

Birth) in the 21st Century


Following change on childbirth care

A documentary feature directed by Claudia Reig



rtve



A close-up photograph of a newborn baby being held by a woman. The baby's face is the central focus, with its eyes closed and mouth slightly open. The woman's profile is visible on the right side of the frame, looking towards the baby. The background is a soft, teal-colored wall. The lighting is warm and intimate, highlighting the textures of the baby's skin and the woman's features.

A renewed visual approach on a process that empowers women, a vital and family event



A choral account about
obstetric violence and its
consequences, told by
victims and healthcare
workers

SYNOPSIS

In the 21st century, women's rights during childbirth are being violated in delivery rooms around the world. Spain is one of the first European countries to promote a legislative change to fight these abuses. A growing network of women is behind this long-demanded change towards **equality**.

Sole is the head midwife of a hospital specializing in humanized childbirth care. Her team accompanies and supports women with a deep respect for their bodies, their babies and rights – a process that is shown in this film in all of its humane, powerful and primitive form.

Francisca is a lawyer dedicated to defending victims of ill-treatment during childbirth in court, and her work led to a United Nations conviction against Spain in a case of obstetric violence. This resolution has triggered a reaction and the government has started the process to include the tools to prevent this violence in a new law – in the midst of **great controversy**.

Sole and Francisca embody the struggles for autonomy and safety of women during childbirth, and their paths cross in a story of sorority and **shared fights for justice**.

TRAILER

<https://vimeo.com/718279757/6b0bbec0ed>



CONTEXT

Scientific evidence shows that excessive medicalization, routine interventions and the violation of the autonomy of women in labor have serious consequences. Many women face this form of violence and its sequels: from verbal abuse to avoidable tears of the perineum, dehumanising behaviour by healthcare providers, failed lactations, cesarean sections scheduled to balance the delivery staff's calendars... In 2019, the stories received by the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women revealed that «mistreatment and violence against women in reproductive health-care services and childbirth in health facilities happen all around the world and affect women across all socioeconomic levels». For the first time in the General Assembly, the term obstetric violence was named.

International organisms like WHO and UN advocate for a progress towards respectful assistance, which also represents an advance in the struggle of feminism: women reclaiming the leading role and decision-making in a process that should be theirs.

Our documentary poses a contrast: on the one hand, the public will see the respectful practices carried out by the professionals at the La Plana hospital, a benchmark in respectful care; on the other, women who have suffered this form of violence share their testimony in the first person – as well as health providers who have witnessed it or even practiced it.

Obstetric violence occurs in an organisational system and therefore could be eradicated if a guide of woman-centered care practices were used. The focus has to be changed by moving away from the current medical model: mothers need respectful, supportive maternity care. It is here where our protagonists take an essential role: Sole, the hospital's head midwife has struggled for years to improve their model and expand it to all the system. So has Francisca, a lawyer who brought a series of cases to international justice to create jurisprudence.

Amidst the production of the documentary, their endeavours have started to pay off: the authorities have set in motion a law to promote good praxis and the creation of a pioneer birth center in the public health system.

NARRATIVE MILESTONES

1. Respected childbirth care

- Work philosophy in a public hospital of international reference in childbirth care: point of view of women and midwives
- Stories of women during pregnancy and childbirth

2. Historical perspective

- Traditional home birth, pros (autonomy) and cons (mortality)
- Childbirth is transferred to hospitals and medicalized

3. Obstetric violence

- Women's accounts about traumatic labors in public hospitals
- Stories of midwives: witnesses of obstetric violence and change of professional career

3. Judicial journey

- Women who report malpractice in their labors, judicial journey
- Precedent of judicial cases, judgments of international organizations: United Nation's CEDAW

4. Obstetric violence during the pandemic

- Delivery of Àngels: changes in protocols which affected women's rights to companionship
- Case of Teresa and her legal procedure against the hospital that forced her into an unnecessary C-section

5. Reform of the law - Birth Centers

- Reform of the sexual and reproductive health law
- History of La Plana hospital, next steps: creation of a birth center in La Plana - Future of childbirth care
- Birth Center in Catalunya.

PROTAGONISTS



SOLE CARREGUÍ

Sole CarreguÍ is the **supervisor of the delivery** service at La Plana hospital (Villarreal, Spain), since its foundation in 2000. Over the years, **her commitment to pregnant women** has led her to fight one battle after another, and face the ups and downs that the healthcare system has gone through during different administrations. The La Plana hospital has become an **international benchmark**, endorsed by the WHO or UNICEF, obtaining the best results. Women from all over the territory choose to give birth there, sometimes traveling from afar, to seek humanized assistance.

For years, Sole and her team have been leading an initiative to **spread their respectful practices** to all the Public Health system and offer women safe spaces in which to give birth. We follow Sole's steps as an activist, **joining forces with midwives from around the world** and with associations for reproductive rights, to offer all women the opportunity to have respected and safe births.

Francisca Fernández, a lawyer specializing in health law and responsible for **this conviction by the UN Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women** against Spain for exercising obstetric violence on a woman. We are following her legal practice in court, during the development of a woman's claim to the hospital where they performed a **caesarean section against her will**, due to a protocol that sought to protect health workers from exposure to the coronavirus.

And in the heart of the film, the women: those whose allow us to be with them in the delivery room, as well as the ones who contribute their accounts of bad practices and abuse during childbirth.



FRANCISCA FERNÁNDEZ



VISUAL APPROACH HUMAN STORIES

We believe that it is essential to provide a realistic image of humanized childbirth, and show it as an intimate and powerful act, where the woman is the center of the action. Women should have the right to see that it is possible to receive a respectful and empathic care, where they are the protagonists. This applies to all typologies of childbirth, whether it is natural and uncomplicated, as if it requires interventions or a cesarean section. This is why we portray a diversity of women and cases.

This film aims to constitute a tool for the empowerment of women regarding their rights – while contributing to the struggle of many midwives who are trying to change the model in their delivery rooms, towards a more humanized assistance.

We follow a group of women during their pregnancies and in childbirth in the La Plana hospital. Their experiences allow us to illustrate the impact of midwives' work on their lives. We accompany them during months before the day of delivery, thus providing a deep, intimate profile of them.

The narrative treatment of childbirth also aims to generate sequences where emotions and uncertainties fit. The public will be aware of women's expectations and fears, and will accompany them from the early stages of the process, from the first contractions until they hold their babies.



A TRANSMEDIA STRATEGY

In 2019, 'Birth in the 21st Century' was developed as an interactive documentary in collaboration with the RTVE Innovation Lab and À Punt (the regional public broadcaster). This was our first contribution to the image of how women in labor can and should be treated.

The webdocumentary is focused on the birthchild stories of 5 women in La Plana Hospital, Castellón, Spain. This hospital is internationally recognized as a benchmark in respected childbirth, thanks to the group of professionals who fight every day to protect the rights of women during this process.

When the COVID-19 arrived, hospital protocols changed, and with them, the rights of women during childbirth were reduced due to the restrictions. A historic moment that we were able to document and will include in our film – with several deliveries filmed during the first waves of coronavirus.

In the midst of the research process for the feature film, we began documenting all these women's stories and organically created a podcast, as an open space for women to freely and intimately share their childbirth experiences and obstetric violence cases through only oral testimonies. We collect stories from midwives and specialists in the field on a national and international scope.

These projects, both the webdoc and the podcast, and their strong social media presence are both enriching the research for our documentary feature film, and above all, our objective of creating awareness to achieve respectful childbirth care for women.

2019-2020
WEBDOC

2021-2022
PODCAST

2022-2023
FEATURE DOC FILM

- 5 women tell their childbirth stories and experiences in La Plana Hospital.

- Childbirth during the COVID-19 pandemic.

www.birth21.com

Open research process on obstetric violence through the stories of women who have been victims, midwives, and specialists in the field on a national and international scope. All these accounts were collected through an open call issued on social media.

www.parir.info and RTVE Play, Spotify, Google and Apple Podcast, Ivoox

A mosaic composed of childbirth stories narrated by their protagonists, the women. A renewed visual approach on a process that empowers women, a vital and family event and the healthcare professionals that help create safe spaces for them.

TIMELINE



FILMING BEGINS

First shootings in prenatal classes and "matroswimming"

June 2019



UN REPORT

UN Special Rapporteur presents her report on obstetric violence in the General Assembly

July 2019



CEDAW DECISION

The UN Committee on the Discrimination Against Women finds Spain accountable for obstetric violence against a woman

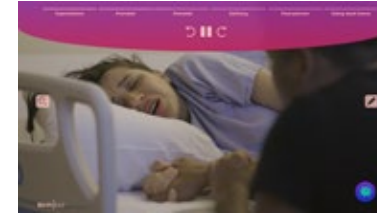
January 2020



PANDEMIC

WHO declares global COVID-19 pandemic. Obstetric care suffers dramatic consequences

March 2020



WEBDOCUMENTARY LAUNCHES

Our first transmedia piece is released. Watch it at www.birth21.com

November 2020



BIRTH CENTERS

Parliament accepts Sole's project to implement birth centers in public health system

October 2020



PODCAST: OPEN CALL FOR ACCOUNTS ON OBSTETRIC VIOLENCE

Our open call in social media received **200+ accounts of victims** and witnesses of obstetric violence

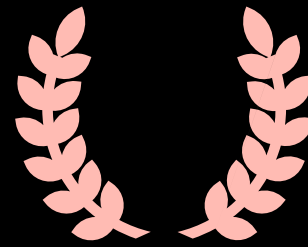
July 2021



SPANISH GOVERNMENT RESPONDS

The process to create a law against obstetric violence begins

January 2022



WORLD PRESS PHOTO

INTERNATIONAL JOURNALISM AWARD



NOMINATED FOR
PRIX EUROPA



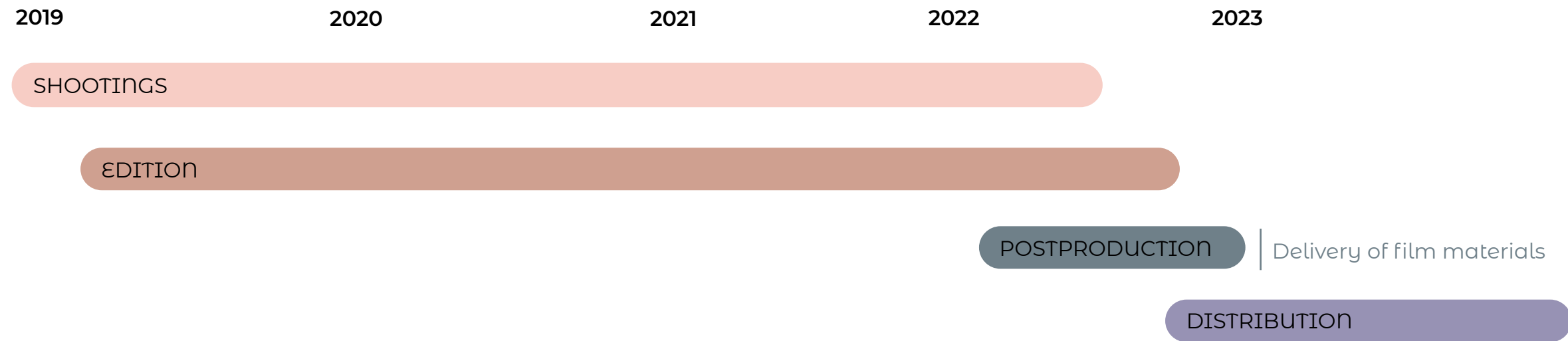
awwwards.

FINNOF





STATUS OF THE FILM



FUNDING SOURCES

· **TOTAL FILM BUDGET: 180.140 €**

· **Institut Valencià de Cultura** (Valencian Government Film Institute): **90.000 € (50%)**

· **RTVE** (Spanish Public Television): **50.000 € (27,7 %)**

TO COMPLETE: **40.140 € (22,3 %)**

CURRICULUM

TEAM

Claudia Reig Valera - director and screenwriter. Director of the feature documentary Resistencia trans (Barret, 2019) Director of the short documentary La Desbanda (Barret, 2019) Director of the transmedia documentary En la brecha (Barret for RTVE Lab, 2018) Director of the transmedia documentary Que tiemble el camino (Barrett for RTVE Lab, 2018)

Dani Fabra Rivas - executive producer, screenwriter and director of photography. Director of photography in the second season of the documentary series Six dreams (Amazon Prime, 2020) Screenwriter and executive producer of the feature-length documentary La estrategia del silencio (Barret and Mediapro, 2017) Executive producer and director of the documentary series Cosins Germans (Televisió de Catalunya, 2014-2016) Writer and director of the feature documentary Las voces de la memoria (Barret, 2011)

Barret Coop, founded in 2008, is a documentary production company based in València, Spain that specializes in a character-driven approach to social issues and civil rights. Their work focuses on interactive formats that aim to engage the audience in the building of communities, collective works and social change.

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

- Crònica Mèdica, documentary series (Barret, À Punt Mèdia, 2021), finalist of Premios Berlanga.
- Birth in the 21st Century, interactive documentary (Barret, À Punt Mèdia, RTVE, 2020), World Press Photo Award in Digital Storytelling, winner of 2 Webby Awards, etc.
- Ways of living, feature documentary (Barret, 2019), OS Festival Inclús, best film at Festival FECIDISCOVI, etc.
- Trans resistance, feature documentary (Barret, 2019), premiered in several international LGTB and documentary film contents (Chéries Chéris, LesGaiCineMad, entre otros). Supported by the IVC.
- En la brecha, interactive documentary (Barret para RTVE Lab, 2018).
- Que tiemble el camino, interactive documentary (Barret for RTVE Lab, 2018).
- The strategy of silence, feature documentary (Barret and Mediapro, 2017), finalist of Berlanga Awards. Supported by the IVC.
- Las voces de la memoria, feature documentary (Barret, 2011). Supported by the ICAA

Produced by **Barret Cooperativa**
Co-produced by **RTVE** and
supported by the **Institut Valencià de Cultura**

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