interview, she commented that she started to live in a cave in Santo Domingo during the first moments of the invitations, and showed me the hammers that were used to break tones and make the streets. After our int review, she showed me that in her basement this cave still exists. Pilar decided to take a participant diary, but she did not have time to complete it, and she did not take part in a walking interview.

Sandra

Sandra is a woman who lived in Santo Domingo in 1971, during the invasion, when she was 8 years old. At the moment of our interview, she was 60 years old. She has been in Santo Domingo since her childhood and only left for some years when she was in a boarding school. She described her mother as being very involved in the early years of the neighbourhood and as an inspiration for her own life. At the moment of our interview, Sandra described that she worked as a secretary in a hotel, mostly at night, which implied that she could not be involved in the activities of the Committee as much as before. Sandra is one of the first members of the Water Defence Committee and was the one who, together with Pilar, gathered a group of neighbours from her street and other surrounding streets in 2019 and called Waldo and other neighbours to join them in a protest for water scarcity. Sandra had a participant diary for the last three weeks of February of 2023 and did not take part in a walking interview.

Susana

Susana is a 67-year-old woman who, at the moment of the interview, was retired and dedicated herself only to household activities. She arrived in Santo Domingo with her parents one year before the invasion, when she was 15 years old, and witnessed the change in the neighbourhood when many people arrived and started to build the streets and their homes. She described that as a big surprise, when one morning, all of a sudden, a large number of people arrived and started to camp in the rocky areas, or pedregal, of Coyoacan. She described that little by little, and particularly with the faenas, she started to get to know these new neighbours. She did not identify with any indigenous groups and lived in the house that her parents made when they first arrived in Santo Domingo. Our interview took place in November of 2022 on the terrace of the Popular Community

Centre. She started but did not finish secondary school, and dedicated most of her time to household activities. For this reason, she said that she did not have time to be involved in a walking interview or to complete a participant diary.

Teodora

Teodora is a woman who was 67 years old at the time of our sit-down interview, held together with Elia in December of 2022. This interview took place in the Popular Community Centre. Teodora was born in a different region to Mexico City, and arrived in Santo Domingo with her mother in 1978, being 23 years old, and after living in another two neighbourhoods of Mexico City before that. She has lived in Santo Domingo ever since, on the same street as her neighbour Elia. Teodora works as a merchant in mail-order catalogues. Teodora completed a participant diary during the second and third week of February 2022, and we had a walking interview together with Elia in May of 2023, that started in the Popular Community Centre and ended in another community centre closer to where they both live in Santo Domingo. She got involved in the Committee with her neighbours, driven by the need to have water.

Tita

Tita is a 63-year-old woman who is originally from a rural area in Mexico and moved to Santo Domingo in the final months of 1971, the year of the land invasion. She arrived after the invasion but was still involved in much of the community work and organising around the right to housing and urban services. She came from a very poor family and moved to Mexico City when she was 10 years old, with one of her aunts, to do domestic work. She completed primary school and does not identify with any indigenous group. Tita was also active in the group that was behind the

administration of the Popular Community Centre. This helped her to obtain her current house, on one of the edges of Santo Domingo. However, our interview took place in a cafe, because she did not want to have it in the Popular Community Centre, or her house. She is one of the most active members of the group and is recognised by many neighbours for her involvement not only in the Water Defence Committee but also in a movement to defend a shallow aquifer that was damaged by a real estate development project and in another group to resist high electricity bills. She did not complete a participant diary, but she guided me on a walking interview in the nearby streets to her house in May of 2023.

Verne

Verne is a 68-year-old man who has lived in Santo Domingo since he was 16 years old. He arrived in the neighbourhood before the invasion, with his mother and siblings, and after the invasion witnessed the changes in the environment that gave way to what the neighbourhood is like in the present time. We had a sit-down interview in January of 2023, in the Popular Community Centre. He worked for 34 years in the same factory as his sister, Monica, who is also part of the Water Defence Committee. He studied until secondary school, after which he had to dedicate time to take care of his younger siblings and resolve many household necessities, such as obtaining water or gas for cooking and having some light, while his mother, sister, and an older sibling had to work. He started to work as a cleaner in a factory at the age of 20, after what he described as 4 years of "working in the neighbourhood". At the moment of our interview, he had retired from the factory but worked as a taxi driver. He described that he joined the Committee because his sister Monica told him about it, and that, similarly to her, he was previously part of a movement for housing rights that is related to the activities of the Popular Community Centre.

Waldo Valverde

Waldo Valverde is a man that has lived his entire life in Santo Domingo, and that has been involved in neighbourhood activism for several years since he was a student in the university. He is 40 years old has been involved in the Committee since its beginnings and has become one of the leading figures in its organisation and protest. Waldo is known by all of the members of the Committee as one of its leaders and has been actively involved in the campaign for the water well since its beginnings. He has university studies and works as a teacher in a school. He did not participate in a sit-down interview or a participant diary but guided me on a walking interview in May of 2023, in which we went to a local park and to a community centre near the house where he grew up in Santo Domingo. His mother, Carolina, was also a research participant and has been active in social movements in the neighbourhood or her workplace.

Appendix B: Participant information table

Name	Gender	Age group	Occupation / Education	Connection to other participants	Time in Santo Domingo and residential status	Methods
Adriana	Woman	40-50	Domestic labour and care activities University education	Neighbour Married to Javier (interviewed together)	Since birth Homeowner	Sit-down interview (in Community Centre) Diary
Alma	Woman	50-60	Domestic labour and care activities	Neighbour	Since childhood (early ears of Santo Domingo) Homeowner	Sit-down interview (at her house) Diary
Alonso	Man	70-80	Retired (worked as janitor)	Neighbour	35 years Lives in family home	Sit-down interview (in Community Centre) Diary Walking interview (from Community Centre to water well)
Beni Ros	Man	70-80	Retired (worked as driver)	Neighbour	50 years (since invasion)	Sit-down interview (in his house)

				Leadership role	Homeowner	Walking interview (schools in Santo Domingo)
Caralampia Mondongo	Woman	40-50	Schoolteacher University studies	Neighbour Daughter of Facunda (interviewed together)	Since birth Lives in family home	Sit-down interview (in her house) Walking interview (tour of Community Centre and nearby streets)
Carolina	Woman	70-80	Retired (worked as schoolteacher) Teaching studies	Neighbour Mother of Waldo Valverde	46 years (early ears of Santo Domingo) Homeowner	Sit-down interview (in her house) Diary Walking interview (streets near her house)
Catalina	Woman	60-70	Domestic labour and care activities	Neighbour	50 years (since invasion) Homeowner	Sit-down interview (in her house)
Elia	Woman	50-60	Domestic labour and care activities	Neighbour Interviewed with Teodora (almost next-door neighbours)	Since childhood (early ears of Santo Domingo) Homeowner	Sit-down interview (in Community Centre) Walking interview (streets near her house) (with Teodora)

Facunda	Woman	70-80	Domestic labour and care activities	Neighbour Mother of Caralampia Mondongo (interviewed together)	50 years (since invasion) Homeowner	Sit-down interview (in her house)
Javier	Man	40-50	Commerce outside home	Neighbour Married to Adriana (interviewed together)	9 years Homeowner	Sit-down interview (in Community Centre)
Juan	Man	40-50	Construction and house maintenance	Neighbour Leadership role	Since birth Lives in family home	Sit-down interview (in Beni's house)
Julia	Woman	60-70	Commerce at home	Neighbour	Since childhood (early ears of Santo Domingo) Lives in family home	Sit-down interview (in Community Centre) Diary
Leticia	Woman	20-30	Domestic labour and care activities Commerce at home	Neighbour Granddaughter of Miriam (interviewed together)	Since birth Lives in family home	Sit-down interview (in her house)
Lucia	Woman	60-70	Domestic labour and care activities	Neighbour Married to Pedro (interviewed together)	42 years Homeowner	Sit-down interview (in Community Centre)

Miriam	Woman	70-80	Commerce at home	Neighbour Grandmother of Leticia (interviewed together)	50 years (since invasion) Homeowner	Sit-down interview (in her house)
Magnolia	Woman	60-70	Retired (worked as secretary)	Neighbour	50 years (since invasion) Homeowner	Sit-down interview (in her house) Diary
Mariana	Woman	50-60	Government service (bureaucrat)	Neighbour	Since childhood (early ears of Santo Domingo) Homeowner	Sit-down interview (in Community Centre)
Marisol	Woman	50-60	Domestic labour and care activities Landlord University studies	Neighbour	Since childhood (early ears of Santo Domingo) Homeowner	Sit-down interview (in Community Centre) Diary
Martina	Woman	60-70	Domestic labour and care activities Commerce at home University studies	Neighbour Leadership role	44 years (early ears of Santo Domingo) Homeowner	Sit-down interview (in Community Centre) Diary Walking interview (from Community Centre to water well)

Monica	Woman	60-70	Retired (worked in factory)	Neighbour Sister of Verne	More than 50 years (since before invasion) Lives in family home	Sit-down interview (in Community Centre)
Pedro	Man	70-80	Agriculture, construction and factory work	Neighbour Married to Lucia (interviewed together)	50 years (since invasion) Homeowner	Sit-down interview (in Community Centre) Diary
Pilar	Woman	60-70	Retired (worked as janitor)	Neighbour	50 years (since invasion) Homeowner	Sit-down interview (in her house)
Sandra	Woman	60-70	Secretary	Neighbour	50 years (since invasion) Homeowner	Sit-down interview (in her house) Diary
Susana	Woman	60-70	Domestic labour and care activities	Neighbour	More than 50 years (since before invasion) Homeowner	Sit-down interview (in Community Centre)
Teodora	Woman	60-70	Commerce (mail-order catalogues)	Neighbour Interviewed with Elia (almost next-door neighbours)	44 years (since early years of Santo Domingo) Homeowner	Sit-down interview (in Community Centre) Diary

						Walking interview (streets near her house) (with Elia)
Tita	Woman	60-70	Domestic labour and care activities	Neighbour Leadership role	50 years (since invasion) Homeowner	Sit-down interview (in cafeteria) Walking interview (streets near her house)
Verne	Man	60-70	Taxi driver (used to work in a factory)	Neighbour Brother of Monica	More than 50 years (since before invasion) Lives in family home	Sit-down interview (in Community Centre)
Waldo Valverde	Man	40-50	Schoolteacher University education	Neighbour Leadership role Son of Carolina	Since birth Lives in family home	Walking interview (to local park)

Appendix C: Codebook and description

Name	Description	Files	Transcript fragments	Themes
Apathy and Participation	Emotions concerning the involvement (or lack of involvement) of other people in neighbourhood activism and campaigns	23	34	neighbour local organising ; environmental movements
Built environment	Opinions and experiences concerning the material conditions and characteristics of the neighbourhood as a shared space, which include popular urbanisation experiences	60	162	Neighbourhood materiality
Changes in the neighbourhood	Expectations and opinions concerning the modifications in the neighbourhood landscape and relationships	28	52	neighbouring; neighbourhood materiality
Communication between neighbours	Moments of interaction to share information and promote or avoid contact between neighbours	35	54	Neighbouring; neighbour local organising
Community building	Experiences of connection between neighbours that relate to a previous history of collective struggle	23	38	Neighbour local organising; environmental movements
Community centre	References to community centres as spaces for encounter, socialisation, and learning	28	75	Neighbour local organising

Name	Description	Files	Transcript fragments	Themes
Conflict between neighbours	Moments of tension and conflict that relate to the neighbours and their behaviour	27	50	Neighbouring
Environmental justice struggle	Experiences of participation in campaigns around water access, other urban services, and the conditions of the neighbourhood as matters of social justice	60	159	Environmental movements
Daily routines	Description of how everyday activities are adapted to face the consequences of water scarcity, to satisfy basic needs	56	143	Neighbouring; neighbourhood materiality; environmental movements
Environmentalist concerns	Commitment to the protection of the natural environment and anxieties related to ecological degradation	38	82	Environmental movements
Family relationships	Mentioning of family bonds (nuclear or extended family) in relation to the consequences of water scarcity	29	70	Neighbouring; neighbour local organising
Future expectations	Expectations concerning the future conditions of living in Santo Domingo, with implications on neighbour relationships	30	59	Environmental movements
Gendered division of labour	Distribution of labour within the household that relates to facing the consequences of water scarcity	10	11	Neighbouring; neighbourhood materiality

Name	Description	Files	Transcript fragments	Themes
Government accountability	Expectation that the local government satisfies its responsibility concerning water supply or the well construction	19	37	Environmental movements
Health issues	Description of the consequences of water scarcity in health and wellbeing	23	31	Neighbourhood materiality; environmental movements
Inequality and Injustice	Perception of unequal water distribution and access related to socioeconomic differences between neighbourhoods	26	52	Environmental movements; neighbour local organising
Infrastructural production	Description of involvement in the campaign for constructing different forms of infrastructure (the water well or the pipe network)	35	80	Neighbourhood materiality; neighbour local organising
Infrastructures	Different networks, systems and facilities that function to move water around the neighbourhood or allow for social connection (physical and social infrastructure)	57	139	Neighbourhood materiality
Memory of Santo Domingo	Descriptions of the first years of inhabiting the neighbourhood and the memories of how the neighbourhood started	29	70	Neighbouring; neighbourhood materiality

Name	Description	Files	Transcript fragments	Themes
Memory of struggle and suffering	Descriptions of previous experiences of activism around housing and the difficulties related to the lack of urban services in Santo Domingo	30	73	Neighbour local organising; environmental movements; neighbourhood materiality
Memory of water scarcity	Descriptions of the experiences and feelings related to water scarcity in the past	33	95	Neighbourhood materiality; environmental movements
Negotiation with government	Experiences of dialogue with local officials, around the distribution of water with trucks or in the pipe network	21	43	Environmental movements
Neighbour differences	Socioeconomic differences between neighbours and the conditions of their houses. Consequence of self-built housing in Santo Domingo	16	20	Neighbouring; neighbour local organising
Neighbour solidarity	Experiences of unity and mutual help between neighbours, particularly including their articulation around neighbourhood activist campaigns	38	101	Neighbour local organising; Environmental movements
Organisation in the WDC	Description of the process of forming, organising, or joining the WDC, including its advantages and challenges	58	197	Neighbour local organising
Neighbour everyday interaction	Experiences of informal interaction and communication between neighbours in public or semi-public spaces	73	192	Neighbouring

Name	Description	Files	Transcript fragments	Themes
Place attachment	Feelings of identification and affection directed towards the neighbourhood of Santo Domingo	32	71	Neighbourhood materiality; Environmental movements
Political subjectivity	Description of political convictions and opinions, particularly concerning the right to water	35	70	Environmental movements
Political water clientele	Dynamics of political manipulation and clientelist practices, exchanging support for water access in Santo Domingo	16	28	Environmental movements; neighbour local organising
Protest	Participation in demonstrations, meetings and activist campaigns in public and semi-public spaces	27	49	Environmental movements; neighbour local organising
Reciprocity	Expectation of receiving some form of support or help, even if minimal, in exchange for offering it to other neighbours	18	31	Neighbouring; neighbour local organising
Suffering	Description of emotional and physical distress related to hardship	19	33	Environmental movements
Territory and activism	Experience of connection and appreciation of the locality that emerge from the involvement in activist campaigns	36	81	Neighbourhood materiality; Environmental movements; neighbour local organising

Name	Description	Files	Transcript fragments	Themes
Water flow and presence	Description of the movement, presences and absences of water in the nearby spaces of the neighbourhood	38	82	Neighbourhood materiality
Water scarcity experiences	Emotions and activities related to the consequences of water scarcity in the present	39	92	Neighbourhood materiality; Environmental movements; neighbouring

Appendix D: Data collection guides

Sit-down interview guide – English

Sit-down Interview with participants

Interview themes:

1. Experiences of struggle for water and environmental justice in Santo Domingo

2. Stories of participation in the Water Defence Committee

3. Meaning of neighbour interaction in the Water Defence Committee

Presentation and discussion of the research objectives. Review the information sheet again and record informed consent (oral or written) if it has not been done

To get started, take the time to describe and introduce yourself to me, (include a pseudonym you would like to have and information about your age, gender, housing, occupation, education, and ethnicity. Include as much or as little as you like)

The purpose of collecting this information is for sampling and analysis

Interview questions

Block 1 – Talk about memory/biography and life stories in Santo Domingo

Can you tell me how you came to live in Santo Domingo? How long have you lived in this neighbourhood?

What are the first things you remember about living in this neighbourhood? How do these memories make you feel? How do you feel about living here now?

How would you describe this neighbourhood, and your neighbours?

Block 2 – Explore water experiences in Santo Domingo

When did your first experience of lack of water happen in Santo Domingo? How did not having water affect you and make you feel?

What did you do to deal with this problem?

Has not having water made you talk or do something with neighbours to find solutions before? How have you interacted with your neighbours around water?

Block 3 – Discuss the history of getting involved in the Water Defence Committee

How and when did you first become involved in the activities of the Water Defence Committee? Why did you decide to get involved in this group?

Have you had any experiences like this before? Did you know other people in this group before?

What are the goals and activities of this organisation? Why do you think some people choose not to get involved?

Why is it important for you to be part of the Committee? What does the group represent for you?

Block 4 – Explore if and how water becomes an environmental justice issue

What does it mean for you to face the lack of water in Santo Domingo?

What do you think can be done to solve the problem of water scarcity? Does this relate to environmental issues for you?

More generally, are people helping each other or are there tensions related to the lack of water?

Block 5- Talk about the importance of neighbour interaction in water struggles

Is being part of this group important for your daily activities? Do you see or talk to people from the Committee normally?

Do you think being neighbours has been helpful and/or challenging in this fight? Do you think that neighbour relationships are important to find solutions to water scarcity problems?

*Lastly: is there anything else you would like to add or that we haven't talked about? **Thank you very much for** your time and for talking to me – Would you like to continue participating, filling out a diary and chatting during a walk around the neighbourhood?*

Entrevista con participantes

Temas de la entrevista:

1. Experiencias de lucha por justicia hídrica y ambiental en Santo Domingo

2. Historias de la participación en el Comité en Defensa del Agua

3. Significado de la interacción vecinal en el Comité en Defensa del Agua

Presentación y discusión de los objetivos de la investigación. Revisar la hoja informativa nuevamente y registrar el consentimiento informado (oral o escrito) si no se ha hecho

Para iniciar, tómese el tiempo para describirse y presentarse conmigo, (incluya un seudónimo que le gustaría tener e información sobre su edad, género, residencia, ocupación, educación y etnicidad. Incluya tanto o tan poco como desee)

El propósito de recaudar esta información es de muestreo y análisis

Preguntas de la entrevista

Bloque 1 – Hablar sobre la memoria/biografía e historias de vida en Santo Domingo

¿Puede decirme cómo llegó a vivir a Santo Domingo? ¿Cuánto tiempo ha vivido en este barrio?

¿Cuáles son las primeras cosas que recuerda sobre vivir en este barrio? ¿Cómo le hacen sentir estos recuerdos? ¿Cómo se siente ahora de vivir aquí?

¿Cómo describiría este barrio, y a sus vecinos y vecinas?

Bloque 2 – Explorar las experiencias del agua en Santo Domingo

¿Cuándo ocurrió su primera experiencia de falta de agua en Santo Domingo? ¿Cómo le afectó e hizo sentir el no tener agua?

¿Qué hizo cuando se dio cuenta de que no tenía agua para enfrentar el problema?

¿No tener agua ha implicado antes el hablar o hacer algo con los vecinos para buscar soluciones? ¿Cómo ha interactuado con sus vecinos en torno al agua?

Bloque 3 – Discutir la historia de involucrarse en el Comité en Defensa del Agua

¿Cómo y cuándo fue que se involucró por primera vez en las actividades del comité en Defensa del Agua? ¿Por qué decidió involucrarse en este grupo?

¿Había tenido alguna experiencia como esta anteriormente? ¿Conocía a otras personas de este grupo desde antes?

¿Cuáles son las metas y actividades de esta organización? ¿Por qué piensa que algunas personas eligen no involucrarse?

¿Por qué es importante para usted formar parte del Comité en Defensa del Agua? ¿Qué representa el grupo para usted?

Bloque 4 – Explorar si y cómo el agua se convierte en un asunto de justicia ambiental

¿Qué significa para usted enfrentar la falta de agua en Santo Domingo?

¿Qué piensa usted que se puede hacer para resolver los problemas por falta de agua? ¿Esto se relaciona con la defensa del medio ambiente para usted?

De manera más general, ¿La comunidad se ayuda entre sí o hay tensiones relacionadas con la falta de agua?

Bloque 5- Hablar sobre la importancia de la interacción vecinal en la defensa del agua

¿Formar parte de este grupo es importante para sus actividades diarias? ¿Ve o habla con las personas del Comité normalmente?

¿Piensa que ser vecinos ha sido útil y/o desafiante en esta lucha? ¿Piensa que las relaciones vecinales son importantes para buscar soluciones a los problemas por agua?

Últimos asuntos: ¿hay alguna otra cosa que quisiera añadir o de la que no hayamos hablado?
Muchas gracias *por su tiempo y por hablar conmigo – ¿Le gustaría seguir participando, llenando un diario y platicando durante una caminata por el barrio?*

Participant diary guide – English

Participant diary guideline

This diary will help me understand more about your day-to-day experiences, particularly on the following topics:

1- Activities facing the lack of water in everyday life

2- Moments of neighbour interaction in everyday life

This instruction sheet will help you complete the diary, but feel free to use the diary however you prefer. **Thank you very much** for taking your time completing this diary.

What the diary is about: This diary seeks to be a record of neighbour relationships and the lack of water on a daily basis. You can answer the following questions when you write in it:

- Did you run out of water today or this week? How does not having water change your daily life? What did you do to get water?

- Did you see or talk to any of your neighbours today? When, where, and why do you meet or communicate with your neighbours during a normal day?

Additionally, you can write your memories about these questions as well.

For how long: I would greatly appreciate it if you can have this diary for **two weeks.** If you need or want to have it longer, you can have it for one more week.

Start date: _____

How to use it: You can write reflections or feelings in this journal when you have time or when you remember something about the questions. You don't have to limit yourself to writing only: you can add drawings, poems, photos, or send me a recording.

When and where to write: Feel free to write in this diary for as long or as little as you like, and at any time of the day. **You don't have to write every day.** I suggest completing it at home and keeping it in a safe place, so it doesn't get lost.

Who owns the diary: This diary is yours and is confidential, so I thank you for being the only person writing.

If you have questions or concerns about this, please do not hesitate to contact me. You can contact me at: [phone number in original] aesierramartinez1@sheffield.ac.uk

Guía del Diario de Participantes

Este diario me ayudará a entender más sus experiencias en el día a día, particularmente en los siguientes temas:

1. Actividades ante la falta de agua en la vida cotidiana

2. Momentos de interacción vecinal en la vida cotidiana

Esta hoja de instrucciones le ayudará a completar el diario, pero siéntase libre de usar el diario como prefiera. **Muchas gracias** por usar su tiempo completando este diario.

De qué trata el diario: Este diario busca ser un registro de las relaciones vecinales y de la falta de agua en el día a día. Puede responder a las siguientes preguntas cuando escriba en el:

- ¿Le ha faltado el agua el día de hoy o durante esta semana? ¿Cómo cambia su día a día por no tener agua? ¿Qué es lo que hizo para conseguir agua?

- ¿Vio o habló con alguno de sus vecinos y vecinas el día de hoy? ¿Cuándo, dónde, y por qué se encuentra o se comunica con sus vecinos durante un día normal?

Además, puede escribir sus recuerdos sobre estas preguntas también.

Por cuánto tiempo: Agradecería mucho si puede tener este diario por **dos semanas**. Si necesita o quiere tenerlo más tiempo, puede tenerlo por una semana más.

Fecha de inicio: _____

Cómo usarlo: Puede escribir reflexiones o sentimientos en este diario cuando tenga el tiempo o cuando recuerde algo sobre las preguntas. No tiene que limitarse a escribir solamente: puede agregar dibujos, poemas, fotos, o enviarme una grabación.

Cuándo y dónde escribir: Siéntase libre de escribir en este diario por tanto o tan poco tiempo como quiera, y a cualquier hora. **No tiene que escribir todos los días.** Sugiero que lo complete en su casa y que lo mantenga en un lugar seguro para que no se pierda**.**

De quién es el diario: Este diario es suyo y es confidencial, por lo que le agradezco ser la única persona que escriba.

Si tiene preguntas o preocupaciones sobre su llenado no dude en contactarme. Puede contactarme de la siguiente forma: [phone number in original]

aesierramartinez1@sheffield.ac.uk

Walking interview guide - English

Walking interview guideline

Themes of the interview:

1- Role of the locality for daily life and neighbourhood interaction

2- Importance of the space for the activities of the Committee in Defence of Water

Review the information sheet again and record informed consent (oral or written). Ask for permission to record the conversation with a microphone around the participant's neck, and to take notes and photographs in public places. Ask the participants to take me to the places that are most important to them in Santo Domingo. Use space as a prompt in questions and conversation with participants. Record the route after the interview. If we run into another neighbour, I will let them know that we are conducting an interview and the content of any small talk with them will not form part of the interview transcript.

In the case of a participant telling me that they do not really know where to take me, I may suggest places from a list of key sites.

Key sites to possibly suggest with the mobile interview:

- Community Centre: this has been the site of several interviews and is a recognisable site for the history of neighbourhood organising in this and other struggles

- The water well: a site of "hard infrastructure" that has been part of the campaigns of this group

- A water tap next to the newly built well, where people regularly collect water whenever there is a water shortage in their homes

- A mural that was made in 2020 by the Water Defence Committee in one of the streets of Santo Domingo

- The street corner where assemblies of the Water Defence Committee occur

- The homes of participants and other public spaces like parks and squares

Some of the questions during the interview will include:

Where are we now? Why did you choose to bring me to this place? What do people use this place for? How often are you here?

Has this place changed over time? What are the most important changes in this place?

What do you like about this place? How does it compare to places you avoid or dislike?

*Concerning neighbour relationships

Do you meet or see your neighbours in this place? Where else do you meet your neighbours regularly and spend time with them?

Are there any spaces where neighbours have conflicts?

Do you think you have a good relationship with your neighbours, and is this relationship important to you?

*Concerning the Water Defence Committee

Do you see or meet members of the Water Defence Committee in this place?

Is there a place where neighbours go when they don't have water in their homes?

How has this group had an impact on Santo Domingo as a neighbourhood and in these places where we are?

Are there places and routes you take to collect water?

*Possible closing questions

What do you think the future looks like for Santo Domingo? How do you think the neighbourhood and the places we walked through will change? What are your hopes for the neighbourhood and the relationship with your neighbours?

Lastly: is there anything else you would like to add or that we haven't talked about? **Thank you very much** *for your time and for talking and walking with me. Review informed consent*

Guía de entrevista en recorrido

Temas de la entrevista:

1. Papel del espacio para la vida cotidiana e interacción vecinal en Santo Domingo

2. Importancia del espacio para las actividades del Comité en Defensa del Agua

Revisar la hoja informativa nuevamente y registrar el consentimiento informado (oral o escrito). Pedir autorización para grabar la conversación con un micrófono colgado de su cuello, y para tomar notas y fotografías en lugares públicos. Pedir a los participantes que me guíen por los lugares que son más importantes para ellos en Santo Domingo. Usar el espacio como elemento en las preguntas y conversación con participantes. Registrar la ruta tras la entrevista. Si nos topamos con otro vecino, le haré saber que estamos realizando una entrevista y el contenido de cualquier pequeña conversación con él no formará parte de la transcripción de la entrevista.

En el caso de que un participante me diga que realmente no sabe dónde llevarme, puedo sugerirle lugares de la siguiente lista:

a) Centro comunitario: este ha sido el sitio de varias entrevistas y es un sitio reconocible por la historia de la organización vecinal en esta y otras luchas.

b) El pozo de agua: un sitio de "infraestructura dura" que ha sido parte de las campañas de este grupo

c) Un grifo de agua junto al pozo recién construido, donde la gente recoge agua regularmente cuando hay escasez de agua en sus hogares.

d) Un mural que fue realizado en 2020 por el Comité de Defensa del Agua en una de las calles de Santo Domingo

e) La esquina de la calle donde se realizan las asambleas del Comité de Defensa del Agua

f) Los hogares de los participantes y otros espacios públicos como parques y plazas.

Preguntas de la entrevista:

¿Dónde estamos ahora? ¿Por qué eligió traerme a este lugar? ¿Para qué usa este lugar la gente? ¿Usa este lugar a menudo?

¿Ha cambiado este lugar con el tiempo? ¿Cuáles son los cambios más importantes en este lugar?

¿Qué le gusta de este lugar? ¿Cómo se compara con los lugares que evita o no le gustan?

* Explorar la importancia del lugar para las prácticas y relaciones vecinales

¿Se encuentra o se ve con sus vecinos en este lugar? ¿Dónde más encuentra a sus vecinos regularmente?

¿Hay algunos lugares por los que los vecinos tengan conflictos? ¿Piensa que tiene una buena relación con sus vecinos? ¿Tener esta relación es importante para usted?

*Comité en Defensa del Agua

¿Ve o se encuentra con los miembros del Comité en Defensa del Agua en este lugar?

¿Hay algún lugar donde los vecinos acudan cuando no tienen agua en sus casas?

¿Cómo ha tenido este grupo un impacto en Santo Domingo como barrio y en estos lugares donde estamos?

¿Hay lugares o rutas que realice para conseguir agua cuando lo necesita?

*Al final de la caminata

¿Cómo piensa que se verá el futuro para el barrio de Santo Domingo? ¿Cómo piensa que cambiará el barrio y los lugares por los que caminamos? ¿Cuáles son sus esperanzas para el barrio y la relación con sus vecinos?

Últimos asuntos: ¿hay alguna otra cosa que quisiera añadir o de la que no hayamos hablado?
Muchas gracias *por su tiempo y por hablar y caminar conmigo. Revisar consentimiento informado*

Participant observation guide – English

Observation guidelineline (for researcher)

What to observe during participant observation (maintaining flexibility and openness to the unexpected):

1. Communicative and practical appropriations of environmentalism

2. Framings of neighbourliness and definitions of the neighbour

3. Interaction and practices among the members of the Committee

4. Relevance of place for neighbour-based organising

Register informed consent for observation during the initial meeting with the Water Defence Committee via approval in a street assembly. Use only pseudonyms and maintain anonymity in the observation. Photographs will remain anonymous.

Location:

Type of event:

Duration:

Date and time:

Additional notes (besides field notes):

Participant observation guide – Spanish

Guía de observación participante (para investigador)

Aspectos que observar durante la observación participante (manteniendo flexibilidad y apertura para lo inesperado):

0. Apropiación comunicativa y práctica del ambientalismo

0. Marcos interpretativos del ser vecino y definiciones del vecino

0. Interacción y prácticas entre miembros del Comité en Defensa del Agua

0. Importancia del lugar para la organización vecinal

Registrar el consentimiento informado durante la primera reunión con el Comité en Defensa del Agua, con la aprobación de la asamblea vecinal. Utilizar seudónimos y mantener el anonimato de las personas y lugares durante la observación, Las fotografías mantendrán el anonimato.

Sitio:

Tipo de evento:

Duración:

Fecha y hora:

Notas adicionales (además de notas de campo):

Observational walk guideline (for researcher)

What to observe during ethnographic walks (maintaining flexibility and openness to the unexpected):

1. Neighbour interaction in public and semi-public spaces

2. Materiality of the neighbourhood and of residential spaces (sensory and sociality aspects)

3. Infrastructures of water provision and environmental characteristics

4. Rhetoric of community development in advertisements

Use only pseudonyms and maintain anonymity in the observation. Photographs and recordings of Santo Domingo will remain anonymous.

Route in Santo Domingo:

Duration:

Date and time:

Additional notes (besides field notes):

Guía de caminata de observación (para investigador)

Aspectos que observar durante la caminata etnográfica (manteniendo flexibilidad y apertura para lo inesperado):

0. Interacción vecinal en el espacio público y semi público

0. Materialidad del vecindario y de espacios residenciales (aspectos sensoriales y relacionales)

0. Infraestructuras de la provisión de agua y características ambientales

0. Retórica de desarrollo comunitario en anuncios

Usar solamente seudónimos y mantener el anonimato de sitios en la observación. Las fotografías y grabaciones de Santo Domingo serán anónimas.

Ruta en Santo Domingo:

Duración:

Fecha y hora:

Notas adicionales (además de notas de campo):

Appendix E: Information sheets

[Spanish version]

Huellas del ambientalismo vecinal en la Ciudad de México *[title changed in final version of thesis]*

Hoja Informativa

Investigador: Andres Emiliano Sierra Martinez

The University of Sheffield
09/08/2022

Usted está siendo invitado a participar en un proyecto de investigación para elaborar mi tesis de Doctorado en el Departamento de Estudios Sociológicos de la Universidad de Sheffield, Reino Unido. *Antes de tomar la decisión de participar, por favor tome el tiempo de leer estas hojas informativas, discutirlas con otras personas de la organización y hacerme tantas preguntas sobre la investigación como quiera.*

¿De qué trata este proyecto?

Este proyecto explora la conexión entre las relaciones vecinales, la defensa del agua, y la justicia ambiental. Me interesa entender cómo el ambiente, sus vecin@s, y su barrio son importantes para usted como parte del Comité en Defensa del Agua. El proyecto tiene el objetivo de entender las experiencias cotidianas de involucrarse con sus vecin@s para defender el agua en Santo Domingo.

¿Quién soy?

Mi nombre es Andres Sierra, un estudiante mexicano realizando un Doctorado en la Universidad de Sheffield. He realizado investigación sobre ecología política,

comunidades locales, y justicia ambiental en las ciudades. También he escrito sobre la defensa del agua en los pedregales de Coyoacán.

Pueden contactarme de la siguiente forma:

[phone number in the original] 📱

aesierramartinez1@sheffield.ac.uk ✉️

¿Por qué realizo esta investigación y cómo pueden formar parte de ella?

Estoy realizando este proyecto como parte de mis estudios y los resultados serán parte de mi tesis de Doctorado. El proyecto tiene financiamiento del Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología (CONACYT) y cuenta con aprobación ética de la Universidad de Sheffield, según el procedimiento administrado por el Departamento de Estudios Sociológicos. Escuchar sus puntos de vista y hablar sobre sus experiencias ayudarán a mí y a otras personas a entender cómo el agua y la justicia ambiental se entrelazan con las relaciones vecinales. Este estudio también ayudará a dar a conocer su lucha ante una audiencia de distintos contextos culturales y profesionales, y será un registro vivo de sus experiencias. Como parte de esto, también compartiré los hallazgos de esta tesis en artículos y presentaciones orales.

¿Cómo será el trabajo de campo?

Si usted decide participar, la recolección de datos tendrá las siguientes etapas:

1- Primero, tendremos una entrevista sobre el significado del agua y de organizarse como vecin@s en Santo Domingo
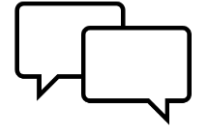
2- Después, le invitaré a mantener un diario por dos semanas, sobre sus experiencias y memorias de estos temas (actividad opcional)

3- Le invitaré a una segunda entrevista en la cual hablaremos mientras "caminamos" (física o imaginariamente) en los lugares que son importantes para usted en el barrio y esta lucha (actividad opcional)

4- Tendremos una reunión final para agradecerle y hablar de cualquier duda sobre los datos
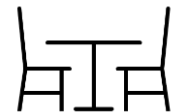
Si le interesa participar en este proyecto de investigación, le invitaré a **dos entrevistas distintas**, **y a mantener un diario por dos semanas** (puede ser en un formato escrito o grabado, físico o digital). Los temas de las entrevistas y diarios serán sus experiencias de defender el agua, construir relaciones vecinales, y buscar justicia. También estaré presente como participante y observador en eventos públicos del Comité en Defensa del Agua de Santo Domingo.

¿Cómo me involucro y qué significa participar?

Si le interesa participar, comuníquese conmigo para que hablemos más sobre cómo pasaría esto. Participar en cualquier actividad del estudio, incluyendo la primera entrevista, es completamente voluntario. Las entrevistas serán en lugares y momentos

que usted determine y serán grabadas en audio. Tras la primera entrevista, usted decidirá si quiere continuar y participar del diario y la entrevista durante el recorrido. Las grabaciones y diarios serán transcritas a un formato digital.

Antes de cada actividad, solicitaré su consentimiento verbal o escrito, registrado en una grabación o formato de consentimiento. Si cambia de opinión y ya no quiere participar, puede retirarse del proyecto en cualquier momento, sin otra razón necesaria. Si participa, no tendrá ninguna obligación legal ni será empleado por la Universidad de Sheffield.

¿Cómo usaré los datos?

No usaré información que pueda conducir a su identificación por alguien externo a esta organización, aunque algunas personas pueden ser identificadas al interior del Comité. Los datos estarán protegidos por el uso de seudónimos y anonimizando espacios cuando sea posible. Su información será confidencial y solamente utilizada para la investigación. Analizaré las transcripciones de las entrevistas y diarios e incluiré fragmentos de ellas como parte de los hallazgos de la tesis, así como en publicaciones y otras presentaciones. Algunas transcripciones anonimizadas pueden ser archivadas para su consulta por otras personas investigadoras.

Los datos serán almacenados de forma segura por el sistema de almacenamiento de la Universidad de Sheffield, protegidos con contraseña, y destruidos cinco años tras la publicación de los resultados. La Universidad de Sheffield es el Controlador de Datos de este estudio. Esto significa que la Universidad es responsable de proteger su información y usarla adecuadamente. Según las determinaciones legales que gobiernan a esta institución, sus datos pueden ser recolectados pues son "necesarios para realizar una tarea en beneficio del interés público" y "por propósitos de almacenamiento según el interés público, y propósitos de investigación científica o estadística".

¿Qué hacer si usted tiene alguna queja o preocupación?

Si tiene quejas o preocupaciones sobre cómo se está usando su información, puede reportarlas conmigo en primer lugar. Si no está satisfecho con como manejo la queja, puede contactar a mis Supervisoras, Profesora Sarah Neal (s.neal@sheffield.ac.uk) y Dra. Katherine Davies (k.davies@sheffield.ac.uk), o al Director del Departamento de

Estudios Sociológicos (Nathan Hughes; nathan.hughes@sheffield.ac.uk). También puede comunicarlo a otras personas del Comité en Defensa del Agua de Santo Domingo para que me notifiquen a mi o a estos contactos de ello.

Si desea hacer un reporte de cualquier preocupación o incidente relacionado a una posible explotación, abuso o daño resultado de su involucramiento en este proyecto, por favor contácteme como el Contacto de Protección Designado del proyecto. Si el reporte se refiere a mí, o si siente que lo he manejado adecuadamente, por favor contacte al director del Departamento de Estudios Sociológicos y/o a la Encargada de Ética e Integridad en la Investigación de la Universidad (Lindsay Unwin; l.v.unwin@sheffield.ac.uk).

Más información sobre las determinaciones legales y sobre cómo elevar una queja pueden encontrarse en el Aviso de Privacidad de la Universidad https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/govern/data-protection/privacy/general.

Gracias por leer hasta aquí…

Este proyecto involucrará hablar sobre injusticia, agua, y relaciones personales, lo que puede a veces involucrar sentimientos o recuerdos difíciles. No quiero "extraer" su información, sino compartir, caminar, y aprender con usted. Aquí comparto algunos recursos e información que humildemente espero puedan ser de utilidad en esta lucha.

- Atlas de Justicia Ambiental: https://ejatlas.org/?translate=es
- Centro Mexicano de Derecho Ambiental: https://www.cemda.org.mx/
- Serapaz, Servicios y Asesoría para la Paz, A.C. https://serapaz.org.mx/
- Caravana por el Agua y la Vida http://caravana.pueblosunidosporlavida.org/

Reconozco que su experiencia en esta lucha es más valiosa de lo que yo pueda ofrecer. Cuando el proyecto haya concluido, me encantaría tener la oportunidad de compartir mis hallazgos de investigación y reflexiones con usted y con el Comité en Defensa del Agua de Santo Domingo con una presentación. Mientras tanto, puede contactarme, y estaré muy alegre de que podamos hablar. **Muchas gracias por su tiempo y por leer este documento.**

[English version]

Traces of neighbourhood environmentalism in Mexico City *[title changed in final version of thesis]*

Information Sheet

Researcher: Andres Emiliano Sierra Martinez

The University of Sheffield
09/08/2022

You are being invited to take part in a research project for a PhD thesis in the Department of Sociological Studies, University of Sheffield, UK. *Before you decide on your participation, please take the time to read these information sheets, talk about it with other neighbours of this group, and ask me as many questions about the research as you want.*

What is this project about?

This project is about exploring the connection between environmental justice and neighbour relationships. I am interested in understanding how the environment, your neighbours, and your neighbourhood are important for you as a member of the Santo Domingo Water Defence Committee. The project has the objective of understanding your everyday experiences of getting involved with your neighbours to defend water in Santo Domingo.

Who am I?

I am Andres Sierra, a Mexican student doing a PhD at the University of Sheffield. I have done research about political ecology, local communities, and environmental justice in cities. I have also written about the defence of water in the *pedregales* of Coyoacán.

You can contact me at

[phone number in the original]

aesierramartinez1@sheffield.ac.uk

Why am I doing this project and how can you be part of it?

I am doing this project as part of my studies and the results will be part of my PhD thesis. The project has funding provided by the National Council of Science and Technology (CONACYT) and has been ethically approved via the University of Sheffield's Ethics Review Procedure, as administered by the Department of Sociological Studies. Hearing your views and talking about your experiences will help me and other social scientists to understand how environmental justice connects with neighbour relationships. This study will also help to make your struggle visible to an audience from different professional and cultural contexts. The findings of this thesis will be published in articles and shared in oral presentations as well.

How will the fieldwork look like?

If you decide to become a participant, the fieldwork will take the following stages:

5- First, we will have an interview about the meaning of water and becoming organised as neighbours in Santo Domingo.
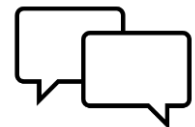
6- After this, you will be invited to keep a two-week diary about your experiences and memories about these themes (optional).

7- You will be invited to a second interview in which we talk while we "walk along" (physically or mentally) places that are important to you in the neighbourhood (optional).

8- We will have a final meeting to thank you and talk about any questions about the data

If you would like to participate in this research project, you will be invited to **two different interviews,** and to keep a **diary for two weeks (the diary can be kept in written or audio format)**. The themes of these interviews and diaries will be your everyday experiences of defending water, building neighbour relationships, and seeking environmental justice. I will also join the public events of the Water Defence Committee of Santo Domingo as an observer.

How do I get involved and what would this mean?

If you are interested in participating, let me know so we can talk more about the ways this will happen. Participating in any of the activities of the study, including the first interview, is entirely voluntary. All interviews will happen at times and places of your choosing and will be audio recorded. After the initial interview, you will decide if you want to continue to take part in the diary activity and the walk-along interview. The audio recordings of interviews and the diaries will be transcribed to a digital format.

Before each activity, I will ask for your verbal or written consent, registered on a recording or a consent form. If you change your mind or no longer want to participate, you can withdraw from the research at any moment, without giving any reason. If you participate, you would not be in a legally binding agreement. You would also not be employed by the University of Sheffield.

How will I use the data?

I will not use your real name in the thesis, nor any information that may lead to your identification by someone external to this organisation. The data will be protected with the use of pseudonyms and by making street locations anonymous when possible. The information that you share with me will be confidential and will only be used for research. I will analyse the transcripts from interviews and diaries and include quotes from them as part of the research results on my thesis, publications, and presentations. Some of the anonymised transcripts may be archived for use by other researchers.

The data will be securely stored by the University of Sheffield storage system, protected with a password, and destroyed five years after the publication of the results. The University of Sheffield will act as the Data Controller for this study. This means that the University is responsible for looking after your information and using it properly. According to the data protection legislation that governs this institution, your data will be collected because it is 'necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest' (Article 6(1)(e)), and 'for archiving purposes in the public interest, scientific research purposes or statistical purposes (9(2)(j)).

What happens if you have concerns and complaints?

If you have a complaint or concerns about how your personal information is being handled, you can report them to me in the first instance. If you are not satisfied with how the complaint was handled, you can contact my Supervisors, Professor Sarah Neal (s.neal@sheffield.ac.uk) and Dr Katherine Davies (k.davies@sheffield.ac.uk), or the Head of the Department of Sociological Studies (Nathan Hughes; nathan.hughes@sheffield.ac.uk). You can also communicate them to other members of the Water Defence Committee of Santo Domingo so they can let me, or these contacts, know about it.

If you wish to make a report of any concern or incident relating to potential exploitation, abuse or harm resulting from your involvement in this project, please contact me as the project's Designated Safeguarding Contact. If this relates to me, or if you feel that your

report has not been handled satisfactorily, please contact the Head of the Department of Sociological Studies and/or the University's Research Ethics & Integrity Manager (Lindsay Unwin; l.v.unwin@sheffield.ac.uk).

Further information about the legislation and about how to raise a complaint can be found in the University's Privacy Notice https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/govern/data-protection/privacy/general.

Thanks for making it here…

This project would involve talking about injustice, water, and personal relationships which can sometimes bring difficult memories or feelings. I do not want to "extract" your valuable information, but to share, walk, and learn with you. Here are some resources and support organisations that I humbly hope can be useful in this struggle.

- Atlas de Justicia Ambiental: https://ejatlas.org/?translate=es
- Centro Mexicano de Derecho Ambiental: https://www.cemda.org.mx/
- Serapaz, Servicios y Asesoría para la Paz, A.C. https://serapaz.org.mx/
- Caravana por el Agua y la Vida http://caravana.pueblosunidosporlavida.org/

I recognise that your experience in this struggle is more valuable than what I may have to offer. When the project is finished, I would love to have the opportunity to share my research findings and insights with you and the Water Defence Committee of Santo Domingo in a presentation. In the meantime, you can contact me, and I will be very happy to talk with you. **I want to thank you very much for your time reading this document**.

Appendix F: Consent forms

Interview consent form – Spanish

The
University
Of
Sheffield.

Huellas del ambientalismo vecinal en la Ciudad de México
Formato de Consentimiento

Por favor marque los cuadros según sea adecuado	Sí	No
Participar en el proyecto		
He leído y comprendido la hoja informativa del proyecto con fecha 09/08/2022 o me han explicado el proyecto completamente (Si su respuesta es No, por favor no continúe con este formato de consentimiento hasta que esté completamente enterado o enterada de lo que implica su participación en el proyecto.	☐	☐
Me fue dada la oportunidad de hacer preguntas sobre el proyecto	☐	☐
Estoy de acuerdo en participar del proyecto	☐	☐
Entiendo y estoy de acuerdo con que participar en el proyecto incluye **tener una entrevista**.	☐	☐
Estoy de acuerdo con que mientras participo en la entrevista se realice una grabación de audio. Estoy de acuerdo con participar de la grabación y con que las transcripciones anónimas de estas grabaciones de audio se utilicen en la investigación.	☐	☐
Entiendo que participar en esta investigación voluntariamente no crea un acuerdo legal ni una relación de empleo con la Universidad de Sheffield	☐	☐
Entiendo que mi participación es voluntaria y que puedo retirarme del estudio en cualquier momento; no tengo que dar razones por las cuales no deseo continuar y no habrá consecuencias negativas si decido retirarme.	☐	☐
Cómo será utilizada mi información durante y después del proyecto		
Entiendo que mis datos personales como nombre, información de contacto, dirección, etc. no serán reveladas a personas fuera del proyecto.	☐	☐
Entiendo y estoy de acuerdo con que mis palabras pueden ser citadas en publicaciones, reportes, sitios web y otros productos de la investigación.	☐	☐
Entiendo y estoy de acuerdo con que otras personas investigadoras autorizadas tengan acceso a mis datos solamente si están de acuerdo con mantener la confidencialidad de la información como este formato requiere.	☐	☐
Para que la información que comparta pueda ser utilizada legalmente en la investigación		
Estoy de acuerdo en que el derecho de autor que posea en todos los materiales generados como parte de este proyecto se asigne a la Universidad de Sheffield.	☐	☐

Nombre   Firma   Fecha

Andres Emiliano Sierra Martinez   Firma   Fecha

Detalles de contacto para más información del proyecto:

Andres Emiliano Sierra Martinez - Estudiante de Doctorado:

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S10 2TU

Dr. Katherine Davies – Supervisora:
k.davies@sheffield.ac.uk

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Professor Nathan Hughes – Director del Departamento de Estudios Sociológicos
nathan.hughes@sheffield.ac.uk

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Diary consent form – Spanish

Huellas del ambientalismo vecinal en la Ciudad de México
Formato de Consentimiento

Por favor marque los cuadros según sea adecuado	Sí	No
Participar en el proyecto		
He leído y comprendido la hoja informativa del proyecto con fecha 09/08/2022 o me han explicado el proyecto completamente (Si su respuesta es No, por favor no continúe con este formato de consentimiento hasta que esté completamente enterado o enterada de lo que implica su participación en el proyecto.	☐	☐
Me fue dada la oportunidad de hacer preguntas sobre el proyecto	☐	☐
Estoy de acuerdo en participar del proyecto	☐	☐
Entiendo y estoy de acuerdo con que participar en el proyecto incluye completar un **diario**. Estoy de acuerdo con que el diario sea transcrito y utilizado en la investigación.	☐	☐
Entiendo que participar en esta investigación voluntariamente no crea un acuerdo legal ni una relación de empleo con la Universidad de Sheffield	☐	☐
Entiendo que mi participación es voluntaria y que puedo retirarme del estudio en cualquier momento; no tengo que dar razones por las cuales no deseo continuar y no habrá consecuencias negativas si decido retirarme.	☐	☐
Cómo será utilizada mi información durante y después del proyecto		
Entiendo que mis datos personales como nombre, información de contacto, dirección, etc. no serán reveladas a personas fuera del proyecto.	☐	☐
Entiendo y estoy de acuerdo con que mis palabras pueden ser citadas en publicaciones, reportes, sitios web y otros productos de la investigación.	☐	☐
Entiendo y estoy de acuerdo con que otras personas investigadoras autorizadas tengan acceso a mis datos solamente si están de acuerdo con mantener la confidencialidad de la información como este formato requiere.	☐	☐
Para que la información que comparta pueda ser utilizada legalmente en la investigación		
Estoy de acuerdo en que el derecho de autor que posea en todos los materiales generados como parte de este proyecto se asigne a la Universidad de Sheffield.	☐	☐

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Walking interview consent form – Spanish

The University Of Sheffield.

Huellas del ambientalismo vecinal en la Ciudad de México
Formato de Consentimiento

Por favor marque los cuadros según sea adecuado	Sí	No
Participar en el proyecto		
He leído y comprendido la hoja informativa del proyecto con fecha 09/08/2022 o me han explicado el proyecto completamente (Si su respuesta es No, por favor no continúe con este formato de consentimiento hasta que esté completamente enterado o enterada de lo que implica su participación en el proyecto.	☐	☐
Me fue dada la oportunidad de hacer preguntas sobre el proyecto	☐	☐
Estoy de acuerdo en participar del proyecto	☐	☐
Entiendo y estoy de acuerdo con que participar en el proyecto incluye **tener una entrevista durante un recorrido**.	☐	☐
Estoy de acuerdo con que mientras participo en la entrevista durante el recorrido se realice una grabación de audio y se registre la ruta con comentarios o imágenes. Estoy de acuerdo con participar de la grabación y con que las transcripciones anónimas de estas grabaciones de audio se utilicen en la investigación.	☐	☐
Entiendo que participar en esta investigación voluntariamente no crea un acuerdo legal ni una relación de empleo con la Universidad de Sheffield.	☐	☐
Entiendo que mi participación es voluntaria y que puedo retirarme del estudio en cualquier momento; no tengo que dar razones por las cuales no deseo continuar y no habrá consecuencias negativas si decido retirarme.	☐	☐
Cómo será utilizada mi información durante y después del proyecto		
Entiendo que mis datos personales como nombre, información de contacto, dirección, etc. no serán reveladas a personas fuera del proyecto.	☐	☐
Entiendo y estoy de acuerdo con que mis palabras pueden ser citadas en publicaciones, reportes, sitios web y otros productos de la investigación.	☐	☐
Entiendo y estoy de acuerdo con que otras personas investigadoras autorizadas tengan acceso a mis datos solamente si están de acuerdo con mantener la confidencialidad de la información como este formato requiere.	☐	☐
Para que la información que comparta pueda ser utilizada legalmente en la investigación		
Estoy de acuerdo en que el derecho de autor que posea en todos los materiales generados como parte de este proyecto se asigne a la Universidad de Sheffield.	☐	☐

Nombre   Firma   Fecha

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Interview consent form – English

The University Of Sheffield.

Traces of neighbourhood environmentalism in Mexico City
Consent Form

Please tick the appropriate boxes	Yes	No
Taking Part in the Project		
I have read and understood the project information sheet dated 22/07/2022 or the project has been fully explained to me. (If you will answer No to this question please do not proceed with this consent form until you are fully aware of what your participation in the project will mean.)	☐	☐
I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project.	☐	☐
I agree to take part in the project.		
I understand and agree that taking part in the project will include participating in an **interview**	☐	☐
I agree that whilst I am participating in this interview audio recordings will be made. I agree to being audio recorded and for transcripts of these anonymised audio recordings to be used in the research.	☐	☐
I understand that by choosing to participate as a volunteer in this research, this does not create a legally binding agreement nor is it intended to create an employment relationship with the University of Sheffield.	☐	☐
I understand that my taking part is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at any time; I do not have to give any reasons for why I no longer want to take part and there will be no adverse consequences if I choose to withdraw.	☐	☐
How my information will be used during and after the project		
I understand my personal details such as name, phone number, address and email address etc. will not be revealed to people outside the project.	☐	☐
I understand and agree that my words may be quoted in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs.	☐	☐
I understand and agree that other authorised researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form.	☐	☐
So that the information you provide can be used legally by the researchers		
I agree to assign the copyright I hold in any materials generated as part of this project to The University of Sheffield.	☐	☐

Name of participant   Signature   Date

Andres Emiliano Sierra Martinez   Signature   Date

Project contact details for further information:

Andres Emiliano Sierra Martinez - PhD Student :

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Diary consent form – English

The University Of Sheffield.

Traces of neighbourhood environmentalism in Mexico City
Consent Form

Please tick the appropriate boxes	Yes	No
Taking Part in the Project		
I have read and understood the project information sheet dated 22/07/2022 or the project has been fully explained to me. (If you will answer No to this question please do not proceed with this consent form until you are fully aware of what your participation in the project will mean.)	☐	☐
I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project.	☐	☐
I agree to take part in the project.		
I understand and agree that taking part in the project will include completing a **diary**. I agree for the diary to be transcribed and used in the research.	☐	☐
I understand that by choosing to participate as a volunteer in this research, this does not create a legally binding agreement nor is it intended to create an employment relationship with the University of Sheffield.	☐	☐
I understand that my taking part is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at any time; I do not have to give any reasons for why I no longer want to take part and there will be no adverse consequences if I choose to withdraw.	☐	☐
How my information will be used during and after the project		
I understand my personal details such as name, phone number, address and email address etc. will not be revealed to people outside the project.	☐	☐
I understand and agree that my words may be quoted in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs.	☐	☐
I understand and agree that other authorised researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form.	☐	☐
So that the information you provide can be used legally by the researchers		
I agree to assign the copyright I hold in any materials generated as part of this project to The University of Sheffield.	☐	☐

Name of participant   Signature   Date

Andres Emiliano Sierra Martinez   Signature   Date

Project contact details for further information:

Andres Emiliano Sierra Martinez - PhD Student :

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Walking interview consent form – English

Traces of neighbourhood environmentalism in Mexico City
Consent Form

Please tick the appropriate boxes	Yes	No
Taking Part in the Project		
I have read and understood the project information sheet dated 22/07/2022 or the project has been fully explained to me. (If you will answer No to this question please do not proceed with this consent form until you are fully aware of what your participation in the project will mean.)	☐	☐
I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project.	☐	☐
I agree to take part in the project.		
I understand and agree that taking part in the project will include participating in a **walking interview**	☐	☐
I agree that whilst I am participating in this mobile interview audio recordings will be made. I agree to being audio recorded and for transcripts of these anonymised audio recordings to be used in the research.	☐	☐
I understand that by choosing to participate as a volunteer in this research, this does not create a legally binding agreement nor is it intended to create an employment relationship with the University of Sheffield.	☐	☐
I understand that my taking part is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at any time; I do not have to give any reasons for why I no longer want to take part and there will be no adverse consequences if I choose to withdraw.	☐	☐
How my information will be used during and after the project		
I understand my personal details such as name, phone number, address and email address etc. will not be revealed to people outside the project.	☐	☐
I understand and agree that my words may be quoted in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs.	☐	☐
I understand and agree that other authorised researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form.	☐	☐
So that the information you provide can be used legally by the researchers		
I agree to assign the copyright I hold in any materials generated as part of this project to The University of Sheffield.	☐	☐

Name of participant   Signature   Date

Andres Emiliano Sierra Martinez   Signature   Date

Project contact details for further information:

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Appendix G: End of fieldwork presentation

[Spanish version]

Huellas del ambientalismo vecinal en la Ciudad de México
Presentación de avances de trabajo de campo

<div align="right">Andrés E. Sierra Martínez</div>

1. ¿Por qué el trabajo de campo y quién soy yo?
    a. Objetivos de la tesis y utilidad del trabajo de campo
    b. Métodos utilizados y sus ventajas
    c. Protección de información, pseudónimos, confidencialidad

2. Descripción de actividades
   - **22 entrevistas** entre noviembre 2022 y febrero 2023
   - **11 diarios** de participantes entre diciembre 2022 y marzo 2023
   - **8 entrevistas** en caminata entre abril y junio 2023
   - Notas de campo de mi propia experiencia

3. Experiencias de participantes

28 participantes: *¿Alguien de las personas que participó quiere compartir cómo fue su experiencia?*

4. Reflexiones **preliminares**
    a. ¿Por qué importa el agua?
        i. El agua es un derecho
            1. Defensa de la conquista histórica y proyección hacia el futuro en el barrio
        ii. El agua es parte de lo cotidiano
            1. Lo ambiental es un asunto de vida y es un asunto de justicia social
    b. ¿Por qué importa ser vecinos y vecinas?
        i. No estamos solos
            1. Aunque no es fácil ponerse de acuerdo, papel de la historia y familia
        ii. Compartimos experiencias
            1. No es beneficio personal y podemos coincidir en objetivos comunes
    c. ¿Cómo se ve la justicia?
        i. Importancia de la infraestructura
            1. Logro vecinal, no de autoridades, en diferentes infraestructuras
        ii. Importancia de la comunidad
            1. Conquista de re-conocernos y la lucha por la vida no se detiene

5. Siguientes pasos
    a. Terminar de transcribir y traducir todas las notas de campo, diarios y entrevistas
    b. Preparar el análisis y escribir la tesis
    c. Presentar los resultados al Comité en Defensa del Agua

6. *¿Preguntas?*

MUCHAS GRACIAS. El AGUA ES VIDA Y LA VIDA SE DEFIENDE

Traces of neighbourhood environmentalism in Mexico City
Presentation of fieldwork progress

Andrés E. Sierra Martínez

1. Why fieldwork and who am I?
    a. Aims of the thesis and usefulness of fieldwork
    b. Methods used and their advantages
    c. Protection of information, pseudonyms and confidentiality

2. Description of activities
    -**22 interviews** between November 2022 and February 2023
    -**11 participant diaries** between December 2022 and March 2023
    -**8 walking interviews** between April 2023 and June 2023
    -Field notes from my own experience

3. Participants' experiences

    28 participants: *Would anyone who participated like to share their experience?*

4. **Preliminary** reflections
    a. Why does water matter?
        i. Water is a right
            1. Defending the historical conquest and projecting into the future in the neighbourhood
        ii. Water is part of everyday life
            1. The environment is a matter of life and social justice
    b. Why does it matter to be neighbours?
        i. We are not alone
            1. Although it is not easy to agree, role of history and family
        ii. We share experiences
            1. Not for personal gain; we can agree on common goals
    c. What does justice look like?
        i. Importance of infrastructure
            1. Achievement of neighbours in different infrastructures
        ii. Importance of the community
            1. Re-cognising each other; the struggle for life does not stop

5. Next steps
    a. Finish transcribing and translating all field notes, diaries and interviews.
    b. Prepare the analysis and write the thesis
    c. Present the results to the Water Defence Committee.

6. *Questions?*
    THANK YOU VERY MUCH. WATER IS LIFE AND LIFE MUST BE DEFENDED