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Abstract:

The European Green Deal (EGD) is the most ambitious current challenge for regions and cities of the EU member states. While the role of regional spatial planning in addressing sustainable development and climate change mitigation has been widely investigated, an analysis of its ability to drive the green transition is still missing. The authors propose a new methodology to map the inclusion of EGD policies in regional and metropolitan spatial planning tools, and to systematically evaluate their ability to drive the green transition processes. The mapping methodology is applied to the case study of the metropolitan area of Florence, analyzing the regional landscape plan (PIT) and the strategic plan (PSM) concerning seven EGD transition policy areas that we show to be relevant to spatial planning (Sustainable transport; Preserving Europe's natural capital; Transition to a circular economy; A zero-pollution Europe; From farm to fork; Transformation of agricultural and rural areas; Clean, reliable and affordable energy). The analysis reveals that, although plans cover EGD issues, there is still a need for more integrated tools and greater effective governance. After identifying and discussing existing gaps, we develop recommendations to guide more effectively the green transition and for integrating different spatial planning policies and tools. Namely we recommend to: adopt an incremental logic that integrates existing regional plans with policy documents regarding EGD aspects that need further development; fill the gaps regarding the need for renewable energy production plants; provide support to municipalities in identifying all possible funding opportunities for strategic transition programming; encourage implementation of inter-municipal structural plans to support a planning scale that is all the more responsive to challenges posed by the EGD; work towards aligning all existing regional transition policies to support the 'build on what is already there' approach.