Co-Visioning Valsesia: Towards an Implementable Territorial Roadmap for Agri-food Short Supply Chains

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Abstract. Inner mountain areas are increasingly affected by socio-economic decline, requiring integrated and place-based strategies to enhance local development. Within this context, the paper investigates how collaborative processes and data-driven approaches can be combined to support the definition of an implementable territorial roadmap, focusing on the Valsesia Inner Area in Italy. The study adopts a co-visioning framework developed within the Branding4Resilience (B4R) project, integrating collaborative processes and AI-supported analytical tools. In particular, AI-based text and data mining techniques were applied to analyse past funded projects and structure qualitative inputs into strategic knowledge. The combined approach enabled the identification of key strategic axes, development areas, and suggested actions for the agri-food sector. It revealed recurring intervention patterns, funding gaps, and the central role of short supply chains in enhancing territorial resilience. The integration of collaborative insights and analytical evidence led to the formulation of a Shared Territorial Vision "*Valsesia: Land of Short Supply Chains*", positioning the agri-food system as a driver of repopulation and local revitalisation. This approach supports the development of preliminary place-based project concepts, strengthens collaboration between academia and local actors in more informed decision-making processes, and provides a replicable framework for the development of implementable Territorial Roadmaps in fragile inner areas.

Keywords: Inner Areas · AI-driven analyses · collaboration-based approach

1 Introduction

Inner mountain areas across Europe are increasingly recognised as complex socio-ecological systems, where structural fragilities coexist with significant territorial assets. These regions are typically affected by long-term processes of demographic decline,

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ageing populations, and the progressive withdrawal of essential services, which contribute to economic marginalisation and built environment abandonment and decay. At the same time, they retain high-value environmental resources, strong cultural identities, and locally embedded production systems, particularly in the agri-food sector, that play a crucial role in maintaining landscape quality, biodiversity, and reactivating social cohesion [1] and territorial vibrancy [2–7].

In Alpine contexts, agri-food chains represent a key component of local development, not only in economic terms but also as drivers of territorial resilience. Small-scale livestock farming, dairy production, and niche product cultivation are often closely intertwined with tourism, ecosystem management, and cultural heritage. However, these systems are typically characterised by fragmentation, limited economies of scale, and weak coordination among actors. As a result, while strategic visions for development are often articulated at the local level, their translation into coherent and implementable actions remains a critical challenge.

The Italian National Strategy for Inner Areas (SNAI) addresses these issues through a place-based policy approach that promotes integrated development strategies and multilevel governance [8, 9]. Central to this approach is the activation of participatory processes involving local institutions, economic actors, and civil society, organised by local coordinators through thematic working tables. These processes enable the emergence of shared priorities and foster local ownership of development trajectories. Nevertheless, participatory practices alone often produce heterogeneous and unstructured outputs, which can be difficult to synthesise into strategic frameworks capable of guiding implementation. This gap between collective visioning and actionable planning represents a key methodological issue in contemporary territorial governance.

In recent years, planning research has increasingly explored the potential of combining participatory approaches with data-driven methods to address this challenge. Within this evolving research field, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and computational tools are emerging as promising instruments to support the analysis of qualitative inputs, identify patterns and relationships, and enhance the consistency of strategic planning processes. Rather than replacing human decision-making, these tools can augment participatory practices by structuring knowledge, supporting scenario-building, and facilitating the translation of complex stakeholder inputs into operational strategies [10–12].

Taking up the challenge of developing a Territorial Roadmap within the Branding4Resilience (B4R) project (https://www.branding4resilience.it), the Research Unit from the Politecnico di Torino (Polito RU) experimented with a new methodological approach in Valsesia, a territory that in June 2022 was officially recognized as a new "Inner Area" under the second programming cycle of the Italian National Strategy for Inner Areas (SNAI), funded by the Minister for Territorial Cohesion and aligned with the European 2021–2027 programming framework.

Building on this perspective, this paper proposes a co-visioning framework to support the development of Territorial Roadmaps by integrating collaborative processes with AI-supported analysis [13–16]. The research framework adopted in this paper is grounded in the integration of two main approaches: (i) collaborative approach, as activated within the SNAI *Agri-food chains and rural development* Focus Group in Valsesia, and field-based co-design and knowledge exchange activities, developed also through

an applied educational experience (Summer School); and (ii) AI-supported analytical approach, used to systematize and interpret past projects and actions funded in the SNAI context. This combined approach is conceptualized as a strategy-oriented framework, in which different sources of knowledge (experiential, institutional, and data-driven) are brought together to construct a shared and operational territorial vision. The aim is to demonstrate how combining stakeholder engagement with data-driven insights can facilitate the construction of a shared territorial vision and inform the definition of strategic axes, development areas, and suggested actions for future development of preliminary place-based project concepts.

Within this framework, the case study of Valsesia SNAI inner area provides a relevant empirical ground to test the proposed approach, given that it represents a typical inner mountain context, where agri-food activities, tourism, and environmental management are deeply interconnected, and where the need for integrated and actionable development strategies is particularly evident.

This paper is structured as follows. Section 2 presents the Co-Visioning framework and the overall methodological approach. Section 3 introduces the case study. Section 4 reports the main results and discusses the findings and Sect. 5 concludes and identifies next steps for further research and implementation.

2 A Co-visioning Framework to Support Territorial Roadmap Definition

In the context of the B4R project, a methodological approach was developed, structured into three main phases, as outlined in previous authors' publications, which present intermediate research results [4–7, 17–23].

The first phase, "Exploration", supports the investigation of territorial contexts from multiple perspectives by combining quantitative and qualitative tools and methods integrated within a GIS-based knowledge system and validated through stakeholder engagement, enabling a comprehensive understanding of local dynamics, resources, and criticalities [4–6, 18].

The second phase, "Co-design", focuses on the definition of actionable transformations, including small-scale infrastructure interventions and operative branding actions, developed by means of collaborative workshops with local actors, using a pilot case to design strategic proposals to be further developed in the co-visioning phase [24].

The third phase, "Co-visioning", represents the last and most strategic component of the methodology. It aims to co-create a Shared Territorial Vision through structured interaction with local communities, stakeholders, and institutions [12, 20]. Building on the knowledge generated in the previous phases, co-visioning integrates collaborative processes with analytical insights to align local aspirations with strategic development trajectories. This phase is crucial for addressing uncertainties, framing long-term priorities, and supporting collective decision-making, ultimately guiding the definition of a Territorial Roadmap that includes coherent and adaptive development pathways.

Each Research Unit (RU) within the B4R project has tailored and refined these phases according to the specific characteristics of its selected Focus Area (FA). Figure 1 illustrates the methodological approach developed and applied by the Politecnico di Torino RU within the Alta Valsesia territorial context.

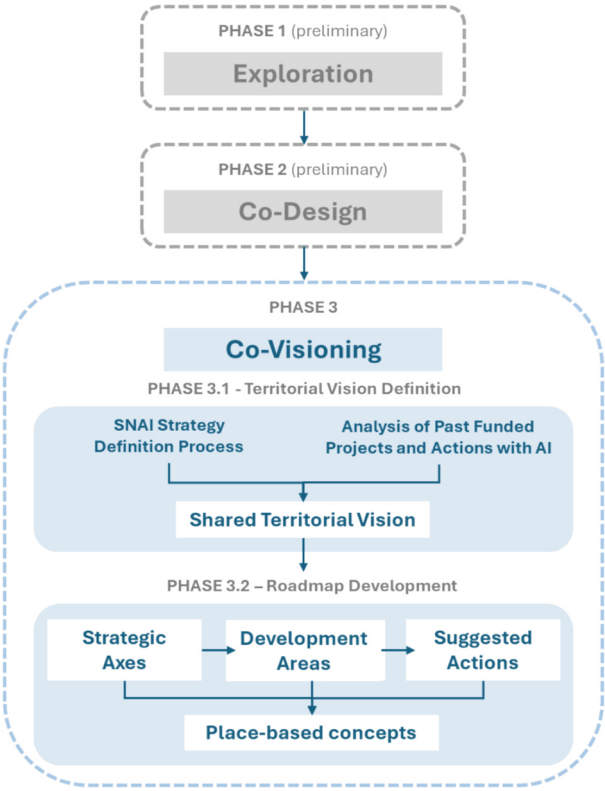

Fig. 1. The B4R Co-Visioning process to support Territorial Roadmap definition applied by the Polito RU for the Alta Valsesia, in the general framework of the B4R project (Source: Authors' elaboration)

Co-visioning - Shared Territorial Vision Definition.
This phase focuses on the co-creation of a Shared Territorial Vision to guide future decision-making within the Focus Area (FA). Two complementary and parallel processes are implemented:

- A collaborative process, embedded within the SNAI Strategy Definition Process, involving stakeholder meetings, focus groups, and co-visioning dialogues. This process enabled the emergence of collective priorities, local knowledge, and shared future trajectories.
- An analytical process, based on the AI-supported analysis of past funded projects and actions, aimed at structuring existing knowledge and identifying patterns, gaps, and performance dynamics.

The integration of these two processes allowed for a more robust interpretation of the territory, explicitly addressing uncertainties, risks, and opportunities. This combined approach supported the identification of strategic directions and led to the consolidation of a Shared Territorial Vision.

Co-visioning – Territorial Roadmap Development.
Building on the Shared Territorial Vision, this phase translates strategic orientations into an operational and adaptive Territorial Roadmap.

The Roadmap is structured across three sequential levels:

- Strategic Axes, which define the main thematic priorities for territorial development;
- Development Areas, which outline the approaches required to achieve these priorities;
- Suggested Actions, which identify concrete initiatives and pilot interventions.

Drawing on a Strategic Choice Approach (SCA) perspective [25–27], Suggested Actions are conceived not only as implementation measures, but also as exploratory options, designed to reduce the conditions of uncertainty. In particular, they allow for flexibility, learning, and progressive refinement over time, supporting decision-making in complex and evolving territorial contexts.

Overall, this process supports the development of place-based project concepts by grounding strategic orientations and actions in the specific territorial context, local resources, and community-driven visions.

3 Agri-food Entrepreneurship in Valsesia SNAI Inner Area

Valsesia is a mountain area located in the northern part of Piedmont (Italy), characterised by limited accessibility and facilities and by a progressive decline in population and ageing demographics, yet it retains significant development potential in the agri-food sector, rooted in traditional agro-silvo-pastoral systems, local supply chains, and the redevelopment of high-altitude pastures.

From an entrepreneurial perspective, the local agri-food system in Alta Valsesia is predominantly composed of micro and small family-run businesses, mainly active in livestock farming and dairy production, often integrating on-site processing and direct sales. These enterprises operate within structurally constrained conditions typical of inner mountain areas, including limited economies of scale, fragmented land ownership, and high production costs. The productive model is thus based on small herds and localised supply chains, where value creation increasingly depends on diversification strategies such as agritourism, direct marketing, and experiential services. A distinctive feature of the local entrepreneurial landscape is the strong interdependence between agriculture, tourism, and environmental management. Farmers and agri-food producers frequently combine production activities with hospitality functions (e.g., agritourism, mountain huts, educational farms), contributing to the maintenance of the landscape and the provision of ecosystem services. In this sense, agricultural enterprises are not only economic actors but also territorial stewards, playing a key role in preventing land abandonment and sustaining high-altitude settlements. However, this multifunctional role is challenged by structural weaknesses, including the progressive decline of active farms, the lack of generational renewal, and the increasing difficulty of managing dispersed and marginal agricultural land .

Within the SNAI *Agri-food chains and rural development* Focus Group, a shared vision emerged towards sector integration and improved coordination of policy instruments. In particular, stakeholders emphasised the importance of aligning agricultural,



Fig. 2. Farmers and agri-food producers in Alta Valsesia (Source: Authors' photos during the site visits, July 2024)

tourism, and forestry policies, as well as overcoming the fragmentation of funding mechanisms and governance tools. The role of intermediary actors, such as GALs (Local Action Group), proved to be crucial for enabling place-based development strategies, facilitating access to resources, and fostering collaboration among otherwise weakly connected local actors. At the same time, the discussion highlighted the need to support entrepreneurial capacity-building, especially in terms of business management, innovation, and market positioning, to enhance the long-term viability of local agri-food chains.

Building upon translating the issues and perspectives that emerged from this SNAI Focus Group into concrete project proposals, a Summer School was organized by the Polito RU, representing a follow-up phase aimed at investigating and deepening knowledge of small-scale actors within the agri-food sector. Through direct engagement with local stakeholders and entrepreneurs, the Summer School served as a knowledge co-production platform, linking academic research with local development practices and reinforcing the dialogue between institutions, researchers, and the local entrepreneurial fabric (Fig. 2).

Overall, the Alta Valsesia case portrays an agri-food system rooted in traditional practices but increasingly oriented towards hybrid and multifunctional models, where production, tourism, and territorial services converge. The effectiveness of future development trajectories will largely depend on the ability to reinforce coordination among institutional and economic actors while supporting the adaptive capacity of small-scale local entrepreneurship.

4 Results

The Co-visioning phase aimed to implement a process to construct a Shared Territorial Vision and formulate a Territorial Roadmap for political decision-makers and local communities of the FA. In the Alta Valsesia context, the B4R Polito RU conducted two parallel and complementary—analytical and collaborative (Fig. 3)—to support the development of a place-based Territorial Roadmap for the Valsesia Inner Area [28] (Fig. 3).

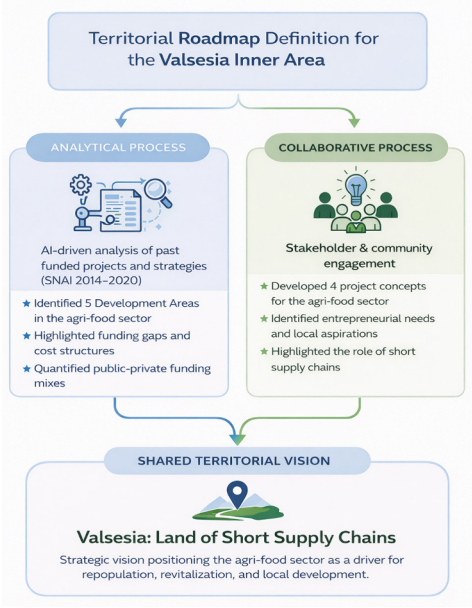

Fig. 3. The Shared Territorial Vision definition process for the Alta Valsesia area (Source: Authors' elaboration)

The analytical process consisted of structuring the acquired knowledge elements, identifying uncertainties and risks and suggesting Strategic Axes and actions for the SNAI strategy definition and implementation. In particular, AI-driven text and data mining techniques were applied to systematically analyse past funded projects and strategies from the first SNAI programming cycle (2014–2020), including APQs and the OpenCoesione database [29, 30]. This process enabled the identification of 5 Development

Areas in the agri-food sector (Productive Economy, Skills and Employment, Community Services, Infrastructures & Mobility, Environment & Landscape). It also highlighted funding gaps in previous programming—particularly the limited attention to research, innovation, and business competitiveness—and provided quantitative insights into cost structures and public-private funding mixes, supporting the definition of more effective and integrated future actions [31, 32].

The collaborative process was initiated following the recognition of Valsesia as an "Inner Area" in 2022 and the allocation of over 10 million euros in funds to counter negative socio-economic trends and foster local development. It was developed through a series of meetings and six focus groups with stakeholders:1) Mobility and transport; 2) Health and personal care; 3) Agri-food chains and rural development; 4) Tourism enhancement; 5) SMEs development; 6) Education and training, organised by the Valsesia Mountain Union in conjunction with the Biellese Orientale Mountain Union, and supported by contributions from professionals. In particular, the Focus Group on *Agri-food chains and rural development* played a pivotal role, as it brought together key local actors to identify both structural weaknesses and development opportunities within the sector, contributing significantly to the definition of 3 Strategic Axes [28].

This process was implemented through a Summer School organised by the Polito RU, which involved direct engagement with stakeholders, local actors, small entrepreneurs, and institutional bodies through interviews, site visits, and collaborative workshops (https://www.polito.it/en/polito/an-international-university/international-mobility-programmes/summer-schools/socio-economic-challenges-for-inner-areas-and-fragile). This process generated context-specific knowledge on local economic dynamics, entrepreneurial needs, and development opportunities, which were translated into four preliminary place-based project concepts focused on enhancing local agri-food value chains and fostering new business opportunities in the area. The interaction with local actors also revealed the central role of short supply chains, local production systems, and community-based economic models in strengthening territorial resilience [33–42].

The integration of the analytical and collaborative processes led to the definition of a Shared Territorial Vision "Valsesia: Land of Short Supply Chains", which positions the agri-food sector as a key driver for repopulation, economic revitalisation, and sustainable development in Valsesia [43]. This vision is grounded both in evidence derived from past funded actions and in locally expressed needs and aspirations, and it outlines a development trajectory based on the consolidation of local supply chains, the enhancement of territorial identity, and the activation of new entrepreneurial initiatives.

4.1 Strategic Axes

The identification of Strategic Axes was based on a systematic analysis of statements collected during two rounds of the *Agri-food chains and rural development* Focus Group. The main outputs were organized into a dataset and analyzed using AI-supported methods to identify patterns and relationships among the statements with the aim of highlighting the most strategic thematic priorities for territorial development within the Agri-food sector.

The following three Strategic Axes emerged from the issues and perspectives identified through the participatory process:

- *Governance, planning, and rural development.* This axis encompassed issues related to institutional coordination, the integration of funding instruments, and support for generational renewal in agriculture. The recurring nature of these statements suggested that governance mechanisms play a pivotal role in shaping the system's capacity to implement coherent and inclusive rural development strategies. In this sense, governance is not merely a contextual factor but a structural determinant influencing the effectiveness of policy interventions.
- *Forest infrastructure and energy supply systems.* This axis identified a critical nexus between infrastructural capacity and the development of the forest-based energy supply chain: statements related to the needs of biomass plant deployment, forest accessibility, and logistical systems indicated that technical and structural constraints directly affect sectoral performance. This configuration underscored the necessity of integrated investments combining infrastructure development, technological innovation, and financial support.
- *Depopulation mitigation through youth entrepreneurship.* This axis clearly pointed out that the enhancement of rural and mountain areas depends on a set of enabling factors: the presence of young entrepreneurs, the valorisation of local products, and the development of short supply chains emerged as outcomes contingent upon supportive policy frameworks, adequate infrastructure, and local economic activation. This perspective emphasized a systemic and interdependent approach to addressing demographic decline.

Overall, the analysis highlighted strong relationships between governance structures, infrastructure systems, and territorial dynamics: governance plays a central role in shaping effective local enhancement, while place-based development strategies are crucial for long-term sustainability and cohesion

4.2 Development Areas and Suggested Actions

Aiming at identifying recurring themes and intervention typologies, an AI-driven, data-oriented methodological approach was applied to analyse past territorial strategies and funded projects, with the aim of extracting transferable strategic knowledge [31, 32]. The AI-driven analysis highlighted several recurring patterns. From a thematic perspective, past strategies addressing the agri-food sector consistently focus on four main objectives: strengthening local supply chains, promoting territorial branding, developing agricultural business networks, and investing in processing and marketing infrastructure. These goals were implemented through a combination of soft and structural actions. Soft measures—such as territorial animation, training, and strategic planning—typically involve limited financial resources, while structural interventions—such as micro-processing facilities, logistics platforms, and cooperative infrastructures—require significantly higher investments. Integrated intervention packages supporting local supply chains generally combine multiple actions and fall within a medium investment range. From a financial perspective, the analysis showed that interventions rely predominantly on public funding sources, which cover most project costs, while private co-financing

is mainly associated with investments in physical assets and productive infrastructure. Different funding streams contribute to specific types of actions, with rural development funds and regional programs supporting structural investments, and national strategy resources more frequently allocated to preparatory and capacity-building activities. The results also revealed that interventions targeting agri-food development are consistently combined with complementary actions in training and education, mobility and accessibility, digital innovation, welfare services, and environmental protection. This integrated configuration emerged as a key condition for enhancing the effectiveness and sustainability of territorial development strategies.

Building on this evidence base,

This process enabled the identification of 5 Development Areas in the agri-food sector (Productive Economy, Skills and Employment, Community Services, Infrastructures & Mobility, Environment & Landscape) that were combined with the 3 Strategic Axes emerged from the Focus Group, enabling the identification of 18 Suggested Actions suitable for the Agri-food sector in the Valsesia area. These actions are intended to be translated into preliminary place-based project concepts and can be assembled in different combinations—according to local constraints, funding opportunities, and governance capacity—to form integrated implementation packages (Fig. 4).

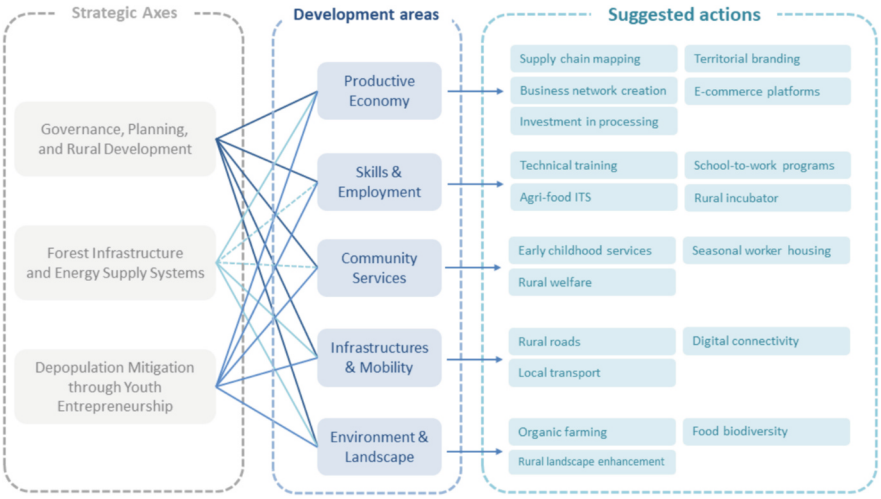

Fig. 4. Shaping a preliminary Territorial Roadmap for the Alta Valsesia area agri-food sector (Source: Authors' elaboration)

4.3 Preliminary Place-Based Project Concepts: Two Examples from the Polito Summer School

The Summer School was designed by the Polito RU as a prototyping device to translate the Shared Territorial Vision and the Territorial Roadmap developed for the Alta Valsesia area into discussable and actionable place-based project concepts, reducing

the gap between strategic orientation and implementation. In this sense, it functioned as a bridge between the strategic level (Strategic Axes, Development Areas and Suggested Actions) and the operational level, making explicit target groups, value propositions, enabling conditions, and feasible governance and management arrangements. The place-based project concepts were developed through the Business Model Canvas tool, complementing the SNAI project information sheets (i.e., the standardised project fiches used in the National Strategy for Inner Areas) —mainly programmatic and regulatory documents— with preliminary assumptions on implementation and medium–long term operating conditions (including management options and running costs). The resulting place-based project concepts can therefore be used as "negotiation objects" to align institutions, local communities, and potential investors around priorities and feasibility constraints. Among the four project concepts developed during the Summer School, two are presented here, because they clearly combine different Suggested Actions and highlight two distinct implementation logics, as summarised in Fig. 5: *Valpunt*, a Communication Hub and infrastructure for agri-food cooperation and market access; and *Alpine Hub*, a hub for nomadic workers and residence-based development program supported by enabling services.

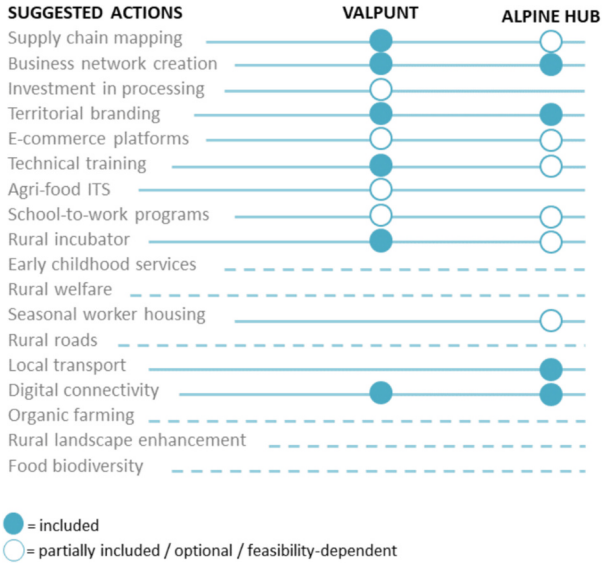

Fig. 5. Preliminary place-based project concept matrix linking Development Areas and Suggested Actions to the two Summer School project concepts (Valpunt and Alpine Hub). Filled circles indicate the actions explicitly activated by each concept (Authors' elaboration)

Valpunt Project Concept

Valpunt can be framed as an intermediary infrastructure for the agri-food ecosystem, rather than a simple digital platform. Its core complexity lies in its design to foster cooperation before generating sales: it must serve as a governance-and-capacity layer that

reduces informational fragmentation, builds trust, and creates a stable interface between micro-producers, institutions, and potential market channels. Operationally, this implies a two-legged architecture (digital platform + physical hub) that must be managed as a continuous service rather than as episodic events, with a strong "institutional" function (rules of engagement, producer onboarding, shared standards, and facilitation). In terms of suggested actions, *Valpunt* fully includes the backbone of Productive Economy and Skills & Employment strategic axes: it explicitly activates Supply chain mapping, Business network creation, and Territorial branding, and it embeds a structured pathway of Technical training and Rural incubator functions to strengthen non-core skills (marketing, ICT, management) and business viability. It also fully includes Digital connectivity as a non-negotiable enabling condition, because the platform, the training pipeline, and the future marketplace depend on stable connectivity. At the same time, some actions are only partially included because they are staged or feasibility-dependent: E-commerce platforms is partially included because it typically evolves from communication and coordination tools into a real marketplace (with governance, logistics, and quality assurance requirements); Investment in processing is partial because it may enter only as a later shared-service layer once bottlenecks are evidenced and partners are ready to manage CAPEX and compliance; Agri-food ITS and School-to-work programs are partial because they require institutional agreements (with schools/ITS, internships, accreditation) and a stable organizational capacity to host and coordinate placements. Conversely, *Valpunt* does not include Community Services actions (childcare, welfare, seasonal housing), Rural roads and Local transport, and most Environment & Landscape actions (organic farming, landscape enhancement, biodiversity) unless explicitly embedded as a strategic positioning choice—because *Valpunt* is primarily built as a supply chain/market and capability infrastructure.

***Alpine Hub* Project Concept**

Alpine Hub is not merely a "coworking in the Alps" concept: its complexity comes from being a residential development program that combines hospitality, infrastructure provision, and a structured knowledge-exchange mechanism between incomers (remote workers) and local actors. It has to operate simultaneously as (i) an accommodation-and-work service (eco-accommodation + coworking), (ii) a community-building device, and (iii) a skills-transfer program that converts temporary presence into local value creation (e.g., upgrading digital communication and market access for producers and micro-enterprises). This requires hard enabling conditions and non-trivial operational roles: beyond Digital connectivity (fully included), the model fully includes Local transport (e.g., shuttle/van logic) as a core enabler to compensate for limited public transport, ensure accessibility across valleys, and make long-stay mobility workable. From a roadmap perspective, *Alpine Hub* fully includes Territorial branding, as the proposition depends on positioning Valsesia as a distinctive, year-round destination for remote work and slow living; and it also fully includes Business network creation, as it requires stable partnerships among hospitality providers, local producers, artisans, and institutional actors. Several actions are partially included because *Alpine Hub* influences them indirectly or as optional extensions: Supply chain mapping is partial (it is not the hub's primary function, but it can emerge through structured linkages between guests and producers, and through the orchestration of experiences and local supply relationships);

E-commerce platforms is partial because the hub can support it through competence transfer and mentorship rather than directly operating the marketplace; Technical training, School-to-work programs, and Rural incubator are partial because the hub can host mentoring, micro-workshops, and internships, but these require formal agreements and dedicated management capacity to become a stable pipeline. Finally, Seasonal worker housing is partial: the hub's long-stay accommodation logic could be adapted to address housing shortages, but only if governance and allocation rules are re-designed for that target. Alpine Hub does not include processing investments, rural roads, and most environment/landscape actions unless they are deliberately added as a sustainability/heritage package.

5 Conclusion

Inner mountain areas face a persistent gap between participatory strategy-making and the production of implementable, evidence-grounded roadmaps, especially when local priorities must be aligned with fragmented policy instruments and limited administrative capacity. Against this background, the purpose of this research was to test how collaborative co-visioning (focus groups, control-room meetings, and Summer School prototyping) can be integrated with an AI-driven, data-oriented analysis of past territorial strategies and funded projects to support a more coherent and actionable agri-food development trajectory.

The study demonstrates the applicability of the proposed methodological approach in the real-world context of the Valsesia Inner Area, which is tasked within the SNAI framework with defining specific economic development strategies. In particular, three main results can be highlighted. First, the analysis of the first SNAI programming cycle makes recurring patterns and funding gaps explicit—most notably the limited attention to research/innovation and competitiveness—clarifying how soft and structural measures tend to cluster and how public and private resources combine across intervention types. Second, by combining evidence from past programming with priorities emerging from the SNAI Focus Groups, the process leads to a Shared Territorial Vision "*Valsesia: Land of Short Supply Chains*", which frames future development trajectories and guides the definition of coherent, place-based strategies.—. Third, the agri-food decision space is structured into 3 Strategic Axes, 5 Development Areas and 18 Suggested Actions that can guide the development of an implementable Territorial Roadmap. In particular, some Suggested Actions were further translated into preliminary place-based project concepts through the Polito Summer School, turning strategic intent into concrete, discussable implementation options.

The broader impact of these results is methodological and operational. Methodologically, the paper shows that AI-supported data mining of strategies and projects can augment collaborative processes by structuring heterogeneous qualitative inputs, reducing uncertainty, and enabling more transparent prioritisation. Operationally, it supports a reframing of the Valsesia agri-food system not as a purely tourism-oriented asset, but as an engine for revitalisation and repopulation, linking short supply chains to stable employment, youth entrepreneurship, service viability, and territorial stewardship.

More generally, the approach offers a replicable pathway for inner areas to treat strategies as adaptive roadmaps—capable of learning from past programming while remaining responsive to evolving constraints and opportunities.

This work also has limitations. The AI-driven analysis depends on the availability and quality of textual and project datasets and, in its current form, provides stronger support for identifying patterns and gaps than for establishing causal impact. In addition, co-visioning outcomes remains sensitive to stakeholder interpretation and to the institutional capacity that determines whether suggested actions can be packaged, financed, and delivered coherently. Future research will therefore focus on (i) strengthening the monitoring and decision-support layer (shared indicators, cross-programme dashboards, and feedback loops) to accompany implementation over the medium–long term; (ii) testing economic feasibility and sustainability through project-specific studies and business-model development, especially where SNAI project fiches need to be complemented with medium–long term management and operating cost assumptions; and (iii) refining coordination mechanisms across funding streams (SNAI, PNRR, foundations, GAL initiatives) to avoid fragmented delivery and improve strategic coherence over time.

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Declaration of AI Usage. During the preparation of this manuscript, we used artificial intelligence-based tools to support analyses, language refinement, grammar and style improvement, and English editing. All outputs generated by these tools were critically reviewed, edited, and approved by the authors, who take full responsibility for the final content and language quality.

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