# THE TOOLKIT OF PROXIMITY
Conceptual exploration

landscape

The term **landscape** is used to identify within the territory all those relationships that are created between the natural and anthropic elements that establishing the identity. In particular, I consider the relationship between nature, society and the stratification over years. The aim is, therefore, to protect and enhance the elements that constitute it and that are recognisable for their **natural**, **historical** and **cultural value** that have defined it over years. It also considers a very important relationship with the surrounding countryside, which represents an element to be enhanced in order to integrate the nature with the urban settlement.

This concept of **landscape** was reinterpreted in terms of proximity in order to understand what interventions could be carried out to ensure that the landscape and the surrounding area were properly developed, also considering the needs of citizens. Some of the solutions defined, to ensure that the landscape becomes a fundamental part of the urban proximity system, are represented here with some conceptual diagrams showing the key and essential elements to realise this concept. In particular, they can be described as follows:

1. Creation of a **cycle-pedestrian path** inside the green spaces of the city. It is necessary to provide paths that are safe and accessible for all people who want to walk along them. For this reason, benches are provided along the path where people can stop and rest during their walk in the greenery, and also some lampposts in order to ensure that the space can be used safely at night. The latter are designed with photovoltaic panel technology in order to be sustainable;
2. Creation of a **cycle-pedestrian path** in the rural landscape. The pathway must come into contact with the surrounding landscape in order to give people the opportunity to experience it. For this reason, cycle-pedestrian paths are planned that run alongside the different crops in the surrounding fields; along these paths, information panels can also be found that give information about the cultures and their history;
3. Creation of **agriculture experiences** and viewpoints in the rural landscape. The landscape must be understood in order to be valued. This is why it is necessary to provide some areas where the landscape becomes part of the rural path and gives to the people the opportunity to experience it through educational activities. Observatories are also provided in order to allow the people to look not only at what is close to them, but also to explore beyond their physical limits;
4. Creation of a **green path** inside the landscape. It should be considered that there are different types of landscape and each of them has its own intrinsic characteristics that need to be brought to light. For this reason, paths are envisaged that seek to connect, for example wooded areas with others destined to meadows where people can stop, chat and where children can play surrounded by nature.
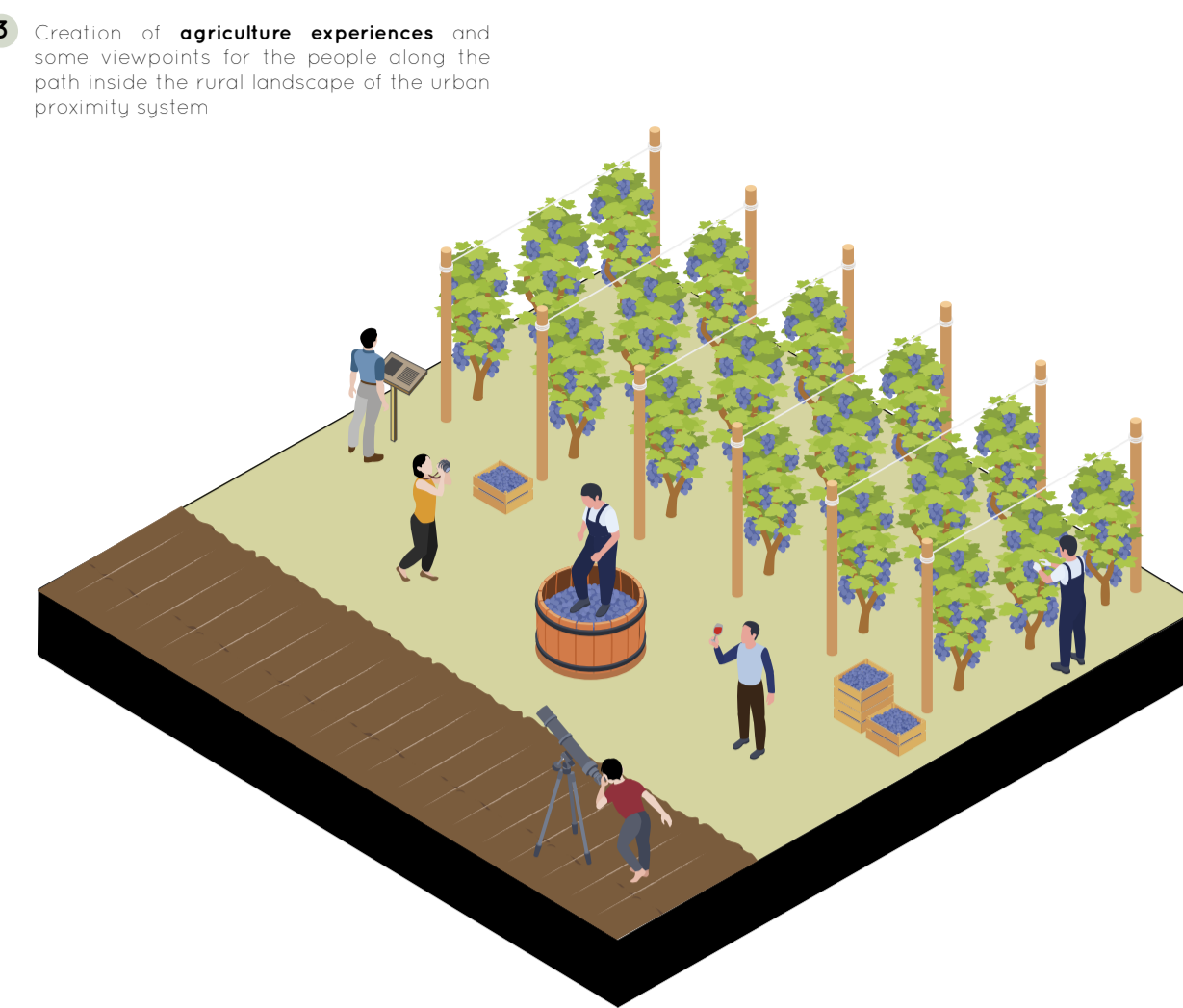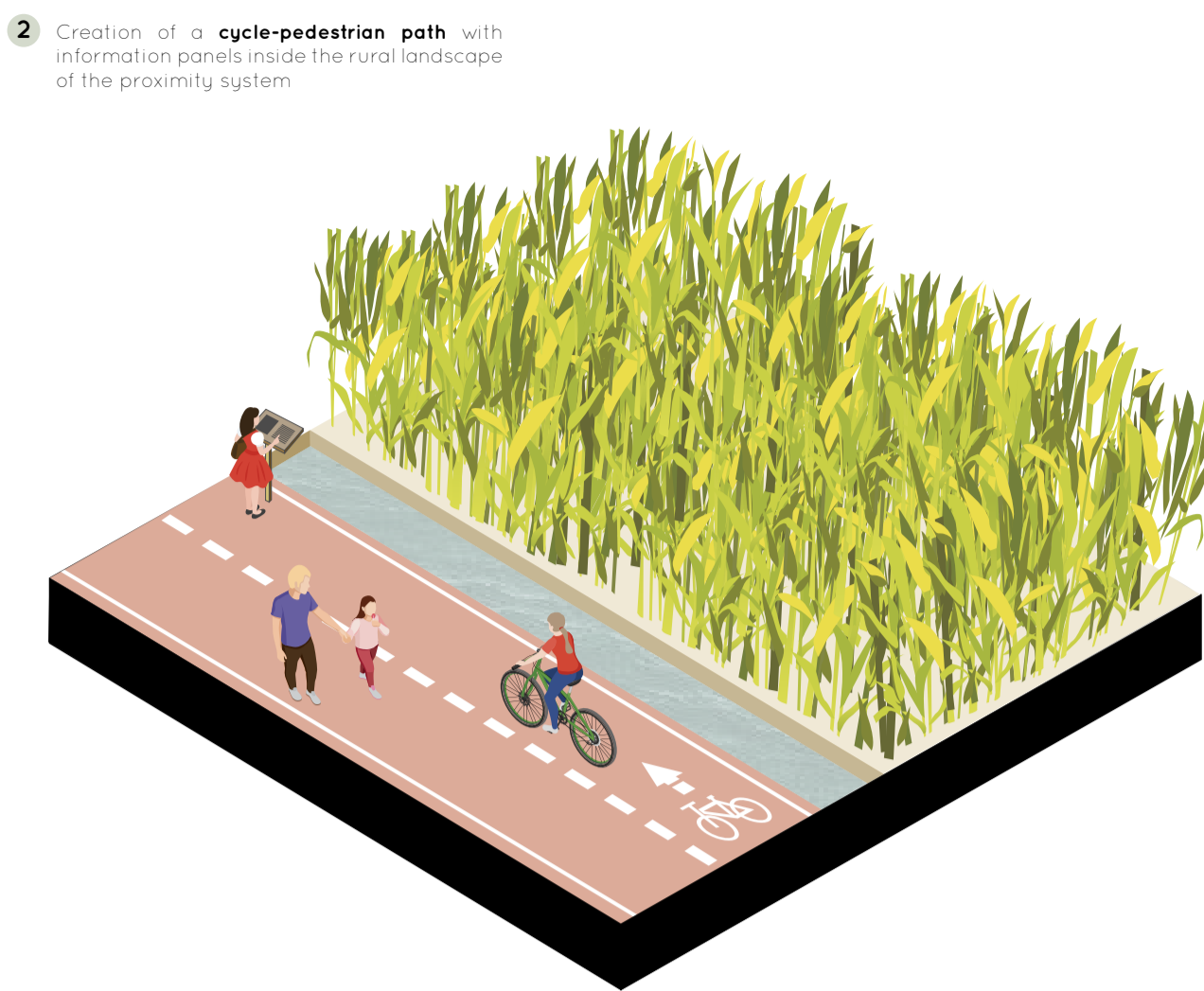
infrastructure

The term **infrastructure** refers to all those components that are distributed over the territory and determine and influence its future composition. There are different types of infrastructure that can be considered; the most widespread ones, found in the territory, are railways, roads, inland waterways and others that can be considered in relation to the location. They, therefore, generate a very important impact on the territory and often become permanent features of it as they are very difficult to remove or move. In connection with these, another important element also falls into this category, namely **mobility**. It ensures that people can move from one place to another. Although over the years, it has been characterised by the presence of cars, today there is a desire to promote more sustainable mobility.

This concept of **infrastructure** was reinterpreted in terms of proximity in order to understand what can be done in the future to promote sustainable solutions to improve the quality of the urban environments. For this reason, it is possible to represent some of the possibilities that could change the future of infrastructures by trying to make them safer and more accessible to people, ensuring also some sustainable strategies such as:

1. Creation of new **railway station** in the urban system. It is necessary to make the urban proximity system accessible with different means of transport that can also bring inside people from faraway places. These new hubs that are created must then be equipped with appropriate facilities such as ticket machines, shelters, lighted timetables and a bike-sharing hub to ensure to the people the possibility to move around and have everything they need close by;
2. Creation of new **level crossings** close to the rails. It is intended to allow safe connections not only by car, but also by bicycle or on foot within the city. For this reason, safe crossings, with some cycle-pedestrian path, must also be provided close to the rails in order to ensure that people can cross the infrastructure safely;
3. Creation of new **bus stops** in the urban settlement. In order to promote the slow mobility within the city, new bus stops must be provided to connect the urban system with its surroundings. These should also include natural and no-natural shelters that allow people to take shade during the different seasons of the year. In addition, bike-sharing hubs should be provided in the vicinity of these bus stops, once again encouraging sustainable mobility solutions by limiting the use of cars;
4. Rethink the parts dedicated to **people** and those to **cars**. The infrastructure has to be rethought in order to be more citizen-friendly within the urban settlement and less to cars. For this reason, it is intended to limit the roads in some sections by making them low-speed and one-way streets near the urban settlement, by placing the sidewalk and bicycle lanes and all safety devices, including the one for people with disabilities.
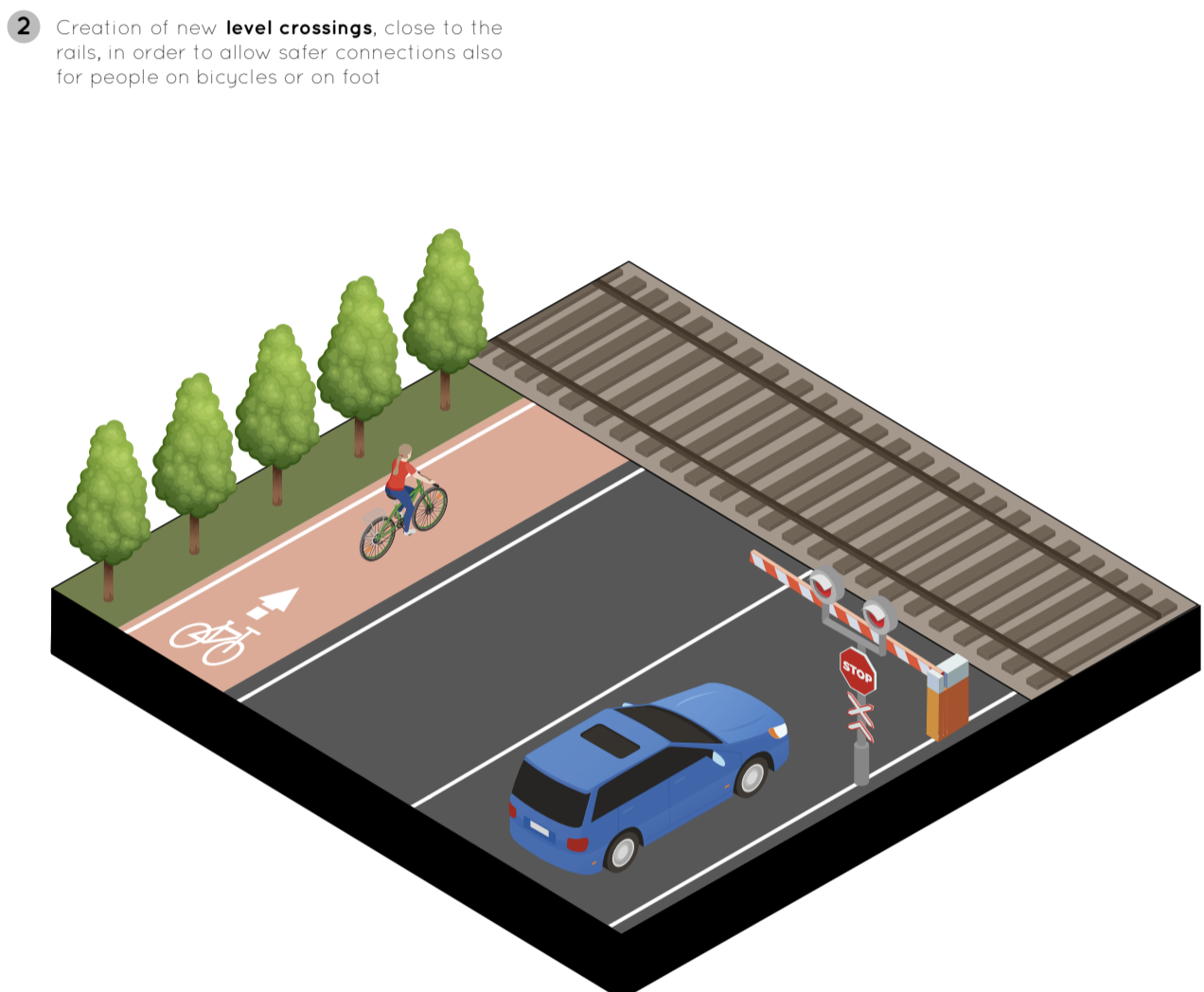
urban settlement

The **urban settlement**, instead, refers to everything that allows people to live, to be in the territory and to congregate in a space that must, however, be organised and not just any space. Over the years, the territory has been divided into different systems that can be concentrated, linear or open. These systems that are created within the city with the combination of different elements and that constitute the urban settlement must, however, be well-connected to each other in order to define lasting and effective links that are resistant even to the passage of time. They are like this today because they have been influenced by very different factors, both anthropic and natural. The first division includes factors in connection to the history, culture, tradition and economy of the place, while the second includes those linked to the morphology of the territory.

This concept of **urban settlement** was reinterpreted in terms of proximity in order to understand which solutions can stimulate activities and which can be exploited in order to reactivate its internal dynamics also with the creation of new functions. In fact, the basic idea is to create recognisable urban systems within the territory that can be experienced by people every day as they present services needed by people. In particular, it is possible to consider:

1. Creation of **botanical** and **community garden**. In order to promote connections between the urban settlement and the surrounding nature, it is necessary to provide actions that foster this link. For this, it is important to envisage areas in which botanical gardens are created and that can be enjoyed by people and in particular by schools and children. They can become real spaces in which to experience the nature in connection with the city in an educational way;
2. Organisation of **weekly markets** inside some public spaces. Some abandoned spaces within the city can be revitalised through the exclusive temporary events that can take place every week or every month. In this way, people are attracted to visit these events; not only local citizens, but also people from outside that are interested to come;
3. Creation of new **economical** and **productive pole**. The urban settlement must be implemented within the city in order to attract more and more people not only from the surrounding areas, but also from far away. For this reason, a new economic and productive hub has to be created in which new workplaces can also be provided for congresses, trade fairs and economic events that allow the urban system to become a new productive pole for the periphery of Mantova;
4. Realisation of **festivals** and **events**. It is necessary to reactivate some of the city's abandoned or disused public spaces; this can be done by organising cultural events or festivals to which people are attracted to go and spend their free time. Here again, efforts are made to involve not only the inhabitants of the system, but also outsiders.
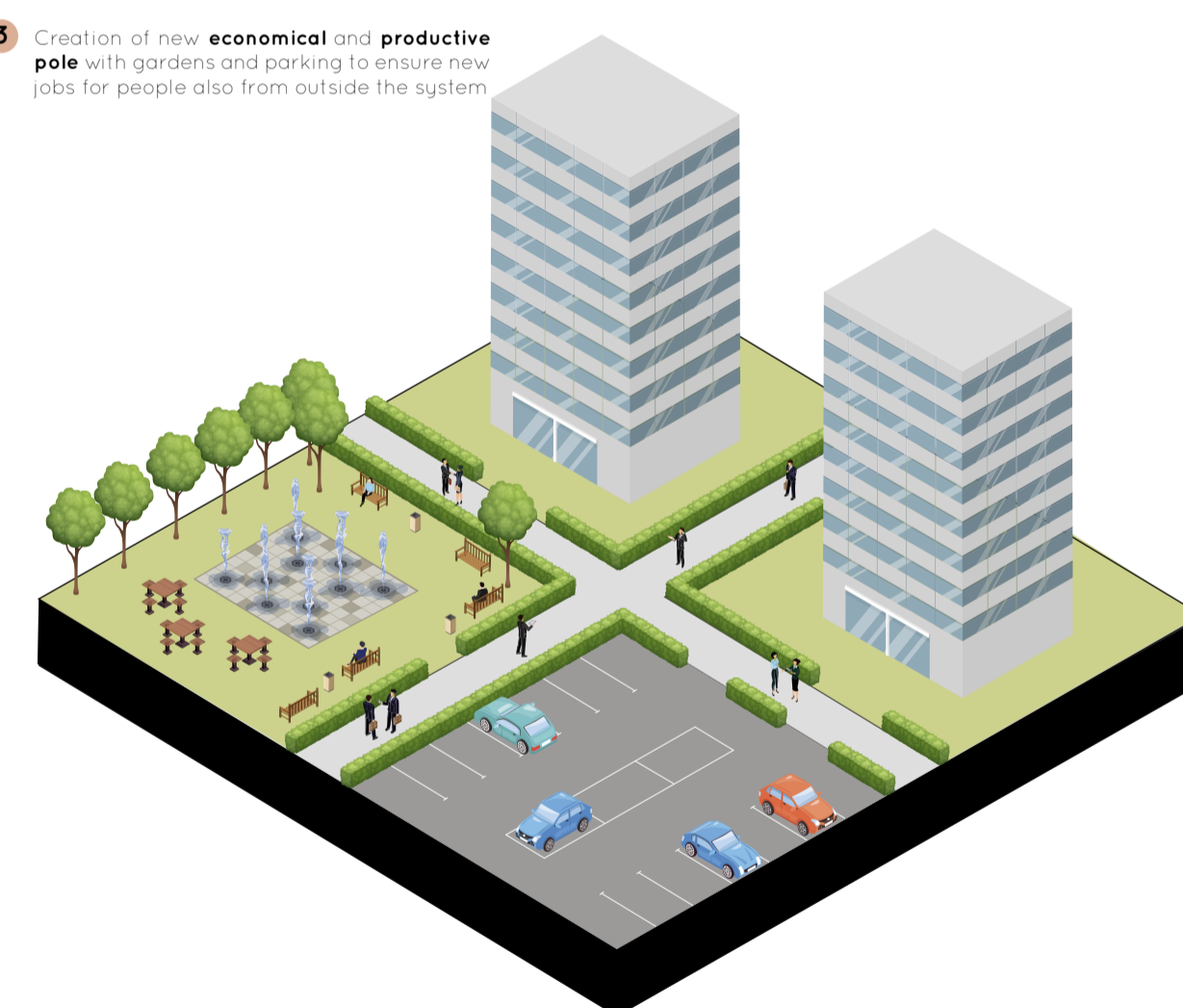
public space

The **public space** is the fundamental place at the city, able to reflecting its inherent urban complexities. If properly designed, it is capable of fostering a set of human, physical and visual interactions that allow people to come into contact with other citizens and establish solid relationships. There are different types of public space: it can be a park, a square or simply a street that is adapted to the new needs of citizens. In fact, it should be considered that the public space must respect the people' demands and satisfy them in order to become a place where citizens decide to spend their time. If it is designed without respecting their needs, it becomes a space of passage and lacking identity, where people only rarely pass by.

This concept of **public space** was reinterpreted in terms of proximity in order to understand which actions can be taken within the city in order to create spaces that are accessible to all and where people can stay and spend their free time. They must be also adaptable and flexible to different needs and can be exploited in various ways. Some of the possible solutions to realise, therefore, from spaces to public places may be:

1. Creation along the cycle-pedestrian path of some **fitness trail** and **picnic areas**. In order to encourage people to spend more free time outdoors, bicycle and pedestrian paths in nature should be provided with some rest areas where people can relax. For this, some picnic areas with a few tables where people can have refreshments has to be inserted. In addition, in order to also encourage the physical activity, hubs with some sports equipment are planned, where people can stop to exercise during their run or walk;
2. Creation of **dehors** outside the bars. In order for the city to be experienced by people, it must provide places where it come into contact with local activities and services. For this reason, in the vicinity of bars and restaurants, or other types of activities, it is necessary to provide open-air areas, dehors, where some tables and seats are present and where people can stop to chat and eat with other people, bringing the city to life;
3. Creation of a **path** within the urban fabric. All spaces within the city can, if properly thought out, become public places, including, for example, the infrastructure. With this in mind, the idea is to make the street in front of the old school in the neighbourhood pedestrianised, which can become a place where children can have fun with some activities and games drawn on the ground. They are completely reversible in that they can be removed, if the street is to be returned to its original state;
4. Creation of **spaces for art** within the city. Temporariness is a key feature and element in order to promote proximity within the city. For this reason, temporary exhibitions are envisaged within the urban system where local artists can exhibit their works and make themselves known to the citizens. Such dedicated areas are part of certain path that can be enjoyed by people and can enrich them.

landscape

1 Creation of a **cycle-pedestrian path** inside the green spaces of the city with some benches, bins and photovoltaic streetlights

2 Creation of a **cycle-pedestrian path** with information panels inside the rural landscape of the proximity system

3 Creation of **agriculture experiences** and some viewpoints for the people along the path inside the rural landscape of the urban proximity system

4 Creation of a **green path** within the urban proximity system that brings together different landscapes, like woodlands and meadows

infrastructure

1 Creation of a **railway station** with some **equipments** such as ticket machines, shelters, lighted timetables and a bike-sharing hub

2 Creation of new **level crossings**, close to the rails, in order to allow safer connections also for people on bicycles or on foot

3 Creation of new **bus stops** to encourage the people to use public transports in which are present also bike-sharing hubs

4 Rethink the parts dedicated to people and those to cars; add also some **equipments** to make these connections accessible to all the people

urban settlement

1 Creation of **botanical** and **community gardens** in the vicinity of schools to be used as experimental laboratories by children and other people

2 Revitalisation of some public spaces through the proposal of **weekly markets**, in which the local products can be sell to the people

3 Creation of new **economical** and productive **pole** with gardens and parking to ensure new jobs for people also from outside the system

4 Realisation of **festivals** and **events** that can attract and entice not only local citizens but also those from neighbouring areas

public space

1 Creation along the cycle-pedestrian path some hubs for the **fitness trail** and also some **picnic ares** in which it is possible to rest

2 Creation of **dehors** outside the bars where people can hang out, chat and share experiences with other citizens

3 Creation of a **path** within the urban fabric that connects the schools with some designed games on the ground that encourage children to walk along it

4 Creation of spaces for art within the city where **local artists** can exhibit their works during the different period of the year in order to promote the local art