



# Accessible Environment, Inclusive Society

Webinar, May 9, 2021  
United World Week 2021

## Apertura

*Images description: the title of the project "Accessible Environment, Inclusive Society" appears in the opening screen of the event, in the five translation languages. We also see the contacts: [www.aeis.cloud](http://www.aeis.cloud) and [info@aeis.cloud](mailto:info@aeis.cloud). An image follows showing a vibrantly colored city, with mountains in the background and in many people in the foreground, all different: small children, couples, elderly, black and white people, pregnant women, a blind woman and a young man in a wheelchair.*

*A short video shows how to find subtitles for translation in different languages: English, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, French.*

*A ball of white crumpled paper opens and occupies the screen: a young black woman holds a paper box in her hand, some young people collect the garbage that is on a lawn, young people in turn raise a sign that says justice and peace. Different people appear from different parts of the world, one by one, they say words, in their language, the words are written on their faces and refer to the theme: care, attention, protection.*

*The phrase "Dare to Care" and the United World Week 2021 logo appear.*

## Introduction

*Rita Bersch (Porto Alegre, Brazil) and Renzo Andrich (Belluno, Italy)*

RITA:

Hello everyone!

RENZO:

Hello everyone!

RITA:

My name is Rita, I am from Porto Alegre, in southern Brazil. I am married to Zeca and we have three daughters. I am a fair-skinned woman, with straight shoulder-length brown hair. I wear glasses, my eyes are green, and I am at my house and behind me there is a white curtain.

RENZO:

My name is Renzo, I am from Belluno, in the north of Italy. I am married to Lucia; we have four children. I am about 1.80 meter tall; I wear glasses and have silver-colored hair as befits my age (66).

RITA:

In this webinar we introduce a project, titled "Accessible Environment, Inclusive Society". Within the wide theme of integral ecology, in which environmental issues are intertwined with those of human development, the sustainability of the social fabric and the quality of human relationships, we cannot miss to notice the presence in the world of inequalities and imbalances that exclude many people from full participation in society. Among these, the presence of barriers that hinder people with disabilities, elderly people with difficulties, people even temporarily in situations of fragility. Barriers often made by men due to lack of awareness; barriers that make our communities exclusive rather than inclusive.

RENZO:

So, what are we proposing with this project? We intend to contribute to spread a culture of accessibility of the environment, the idea of a world where no one, regardless of one's physical or cognitive condition, encounters

architectural or technological or social barriers that can restrict their mobility, limit their relationships, prevent them from being fully realized as a person and as a citizen. This idea of an accessible environment should no longer be confined to utopia. Today, at the dawn of the third millennium, this dream must become reality: it is a prerequisite for the achievement of an inclusive society.

RITA:

In my profession - I am a physiotherapist, I deal with assistive technologies, that are tools for the autonomy of people with disabilities - I see how difficult it is still for many people in certain areas of the world to avail the technologies that meet their mobility, personal care, communication, and daily life needs. And working in the school world, I notice how the inaccessibility of many school buildings and the difficulty in having these tools often compromise the right to education.

RENZO:

It's true. As an engineer who has always dealt with these technologies, I also see how they can solve many practical problems that a person with disabilities encounters in everyday life. But how many times can everything be thwarted by a barrier! Even though I have a super sophisticated electronic wheelchair, I must stop in front of a staircase; if I am blind, however modern the computer tool that allows me to use the computer may be, I stop in front of an Internet site that is not designed in an accessible way.

RITA:

So, we really have a "patient to treat", which is society. It is in fact society which, with its barriers, makes disability a problem. What do you think?

RENZO:

Yes, that's right. Let's take a little tour around the world to reflect on this question.

*Image description: the path leading from Belluno (Italy) to Mumbai (India) is traced on a globe.*

## **First Interview**

*Renzo Andrich and Rozelle Rebello (Mumbai, India).*

*Images description: Rozelle has black tied up hair and dark skin, wears glasses and wears an orange blouse. During the interview the following pictures appear: Rozelle sitting with her twin sister Rachel on the lawn, Rozelle making colorful and handmade bracelets, young people positioned in a circle who join hands and show the colored bracelets.*

ROZELLE:

Hi Renzo, I am Rozelle Rebello from Mumbai, India.

Though I am differently able, I was loved and accepted by my family.

At the age of 13 I underwent surgery on my legs which unfortunately left my left leg partially non-functional, thus restricting my mobility even further.

I lost my dad in 2018 but that did not deter me from pursuing my dreams in poetry as well as making hand-made bracelets.

RENZO:

From your experience I understand that it was important for you to have a supporting family and a network of great friends. However, society still has a lot of barriers. What is your message about that?

ROZELLE

Renzo, thank you for your question. I would like to answer with a short poem I recently wrote.

"By our actions and perspective, we view,

An inclusive society is in reach true.

A stereotypical mindset needs change,

For an accessible environment in range.

As citizens in the world,  
Voices towards inclusiveness and accessibility for all should be heard.”

RENZO:

Thank you very much for your message!

ROZELLE:

Thank you, Renzo, it has been a pleasure.

*Image description: the path leading from Mumbai (India) to Venice (Italy) is traced on a globe.*

## **Second interview**

*Renzo Andrich and Stefano Maurizio (Venice, Italy).*

*Image description: Stefano is fair-skinned, has white hair and a beard, stands in front of a bookcase and wears a beige blouse.*

*During his speech we see a sequence of pictures: a nocturnal image of the city of Venice where the lights highlight the old buildings and many small boats on the sea. San Marco Square with its bell tower is empty. Canals of Venice with colorful houses and boats. Pictures of Stefano riding his scooter and manual wheelchair. An image shows a ramp that gives access to the boats. Stefano speaks at conferences, in one of which the projected sentence is seen: “Tourism and sport - accessibility and inclusion, possible opportunity”. Various drawings present other architectural projects related to the accessibility of Venice.*

RENZO:

Stefano Maurizio lives in Venice, a city that needs no introduction, an Italian jewel known all over the world. You are an architect. Let us start with telling us something about yourself.

STEFANO:

Yes, I am Stefano, I'm an architect, I'm sixty years old (alas!). I use a wheelchair for my mobility, maybe the biggest problem is a slight overweight, that makes it harder for me to visit construction sites and sailing, which is one of my passions, my greatest passion.

I had an accident when I was 25, so quite young. Then I continued (I had already started studying architecture) I continued to study architecture with the vision, with the perspective to try to improve the quality of the urban environment, of everything that is designed.

RENZO:

Well, Stefano: in your experience as an architect how do you design in an accessible way?

STEFANO:

It is perhaps a matter of "head": architectural barriers are inside our brains. On the paper sheet or on the computer where you design there are no architectural barriers. The initial approach is important, that is, to have a head that thinks in an accessible way. This should be a message for young architects and designers.

The importance of accessibility: it becomes more and more important as you get older. It's something that really affects everyone: in my profession I see a lot of people of a certain age who, for example, run away from their terraced houses or from the houses where they had been living for many years, because at a certain age it's a little harder recognizing colors or climbing a flight of stairs, rather than having an elevator or a ramp that makes it easier to make movements also for those who move on wheels.

By the way, wheeled mobility is becoming something important in urban spaces: how important it is today to consider skates, electric scooters, many people who move around in public spaces with vehicles with larger or smaller wheels, slower or faster.

RENZO:

I'm going to speak for a moment because it seems to me that you're saying something really fundamental: myself as engineer, you as architect, another as designer, we have a great responsibility, because we can create inclusion or exclusion depending on how we design a space, a product, a tool.

I can think of that motto that we often mention in technical meetings: "*Good design enables, bad design disables*" that is: "good design makes you able, poor design makes you disabled."

In fact, as we often say, and as also emphasized by the World Health Organization, disability is not an "attribute" of the person, but a "situation" where I can find myself when my limits conflict with some barrier. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities does not say "the Disabled" but says "Person with Disabilities: hence a person, with all his or her dimensions, experiences a disability when he or she encounters barriers.

Stefano, what message would you like to offer regarding this responsibility that we technicians have? Especially, what message to the new generations and to those who study Architecture or Engineering or Design?

STEFANO:

Taking up these fundamental concepts of the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and of the WHO model of human functioning, that adds further insight on the fact that disability can be increased or decreased depending on the conditions of the surrounding environment.

As was said before: in thinking and designing anything, whether a spoon or a town (paraphrasing an architecture exhibition held few years ago) it's important to take into account the needs of all people, knowing that you can improve their life or make it harder in every action that one may need to do. In particular, we designers, who, depending on how we imagine the environment, can make it easier or harder our lives and the lives of our fellow citizens.

RENZO:

Thank you, Stefano, for your contribution!

STEFANO:

It was a pleasure, hello everyone, goodbye.

*Image description: the path leading from Venice (Italy) to Valencia (Spain) is traced on a globe.*

### **Third interview**

*Renzo Andrich and José Agustín Martínez (Valencia, Spain).*

*Images description: José is a bald man; he wears glasses and wears a blue shirt.*

RENZO:

Hello Jose!

JOSÉ:

Hello Renzo!

RENZO:

José Agustín Martínez, whom we greet and thank for being here with us, is a psychologist and a pedagogist.

José works at the Institute of Modern Art of Valencia, in Spain. We may wonder what Art has to do with accessibility and inclusion issues. Jose, can you tell us something about you and your work?

JOSÉ:

OK, Renzo. First, I will say I am a person who is about 1,80 tall, I wear glasses, I'm married, and I have three children.

As you said, I have always been involved in psychology and pedagogy. I have also been a teacher in art and humanities. As freelancer I also worked as clinical psychologist and trainer of students and teachers.

Since some years I work at the Museum you have cited before. My job to make the museum available to everybody, that everyone can have accessibility, can have access to culture.

I think that art is a social transformation agent, and therefore the museum must adapt its contents to all groups of people. That is, making culture accessible and make learning enjoyable by all people, to persons with disabilities, considering that there are many disabilities: sensory disability, physical disability, cognitive disability and so on.

In our Museum we are trying to meet the demand of deaf people by making visits with sign interpretation (the sign language used by the deaf); we are also trying to make tactile visits possible for some museum exhibitions; we are also organizing specific collections that can be visited independently by blind people; we've worked with people with Alzheimer's, we've done summer schools for people at risk of social exclusion especially young people who are in family custody.

RENZO:

Thank you, José. What you told us is important. It is also important to know that several cultural institutes around the world are moving in the same direction. Culture is a world heritage: it is not acceptable that someone be excluded from it. What is your "dream"? What message would you like to offer to us?

JOSÉ:

I certainly agree. Culture should be accessible to all audiences. I think it is a universal right of all people. Every group of people with disabilities has different disabilities and we must address all of them in the Museum. We must be able to communicate the contents we have in the museum, which we can and should adapted to each group.

I am not just talking about architectural barriers (that in our museum we are managing to eliminate) I mean the cultural contents: these should be accessible to all people; we have to do all we can to adapt them to each ability and give them the tools that allow access to culture and to its enjoyment on the same level as any other people.

RENZO:

Thank you very much, José!

JOSÉ:

My dream would be, let me say that Renzo, to achieve universal accessibility, to pursue a universal design that can be accessible to all people, however not only in the field of culture: in any field. I deal with this particular field however I think the ideal should be universal accessibility.

*Image description: the path leading from Valencia (Spain) to Curitiba (Brazil) is traced on a globe.*

## **Fourth interview**

*Lúcia Miyake and Geane Poteriko (Curitiba, Brazil).*

*Images description: Maria Lúcia has oriental features, tied dark hair, and wears glasses. She is sitting in her house; next to her we see a handcrafted ornament with the words: happiness / wisdom / love. Geane, Dara's mother, has fair skin and hair, wears glasses and speaks from inside the library where she works.*

*They tell the story of the "Dar a Mão" Association which was created after the birth of Geane's child Dara, who has a physical disability: agenesis of the right hand. During the dialogue, pictures are shown that illustrate moments of their story: Dara playing in the courtyard, drawing, reading history books. In some photos she is alone and in others she interacts with other children. Dara has long blonde hair. She sometimes appears with her prosthetic hand and in other images she does not. Other children with prosthetic hands ride bicycles, play and interact with each other. In the pictures there are also adults with agenesis of the hand or amputees. They display very shining dentures and happy facial expressions. The workshops where professionals make prostheses are shown. The prostheses are colored and have custom designs reminiscent of superheroes (Iron Man and Wonder Woman). The images also show a large group of families and people looked after by the project, in face-to-face meetings and training.*

LÚCIA:

I am Maria Lúcia Miyake Okumura, professor and researcher in assistive technologies. I am part of the group of Systems Production and Engineering. And in 2014 I met Geane.

GEANE:

I am Geane Poteriko, I am a teacher, and I am a member of Lucia's research group.

I started working on inclusion and accessibility after the birth of my daughter Dara. It was a big surprise when my daughter was born with a physical disability, the agenesi of the hand.

At that time, I didn't know whom to turn to, however, on a certain day I got a call. I met Lúcia in 2014, Dara was just some months old, and that's when it all started.

LÚCIA:

When I met Geane and started receiving lots of emails from her, I saw a mother without any support and with an incorrect perception, right? that she was looking only at the missing part of her child.

GEANE:

I was just looking at my little girl's deficit: I only saw the issue of agenesi and I didn't realize she was a child with full functionality who would be able to learn to do everything.

Her 3D-printed prosthetic device is a tool which support her, help in certain activities, and allows for greater autonomy, along with physical rehabilitation.

Lucia came to me as a person who held out her hand to me, she gave me all the knowledge I needed, not only to help myself but others as well.

LÚCIA:

When I met Geane I began to understand that she had a void in her heart and at the same time she was thirsty for knowledge and willingness to learn. The first thing I saw was that there were several mothers in the same situation. And I said something like "Geane, what about exchanging your experience with other moms? "

Hence, from the pains and the achievements of a little girl, today there are several parents from all over Brazil who are in contact with each other and exchange experiences.

Furthermore, in this project, we have also included a facility for prostheses manufacturing and maintenance. We also have professionals specializing in assistive technologies, who have knowledge about the needed services and also products.

This structure has grown up to a size that is no longer sustainable by a simple group of parents; so, we had to establish an association called "Dar a Mão" (give a hand),

GEANE:

which is a non-profit entity (social organization), which operates at national and international level. Today there are over three thousand families assisted daily. We identify the interventions that the family needs, from medical aspects to school inclusion. The service is carried out both remotely and in presence.

We also offer training courses; our network of volunteers is large because it is spread all over Brazil. The "Dar a Mão" Association operates entirely on a voluntary basis: our professionals are not paid, our entire Council, which has representatives from all over Brazil and other countries, does not receive any remuneration, it is only solidarity that drives us.

We see that the little girl can do absolutely anything with her stump, with her limb with agenesi: the main problem is rehabilitation, how to support the rehabilitation program.

LÚCIA:

This device enriches the possibilities of autonomy in her daily life; its personalization helps the rehabilitation process, makes it more motivating. Here I have one device made by a volunteer from Caruarú (Pernambuco), he did it for a girl who wanted to be "Wonder Woman".

GEANE:

What I really want is that all these families that come to us come out of a painful condition and switch to an active attitude, fight for the cause of people with disabilities. For me, a life goal is to be able to go to a playground and take my daughter to play together with other children without any kind of differentiation, without perceiving attitudes of extraneousness. This can be generated by a broad movement of fight and activism, not just talking about inclusion, but acting in a context of inclusion.

LÚCIA:

We should "live the other", don't we? And to know the diversity present in society, to understand the limits and the specificity of each person. I think this sharing will bring us a better world.

*Image description: the path leading from Curitiba (Brazil) to Yangon, (Myanmar) is traced on a globe.*

## **Fifth interview**

*Renzo Andrich and Cynthia Khin Htwe Kyi (Yangon, Myanmar).*

*Image's description: Cynthia has oriental features, has dark tied hair, wears glasses and is wearing a yellow blouse.*

*During the conversation, an image of her school called "Flowers" appears; children around a table are reading books supported by teachers; they play together, take care of plants, a boy pushes his companion's wheelchair into the garden; they choose fruit in the supermarket, they are together in a karate lesson, they are in a room decorated with colorful ornaments; they make a presentation on a stage, pose in front of the school in graduation gowns, show their diplomas; the last picture shows the entire large group of students and professors.*

RENZO:

Cynthia Khin Htwe Kyi is a medical doctor. She is co-founder of "Flowers", which is a school offering also care and rehabilitation services in Myanmar. Cynthia, can you briefly summarize for us the mission and activities of your institution?

CYNTHIA

Yes. Our mission is to provide the systematic training that leads to a happy and well-adjusted life and the future of our children's special needs.

So, we are giving early detection to get early intervention; we also give resources for parents, professionals, teachers of these children; we also work with other government sectors to establish stronger policies upon these children.

RENZO:

That is interesting. How did this work start? Can you tell us a little bit of your story?

CYNTHIA:

Yes, it is a long story. 18 years ago, one of my friends shared her difficulties and challenges. She has a child with autism. She said it was quite difficult to find a school in Myanmar.

At that time, I was in Vietnam. I decided: when I go back to Myanmar, I will start a training center or a school for these children with disability. So, in 2009, when I came back, I met one of the principals from the government schools, and with her help we started our "Flowers" special education and physiotherapy center in 2010.

And from that, to respond the demands of the parents and of our country's situation we have extended from basic education to middle school, elementary school. In 2020 we have extended to high school.

RENZO:

Wonderful. In your experience and from your perspective, what are the main barriers that people with disability encounters in society? What obstacles should be removed for a fully inclusive society?

CYNTHIA:

For a fully inclusive society, we encounter the challenges of lack of human resources for special education (teachers, professionals). Another challenge is the lack of awareness, that is critical for early detection and early referral and early intervention. We have policies and we have laws, but inclusiveness is not established properly, and government policy is not strong enough for the people with disabilities. These are the obstacles we are facing now.

RENZO:

So, your institution is doing a really great job with empowering people to be active protagonists in society. What is the key factor of the results you have achieved so far? And what is your dream for the future?

CYNTHIA:

Our key is the concept of "art of giving", regardless of race and religions. We have respect for every people, every child, every parents. We have built a strong sense of family because of that. We have transparency and trust within our organization, among our parents and among our people with disabilities. We have our children in focus. We work, day by day, for our society becoming very united. We have formed networking and we work together. So, my dream - our dream - for the future is that all our children will nurture a fully inclusive society that respects their identity and makes it possible independent living for our children with disability.

*Image description: the path leading from Yangon, (Myanmar) to Milano (Italy) is traced on a globe.*

## Sixth interview

*Renzo Andrich and Litzy, Fabio and Elena Recalcati (Milano, Italia).*

*Images description: Litzy is a fair-skinned woman, with short straight silver hair, wearing a gray-toned blouse. Fabio is a light-skinned man with short silver hair, he wears glasses and wears a dark blue shirt. Elena is a young woman with Down syndrome and is sitting between her parents; she has brown hair, loose to the shoulders, wears glasses and wears a yellow blouse.*

*During the interview various family pictures are presented, from when Elena was a baby to her adolescence and youth. Sometimes she is with her brothers (two sisters and a brother), sometimes with her parents and with friends.*

RENZO:

Litzy and Fabio Recalcati, from Milan, Italy, together with Elena, one of your four children, thank you for being here with us. Please tell us something, in brief, of your story.

LITZY:

Thank you! We are very happy to be with you. I am Litzy (62 years old), here with me is Fabio (67) and Elena (almost 22). We have been for 35 years, we are already grandparents, our three oldest children are already on their own while Elena still lives with us.

When we were waiting for her, we did not know she had a Down syndrome. We had a very normal pregnancy, however there were complications at the birth; soon we feared for her and her health because we had to stay in the hospital for one month, there were treatments, we had some problems, and we were afraid that in addition to trisomy there were permanent neurological damages. Instead, she brilliantly overcame everything. She attended school, she went all the way to graduation at the artistic high school and now she is getting ready to enter the world of work.

Surely in this challenge, in this strong shake-up, which was the disability coming into our family, we have been able cope thanks also to the help of the friends we had around us, of the families we had around, and to our experience within the Focolare Movement. We immediately realized that we could not make it alone, we needed a lot of specific help, of many kinds of support that have never been lacking, both as practical help and psychological support.

RENZO:

When it comes to accessibility, people tend to think only to those "architectural things" that concern people who have a motor or a visual or an auditory limitation, and you don't realize that maybe there are also barriers that exclude people who have intellectual or relational problems. In your experience, did you encounter some such barrier?

FABIO:

I am going to try to answer. Yes, we did. Elena did not have any major physical problems but certainly there are some intellectual problems. The thing we noticed right away is this: that the disabled person is usually framed in a kind of "fence" in which he or she is defined, its potential is defined *a priori*: "will be able to do that, will not be able to do that...".

There is also a stereotype connected to this: for example, somebody says that people with Down syndrome have a particular propensity for music, are particularly emotional, are very affectionate. All these things are actually not true, because a person who has a disability, whatever it may be, is a unique person, with his or her positive sides

and his or her downsides, that are his or her limits; this by the way, disability is something which must also be seen in relation to each of us: each of us, in our lives, may happen to go through phases of disability or fragility, let's simply think to when we age. So, this "positive" and "negative" is something typical of any person, at any age of life.

This look, this way of looking at the disabled person, was the limit that we soon saw in other people.

RENZO:

Barriers are therefore stereotypes and prejudices.

FABIO:

Stereotypes and prejudices. Of course, the opposite risk must also be borne in mind: to think that every person is capable of everything. In real life there are limits. This is true for everyone. Only, the limits are diverse: this is a fundamental fact.

Of course, in trying to address these problems we often found ourselves, how I can say it, scared. How do we deal with these things? Deal with things in the present moment: this was somewhat the key to overcoming these difficulties.

RENZO:

It's very important what you say: is there any message that is close to your heart, that you'd like to pass on to us to help each other to build a more inclusive society? What should we do?

LITZY:

The 22-year experience with Elena was incredibly positive in making us realize that we could not do things alone. So, the important message for us is to team up, to work with others, each with their own specific skills, with their own possibilities, and above all with a great availability to listen to what the other can offer you: a different point of view, a bit of help, some support. You really cannot make it on your own.

This was also so paradigmatic in the experience of BASKIN, as Elena may tell us. Because when we saw the first match of this sport which is so inclusive, we thought it could be the sketch of a more inclusive society.

RENZO:

You mentioned a sport that probably few of them still know: BASKIN. Elena, can you tell us what it is?

ELENA:

Sure. BASKIN is more or less like a normal basketball, because in fact there are two traditional baskets. Then there are other baskets, more or less in the center of the playing field, because they're actually in the pivot area, where pivots in role one and role two can make the basket from the highest basket. Instead, the others who use wheelchairs they struggle more but with other companions who have motor difficulties they make basket from the lowest basket.

RENZO:

I understand. So, it's a basketball, redesigned in a way that people can play with their different sports abilities. Thank you, thank you so much for being with us!

*Image description: the path leading from Milano (Italy) to Belluno (Italy) is traced on a globe.*

## **Seventh interview**

*Renzo Andrich and Oscar De Pellegrin (Belluno, Italy).*

*Image's description: Oscar is a fair skinned man with silver hair; he wears glasses and wears a green sweatshirt.*

*While he talks, we see picture where he is shown in a wheelchair practicing archery, rejoicing for victories with the gold medal on his chest along with other silver and bronze winners, receiving a medal from a young boy himself in a wheelchair. During the conversation Oscar also shows one of his gold medals.*

RENZO:

Good afternoon, Oscar. Thank you for being here with us.

Oscar De Pellegrin is from a small mountain town in northern Italy (Belluno), and he is a well-known person in the world of sport. He has been national and international champion in the disciplines of archery and shooting. He competed in six Paralympics Games and earned two gold medals and four bronze medals. Oscar, you were also the Italian flag-bearer at the London Paralympics in 2012.

However, beyond that, please tell us: who is Oscar?

OSCAR:

First, greeting to everyone. Oscar is a person who had the fortune in his life to encounter disability. I believe that disability, for me, has been a springboard (also listening to the resume you just mentioned) and it was not a limit.

In his first life I was a 1,90 m tall person, who weighed 80 kg and had my own life. In my second life I am 1,50 tall however I continue to commit, to be motivated, to take control of my life and sport was my extraordinary instrument: it was the sport that really gave me the opportunity to discover new skills and to engage, because without commitment, without sacrifice you would not go anywhere.

This is the first thing: that anything in life we want to do, to achieve as a goal, we must know that commitment, sacrifice, will, determination are primary requisites.

In my life I did not do just that, even if it's a beautiful part, the one that everyone knows a little bit. I am a person who lives a normal life, has a family, an adoptive son, a beautiful social life with many friends. So, I say, as mentioned before, that my luck was encountering disability, but above all overcoming it. This gave me a great willpower and fortitude to live life which is not easy, but which is also aimed at helping others.

RENZO:

Thank you, Oscar. Listen, I get a curiosity: do you have a gold medal at your fingertips, and can you show it to us?

OSCAR:

I believe that, given the audience, this is also a nice stimulus to see. Well, this medal is the one I won in London in 2012. It was my last participation, and the most beautiful because I was also a flag-bearer, and so I debunked the idea that usually the flag bearer does not win medals. Instead, I came back victorious, and it was a great achievement, because I achieved my goal: it will always remain as an indelible mark within me.

RENZO:

Mamma mia, what an emotion! You were all of us in those days! Look, we know you are still very active in the world of sport at Italian national level but also internationally, however you are also very engaged with helping many people, many young people with disabilities, to pursue autonomy.

OSCAR:

Yes, my commitment, once my competitive career was over, was addressed to sport management because I think I bring an experience of so many years in the field within these federations, where you must keep the focus, which is the athlete, everything must focus on the athlete and not on other choices. Hence the will to help so many young people grow through sport and therefore to dedicate myself to others.

However, above all, here comes the most beautiful part: what really gives me the greatest satisfaction is the social part, the one where you dedicate yourself to the others without having the desire, without having the goal of receive something: this is what "help" really means. I believe that if a person is in trouble (if you have eyes to see these troubles), you must at least try to help his or her, to get his or her out of that difficult situation.

The association I created ten years ago tries to create the best conditions to enable every person who is in trouble, through a variety of activities (such as welcoming, motivation, training and so on), becoming able to say: "OK, if they made it, I could make it too." Please believe me, this is the greatest satisfaction: when you help a person, and you see that he or she makes it. I think this is the most beautiful medal, not the one I showed you from London.

RENZO:

I understand you have an observatory of so many other people, of so many other personal stories. Based on your experience, what are, in your view, the main barriers that still we must remove and eradicate in society? What would you say to the new generations that, unlike our generation, are demonstrating better awareness on the

themes of love for our planet, of societal sustainability, and therefore also for an inclusive society? (because a society is not sustainable if it is not inclusive).

OSCAR:

I think we must work a lot on the inclusion of any person because, as I always say, the architectural barrier may be overcome with the help of each of you. Conversely, it is the mental barrier that hurts; mental barriers put a wall in front of you and do not allow you to have a dialogue on equal foot with each other.

So, the difficulty is that. It is essential that we judge the people we have in front of us based on what they have inside and not on their condition. I believe that today's society can transfer this great message which also comes from the Paralympic world.

The cultural growth we have had in recent years can be an element that leads to reasoning and strengthening more and more the sustainability of the world. The inclusive world we want is just that: when we will not talk about disability anymore, but each person will be able to be autonomous within this world. Persons with disabilities can also help improve our planet.

*Image description: the path leading from Belluno (Italy) to Porto Alegre (Brazil) is traced on a globe.*

## Conclusion

*Rita Bersch (Porto Alegre, Brasile) and Renzo Andrich (Belluno, Italy)*

RITA:

How many experiences, how many stories! How many there would still be, which due to time constraints we cannot offer you! But we are only at the beginning of this project, and we want to tell you something about what we would like to do.

RENZO:

There are many people and civil society organizations in various parts of the planet who are working for a more accessible and inclusive world. Our project aims to join this choral commitment, bringing a contribution inspired by the culture of unity, the founding dimension of the Focolare Movement. We will draw on the many concrete life experiences and the social commitment of people who personally experience situations of disability or who are in contact with them at various levels: witnesses of how the lived experience of the limit is able to illuminate thought and action necessary to make communities evolve in a truly inclusive way.

RITA:

The project is divided into three phases: Learn, Act, Share. Now we are in the first phase, learning: we are collecting experiences from all over the world by people with disabilities, or by people involved in disability at various levels, who have also managed to plant a "seed of a united world" in their environment, marking a development step towards a more inclusive community. We will carry out various online seminars based on these experiences.

RENZO:

In the second phase - acting - we foresee various events dedicated to in-depth analysis, sharing and interdisciplinary discussion on these issues; to co-designing specific actions to be carried out in the third phase.

RITA:

Do you want to participate, do you want to collaborate, do you want to share your experience? On the project website [www.aeis.cloud](http://www.aeis.cloud) you will find all information and references.

RENZO:

We conclude our conversation with a short movie, courtesy of the Dolomiti Unesco Foundation, that takes us back to nature, recalling in some way the environment-humanity combination, so dear to the idea of "integral ecology" from which we started. Let's immerse ourselves for a moment in the Dolomites, beautiful mountains in the Italian Alps recently recognized by Unesco as "World Heritage", and for this reason, a heritage for all. A walk together,

each with the means suited to their mobility needs, to enjoy a world in which everything, even the natural environment, is accessible.

RITA:

Thanks for joining us!

*Image description: the path leading from Porto Alegre (Brazil) to the Dolomites (Italy) is traced on a globe.*

## **Film: Accessible Dolomites – A heritage for all”**

*Image description:*

*In the background there are mountains, the sky and some clouds. This image shows the UNESCO / Dolomites World Heritage since 2009 / UNESCO Dolomites Foundation logo.*

*Aerial scenes of snow-capped mountains. A group of people is preparing for a walk. You can glimpse the details of setting up the wheelchairs for a trip: hands that join the parts and tighten the screws, wheels that rotate.*

*On a path in the woods, various people walk with their colorful backpacks and mountain clothing; some of them ride their wheelchairs or scooters. They pass over a wooden walkway.*

*The group, side by side, walks on a wide road against the backdrop of snow-capped mountains. In the sky there are many white clouds with patches of clear sky. The path crosses a clearing in the woods, a bird flies high. At the foot of the mountain, we see trees, plants and lawns. The big mountains are getting closer and closer, and the trail takes the group to the base where all begin to climb. Those who use manual wheelchairs receive help from their climbing companions. We see details of different mobility aids, the faces are happy, people help each other put on their anoraks.*

*During the ascent, many trees and a beautiful landscape with plants, sky, clouds and stone walls appear. Scooters and wheelchairs follow the same path with the group. When crossing a snowy area, wheelchairs are pulled with the aid of rock ropes. Everyone stops on a terrace to celebrate their arrival on a peak.*

*At this moment we read the sentence: “Dolomites, a world heritage site for all - [www.visitdolomites.com](http://www.visitdolomites.com)”. The logos of the collaborating entities appear and finally the logo of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism.*