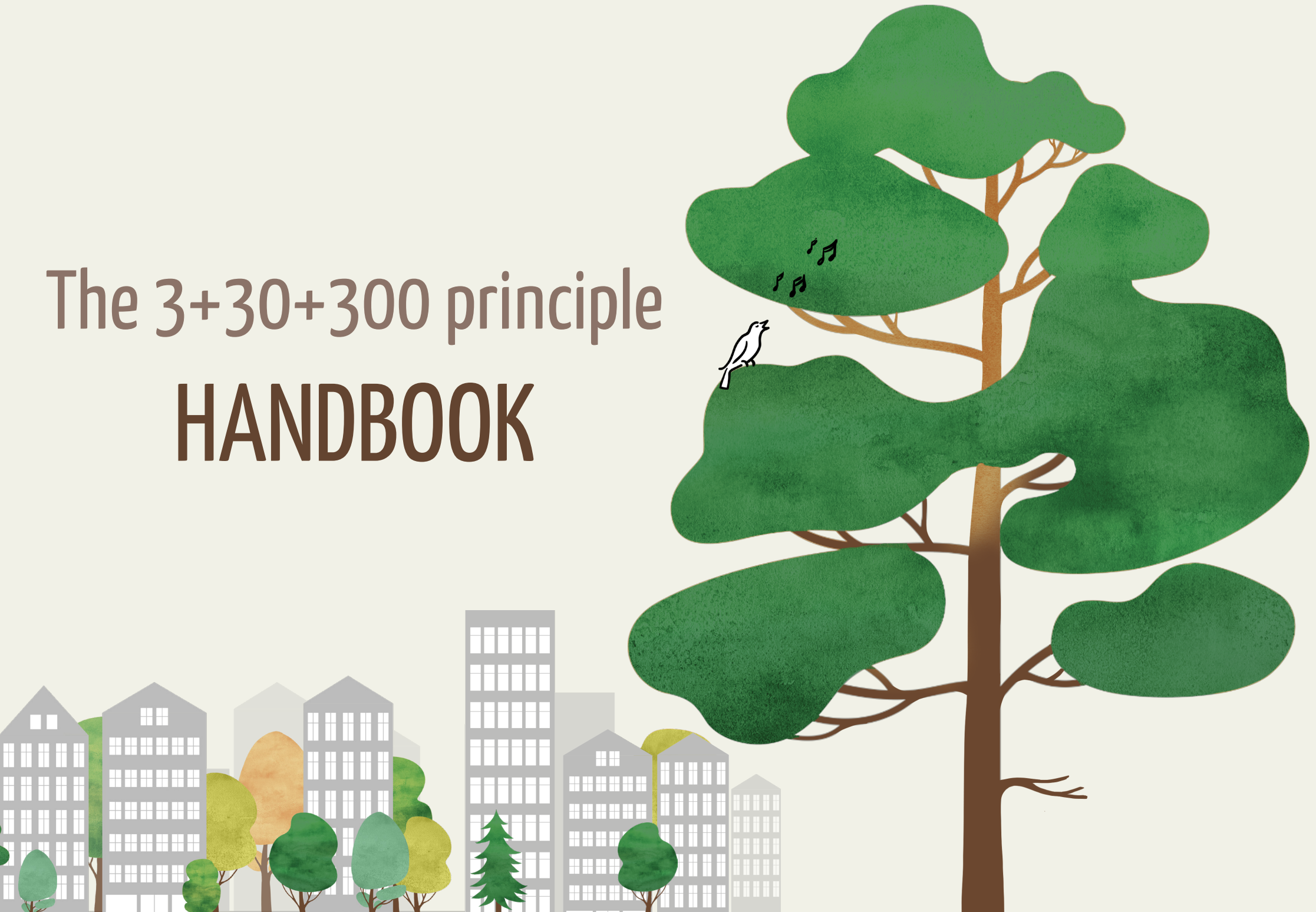
The 3+30+300 principle

HANDBOOK



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1. Introduction

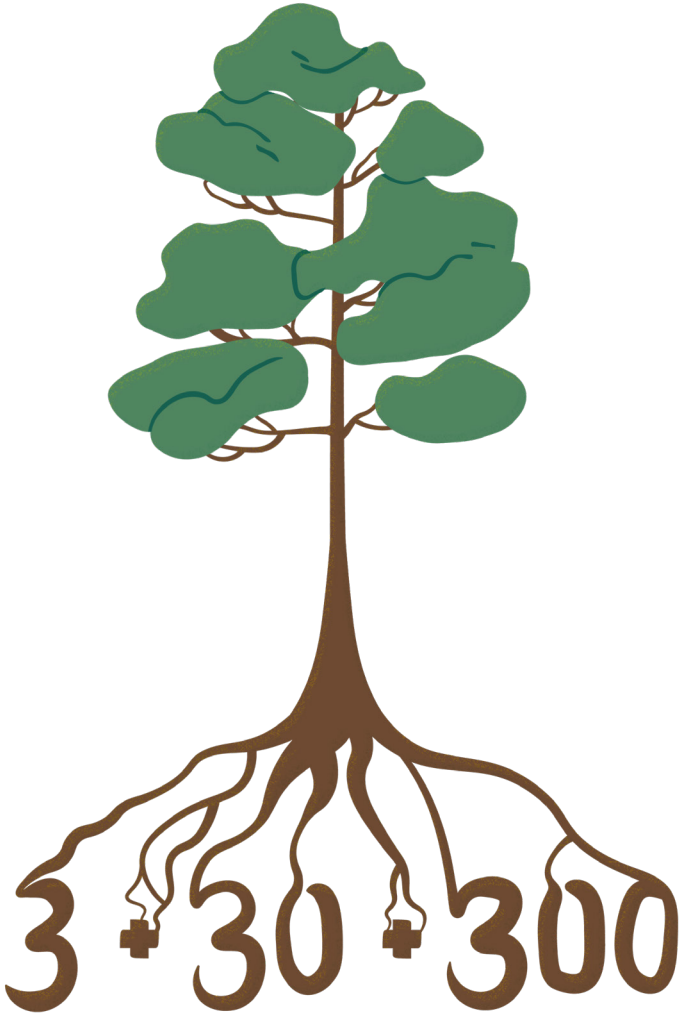
The 3+30+300 principle (often also called the '3+30+300 rule') provides evidence-based guidance for the creation of greener, healthier, and more resilient communities, from large metropolitan areas to small settlements. As discussed in greater detail in the next chapter, this principle promotes healthier urban environments by ensuring that every resident can see at least three mature trees from their home, lives in a neighbourhood with 30% tree canopy cover, and has access to green space within 300 metres. Since its launch in early 2021, the principle has rapidly gained popularity across the world and is now being used by many local authorities, regional and national governments, not-for-profits and community groups, as well as businesses.

This handbook provides practical guidance for implementing the 3+30+300 principle in your community. It builds on the insights and findings from the Yggdrasil - The Living Nordic City project (Yggdrasil in brief), carried out under the Nordic Council of Ministers' Vision 2030 initiative (see Nordic Council of Ministers, 2025). As part of the Nordic Cities Nature-Based Solutions initiative, Yggdrasil focused on strengthening the role of urban trees and green spaces in creating healthier, climate-resilient cities across the Nordic region. Yggdrasil reflected the Nordic perspective on urban sustainability, integrating research with practical applications and recognising the unique local contexts of the region's cities. It highlighted how urban greening can simultaneously address public health, climate adaptation,

and biodiversity challenges while respecting the diverse needs and conditions of municipalities. It also stressed the importance of resilient and diverse urban forests for municipalities.

This handbook is not limited to Nordic municipalities but can in fact be used by anyone interested in using the 3+30+300 principle for strengthening greening efforts, from the very local to the international level. It provides a step-by-step guide for implementing the principle according to your own purposes, offers practical examples and good practices, answers frequently asked questions about the principle, and provides further sources and inspiration.

The handbook starts with a description of what the 3+30+300 principle is and describes its three components. Reasons and arguments for using 3+30+300 are presented next, as implementation of the principle can differ depending on local needs, preferences, and conditions. This is followed by a step-by-step guide of 3+30+300 implementation, from assessment of the current situation and the subsequent formulation of visions, goals, and targets, to using the principle for communication, community engagement, and long-term monitoring. Examples and good practices that can inspire implementation are covered in the section after that.



2. What is 3+30+300?

The 3+30+300 principle, first introduced in February 2021 by Dutch urban forestry expert Cecil Konijnendijk of the Nature Based Solutions Institute (one of the authors of this handbook), offers a straightforward and evidence-based framework for urban greening, focusing on three critical components to ensure access to and benefits from urban forests and green spaces:

3 - Visible Green

Everyone should be able to see at least three large trees from where they live, work, learn, or receive care. This promotes psychological well-being and connection to nature, and also enhances mental recovery, concentration, learning, and creativity.

30 - Living Area or Climate Green

Neighbourhoods - defined based on local definitions and needs - should have at least 30% tree canopy cover. This provides environmental benefits, such as cooling and improved air quality, while also enhancing our wellbeing and physical health, and fostering more social interactions.

300 - Recreational Green

We should all have a high-quality, publicly accessible green space of at least 0.5–1.0 hectares no more than a 300 metres walk or bike ride away, ensuring accessibility for recreation and fostering healthier lifestyles.

3+30+300

The combination of the 3, 30, and 300 components ensures that we always have visible greenery, particularly trees, as well as sufficient tree canopy coverage at both street and neighborhood levels. Additionally, it makes high-quality public green spaces available to everyone. Many municipalities include a lot of green spaces and trees, but their distribution across districts, neighbourhoods, and streets is often uneven. As a result, many residents don't have sufficient exposure and access to trees and other greenery.

FAQ: The 3-component

What is considered a large or mature tree?

This can depend on local context, but one way to define this is by setting a certain minimum diameter at breast height (DBH) or canopy diameter or surface (possibly in combination with a minimum height) for trees to be included. In the Yggdrasil project, a minimum canopy surface of 28 m^2 was used. One can also use a minimum crown diameter of e.g., 6-8 metres. Another guideline would be that the tree should have a DBH of at least 30 centimetres.

How do you measure the 3-component?

There are different ways of assessing the 3-component of the principle. An example of such methods, using a buffer around individual residences and then counting all tree canopies over a certain size (e.g., 28 m^2, as mentioned above), is described in the Yggdrasil report (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2025). There are also other ways to assess the 3-component, for example by using surveys and asking people how many (large) trees they can see. New methods will also include the actual visibility of trees (looking at where windows are located on individual buildings). For an overview of different assessment methods for all three components, with their respective pros and cons, see Browning et al. (2024).

Why does the principle ask for seeing at least 3 trees (and not, for example, 2 or 4)?

Research has shown that seeing trees, shrubs, and other vegetation is good for us. Although there is no specific research that calls for exactly 3 trees, having a view of at least 3 trees is seen as a good proxy for visible green around homes, schools, workplaces, etc. This can mean, for example, that trees are visible from different sides of the buildings. Having multiple trees in sight could also mean seeing different species of trees, offering a more diverse experience. Finally, the 3 of course goes well with the 30 and 300 components that are more firmly founded in evidence.

Why is there a focus on trees - and specifically large ones?

Trees typically provide more benefits than other types of vegetation, and especially large trees offer the most value in terms of, for example, cooling, pollution reduction, water buffering, and enhancement of mental health. One large tree will provide more benefits than a large number of small trees, as shown by research.

FAQ: The 30-component

How do you define a 'neighbourhood'?

Neighbourhoods can be defined in different ways, depending on the local context. Often municipalities have clearly defined neighbourhoods or districts. In North-American cities, as an example, the postal codes of different neighbourhoods differ. As a proxy for neighbourhood, as used in the Yggdrasil project, a buffer of, for instance, 500 metres or perhaps 1 kilometre can also be taken from individual residences to simulate people's daily neighbourhood.

When measuring the 30-component, do we need to include buildings, roads, water, etc.?

Usually the 30% is calculated over the full land surface of an area, including buildings and roads. Often (larger) water bodies are excluded from the assessment. The presence of water, such as rivers, lakes, and ponds, obviously has values of its own. In fact, water will often be part of the 300-component as an important feature in city parks.

FAQ: The 300-component

How do we define a 'high-quality' green space?

In order to be included in the 300-component, green spaces from parks to woodland areas have to offer opportunities for a wide range of recreational and related activities. They should ideally have a diverse vegetation, with sufficient trees and shade but also sunlight. The green spaces should offer different experiences and be publicly accessible, without any sort of entrance fee. Further, the spaces should be safe, well managed, and have no major barriers in terms of access. They should also have an appropriate level of facilities and infrastructure, related to the functions of the area. However, each city should have the flexibility to define this based on its unique context. For some cities, a high-quality green space may simply be one that is actively used by the public, even if it is small or non-traditional (i.e., not a typical public park).

What is meant by a maximum distance of 300 metres?

The maximum distance of 300 meters refers to the actual walking distance for a walk (or bicycle ride), without major barriers, of no more than 300 metres from your home (or e.g., workplace) - as opposed to the geographical distance.

Why should the green space be 0.5-1.0 hectares in size?

Green spaces need to have a certain minimum size to accommodate different uses and offer a range of experiences. Larger green spaces can also offer more biodiversity and higher quality nature experiences. The World Health Organization, Regional Office for Europe (2017) has recommended a minimum size of 0.5-1.0 ha to achieve this.

3. Why 3+30+300?

Implementing the 3+30+300 principle, with its focus on the important contributions of trees and green spaces to better communities, addresses several critical challenges facing human settlements today. For more information on the background and supporting research for 3+30+300, see the Yggdrasil final report (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2025) and the dedicated 3+30+300 website (www.330300rule.com).

Why Three Trees from Every Home?

Research highlights the mental health benefits of visible vegetation, with trees playing a key role. During the COVID-19 pandemic, nearby green spaces provided essential 'nature doses.' Studies also show faster recovery rates for hospital patients with green views and improved academic performance for students with greenery visible from the classroom. Research shows that especially (large) trees are an important component of visual green around the places where we live, work, go to school, or perhaps are cared for. Ensuring everyone can see at least three mature trees from the places where they spend a lot of time supports well-being, health, and our ability to concentrate.

Why Thirty Percent Tree Canopy Cover in Every Neighbourhood?

Urban tree canopy cover provides various benefits, including temperature regulation, air pollution reduction, buffering of heavy rain, and a range of public health benefits. In fact studies have consistently shown that people living in neighbourhoods with higher canopy cover are healthier and happier, including when studies control for the influence of factors such as income and cultural background. Studies indicate that higher canopy levels are needed to obtain the full benefits, and should therefore be in the range of 30% or even more. Some cities, like Barcelona, Bristol, New York, and Vancouver have set a 30% canopy target, while cities such as Sydney and Washington DC aim even higher. Municipality-wide targets, however, can hide an uneven distribution of canopy cover, with some neighbourhoods scoring very high and some very low. It is essential to ensure that everybody in cities and towns lives in 30% canopy neighbourhoods. Only in this way can environmental justice and tree equity considerations be met.

Why Three Hundred Metres from the Nearest Park or Green Space?

Access to high-quality green spaces within close proximity is vital for promoting recreational activities and enhancing well-being. Studies show that people who live within an easy walk from a local park or other public green space visit these areas more frequently and are also in a better state of health. As mentioned, The World Health Organization has called for everyone to have a public park of at least 0.5- 1 ha within 300 metres from their home (World Health Organization, Regional Office for Europe, 2017). Efforts must be directed towards ensuring equitable and good access to green spaces, from parks to woodland, across different urban typologies. Innovative solutions, such as linear green spaces serving as cycle corridors, can effectively bridge the gap between urban dwellers and nature. In recognition of the importance of smaller green spaces and the realities of often dense urban areas, the 3+30+300 principle works with a minimum green space size of 0.5 ha, within a 300-metre walk or bike ride.

Other Arguments

Public Health - Access to urban greenery reduces stress, improves mental well-being, and fosters physical activity, especially for vulnerable groups like children, the elderly, and those with health challenges.

Climate Adaptation - Urban trees help mitigate the effects of climate change by reducing heat islands, managing stormwater, reducing flooding, and providing shade.

Biodiversity - Green spaces create habitats for native flora and fauna, contributing to ecosystem health and diversity.

Equity - By setting clear targets, the principle ensures all residents—regardless of socio-economic background—benefit from the presence of green spaces in their community.

Policy Alignment - The principle can support green space, tree, climate, biodiversity, public health and other policies and plans, helping to set targets, linking trees and green space to different benefits and themes, and offering an evidence-based metric and guideline.

Economic Development - Greener cities can attract investment, events, businesses, tourists, etc. Property prices and people's willingness to pay for housing in greener neighbourhoods can increase. City-wide greening also stimulates green jobs and green entrepreneurship.

FAQ: The overall 3+30+300 approach

Do I have to pay royalties or some kind of fee for using the principle?

No, use of the 3+30+300 principle is entirely free as there are no copyrights or trademarks. It is however recommended to respect the scope and intention of the principle and properly cite where it comes from.

What ecosystem services and benefits does the principle focus on and why?

Although trees and green spaces made available to people provide a wide range of ecosystem services, the focus of the 3+30+300 principle is on climate adaptation and public health. These are two key challenges for cities and other built-up areas around the world and research has shown what the impact of visual trees, canopy cover, and accessible public green space can be in relation to these.

Why should 3+30+300 always be used together with other objectives, tools, or metrics?

Cities need comprehensive planning frameworks to address diverse challenges like climate adaptation, mobility, housing, and public health. The 3+30+300 principle is a strong starting point but needs integration into broader policies. For example for biodiversity and enhancing vegetation other than trees, additional metrics and guidelines will be needed.

Can the principle be used for biodiversity enhancement and how?

Yes, this is possible, especially when the three components are linked to aspects of tree/ vegetation diversity and the biodiversity of green spaces. Specific links can relate to, for example:

- Habitat connectivity: the principle can help to establish ecological corridors supporting movement of species.
- Ecosystem functionality: Well-designed implementation of the principle ensures trees and green spaces contribute to pollination, water cycling, and soil health, indirectly fostering biodiversity.
- Fostering a diverse range of trees and other habitats across the city, stimulating green spaces, gardens, etc. with a mix of trees and other vegetation.
- Promoting the role of native trees and other plant species, especially where native species can perform well.

Can other types of vegetation (shrubs, perennial plants, green walls and roofs) be considered within the 3+30+300 framework? Especially in areas where growing full sized trees is challenging?

In principle, trees are in focus when it comes to the 3 and 30 components, as backed up by research. However, this should still be seen as a step toward fully fulfilling the 3+30+300 principle in the longer term, as more opportunities emerge for planting and growing trees. Different types of vegetation can all contribute to fulfilling the 300-component when they are part of high-quality public green spaces. Combining trees with other vegetation, using multiple layers, can also be beneficial for biodiversity, stormwater management, and other benefits.

Does the 3+30+300 principle take tree diversity into consideration? You could achieve especially the 3 and 30 components with only one or a few tree species, which does not seem to be desirable.

Although the principle does not specifically include requirements for tree diversity, it is recommended to use a wide range of tree species and build a diverse and resilient urban forest. The Yggdrasil final report provides some information and guidance for this, for instance, referring to Frank Santamour's 10-20-30 rule of thumb for tree diversity that states that no single species should take up more than 10% of the entire tree population, no genus should cover more than 20%, and no plant family should represent more than 30% of all trees in the city (see for example, Sabatini, 2024).

Is there a way to make a composite score to visualize all components on a single map?

Yes, this can be done. See the example of the 'overall score' used in the Yggdrasil report, with a weighting of the three components and then a composite score (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2025). Or you can simply use a score from 0 to 3, for the number of components met for a certain building, neighbourhood, or city.

What is a good time perspective for implementing 3+30+300?

This depends on local needs and perspective but generally a longer-term perspective (of several decades) will be needed, for example, to reach 30% tree canopy cover. This will require different ways to plan and design neighbourhoods. For new developments, one could imagine setting a timeframe of 20-30 years in which the full 3+30+300 principle needs to be achieved. This then also calls for a clear vegetation management and growth plan, with responsibilities, resources, and monitoring allocated and arranged, so that it does not remain an empty promise.

Is 3+30+300 a norm, principle, guideline, general metric, or all of these?

It can serve (and has been used) as all of these, depending a bit on the purpose. It was originally formulated as a 'principle' or 'rule of thumb', to emphasise the importance of having sufficient visible, surrounding, and recreational green (based on research findings) and to have a stronger position within urban space discussions and prioritisation. 3+30+300 has featured as a local and even national green norm, adopted by government bodies, thus strengthening the case for sufficient trees and green. It has frequently been mentioned in tree and green strategies and plans, as well as other policy documents, as a target or monitoring tool. Local communities and not-for-profits have used it for advocating for more trees and green in communities. Just make it clear from the start how 3+30+300 is used in the specific context or document at hand.

What are some of the limitations of 3+30+300?

First of all there are some context-specific challenges. The principle does not automatically account for the unique ecological or urban contexts in regions (as the Faroe Islands or Iceland in a Nordic context) where achieving 30% canopy cover may be unrealistic due to climatic or geographic constraints.

Uncritical use of the principle can result in oversimplification. While it is a useful guideline, 3+30+300 might oversimplify complex urban planning and ecological dynamics, neglecting other critical factors like soil quality, underground infrastructure, or socio-cultural preferences.

There can be a tendency of focusing on quantity over quality. The principle emphasizes measurable metrics (tree visibility, canopy cover, proximity to green space), which might overlook the quality and functionality of the green spaces or tree species for biodiversity and resilience. Having said this, the 300-component clearly calls for a high-quality public green space. Moreover, as also mentioned above, ensuring proper tree species diversity should be a key consideration.

4. How to Implement 3+30+300?

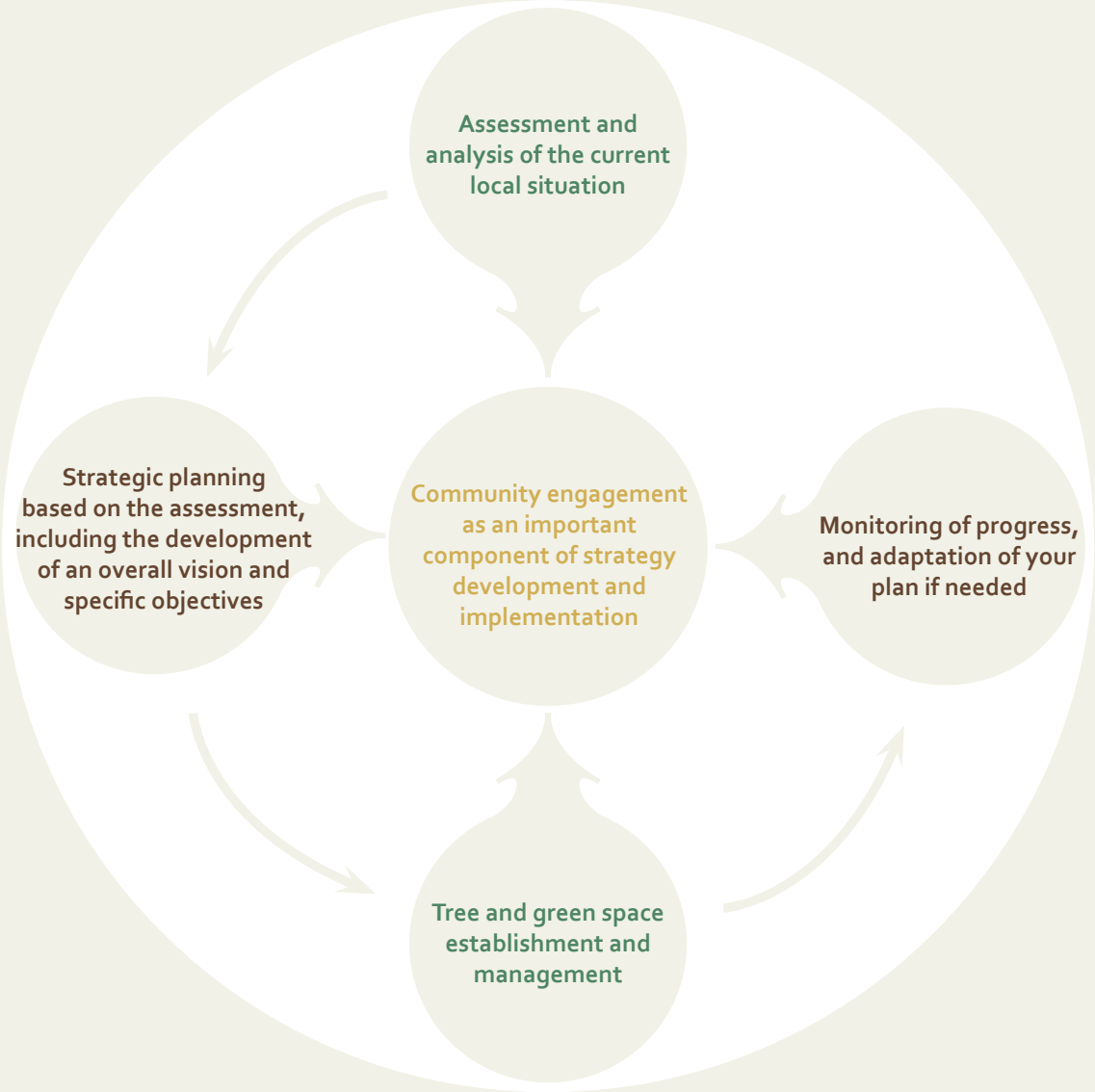
Step-by-Step Guide

The 3+30+300 principle can be used in different ways but the optimal use is to integrate it into a stepwise and strategic approach. Key steps of this strategic process relate to the five steps illustrated to the right.

Community engagement is mentioned as a fifth step here but in fact it is linked to all other steps (as shown in the figure). Under assessment and analysis, as well as under monitoring of progress, for example, citizen science can be used. Ideally local communities should also be engaged in the formulation of visions and objectives of greening strategies and policies.

The five steps and the respective / potential role of the 3+30+300 principle are described below. For each step, key considerations, aspects, and questions are listed to guide you in your work under this step. In the next chapter, a selection of practical examples for every step in the guide is listed.

The steps can be followed by different types of stakeholders, from municipal staff to non-profit and community groups. Naturally the emphasis of what steps are the most important or relevant will vary between groups.



1. ASSESSMENT AND ANALYSIS

A Current state and gap analysis

Current state and gap analysis: What do we have? (assessment of current state). What is the current 3+30+300 and wider greening situation in my community and in specific neighbourhoods? What is the 3+30+300 state in different neighbourhoods? Where are the primary 3+30+300 gaps? (This can be analysed using mapping tools and overlays with socio-demographic data to prioritise the areas with the greatest need.) How do you define 'vulnerable' populations or areas? Where are some of the most vulnerable and prioritised areas for 3+30+300 implementation? As a result of this analysis, for example, areas near schools, healthcare facilities, and socio-economically vulnerable neighbourhoods should be prioritised to maximise health and equity benefits.

B Policy and context analysis

What are some other relevant policies and plans, or perhaps legislation, and how do they link to 3+30+300? Are there characteristics of the local context that should be kept in mind? What are some of the issues, challenges, and opportunities where trees and other greenery play a role, for example in terms of the benefits or nuisances they provide, the link to policy objectives and community priorities?

C Stakeholder mapping

Who are the key actors and stakeholders in relation to 3+30+300 implementation?

2. STRATEGIC PLANNING

A Define your destination

Where do we want to go (in terms of our vision, a preferred future state)? What is the desired future state of my community's green structure, especially from a 3+30+300 perspective? How does this link to meeting a range of strategic objectives for the future of my community? Do not mistake the vision - which is a more general aspirational statement and a desired future state - for specific objectives and targets that will help you get to the vision.

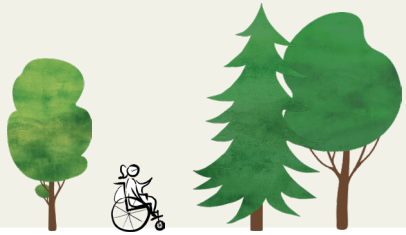
B Identify what trade-offs need to be realised to prioritise trees and green spaces (parking, housing, non-green public space, etc.).

C Use the principle to open the door to a conversation about greening the city. Apply the principle as a communication tool to advocate for greener communities and a stronger presence of trees and green in urban policies.

D Decide whether you will focus on the 3 trees, the 30 % or the 300 metres, or, ideally, all of them, as they represent different functions and roles of trees and green space.

E Integrate the 3+30+300 principle into urban forestry, green space, biodiversity, climate and other related plans and strategies. Use frameworks like urban forestry master plans to formalise commitments.

F See how the principle can be used with other guidelines and tools for urban greening, biodiversity, climate adaptation, and the like.



G Ensure that policies and plans account for long-term maintenance and protection of trees and green spaces (see step 4).

H Integrate 3+30+300 into broader policies

- Embed the principle in municipal comprehensive plans, as well as in policies and strategies for housing, public health, education, transportation, economic development, etc.
- Find ways of aligning policies and plans, creating synergies rather than policy or sectoral conflicts.

3. TREE AND GREEN SPACE ESTABLISHMENT AND MANAGEMENT

A **Describe your roadmap**

How do we get there, i.e. how do we realise our vision and meet our objectives (work plan, roles and responsibilities, resources)? What will have to be done when, by whom, and with which resources?

B To guide the above, develop a detailed framework that links objectives to targets and key performance indicators.

C Take good care of existing trees and green spaces and enhance their conditions and qualities. Pay special attention to protection of existing mature trees that provide the greatest ecosystem services.

D Focus tree planting and the creation of new green spaces on the priority areas identified earlier. Plant a mix of species to withstand pests, diseases, and climate change. Also depending on local policies and legislation, carefully balance the use of native and exotic species as you try to enhance the diversity and health of your local urban forest.

- Prioritise large, long-lived shade trees over smaller ornamental species for maximum impact.
- Tailor to local contexts: Recognise regional variations in tree growth and urban conditions. Where trees are less appropriate or harder to grow, focus on using alternative forms of vegetation.

4. MONITORING AND ADAPTATION

A Monitor your progress: How do we know that we have arrived? What is the minimum level we want to achieve at different times in the future? (monitoring, policy/strategy adjustment). Note: You will need to have a clear idea from the start of how you are going to monitor progress and the development of 3, 30, and 300 fulfilment, so this step links to earlier steps as well.

B Regularly evaluate progress and adjust plans as needed. How are the scores on the 3, 30, and 300 evolving? What are the opinions of local communities on the changes?

C Use tools like i-Tree and public health impact assessments to quantify the benefits of tree planting and canopy cover changes.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

A Community engagement should be integrated in all other steps, and engagement should start early in the process.

B Focus on residents and community groups: Which residents and communities are most affected? What are the best ways to involve them and other stakeholders in strategy development and implementation? Use the analysis done in step 1 here.

C Use 3+30+300 to raise awareness among residents of the importance of trees and green spaces.

D Involve residents in greening projects to build ownership and align efforts with community needs.

E Identify how 3+30+300 can help meet community needs and preferences, and also ensure a locally sensitive implementation of the principle.

FAQ - Implementing 3+30+300 in different contexts and realities

How can the principle be used for communication and public engagement?

There are many ways of using the principle for communication and public engagement. Some examples of this:

- Setting simple, tangible, and measurable goals: The 3+30+300 principle offers clear and relatable metrics (seeing trees, proximity to parks) that are easy for both policymakers and citizens to understand and support - and keep track of.
- Raising awareness: The principle highlights the importance of urban trees and other greenery for health, climate adaptation, and biodiversity, making it a powerful narrative for advocacy.
- Community participation and citizen action: Initiatives aligned with the principle, such as tree-planting drives or park revitalization, can actively involve residents, fostering a sense of ownership.
- Evidence-based messaging: Research showing benefits like improved mental health, cooling effects, and biodiversity gains can be used to engage communities and decision-makers.
- Policy advocacy: The principle acts as a rallying point for citizens, NGOs, and urban planners to advocate for greener cities, aligning with international and national climate, sustainability and other targets, as well as local policy objectives.

Can the principle be applied to arid and semi-arid cities?

Yes, but for example the 30 could be difficult to reach, because of drought and water limitations. It is important to make use of locally adapted trees and other vegetation.

What can be done to retrofit cities, including dense urban centres, using the principle?

Often more is possible than one thinks. First of all, identify plantable spots and focus especially on places where large trees would be possible. Make use of mobility, energy and other transitions, as many urban areas undergo frequent transformation. In addition, be sensitive to cultural-history and other values. Where there is no space for trees (at least at the moment), make use of other types of green.

Can the principle also be used outside of urban centres, for example, in rural areas? If so, how?

Yes, but here one should still focus on built-up centres where most people live. For any built-up area, including villages and smaller settlements, the 3 and 30 should be in focus. In addition, for the 300, the surrounding countryside can be used and made more accessible and attractive for different recreational activities.

If a new area or neighbourhood is being constructed, for example on former farmland or a remediated industrial site without or with only few trees, how can 3+30+300 be reached?

Of course it can be difficult to achieve the three components from the very start, but the design should include a sound foundation and sufficient trees for achieving the principle in the longer term. Here, a time period of for example 20-30 years could be agreed on. Moreover, sufficient space should be reserved for trees to grow old and large, where possible.

How does the principle work during different seasons, including often long winters in some parts of the world?

Here the work on 'winter placemaking' is highly relevant, making use of seasonality and opportunities for winter recreation; having a mix of coniferous and broadleaved species so that there is green during winter as well; while balancing light and dark, sun and shade. High-quality green spaces should include possibilities for different winter uses, providing comfort also in winter.

My municipality already exceeds all three components of the principle. Isn't there a risk for complacency and lowering the bar?

The three scores are minimum scores. Research has shown, for example, that the cooling effect really kicks in at a canopy cover of 40% or so. If possible, strive for scoring higher than 3, 30, and 300.

Where do I start? Is it better to focus first on the 3, 30, or the 300 component?

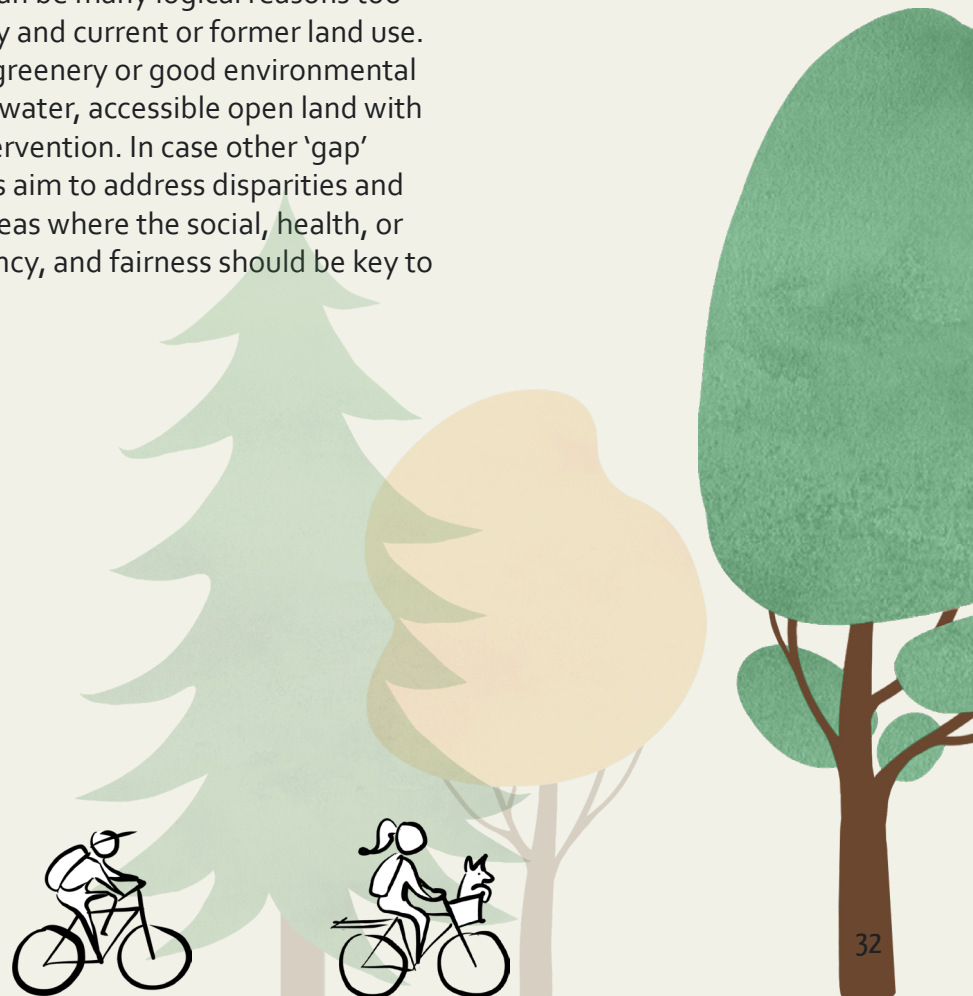
All three components are important and should ideally be addressed jointly. However, research suggests that especially canopy cover is essential for several ecosystem services. Often the 30 is also the hardest component to achieve. Perhaps you can start by adding a few percent canopy cover, even if this only means an increase from, for example, 8 to 10% canopy cover (which would still be a 25% increase!). Alternatively, maybe there are some areas in which the 300 component is not met but where there are opportunities for either new green spaces or improving the accessibility of existing parks. Then you could start your work there. Remember that 3+30+300 implementation is a long-term process. Any improvement you can make on the individual components will be worthwhile.

How can 3+30+300 help with pushing for greener cities in municipal politics and policies?

You can use 3+30+300 to open the door and start the debate about the importance of trees and green. Its simplicity makes it suitable and effective for raising awareness of the benefits of urban greenery, such as climate resilience and improved well-being. It can help with raising interest and awareness among politicians and with engaging stakeholders early, with building cross-departmental collaborations, and framing green initiatives as solutions to broader urban challenges. Messages should be tailored to align with local priorities and foster community support through active involvement and transparent communication. Don't forget to highlight successful examples from other municipalities to inspire and guide decision-makers.

How can you communicate with decision-makers and the public that some low scoring areas may still not be prioritised for greening efforts.

To effectively communicate why some low-scoring areas on 3+30+300 maps may still not be prioritised for greening efforts, it is important to frame the reasoning with clarity, empathy, and evidence. Emphasise that prioritisation is not solely based on 3+30+300 scores but also considers factors like socio-economic vulnerability, public health needs, and climate adaptation risks. There can be many logical reasons too for why some areas score low, perhaps also in relation to cultural history and current or former land use. You could explain that areas already benefiting from extensive private greenery or good environmental conditions that don't show up on the 3+30+300 maps (e.g., presence of water, accessible open land with few trees but with high landscape qualities) may not require urgent intervention. In case other 'gap' areas are prioritised, communication can highlight that greening efforts aim to address disparities and provide equitable access to green spaces, at least initially prioritising areas where the social, health, or environmental benefits will have the most impact. Evidence, transparency, and fairness should be key to communication.



DON'T GIVE UP!

Implementation of the 3+30+300 principle can seem overwhelming, especially when starting scores on one or more components are very low and it seems difficult to increase these. A few pieces of advice that can keep you going:

An overarching message from the municipalities that participated in the Nordic Yggdrasil project was the importance of challenging constraints and not accepting "no" as the final answer. Cities agreed that with creative thinking and perseverance, there are always ways to incorporate green solutions, even areas and spaces that are challenging for trees and parks.

Foster collaboration and knowledge sharing through networks of municipalities, communities, and organisations to share insights, strategies, and experiences. Other municipalities, communities, and organisations have faced similar challenges. Reach out and learn from their experience.

Also, enhance collaboration between different land owners, including private garden owners, schools, utility companies, the road department, etc. to overcome barriers and increase chances of success.

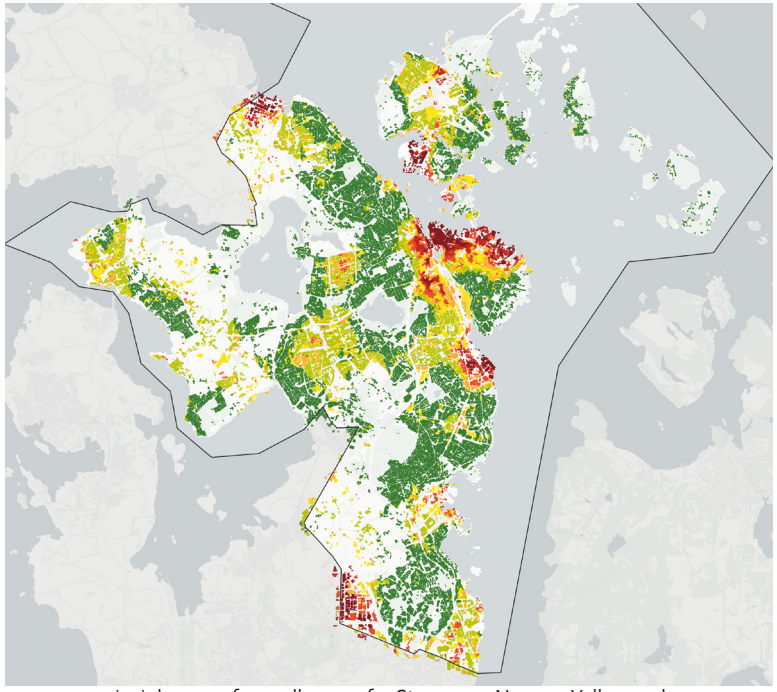
Engage with local stakeholders, researchers, and international experts to ensure best practices are followed.

This is a task for the long run and perhaps it will take 40-50 years before you get there. But small increases already make a difference and should be celebrated.

If one or more components of the principle seem unrealistic, at least on the shorter term or because of your local context, aim for smaller improvements. One or two percent more canopy cover can already make a real difference! Also, if there simply is no additional space for larger trees you can still improve local greening by using smaller trees, shrubs, other vegetation, and even green facades. Use the 3+30+300 principle according to your own contexts and needs.

5. Putting 3+30+300 into Action - Examples and Good Practices

Here is a selection of practical examples that align with the various steps outlined in the step-by-step guide. These examples can serve as a source of inspiration for municipalities and planners by showcasing real-world applications of urban greening initiatives and strategies. The examples can provide practical insights into proven methodologies, which can inform decision-making and planning processes when aiming to meet the 3+30+300 goals.



3+30+300-principle map of overall scores for Stavanger, Norway. Yellow and green colours indicate buildings and areas with positive 3+30+300 scores, orange and red tones depict scores that are too low.

Assessment and Analysis

In the Nordic Yggdrasil project from which this handbook results, detailed 3+30+300 mapping was done for all Nordic municipalities. Maps were not only used to offer an overview of how the Nordic region and individual countries and cities are performing, but also in workshops with selected municipalities. During these workshops, cities' 3+30+300 maps were analysed and discussed, also with peer municipalities. Gap analyses were undertaken to identify 'weak spots' in 3+30+300 coverage and future priority areas.

The 3+30+300 principle was included in a new, long-term Tree Strategy for the City of Belfast in Northern Ireland (City of Belfast, 2023). It is not a policy target per se, but rather offers a reference framework for the current and future state of Belfast's urban forest.

Assessment and analysis of 3+30+300 can also be used as part of green space / tree equity mapping, as Malmö and other cities have done (e.g., City of Malmö, 2024b).

Strategic Planning

The 3+30+300 principle can be integrated in different types of policy documents, from green space and urban forestry strategies and plans (such as urban forest master plans) to policies and plans for climate action strategies and public health. In some cases the principle will be one of the key targets while in other instances it will primarily be a tool for analysis and / or monitoring of policy targets.
A good example of policy integration of the principle is provided by the Swedish city of Malmö (see City of Malmö, 2024a). After the 3+30+300 principle was formally adopted by the Malmö City Council in early 2023, it was included in different municipal plans, including the city's comprehensive plan. To raise 3+30+300 awareness and aid implementation, special internal 3+30+300 conferences have been held for different city departments. Specific activities to aid 3+30+300 implementation have included mapping and prioritisation exercises to identify areas with potential for 3+30+300 realisation and those that need to be prioritised.

Ideally, the focus in policies and plans is on all three components of 3+30+300, as it crucially combines visible, environmental/surrounding, and recreational green. However, in some cases focus can be on one or two of the components only. In the tree policy of the Danish municipality of Frederiksberg, for example, a target is that every resident should be able to see at least one tree from where they live (Frederiksberg Kommune, 2018). In a new Urban Forest Master Plan for the Dutch city of Groningen, the overarching target is to achieve 30% canopy cover for every neighbourhood within the next few decades (Gemeente Groningen, 2024).

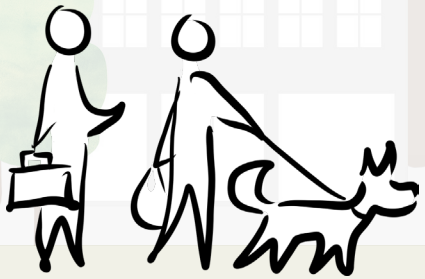
The government of Flanders, Belgium proposed a slightly adapted version of 3+30+300 as a new regional green norm, replacing older norms that were considered obsolete (Agentschap Natuur en Bos, 2024). To achieve the 30%, ideally trees are used but room is made for other types of 'climate green' as well, such as shrubs. In the latter case, however, a double amount of other types of green needs to compensate for the lower tree canopy cover. For example: 15% tree canopy cover needs to be accompanied by 30% other vegetation. This initiative led to a rapid spread of the 3+30+300 principle among Flemish municipalities.

Tree and Green Space Establishment and Management

For achieving 3+30+300, it is important to have a close look at your existing urban tree population and make projections, for example, of how canopy cover will develop as trees grow, decline, or die. Trying to find ways for trees to live longer and grow bigger is another key strategy, so it is definitely not only about planting new trees.

The City of Malmö made a detailed analysis of the potential for expanding their tree canopy in three typical neighbourhood types, showing that a doubling of this on public land alone would be feasible in the longer run (FOJAB, 2024). Identifying potential planting spots, as organisations like Cobra Groeninzicht have done for Dutch municipalities, is another useful strategy.

In The Netherlands, the Norminstituut Bomen (Dutch Tree Norm Institute) has developed a comprehensive handbook in which specifications are provided, for example, for required soil volume for different sizes of trees over time (Norminstuut Bomen, 2022). They also link this to a new countrywide tree norm, derived from 3+30+300 and linked to a certain amount of tree crown volume per m^2 (Norminstituut Bomen, 2024). The basic premise is to take good care of trees, starting from their establishment, so that they can grow older and bigger.
An example is the city of Nice in France (Meet In Nice Côte d'Azur, 2024). Although Washington DC in the United States does not specifically use 3+30+300, it has set a clear tree canopy target and carried out detailed monitoring of the canopy in different parts of the city (DDOT, 2025).



Monitoring and Adaptation

The introduction and implementation of the 3+30+300 principle is still a new phenomenon. But as policies, plans, and other initiatives are being rolled out, it is important to monitor impacts and adapt actions and plans where needed. The mapping work done by municipalities such as Malmö offers a good example for this, as it will allow for monitoring real change over time, neighbourhood by neighbourhood. Using tools such as i-Tree (2025) but also for example, health impact assessments, the situation before, during, and after 3+30+300 implementation can also be assessed in terms of ecosystem services and benefits provided (even in economic terms).

Other cities and municipalities have also done very good work in assessing their current 3+30+300 status and preparing a plan for improvement based on this, step by step. An example is the city of Nice in France (Meet In Nice Côte d'Azur, 2024). Although Washington DC in the United States does not specifically use 3+30+300 it has set a clear tree canopy target and carried out detailed monitoring of the canopy in different parts of the city (DDOT, 2025).

Community Engagement

As the 3+30+300 principle is easy to understand and scalable to the neighbourhood and even street levels, it offers a great tool for communication and community engagement. An example of this was the national campaign Greenpeace Belgium carried out during the local elections in Belgium (Greenpeace Belgium, 2024). Prior to the campaign, Greenpeace had already done a citizen science campaign to ask residents about their local 3+30+300 situation. Then they had a voluntary data analysis lab prepare an overview of 3+30+300 scores for all Belgian municipalities, resulting in local discussions and media attention. Finally, the NGO carried out an awareness raising campaign during which local volunteers put tree stickers on municipal name signs in 25 locations.

In The Netherlands, a non-profit called IVN (Institute for Nature Education in English) launched a series of activities to support communities and local groups in greening neighbourhoods using the 3+30+300 principle. For this purpose, it commissioned a special concise fact sheet as well as an explanatory video that can provide inspiration and specific tips and tricks (IVN, 2024).

Experience has shown that 3+30+300 is also a good communication tool concerning news media. Hundreds if not thousands of 3+30+300 stories have been run by TV stations, radio, newspapers and magazines, as well as podcasts and social media sites. A news story could for example be pitched when the principle is adopted or when an initial analysis has been made (and also allows for benchmarking with other municipalities). An example of this was a study of 8 large global cities that resulted in over 600 individual news stories with an estimated audience of over 270 million people (Croeser, 2014).

Within the Yggdrasil project, several communication tools were produced on 3+30+300, including an explanatory video, a podcast, and a set of visualisations.

Peer Learning

As the implementation of the 3+30+300 principle progresses, municipalities can learn a lot from each other. Therefore it is important to facilitate peer networking and learning, both formally and informally. In the Nordic Yggdrasil project, so-called Future Living Labs were set up that combine 3+3+300 implementation in selected municipalities with careful analysing and monitoring, drawing lessons for the future. Projects like Yggdrasil can strengthen sharing of experiences and good practices, as also shown by the workshops with several Nordic municipalities in the project.

In the Netherlands, consultancy firm Sweco took the initiative at the end of 2024 to bring together Dutch municipalities that are implementing 3+30+300, or planning to do so, to build a peer network and share practical experiences.

Sources, Further Information, and Inspiration

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