

Avalanche Scenario Model Chain (2025-11 Update)



⚠ Handle with care — work in progress

Overview

- The Avalanche Scenario Model Chain is developed with in EUREGIO Project CAIROS
- The Avalanche Scenario Model Chain steps are the preprocessing for the Avalanche Scenario Mapper
- The Avalanche Scenario Model Chain is a orchestrates the full automated avalanche modelling workflow — from raw terrain data to structured delineation of potential release areas (PRAs) and size dependent avalanche simulations.
 - Main entrypoint: `cairosModelChain/runCairos.py`
 - Orchestrates 15 workflow steps (Step 00–15)
 - Integrates AvaFrame (FlowPy engine) in editable mode via Pixi
 - Manages directory trees, inputs, and processing configurations automatically

Cairos/cairosModelChain Repository layout

```
Cairos/
├── cairosModelChain/          # Main Python package (modular CAIROS workflow)
│   ├── cairosCfg.ini          # Default configuration (global)
│   ├── local_cairosCfg.ini    # Local project override (preferred for runs)
│   ├── runCairos.py           # Main driver (Steps 00–15, orchestrates workflow)
│   ├── runInitWorkDir.py      # Step 00 – Initialize project directory + logs
│   ├── runPlots.py            # Optional plotting entrypoint (not in main workflow)
│   └── com1PRA/               # Step 01–08: Potential Release Area (PRA) workflow
│       ├── praDelineation.py  # Step 01 – Derive PRA field from DEM + forest
│       ├── praSelection.py    # Step 02 – Apply thresholds, aspect + region masks
│       ├── praSubCatchments.py # Step 03 – Delineate subcatchments (WhiteboxTools)
│       ├── praProcessing.py    # Step 04 – Clean and polygonize PRA masks → GeoJSON
│       ├── praSegmentation.py  # Step 05 – Intersect PRAs with subcatchments → GeoJSON
│       ├── praAssignElevSize.py # Step 06 – Classify PRAs by elevation + area size
│       ├── praPrepForFlowPy.py # Step 07 – Prepare PRAs for FlowPy simulation
│       ├── praMakeBigDataStructure.py # Step 08 – Build aggregated FlowPy input tree
│       ├── bottleneckSmoothing.py # Not used ATM
│       └── __init__.py
```

```

├── com2AvaDirectory/          # Step 09-15: FlowPy & Avalanche Directory chain
│   ├── avaDirBuildFromFlowPy.py # Step 13 - Convert FlowPy results to AvaDirectory
│   ├── avaDirType.py           # Step 14 - Build scenario type structure (dry/wet)
│   ├── avaDirResults.py        # Step 15 - Aggregate final scenario results/maps
│   └── __pycache__/
├── in1Utils/                  #Core utilities (shared across all modules)
│   ├── cfgUtils.py             # Config handling, GDAL/PROJ setup, manifest writers
│   ├── dataUtils.py            # Raster/vector I/O, compression, helper functions
│   ├── plottingUtils.py        # Plotting helpers (matplotlib/geopandas)
│   ├── workflowUtils.py        # Workflow flag parsing, discovery of FlowPy leaves
│   └── __pycache__/
├── in2Parameter/              # Parameterization + FlowPy integration
│   ├── compParams.py           # Step 09/11 - Compute size-dependent FlowPy parameters
│   ├── sizeParameters.py       # Parameter range management for simulation inputs
│   ├── muxi.py                 # Additional parameter computation utilities
│   └── __pycache__/
├── outPlots/                   # Optional plotting layer
│   ├── out1SizeParameter.py    # Plot FlowPy parameter outputs (alpha/umax/etc.)
│   ├── plotFunctions.py        # Common plotting logic
│   └── __pycache__/
└── __pycache__/

```

Quick start (Linux)

1. Minimal system prerequisites

- Install only the flexible, OS-level tools system-wide.
- All project dependencies (AvaFrame, CAIROS, GDAL, NumPy, etc.) will live inside Pixi-managed environments.
- System Python (python3.10 or 3.11 on Ubuntu) is kept minimal — used only for tools like VS Code, Pixi bootstrap, etc.
- CAIROS and AvaFrame never touch system Python → they live in isolated .pixi/envs/* environments.
- Optional:
 - Install VS Code for editing, debugging, and integrated terminals: <https://code.visualstudio.com/download>

```

# System-wide basics
sudo apt update
sudo apt install -y git python3 python3-pip

# Install Pixi (recommended via installer script)
curl -fsSL https://pixi.sh/install.sh | bash
# restart your shell so `pixi` is in PATH

```

2) Install AvaFrame (temporary: dev branch)

```

# choose your workspace directory, e.g. ~/Documents/Applications
cd ~/Documents/Applications

# clone AvaFrame
git clone https://github.com/avaframe/AvaFrame.git
cd AvaFrame
# checkout branch until next release (ATM)
git checkout PS_FP_outputRelInfo

```

Two options from here:

Option A: Use AvaFrame via CAIROS

- Nothing else required — CAIROS links AvaFrame in editable mode automatically through Pixi.
- Skip the manual build step.

Option B: Use AvaFrame standalone

- If you want to run AvaFrame directly (outside CAIROS), you need to compile the Cython parts:

```
# set the avalanche dir in local_avaFrameCfg.py and apply your settings to
local_com4FlowPyCfg.ini
cd AvaFrame
pixi shell
python setup.py build_ext --inplace
# checkout branch until next release (ATM)
git checkout PS_FP_outputRelInfo
pixi shell --environment dev
cd AvaFrame/avaframe
python runCom4FlowPy.py
```

- Repeat this step whenever Cython code changes or after pulling new updates.

3) Install CAIROS repo

```
# choose your workspace directory next to AvaFrame
cd ~/Documents/Applications
git clone <your-cairos-repo> Cairos # !!!!!
cd Cairos
```

4) Setup CAIROS ModelChain env

```
# Clean any old envs if something is corrupted
rm -f pixi.lock
pixi clean -e dev || true
#pixi clean cache || true
rm -rf .pixi

# Install dev env (with local AvaFrame)
pixi install -e dev

# Check that CAIROS uses your local AvaFrame
pixi shell -e dev
python -c "import avaframe, pathlib; print(pathlib.Path(avaframe.__file__).resolve())"
> .../Documents/Applications/AvaFrame/avaframe/__init__.py
```

5) Configure

Copy the defaults and edit the **local** copies:

```
# CAIROS ModelChain config
cd Cairos/cairosModelChain
cp cairosCfg.ini local_cairosCfg.ini

# AvaFrame config
cd ../AvaFrame/avaframe
cp avaframeCfg.ini local_avaframeCfg.ini
```

- Fill in `local_cairoCfg.ini` → [MAIN] with your project info and input filenames (the files must exist in the run's `00_input/` folder once the project is initialized).
- Adapt your `local_*Cfg.ini`'s
- Details TBA....

[illegible]

```
cd Cairo/cairoModelChain #location of runCairo.py
pixi run -e dev cairo
```

```
INFO:__main__:

=====
... Start main driver for CAIROS model chain (2025-11-06 13:11:24) ...
=====

INFO:__main__: Config file:
/home/christoph/Documents/Applications/Cairos/cairosModelChain/local_cairosCfg.ini
INFO:__main__: Step 00: Initializing project...
INFO:runInitWorkDir: cairosDir:
/media/christoph/Daten/Cairos/ModelChainProcess/cairosTutti/pilotSellaTest/alpha32_3_umax8_18_ma
xS5_
INFO:runInitWorkDir: ...cairosDir: ./
INFO:runInitWorkDir: ...inputDir: ./00_input
INFO:runInitWorkDir: ...praDelineationDir: ./01_praDelineation
INFO:runInitWorkDir: ...praSelectionDir: ./02_praSelection
INFO:runInitWorkDir: ...praBottleneckSmoothingDir: ./03_praBottleneckSmoothing
INFO:runInitWorkDir: ...praSubcatchmentsDir: ./04_praSubcatchments
INFO:runInitWorkDir: ...praProcessingDir: ./05_praProcessing
INFO:runInitWorkDir: ...praSegmentationDir: ./06_praSegmentation
INFO:runInitWorkDir: ...praAssignElevSizeDir: ./07_praAssignElevSize
```

```

INFO:runInitWorkDir: ...praPrepForFlowPyDir: ./08_praPrepForFlowPy
INFO:runInitWorkDir: ...praMakeBigDataStructureDir: ./09_flowPyBigDataStructure
INFO:runInitWorkDir: ...flowPySizeParametersDir: ./09_flowPyBigDataStructure
INFO:runInitWorkDir: ...flowPyRunDir: ./09_flowPyBigDataStructure
INFO:runInitWorkDir: ...flowPyResToSizeDir: ./10_flowPyOutput
INFO:runInitWorkDir: ...flowPyOutputDir: ./10_flowPyOutput
INFO:runInitWorkDir: ...avaDirDir: ./11_avaDirectoryData
INFO:runInitWorkDir: ...avaDirTypeDir: ./12_avaDirectory
INFO:runInitWorkDir: ...avaDirResultsDir: ./12_avaDirectory
INFO:runInitWorkDir: ...avaDirIndexDir: ./12_avaDirectory
INFO:runInitWorkDir: ...avaScenMapsDir: ./13_avaScenMaps
INFO:runInitWorkDir: ...avaScenPreviewDir: ./14_avaScenPreview
INFO:runInitWorkDir: ...plotsDir: ./91_plots
INFO:runInitWorkDir: ...gisDir: ./92_GIS
INFO:__main__: Step 00: Project initialized in 0.01s
INFO:__main__: Step 00: Log file: runCairos_20251106_131124.log
ERROR:__main__: Step 00: Required input files are missing in ./00_input:
ERROR:__main__: - DEM=10DTM_pilotSellaTest.tif
ERROR:__main__: - FOREST=10nDOM_binAgg_100_pilotSellaTest_forestCom.tif
ERROR:__main__: - BOUNDARY=regionPilotSella.geojson
ERROR:__main__:

```

... Please provide the required input files and run again ...

- Copy or prepare these files into your project's `00_input/` directory.
- Their filenames must match the entries defined in your INI's `[MAIN]` section e.g:

```

[MAIN]
DEM      = 10DTM_pilotSellaTest.tif
FOREST   = 10nDOM_binAgg_100_pilotSellaTest_forestCom.tif
BOUNDARY = regionPilotSella.geojson
COMMISSIONREGION = commRegionExtentPilotSella.geojson
COMMISSIONS = commissionsEuregio.geojson
AVAREPORT = avaReportMicroRegions.geojson

```

- run again...

```

cd Cairos/cairosModelChain #location of runCairos.py
pixi run -e dev cairos

```

- when all input is provided and checked you will see:

```

...
INFO:__main__: Step 00: Project initialized in 0.01s
INFO:__main__: Step 00: Log file: runCairos_20251106_113707.log
INFO:__main__: Step 00: Input DEM validated: nodata + CRS check done.
INFO:__main__: Step 00: Input FOREST validated: nodata + CRS check done.
INFO:__main__: Step 00: All raster inputs validated: DEM + FOREST nodata/CRS checked and safe.
INFO:__main__: All inputs complete:
/media/christoph/Daten/Cairos/ModelChainProcess/cairosTutti/pilotSellaTest/alpha32_3_umax8_18_maxS5/00_input

=====
... LET'S KICK IT - AVALANCHE SCENARIOS in 3... 2... 1...
=====
...

```

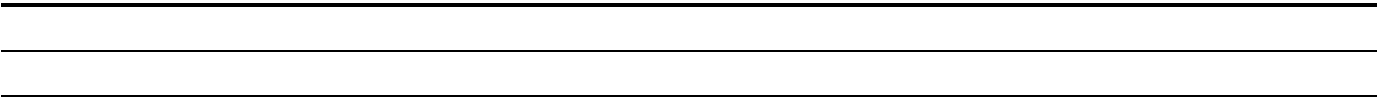
- **NOTE:** All rasters (REL, RELID, ALPHA, UMAX, EXP, Outputs) must inherit:
 - CRS, transform, and nodata from [MAIN] .DEM
- identical width/height for raster alignment
- **Any deviation triggers a warning during preprocessing or FlowPy parameterization.**

Running a single leaf

- Instead of enumerating the BigData tree, set in [WORKFLOW]:

```
#test only
makeSingleTestRun = False
singleTestDir = pra030secE-1800-2000-4
```

- With this Step 09-15 will parameterize **that** leaf (pra030secE-1800-2000-4).



What the workflow does (Steps 00–15)

Step 00 — Initialize project folders

- Creates the standardized CAIROS run directory structure based on [MAIN] in your cairosCfg.ini.
 - Each run lives in its own tree:

```
<workDir>/<project>/<ID>/
├─ 00_input/                ← User-provided inputs (DEM, FOREST, BOUNDARY, etc.)
├─ 01_praDelineation/       ← Step 01: Derived PRA raster field + terrain layers
                             (slope/aspect)
├─ 02_praSelection/         ← Step 02: Filtered PRA rasters by threshold, elevation, and
                             aspect
├─ 03_praBottleneckSmoothing/ ← Not used ATM
├─ 04_praSubcatchments/     ← Step 03: Subcatchment rasters + polygons (via WhiteboxTools)
├─ 05_praProcessing/        ← Step 04: Cleaned & polygonized PRA masks (GeoJSON)
├─ 06_praSegmentation/      ← Step 05: PRAs segmented by subcatchments (GeoJSON)
├─ 07_praAssignElevSize/    ← Step 06: PRAs classified by elevation bands and size
├─ 08_praPrepForFlowPy/     ← Step 07: Prepared PRA inputs for FlowPy (GeoJSON + metadata)
├─ 09_flowPyBigDataStructure/ ← Step 08: FlowPy BigData structure (SizeN/{dry,wet}/Inputs
                             tree)
├─ 10_flowPyOutput/         ← Steps 09-12: FlowPy results, size aggregation, compression
├─ 11_avaDirectoryData/     ← Step 13: Raw AvaDirectory data collected from FlowPy outputs
├─ 12_avaDirectory/         ← Steps 14-15: Unified AvaDirectoryType & Results (CSV, GeoJSON,
                             Parquet)
├─ 13_avaScenMaps/          ← Step 16 (planned): Automated avalanche scenario map generation
├─ 14_avaScenPreview/       ← Optional previews for avalanche scenarios
├─ 91_plots/                ← Diagnostic plots, QA visualizations, and size parameter
                             distributions
└─ 92_GIS/                  ← GIS-ready exports (merged shapefiles, GeoPackages, layers)
```

Log file

- Each workflow run automatically creates a timestamped log file:

```
<workDir>/<project>/<ID>/runCairos_YYYYMMDD_HHMMSS.log
```

Steps 01–08 — PRA processing (com1PRA)

- The PRA chain defines the complete pre-processing stage of CAIROS — from delineating potential release areas to creating structured, FlowPy-ready input datasets.
- Each step builds directly on the previous one, and together they establish the BigData foundation used in later FlowPy and AvaDirectory processing.

Step	Module	Main INI Sections	Description
01	com1PRA/praDelineation.py	[praDELINEATION], [MAIN]	Detects potential release areas (PRA) from DEM and slope; outputs base PRA raster + aspect layer.
02	com1PRA/praSelection.py	[praSELECTION]	Applies filtering thresholds (e.g. area, elevation, slope) to select relevant PRA regions.
03	com1PRA/praSubCatchments.py	[praSUBCATCHMENTS]	Generates subcatchment polygons using WhiteboxTools; prepares catchment delineations.
04	com1PRA/praProcessing.py	[praPROCESSING]	Cleans, dissolves, and vectorizes PRA rasters; outputs unified PRA GeoJSONs.
05	com1PRA/praSegmentation.py	[praSEGMENTATION]	Intersects PRAs with subcatchments to segment them into manageable units.
06	com1PRA/praAssignElevSize.py	[praASSIGNELEV], [praSEGMENTATION]	Assigns elevation bands and size classes to each segmented PRA.
07	com1PRA/praPrepForFlowPy.py	[praPREPFORFLOWPY], [WORKFLOW]	Converts PRAs into FlowPy input-ready GeoJSONs and ensures consistent CRS and naming.
08	com1PRA/praMakeBigDataStructure.py	[praMAKEBIGDATASTRUCTURE], [WORKFLOW]	Aggregates all PRA data (rasters + GeoJSONs) into the structured BigData tree.

- **NOTE:** The table lists only the primary INI sections.
 - Several steps internally reference additional parameters (e.g. from [MAIN], [avaPARAMETER], or [praSEGMENTATION]).

Output of Step 08 — FlowPy BigData Tree

- Each case (PRA × size × elevation band) is written into a **BigData tree** designed to match AvaFrame’s expected input structure for FlowPy runs.

09_flowPyBigDataStructure/

└─ BnCh2_subC500_100_5_sizeF500/

└─ pra030secS-2000-2200-3/

└─ Size2/

└─ dry/

└─ Inputs/

└─ REL/

└─ pra030secS-2000-2200-3-praAreaM.tif

└─ pra030secS-2000-2200-3-praBound.tif

└─ RELID/

└─ pra030secS-2000-2200-3-praID.tif

└─ RELJSON/

└─ Root: parameterized subcatchment/size case

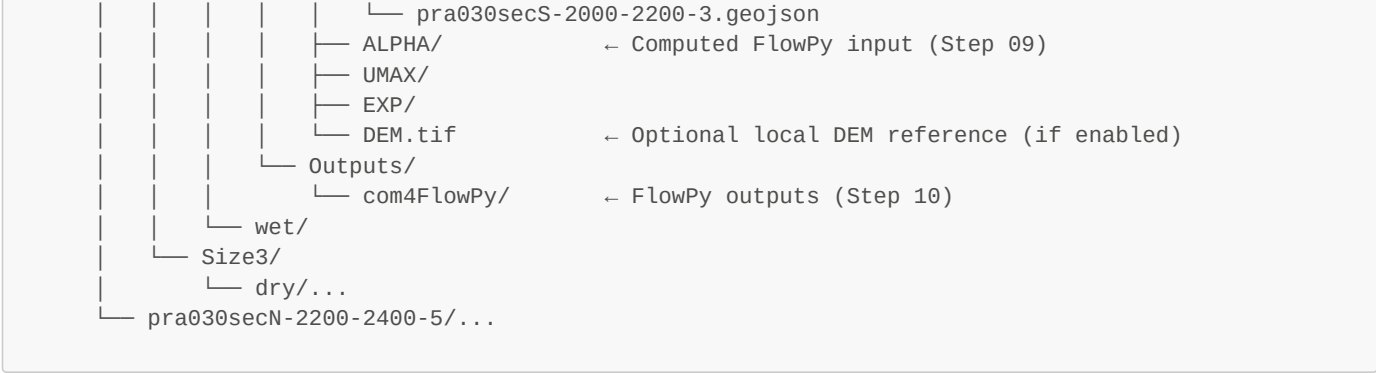
└─ Case: single PRA scenario (aspect/elev/size)

└─ Rasterized release masks (PRA polygons)

└─ PRA IDs encoded as integer rasters

└─ PRA geometry + metadata (GeoJSON)

7 / 11



Terminology & Naming Conventions

Term	Description
Root	The main parameter-case folder (defined by [praPROCESSING], [praSUBCATCHMENTS], [praSEGMENTATION]). Example: BnCh2_subC500_100_5_sizeF500 (constructed from default PRA parameters).
Case	A single PRA release scenario, combining PRA ID, elevation range, and size. Formed from [praDELINEATION], [praSELECTION], [praASSIGNELEV], [avaPARAMETER]. Example: pra030secS-2000-2200-3.
SizeN	Size class folder derived from the case’s maximum potential size ([avaPARAMETER].sizeRange). Example: pra...-4 → Size2, Size3, Size4.
Scenario	Flow regime folder: either dry/ or wet/.
Leaf	The lowest-level folder — SizeN/scenario/ — containing Inputs/ and Outputs/ subdirectories for FlowPy processing.

- **NOTE:** No Size5 for wet/ Avalanches!!!

Summary:

- Steps 01–08 create the foundation of the CAIROS workflow.
- They transform raw terrain and PRA data into a fully structured **BigData input tree**, ready for parameterization (Step 09) and FlowPy simulations (Step 10).

Steps 09–15 — FlowPy and AvaDirectory Chain

Step 09 — Parameterization (per leaf)

- Code: in2Parameter/compParams.py
- Inputs: DEM + PRA release (Inputs/REL/pra*.tif)
- Uses [avaPARAMETER] and [avaSIZE] to compute ALPHA, UMAX, and EXP once per leaf.
- **Folder rule:** if a leaf path contains .../SizeN/..., the computed size is **clamped to N** before mapping to ALPHA/UMAX/EXP.
- DEM selection logic (handled via workflowUtils.demForLeaf(...)):
 - For BigData leaves (default): use 00_input/<DEM> from [MAIN].DEM
 - For single or manual runs: fallback to Inputs/DEM.tif if present

Step 10 — Run FlowPy (per leaf)

- **NOTE:** FlowPy is now executed directly through AvaFrame — there is no runCairosFlowPy.py anymore.
- Driver: cairos/runCairos.py

- FlowPy INI: `AvaFrame/avaframe/com4FlowPy/com4FlowPyCfg.ini`
 - Copy to `local_com4FlowPyCfg.ini` before editing

Example FlowPy configuration used for CAIROS runs:

```
[GENERAL]
infra = False
previewMode = False
variableUmaxLim = True           # important for CAIROS
varUmaxParameter = uMax         # important for CAIROS
variableAlpha = True            # important for CAIROS
variableExponent = True         # important for CAIROS
forest = False                  # important for CAIROS
...

# computational defaults
tileSize = 12000
tileOverlap = 4000
procPerCPUCore = 1
chunkSize = 50
maxChunks = 500

[PATHS]
outputFileFormat = .tif
outputNoDataValue = -9999
outputFiles = zDelta|travelLengthMax|fpTravelAngleMax|cellCounts|relIdPolygon
useCustomPaths = False
deleteTempFolder = True
useCustomPathDEM = True          # important for CAIROS
workDir =
demPath = ...00_input/10DTM_pilotSellaTest.tif # important for CAIROS
...

[FLAGS]
plotPath = False
plotProfile = False
saveProfile = True
writeRes = True
fullOut = False
```

Step 11 — Back-map FlowPy outputs to size (optional)

- Description:
 - Writes new size-based results into:
 - `<leaf>/Outputs/com4FlowPy/sizeFiles/res_<uid>/...`
 - where `<uid>` is the FlowPy run identifier created by AvaFrame.
 - Each size file corresponds to a resampled or aggregated result from the original FlowPy output, grouped per PRA and per size class.
- Code:
 - `in2Parameter/compParams.py::computeAndSaveSize`
- Controlled by:
 - `[WORKFLOW].flowPyOutputToSize`
- Writes new size-based results into:
 - `<leaf>/Outputs/com4FlowPy/sizeFiles/res_<uid>/...`
 - where `<uid>` is the FlowPy run identifier created by AvaFrame.

Step 12 — Output management and cleanup (optional)

- TBA

Step 13 — Build AvaDirectory from FlowPy

- Description:
 - Collects all `com4FlowPy` outputs for each scenario and merges them into a structured **AvaDirectoryData** tree.
 - Handles optional `RELJSON` merges, per-PRA splitting, and raster clipping for both **dry** and **wet** flow scenarios.
- Code:
 - `com2AvaDirectory/avaDirBuildFromFlowPy.py`
- Controlled by:
 - `[WORKFLOW].avaDirBuildFromFlowPy`
- Inputs:
 - `09_flowPyBigDataStructure/<caseFolder>/pra*/Size*/dry|wet/Outputs/com4FlowPy/`
- Outputs:
 - `11_avaDirectoryData/<caseFolder>/com4_/praID.geojson + rasters`
 - `11_avaDirectoryData/<caseFolder>/avaDirectory.csv`

Step 14 — Build AvaDirectory Type

- Description:
 - Merges all PRA-level GeoJSONs into a unified `avaDirectoryType` dataset.
 - Cleans, normalizes, and deduplicates attributes across all dry/wet and rel/res combinations.
 - Provides the master dataset for raster path enrichment in Step 15.
- Code:
 - `com2AvaDirectory/avaDirType.py`
- Controlled by:
 - `[WORKFLOW].avaDirType`
- Inputs:
 - `11_avaDirectoryData/<caseFolder>/com4_*/praID*.geojson`
- Outputs:
 - `12_avaDirectory/<caseFolder>/avaDirectoryType.csv`
 - `12_avaDirectory/<caseFolder>/avaDirectoryType.geojson`
 - `12_avaDirectory/<caseFolder>/avaDirectoryType.parquet`

Step 15 — Build AvaDirectory Results

- Description:
 - Builds the enriched `avaDirectoryResults` dataset by attaching relative raster paths to each (praID, resultID) combination
 - The `.pkl` index maps:
 - (praID, resultID) → { rasterType: path, ... } for all available simulation outputs.
 - These results form the foundation for Avalanche Scenario Mapper (scenario mapping, under development).
- Code:
 - `com2AvaDirectory/avaDirResults.py`
- Controlled by:
 - `[WORKFLOW].avaDirResults`
- Inputs:
 - `12_avaDirectory/<caseFolder>/avaDirectoryType.parquet`
 - ``11_avaDirectoryData//com4_*/.tif`
- Outputs:
 - `12_avaDirectory/<caseFolder>/avaDirectoryResults.csv`
 - `12_avaDirectory/<caseFolder>/avaDirectoryResults.geojson`
 - `12_avaDirectory/<caseFolder>/avaDirectoryResults.parquet`
 - `12_avaDirectory/<caseFolder>/indexAvaFiles.pkl`

Summary:

- Steps 09–15 form the complete FlowPy + AvaDirectory pipeline.

- They parameterize, simulate, post-process, and structure all avalanche scenarios into reusable, indexed datasets — ready for mapping, visualization, and scenario-based analysis.

INI

thats it for now - tbc...