

# Birth and Midwifery in Tamera

Leila Dregger, 2013



Giving birth is about opening, which is a process based on trust. In Tamera, there is a Parents' School, founded by mothers. With knowledge, transparency, awareness and experience, they strengthen the power of trust among parents, children and the community. Leila Dregger spoke with two midwives and a young mother about the art of reclaiming lost power. Since 2006, they have helped birth 19 children into the community. And while Leila was transcribing the interview, another child was born in Tamera.

Karin Schlote, mother of a grown son, and a midwife in Tamera, says, "There is nothing greater or more universal than a being which has just emerged from the body of its mother. The first opening of its eyes, the first movements ... I know of nothing more sacred and beautiful than to witness this." Together with her colleague Uta Schneeweiß, Karin travels across the whole of Portugal, supporting mothers and families with births at home – mostly water births.

For Uta Schneeweiß, the most fascinating aspect of her work is the strength that a woman develops while giving birth. "To be present to experience this opening of the body is an unbelievable privilege. If we do not disturb it, it is an ecstatic, indeed an orgasmic process ... with the same sounds and movements as in sexuality. In a hospital, this is mostly not accepted – there is a fear of this raw power of the woman. I, however, am very much fascinated by this process. As a midwife, I want to accompany and protect the woman throughout."

In Tamera, it's about more than the question of home birth vs. hospital birth: Everything –beginning with the decision to become parents, then the process of giving birth, and continuing with raising the children – is held and supported by the community. In order to accompany the entire process with knowledge and experience, several mothers founded the Parents' School. In the Parents' School, those in the process of becoming parents – and also their close friends and relatives – study the psychological, social, philosophical, and practical foundations of parenthood. The "Forum" is one of the tools used to create transparency regarding our true motives and wishes, to discover and share deep truths and insights, and to make progress with open questions. It is part of a system change which Tamera wants to achieve as a model of a society of peace. And it supports the building of trust and transparency.

Karin: "During a birth, every mother's core question is: to what extent can I open? This decision is made not only during the birth, but mostly in the time before. A mother who beforehand has cleaned and cleared her inner channels, and has developed trust towards her community and her partner, has much better chances during the birth to open completely and to easily give birth to her child." The Parents' School helps with this, looking at and addressing all problems and fears, finding and discussing a picture of the birth, and also developing a picture of how to continue after the birth – with the mother, with the child, and with the partner.

Karin: "During a normal birth, there isn't so much that a midwife has to do. The mother-to-be should know that she's the one giving birth, and that she can do it, even alone if necessary. A birth is a natural process, the most natural process of all. Our task is to create a frame to hold it, to stay in contact, to measure the heartbeat and to offer encouragement. And to be there in case something unexpected arises."

## Birth in Tamera

The 31st of July, evening: it's time. For the mother-to-be Marina (she prefers that her real name not be used) the contractions are starting. The birth begins ... and with it, the climax of a process that began eight years before. "It was then that I dreamed of becoming a mother for the first time. I was already in my mid-thirties, and didn't have a partner. But I knew that I wanted to conceive and carry a child, and it was in full consciousness and in full agreement with the community. It was, for me, not a private decision, but rather a conscious step towards the rediscovery of trust in other human beings... something that was lost when the ancient tribes were destroyed. With trust in the community, I was able to become a free channel, through which a free being wanted to enter the world."

The process of this inner work – choosing the father of the child and building the partnership, the struggles with doubts and fears, and finally making contact with the being – really takes years. Her partner also needed time to consider ... and a long voyage, during which he prepared himself for fatherhood. Marina: "Mama, papa, and the child are a unit which is best embedded in community. There, children are free beings if they are not expected to fulfill the unresolved longings of their parents. It was a liberation for me to leave my secret thoughts and worries behind. I wanted to follow the pace of my soul, and

not go too fast over any boundaries – for the father, for me, for the child, and for the new culture of conscious conception.”

The Tamera community had already expressed its complete trust in them a long time before. And then one evening in October, she knew: it is time. The new being wishes to be conceived tonight.

Nine months later. The parents have already been living for several days in Tamera's "Children's House," the place where most births take place. The contractions had begun. Friends came together. Marina's wish was – other than the two midwives and the father-to-be – to be accompanied only by one “wise woman,” and by her best friend. The wider circle of friends was asked to wait outside nearby, to keep a fire burning, and sing.

Uta and Karin are very well prepared. “Potential disturbances should be neutralized as much as possible, so that the mother can give herself completely over to her inner process. Someone from the community takes care of everything else, so that the mother can completely let go.”

Emergency medications and oxygen are there, ready for any situation. Similarly, there is a car nearby with a full tank, in case at any point the birth is interrupted and the mother must be taken to the hospital.

Normally a pool is prepared for a water birth, but in this case the mother has decided against it. There are experienced women nearby who also keep an inner eye on the process.

Marina: “I was not afraid to give birth. Billions of women have given birth. Our bodies are made for this. This thought always encouraged me.”

At first, everything went entirely well, and quickly. Marina: “During the contractions, a strong power-sentence came to me: ‘For opening!’ This was the turning point from pain to desire.” At five in the morning, the cervix was open wide. Really, the little girl could come to the light of the world. But she didn't come. Contraction after contraction. Yet the cervix did not open any wider. Marina: “From this point on, I no longer acted from my own power. Rather, it was as if a much greater power was working through me.” She had 700 contractions over the course of the night and morning. In the end, she had the question: “Do I have to open my body even more?” And the powerful answer was, “Yes, ultimately my body is made for this.”

Uta: “Birth pains are pure physiological pain. It does not indicate anything bad or unhealthy, but rather leads to something good. With this thought, a woman in labor doesn't have to react with fear or alarm. It is a pure intensity, that requires her full attention.”

At twelve o'clock, it suddenly all goes very quickly. The little girl has arrived... and with her, the explanation why it took so long: Her little head is nestled in her hand, and in this position she needs a bit more opening. So no tearing, and no cut is needed, and even the placenta slides out very quickly. The parents' wish is for a lotus-birth: the umbilical cord is not cut. The afterbirth is wrapped up and protected until the umbilical cord naturally disconnects by itself, after a few days. "This provides more calmness for the child," says Marina.

Outside the group begins to sing again, louder this time. Laughter of relief, as well as tears, are mixed in the voices.

The community rejoices that the Earth has a new citizen. In a few days, she will be celebrated in Tamera's Stone Circle, and welcomed by all the members of the community.

## Standing Up for the Rights of Midwives

As trained midwives, Uta and Karin are members of the Portuguese professional association of nurses. Home births, which were entirely normal until a few decades ago, came to be considered too dangerous – thereafter essentially all births took place in hospitals. Since some years ago, parents have increasingly wished for natural births. The association recommends that every birth be accompanied by two midwives. The legal situation is also difficult for midwives. Karin: "We have no possibility to get insurance, and have to work entirely at our own risk." If it could be proven that they made a mistake during a birth, they would have to pay out of their own pockets – a risk that few midwives in Portugal are ready to take on. Only 14 independent midwives are active in the whole country – meanwhile the requests only increase. Especially in the case of water births, the only option is to give birth at home.

Uta and Karin belong to those midwives who stand up for their rights ... and for the right to have a natural birth. As Michael Odent says: "To change the world, we need to change the way we give birth."

For more information, or to contact our midwives:

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