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Coexistence of Tourism in Urban Planning: Active Living, Social Sustainability, and Inclusivity

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Abstract: In any city, various social groups coexist and need to have a harmonious symbiosis and optimise how people experience the city. The notion of urban planning incorporates positive city development that is active, socially sustainable, and inclusive. This study aims to identify whether the development of the Mediterranean city of Limassol, Cyprus extends to cover the needs of people with disabilities (PwD), residents, and tourists, emphasising physical impairments regarding the facilities and services provided. Limassol, Cyprus is an interesting case because recent developments aim to establish the city as a friendly living space with varied activities and services. Additionally, the city attracts tourists, and such development can be a competitive advantage as a tourism destination. Semi-structured interviews with PwD have been conducted to analyse their views, aiming to identify the extent to which existing infrastructure and services align with an inclusive model within the framework of sustainability, encompassing the notion of an active city. According to the findings, local government via municipal and tourism authorities should consider inclusivity in all aspects when re-developing urban settings by ensuring accessibility for PwD and offering more services that adhere to the requirements of an active, socially sustainable, and inclusive city.

Keywords: urban planning; active city; social sustainability; people with disabilities; inclusion; Cyprus; qualitative research



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1. Introduction

Urbanisation has become a defining feature of the contemporary world, with most of the global population now residing in cities [1]. According to the European Commission's [2] report, the most recent population projections indicate a 6.8% overall increase in the number of individuals living in metropolitan regions of the European Union's capital cities from 1 January 2021 to 1 January 2050. Therefore, securing and unifying urban environments is crucial in advancing inclusive and, at the same time, sustainable societies, as stated in the '2030 United Nations Agenda for Sustainable Development' [3]. The 'New Urban Agenda' [4] is a comprehensive guide for achieving sustainable urbanisation, providing a roadmap for creating more inclusive, sustainable, and resilient cities. The emphasis is placed on cities prioritising safety, inclusivity, accessibility, and promoting social cohesion, and entails fostering inclusive and safe environments within peaceful and diverse societies.

Tourism coexists in the ordinary way of life, affected by trends enforced in urban development [5,6]. Residents' views indicate how a city is experienced and exposed in everyday life. Tourists live in a city temporarily; however, the development directly impacts their experience. The city is the destination for tourists, whereas, for residents, it is their permanent place of residence. This study extends this emphasis to people with disabilities (hereafter PwD), who represent 16% of the world's population [7–9], an often-underrepresented and underprivileged group in urban development [10,11]. It focuses on Limassol, Cyprus as a case study to explore inclusivity, social sustainability,

and tourism development perspectives, particularly tailored to the needs of PwD with physical impairments. In addition, the study adopts the framework of the ‘Social Model of Disability’ (hereafter SMD), which distinguishes between impairment and disability, identifying the latter as a disadvantage that stems from a lack of fit between a body and its social environment [12,13], and by addressing and removing societal barriers, it aims to create a more inclusive and equitable society for individuals with disabilities [14].

The study aims to understand the perceptions of PwD, particularly residents with mainly physical impairments regarding the adequacy of facilities and services in Limassol’s urban planning and development. Their views and opinions are aligned with the current development and reflect how the city is developed simultaneously as a tourism destination. Thus, investigating the perceptions of PwD in Limassol can assess how well the city’s planning aligns with the principles of inclusive living.

The research questions guiding this study are:

1. How does Limassol’s current urban planning framework address an active city, social sustainability, and inclusivity?
2. How does Limassol tourism development coexist within an inclusive urban development?

The theoretical background is in Section 2. Section 3 introduces the selected case study and research methodology while emphasising the research contribution. Section 4 presents the obtained qualitative data, and discusses the results, including suggestions for future research. Section 5 is the conclusion.

2. Theoretical Background

Cities are integral to the urban environment, “involving diverse stakeholders from construction companies to development finance institutions and local planners physically shaping the built environment” (p. 15) [14]. Healthy and socially sustainable concepts are linked to urban development frameworks [15,16], especially considering the growing urban population. Authorities and city planners should prioritise healthy living and provide necessary facilities to support residents’ well-being [17,18]. The challenges of urbanisation became evident with increased migration from rural areas, driven by the search for a new lifestyle. The World Health Organization (hereafter WHO), advocating for the Active Cities Initiative since 1986 [6,8], underscores the importance of maintaining a healthy city environment. A healthy environment yields social, economic, and environmental benefits, but assessing whether cities have effectively translated policy rhetoric into tangible improvements in urban living standards remains crucial.

The WHO [7,8] conceptualises cities as dynamic entities, constantly evolving and adapting. In line with this perspective, a healthy city is a value-based political and multi-level movement that collaborates with local governments and communities to address city health and well-being issues. Recognised as an effective strategic tool, it actively involves mayors, political leaders, and community stakeholders in its efforts [7,8], such as the ‘WHO European Healthy Cities Network’, the ‘Urban Health Equity Assessment and Response Tool’, and the ‘WHO Age-friendly Cities Framework’, underscoring the importance of creating supportive urban environments for health [16]. However, urban policymaking can often be complex and slow, impacting the integration of health and well-being into city living for all community members, including tourists, thereby influencing various relevant activities such as tourism and leisure pursuits [10]. Inclusion and participation of all stakeholders, especially those directly affected by urban policies, are vital for effective health promotion in cities.

Despite policy aspirations, the literature highlights a gap between policy specifications and their implementation, leading to challenges in achieving healthier urban living [19,20]. Those points raise critical questions about the effectiveness of policies fostering healthier urban living. In the context of urban development, it becomes imperative to examine how well cities align their intentions with tangible outcomes. Moreover, when considering studies on cities and PwD, it becomes evident that inclusive cities and social sustainability are integral to urban development [21–23]. The term PwD encompasses a diverse group

facing physical, sensory, cognitive, or mental health impairments that may hinder their full and equal participation in daily life [24]. The term ‘disabilities’ is an umbrella that covers impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions, as defined by the WHO [25]. The WHO’s definition [25] underscores the need for a comprehensive approach to urban planning that considers the diverse needs of disabled individuals to ensure genuinely inclusive and socially sustainable cities.

Bibri et al. [26] highlight the significant impact that urban governance has on the quality of life of their residents. Thus, the ‘active city’ concept gains prominence, as Edwards and Tsouros [27] outline. The active city concept advocates for integrating physical activity into the daily life of urban residents, extending beyond the development of infrastructure to include a wide array of activities [27]. As Tsouros [16] points out, the role of local authorities is pivotal in promoting active lifestyles and thus contributing to the overall vision of sustainable, inclusive urban development. The SMD is a seminal theoretical framework that has significantly influenced disability discourse [28–31] and inclusive urban development [22,32,33]. This model stands in contrast to the traditional medical model of disability, which perceives disability as a deficit or impairment within an individual [33].

The SMD posits that disability is not an inherent attribute of the individual but rather a result of the barriers and societal attitudes that individuals with impairments encounter [34]. This perspective places the responsibility on society to remove these barriers and create inclusive environments where PwD can fully participate in all aspects of life, including urban spaces. According to Berghs et al. [35], central to the SMD is the notion that disability is not solely a medical concern but a social issue deeply intertwined with environmental, attitudinal, and structural factors. In urban development, this theory emphasises the need for cities to be designed and built in ways that consider their inhabitants’ diverse abilities and needs [36]. As Reuter (2019) [37] states, it calls for accessible public transportation, infrastructure, and facilities, making it possible for PwD to move around the city quickly and independently. Moreover, this model underscores the importance of shifting the focus from “fixing” individuals with impairments to rectifying societal shortcomings that hinder their participation in urban life [38].

The SMD influence extends beyond academic discourse; it has played a pivotal role in shaping policy and legislation related to disability rights and accessibility. For instance, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities aligns with this model by promoting the rights, dignity, and inclusion of PwD [39]. It requires state parties to “recognise that persons with disabilities enjoy legal capacity on an equal basis with others in all aspects of life” [39]. As urban centres worldwide strive to become more inclusive and accommodating, this model offers a valuable framework for conceptualising and realising urban development that is truly inclusive, equitable, and reflective of the diverse abilities of all residents, including those with disabilities. Additionally, Disability Inclusive Infrastructure (DII) includes the design of accessible parking spots, bus stops, taxi ranks, signage, lighting, and information, as well as human aspects and design, the pedestrian environment, and tactile paving [21].

Social sustainability is a cornerstone of overall sustainability, focusing on communities’ or societies’ well-being, equity, and social cohesion [40]. The SMD is integral to shaping inclusive urban development, underscoring the importance of creating environments where PwD actively participate in community life. This connection between SMD and social sustainability emphasises the necessity of fostering social inclusion and equity for PwD within urban settings [41]. A key element of social sustainability is the promotion of social inclusion, aligning with the principles of the SMD. In an inclusive urban development framework inspired by the SMD, social inclusion encompasses providing accessible public spaces, transportation, and amenities, ensuring that PwD are integral community members [22]. As such, PwD can engage in recreational activities that are not only accessible but actively engage PwD, fostering a sense of belonging and acceptance. Such initiatives contribute to social cohesion, reinforcing the core tenets of social sustainability [42–44].

Furthermore, SMD and social sustainability convergence is evident in the shared pursuit of equal resource access.

According to Suarez-Balcazar et al. [45], this commitment is rooted in principles of social justice and contributes significantly to the overall well-being and participation of PwD in society. Consequently, the symbiosis between SMD and social sustainability provides a solid foundation for creating urban environments that prioritise the full participation and quality of life for all residents, including those with disabilities. Undoubtedly, there is a coexistence regarding the benefits that tourism can bring if it is well-planned. Since tourism's socially beneficial effects include social cohesion and the locals' viability, residents and foreign visitors can use modern and sustainable infrastructures [43,45]. Thus, city authorities must contact the official tourism body directly to work in a common direction concerning planning, policymaking, and development [46]. Any urban development involves locals and tourists and is interchangeable [47].

Social cohesion and the absence of discriminatory practices establish a place ideal to reside in and visit as a tourist. Any practices that neglect the needs of the locals are not sustainable. Social sustainability is mainly involved in providing all good practices that make life easier and healthier [48]. The notion of sustainable tourism aligns with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development proposed by the United Nations [3]. Inclusion and accessibility are essential for tourism and sustainability [49]. While PwD's perspectives converge, every inclusive development incorporates locals and visitors. The positive impacts of tourism instigate a framed development by tourism authorities that includes social sustainability and social cohesion. Destination Management Organisations (hereafter DMOs) must have high-ranking, robust policies that provide a socially, environmentally, and economically sound framework that prioritises residents [49,50]. In turn, such policies will reflect on the experiences retrieved by visitors during their stay at the destination. Unfortunately, there is a gap in tourism policy drafting and implementation, whereas most tourism strategies fail due to the multicomplexity of the sector and conflicts of interest [13,51].

Tourism has inextricably coexisted in urban planning since the popularity of cities as an attraction to tourists [52,53]. However, there is a need for more papers that concentrate on the notions of urban planning and tourism [54]. Existing urban planning and tourism studies' literature focuses on particular locations [52–55]. The focus of the papers attests to the marginalisation of tourism planning in urban development [52] along with accessibility services [56]. Any urban development directly impacts tourism, such as providing disabled facilities and services that become amenities for PwD residents and tourists [56]. Thus, stakeholders involved in tourism must dynamically enforce the tourism policy and strategies in urban planning development and provide a well-planned and realistic urban setting that directly influences tourism competitiveness [51,57,58]. Additionally, sustainable urban planning based on the SMD directly enhances urban settings and provides tourist niche services.

However, applying the concepts of active cities with inclusive developments can ensure non-discriminatory and sustainable participation for all [59]. The built environment must be accessible and, at the same time, maintain sustainable characteristics aligned with the natural and social requirements of a place. Urban development directly affects a destinations' reputation among tourists, but more attention is required for local authorities to include tourism authorities in urban planning and development [56–58]. In practice, some cities have managed to provide an inclusive, sustainable development model. Extraordinary examples can be seen in the cases of Vienna, Austria; Copenhagen, Denmark; Barcelona, Spain; Stockholm, Sweden; Amsterdam, Netherlands, Reykjavik, Iceland; Toronto, Canada; Portland, USA; and Melbourne, Australia, which manage to incorporate the MSD in practice [60]. In particular, those cities' common characteristics are an eco-friendly approach and encouragement to using bicycles, walking, and technologically modern means of transport [22].

The discussion highlights that existing literature suggests incomplete and handicapped urban development that can complement the characteristics of active, inclusive, and sustainable cities and at the same time competitive tourism destinations. Examining the research gaps in the discourse on urban planning policy reveals a lack of a comprehensive development plan with verified standards and procedures. As it is stated in Ref. [61], there is ‘no universal and widely accepted assessment tool to measure and rank these cities accurately and reliably’. That is the main case that hinders the exclusive development of cities that are ideal for all without limitations, ensuring an easy and healthy way of living. The absence of a cohesive development that caters to PwD’s needs is a recurring argument in the policy that must be both equitable and non-discriminatory [26]. This requires the implementation of an inclusive perspective for all residents, in conjunction with an urban development that is culturally friendly, accessible, and active [11,22]. Even if there is an obligatory policy aspect of inclusion, there is a selective process of implementation that neglects a holistic perspective of development [19,20].

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Study Area

The main objective of this study is to assess how well Limassol’s urban development accommodates the needs of PwD in terms of facilities and services provided. The investigation focuses on the perception of PwD living in Limassol, Cyprus’s second-largest city. It has undergone substantial developments in recent years and is experiencing urban transformations and infrastructure advancements. Cyprus, located in the eastern Mediterranean Sea, has a population of 900,000, with 67% residing in four major cities: Nicosia, Limassol, Larnaca, and Paphos (Figure 1). Limassol, situated on the coast, is the second-largest city on the island, with a population of 242,000; 100,000 people reside in the town, while the remainder live in the broader Limassol district [62].



Figure 1. Map of Cyprus. Source: Cyprus Press Information Office 2024.

Regarding tourism, the development is under the Deputy Ministry of Tourism, which sets the tourism plans and policies. The latest policy covers 2023–2030 and has a sustainable approach to development within the sustainability frames. In particular, the aim is to establish Cyprus as a competitive all-year-round destination with multifaceted activities. Compared to 3,021 in 2022, the total number of tourists arriving in 2023 was 3,845 (Figure 2). From €1,513.6 million in 2021 and €392.0 million in 2020, tourism revenue increased to €2,439.2 million in 2022. Compared to 2021, tourism earnings increased by 61.2% in 2022. Israel (8.7%), Germany (6.2%), Poland (5.8%), Greece (5.3%), Sweden (3.7%), Austria (2.2%), and Denmark (2.1%) were the following most popular tourist destinations, with 37.9% of all visitors to Cyprus in 2022 coming from the UK. Limassol receives 11% of the total tourism arrivals [63].

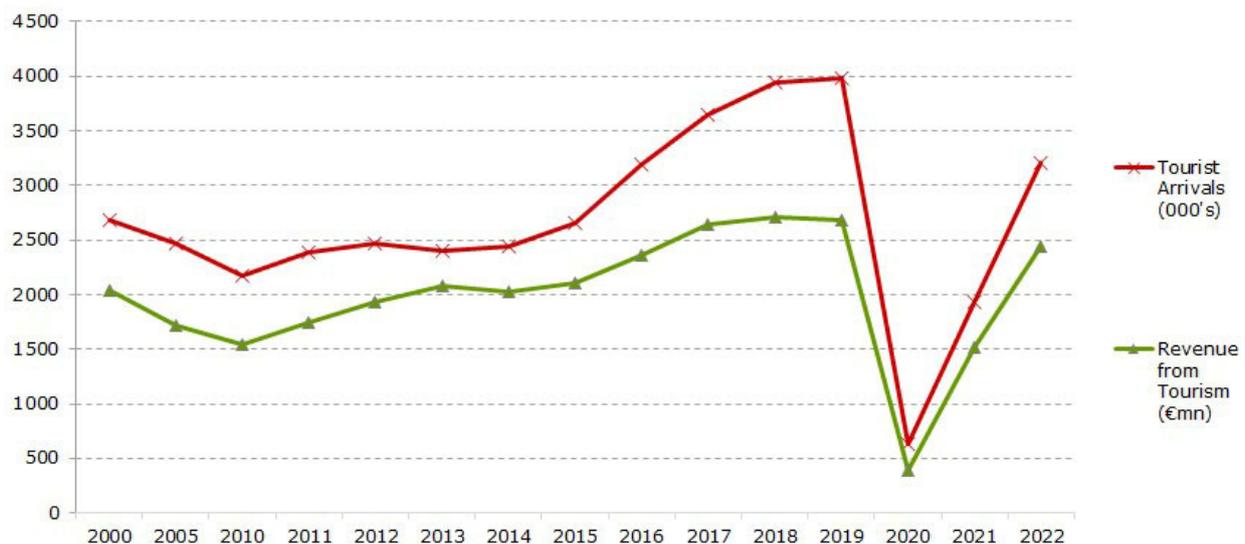


Figure 2. Tourism statistics for Cyprus. Source: Cyprus Statistical Service 2023.

The city boasts significant commercial activity, serving as the island's largest port and a crucial transit point connecting Asia and Europe. Limassol's primary source of income is tourism, with its reputation as a well-known destination. Limassol features a 26-km coastal pedestrian route, making it a distinctive location in the Mediterranean basin. A dedicated cycling network is established to encourage resident engagement in cycling [64]. Recent urban planning developments are vital to transforming Limassol into a sustainable city that fosters effective policy, planning, and development [65]. Limassol Municipality has made substantial commitments to revamp the city through its 'Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan' (hereafter SUMP). The SUMP focuses on traffic management via an integrated public transport system and prioritises safety for pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers through an intelligent transport system [66–68]. This development strategy is grounded in social, economic, and environmental sustainability, aimed at improving residents' quality of life. The city centre generally grapples with a chaotic and unplanned infrastructure, resulting in traffic congestion and a scarcity of parking spaces.

Cyprus actively participates in the 'WHO European Healthy Cities Network', which advocates for establishing Limassol as an active and healthy city committed to achieving positive change, addressing inequalities, and promoting good governance and leadership for health and well-being. In addition, Limassol has benefited from EU structural funds, receiving financing under the 'Operational Programme Competitiveness and Sustainable Development 2014–2020' [69]. Since 2020, Limassol Municipality has been a part of the 'Integrated NBS-based Urban Planning Methodology for Enhancing the Health and Wellbeing of Citizens: The euPOLIS Approach', a European Union Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation programme that seeks to develop a methodology for town planning based on

natural actions, involving all city stakeholders, with a focus on preserving a healthy life in the city [70].

Moreover, scholarly studies on Limassol have concentrated on various aspects, some of which include its development as a cyclist-friendly city [71], an evaluation of its strategic urban planning [72], an analysis of its human-centric approach to becoming a smart city [73,74], and a study on the city's sustainability through transportation and green spaces indicators [19]. The findings of these studies consistently stress the need for robust policy-making and decisive actions to transform Limassol into a sustainable urban city. Against the backdrop of Cyprus' unique socio-cultural landscape, the study aims to explore how the SMD applies within the specific context of Limassol. The city's recent growth presents an opportune environment to investigate the interplay between societal changes, urban planning, accessibility measures, and social attitudes and their impact on the inclusion of individuals with disabilities, aiming to create an active city living. The data acquisition process will comprehensively examine urban policies, accessibility initiatives, and community perspectives, utilising qualitative research methods. Through this approach, the study seeks to provide insights into the intersection of social sustainability, inclusion, and urban development within the dynamic setting of Limassol, Cyprus.

3.2. Chosen Research Methodology and Data Acquisition

The primary aim of this research is to comprehensively understand the perceptions of PwD in Limassol regarding integrating urban development into tourism. Firstly, the aim is to gain insights into the general perception of inclusion in urban development. Secondly, a discussion regarding the relationship between urban development and tourism evaluates the extent to which Limassol's urban planning prioritises residents' and tourists' needs, particularly those with physical impairments. The study also aims to understand the challenges faced by disabled residents and non-residents in enjoying Limassol and living active lives. Consequently, a qualitative research methodology allows for an in-depth exploration of participants' perspectives and experiences [75] through semi-structured interviews, facilitating an understanding of the multifaceted aspects of an active city and its inclusivity. Moreover, the qualitative approach empowers the researchers to capture the narratives and contextual richness inherent in the participants' lived experiences [63,64], offering valuable insights that contribute to a comprehensive and authentic portrayal of Limassol's dynamics as an active city.

Specifically, the study focuses on twenty-five (25) semi-structured interviews. It employs a purposive sampling method with a snowball approach, consisting of PwD residing in Limassol for at least five years. In 2023, estimates indicate 10,837 persons with disabilities in Limassol, or 10.73% of the total population [76]. The purposive sampling method with a snowball approach enables a targeted selection of participants with diverse perspectives, enriching the study with a comprehensive understanding [77] of Limassol's active city dynamics. The researchers have intentionally chosen individuals who have been residing in Limassol for a minimum of five years. This selection recognises that these participants have firsthand experience with the recent developments within Limassol. Living in the city for an extended period positions them as valuable informants who can provide insights into the changes, initiatives, and urban dynamics that have unfolded over the past five years.

The next step was to identify the role of a disabled person by targeting disability organisations. The first four interviews were with people who are actively involved in the organisation's boards, with one being a basketball player. At the end of each interview, the participants were asked to recommend more PwD for further interviews. A primary criterion for selection was the fact that the people recommended were eloquent and active in supporting PwD rights and had a public voice expressing their disappointment in cases where discrimination existed. The study considers the views and opinions of PwD as a reflection on how tourists with disabilities can experience Limassol's demographic information, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographics of the participants.

Interviewee	Type of Disability	Gender	Age	Education
Interviewee I	Basketball player—Mobility Impairment	Male	34	Bachelor’s Degree
Interviewee II	Member of the Association Board—Mobility Impairment	Male	56	Master’s Degree
Interviewee III	Member of the Association Board—Mobility Impairment	Female	57	High School
Interviewee IV	Member of the Association Board—Mobility Impairment	Female	28	Master’s Degree
Interviewee V	Mobility Impairment	Female	36	High School
Interviewee VI	Mobility Impairment	Male	42	PhD
Interviewee VII	Mobility Impairment	Male	45	Master’s Degree
Interviewee VIII	Mobility Impairment	Female	71	High School
Interviewee IX	Mobility Impairment	Male	55	Higher Diploma
Interviewee X	Mobility Impairment	Male	26	Master’s Degree student
Interviewee XI	Mobility Impairment	Male	38	High School
Interviewee XII	Mobility Impairment	Male	39	Master’s Degree
Interviewee XIII	Mobility Impairment	Male	47	High School
Interviewee XIV	Mobility Impairment	Male	45	Higher Diploma
Interviewee XV	Mobility Impairment	Female	24	Undergraduate Student
Interviewee XVI	Mobility Impairment	Female	45	High School
Interviewee XVII	Mobility Impairment	Male	62	High School
Interviewee XVIII	Mobility Impairment	Male	68	High School
Interviewee XIX	Mobility Impairment	Female	32	Bachelor’s Degree
Interviewee XX	Hearing Impairment	Male	34	Higher Diploma
Interviewee XXI	Visual Impairment	Female	56	Master’s Degree
Interviewee XXII	Visual Impairment	Male	54	Bachelor’s Degree
Interviewee XXIII	Multiple Disabilities	Female	67	High School
Interviewee XXIV	Multiple Disabilities	Female	31	Master’s Degree
Interviewee XXV	Multiple Disabilities	Female	37	Bachelor’s Degree

Source: Authors.

The researchers developed and pilot-tested the interview protocol, as shown in Table 2. The semi-structured interview format addressed the issues of urban planning, active cities, social sustainability, inclusivity, SMD, and tourism. The respondents quickly understood the terms investigated since this involved their way of living in the city. In other words, their opinions are an experiential way of living as a disabled person in a city that is not accessible and does not provide active and recreational facilities to all. The pilot testing was conducted in June 2023 with the members of the association boards (four) through semi-structured interviews. The final interview process took place between July 2023 and December 2023. All 25 semi-structured interviews took place in Greek via phone or Zoom, each lasting approximately 35 min. Before engaging in the research activities, explicit and informed consent was obtained from all participants, highlighting the voluntary nature of their participation and ensuring their comprehension of the study’s objectives, procedures, and potential implications. Participants signed a consent form that clearly articulated the purpose of the study, the expected duration of their involvement, the methods employed, and any potential benefits associated with their participation.

During the interviews, recording took place, enabling the transcription and organisation into two thematic categories for analytical purposes, as outlined in Table 2. To safeguard participants’ anonymity, they were given pseudonyms of Latin numerals, e.g., I, II, III, etc. The questions were divided into two topics as themes that answer the research

questions (Table 2). Thematic analysis is a well-established method for interpreting interview content, aligning closely with the research objectives and questions [78]. A coding approach was employed using NVIVO 12 to enhance transparency in data analysis. Additionally, NVIVO 12 aided in identifying commonalities in interview content, enhancing the precision of conclusions [79]. The process involved uploading the interview content in NVIVO 12 for each theme and the system-generated common patterns and codes. According to each theme, interview content with direct quotations supports the main arguments that lead to useful conclusions.

Table 2. Interview protocol—indicative content.

Themes		
Theme 1: Conceptualisation of an Active and Socially Sustainable City		
Question	Purpose	Theoretical Substantiation
Can you define what a healthy, active city is?	Definition	Provide an understanding of the PwD perspective
Do you believe that Limassol is an active city?	Perceptions of Active City	Exploring the actual implementation
Do you believe that Limassol is a city where physical activity and sports work for all?	Active City Characteristics	Explaining the requirements
As a disabled resident, do you believe that you face restrictions in enjoying Limassol and living a healthy life?	Active City and Disability	Explaining the restrictions
Do you believe that Limassol can be considered a socially sustainable city?	Understanding Social Sustainability	Explaining the reasons for social sustainability or unsustainability
Theme 2: Tourism coexistence: urban planning and inclusivity		
Do you believe Limassol's urban planning and development cover the needs of PwD?	Understanding of Urban Planning and Development	Requirements and Characteristics
Do you believe that Limassol is an accessible tourism destination?	Accessible tourism destination	Accessibility and Tourism
How can Limassol become an inclusive city?	Becoming an inclusive city	Requirements of inclusivity
How can Limassol establish the SMD?	SMD	Establishing SMD

Source: Authors.

The study's results were further analysed based on the Infranodus AI text Analysis Tool with the regeneration of new themes. In particular, the analysis is provided through text uploading with the generalisation of word and topic clusters and identification of the relationships generated [80,81]. Thematic analysis was a well-established method for interpreting interview content, aligning closely with the research objectives and questions [82]. Reliability is about the consistency of a measure, and validity is about the accuracy of a measure as the appropriateness of the method selected to collect data [83]. In the case of this particular study, choosing interviews indicates that the main aim is for participants to express their way of experiencing the city. Additionally, their opinions are accurate since any misleading information provided will impact their way of life. Thus, the participants' views and opinions are generalised to people with the same characteristics. The sample reached saturation since the interviewees' responses were similar and expressed the same problems and concerns about Limassol's active, sustainable, and inclusive development [83].

4. Results/Discussion

4.1. Theme 1: Conceptualisation of an Active and Socially Sustainable City

Defining 'What is an active city?' was the initial question during the interview. Respondents highlighted that it is a city that cares and provides a healthy lifestyle. The excerpt below is representative of defining an active city:

“An active city is a city that provides opportunities to its citizens to live according to a healthier lifestyle and active physical participation. Living in an active city improves not only the physical health of its citizens but their mental health as well.” [Interviewee XXIV]

The below statement broadens the definition of an active city, incorporating elements beyond traditional physical exercise [6]. It introduces another perspective, framing an active city as a living entity with cultural richness, events, and communal engagement:

“To me, an active city is a dynamic ecosystem where infrastructure integrates with the needs and aspirations of its residents. It is not just about the presence of physical amenities but the thoughtful design that encourages mobility.” [Interviewee XXIV]

The definitions provided add to the existing literature domains by supporting the notion of a city that provides a healthier living. Some confirmed that an active city goes beyond physical exercise [6], emphasising cultural liveliness and recreational opportunities as essential elements. The study’s results validate existing research exploring facets of urban social sustainability linked to an active city’s defining characteristics, as expounded by Edwards and Tsouros [27]. Additionally, the respondents underscored the pivotal role of accessible green spaces in shaping their conceptualisation of an active city that is socially sustainable. Another example of the city that relates to a healthy activity is illustrated in the excerpt below:

“The main example of Limassol in terms of the provision of health facilities is the sea-side promenade, which is accessible and provides an opportunity for various activities. However, it needs continuous maintenance and reservation to be in good condition.” [Interviewee III]

The emphasis on green spaces extended beyond mere landscapes; it resonated with a broader vision encompassing physical activities and community building [38]. The theme investigates the role of community engagement and social activities in shaping the perception of Limassol as an active city.

The primary result of this study stresses the need for a local culture that actively embraces a lifestyle combining physical activity and engagement with recent urban developments in Limassol. Moreover, the city faces challenges hindering smooth mobility, with notable issues such as severe congestion and a shortage of parking spaces, as documented in prior studies [48,49]. This difficulty aligns with the evident trend of residents choosing not to utilise public transport, affected by a notable lack of mobility infrastructure and planning. Interviewee IV articulated a reflection of these challenges:

“A city in which residents do not walk and use their cars all the time cannot be called active. . . no matter how advanced or modern the infrastructure is.” [Interviewee IV]

The interviewees agreed that the mentality of the locals arises from their hectic routines, which do not allow them to enjoy the city based on its existing infrastructure. Simultaneously, residents tend to overlook the natural beauty of the seaside area, leading them to underestimate the city’s potential for providing diverse physical activities. However, for tourists, the natural setting of the seaside consists of an idyllic environment that can establish Limassol as an active niche destination.

However, the current status of the city is in the excerpt below:

“While there is room for improvement, Limassol does offer a range of recreational opportunities, from parks to sports facilities. These spaces and the city’s cultural events contribute to an active lifestyle. However, fostering a more widespread appreciation of these offerings is crucial among residents. I believe that this is a marketing/promotion issue as well.” [Interviewee IV]

Another reflection is the following statement:

“Despite Limassol’s substantial potential and evident recent developments showcasing its capacity to evolve into an active city, a primary challenge lies in the mindset of residents

who still need to embrace the city's potential for diverse activities fully. It is worth noting that tourists derive more enjoyment from their experiences in the city." [Interviewee I]

Interviewee I expressed this as follows:

"Limassol, currently, cannot be classified as an active city. However, there is promising potential for transformation in the future through implementing strategies outlined in the Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan." [Interviewee I]

When it comes to Limassol's potential to serve as a model of urban social sustainability, participants have also stressed the significance of inclusive policies [25] in creating a socially sustainable urban environment:

"The importance of inclusive policies cannot be overstated when envisioning a socially sustainable city. Limassol recognises this importance by incorporating inclusivity into its urban planning and development." [Interviewee XVII]

The participants in the study argued that Limassol has undergone many infrastructural changes but that more still needs to be done. Furthermore, the research participants argued that there needs to be more transparency in the decision-making and implementation of policy for development in Limassol, both in terms of tourism and urban planning. The respondents emphasised law enforcement and implementation in cases where there is anarchy in the streets and violation of the parking rules. The excerpt below is representative:

"Appropriate urban planning and transportation projects are also necessary. Most sidewalks in Limassol are more like parking spots for everyone who needs help finding a proper parking space. This is the sad truth, as Cypriots' mentality differs significantly from that of other European citizens. Policies should be in place to address such illegalities." [Interviewee XVI]

In social sustainability, this socio-political shift enabled a paradigmatic change from viewing disability as an individual deficit to understanding it as a product of social, environmental, and attitudinal barriers [33]. Social sustainability values the equitable distribution of resources, opportunities, and services, extending this objective to PwD in urban settings. In a socially sustainable city informed by the SMD, urban development should guarantee equal access to vital resources, including healthcare, education, employment, and social services for PwD [42]. In addition, the below comments attest to the "lack of a common vision for the city" [Interviewee X] for social sustainability.

Another outcome of the interview was that technology is incorporated to fulfil sustainable goals related to the transportation network. The excerpt below is indicative:

"Adopting smart city technologies can enhance Limassol's overall efficiency and sustainability. Implementing innovations like smart traffic management, energy-efficient infrastructure, and digital platforms for citizen engagement would contribute to making Limassol a more active and forward-thinking city." [Interviewee I]

In addition, the discrepancy in participants' perceptions of Limassol as an active—city and socially sustainable indicates a potential communication or marketing gap. However, concerns about transparency and law enforcement suggest that policy implementation might be lacking. Consequently, critically examining the governance structure and processes can question whether existing policies occur and what citizen engagement in decision-making is.

Therefore, the analysis of the findings about 'Active City' and 'Social Sustainability' about Limassol led to the generation of four topics:

1. "City Lifestyle": city facet
2. "Sustainable Urbanism": Limassol potential sustainable development
3. "Park Design": area strategic indicator
4. "Public Transportation": active Limassol initiative

Figure 3 presents the key concepts identified to establish a city as active and socially sustainable based on the theme above. Promoting active transportation, such as walking and cycling, can positively impact the social sustainability of wheelchair users in Limassol,

considering the challenges they face with uneven terrain and the importance of inclusive design for their health and well-being. The above suggests that the official Municipal Authorities of Limassol must establish Limassol as a sustainable city with the dominant notion of an 'active city'. Thus, city authorities need to encourage an active and healthier way of living based on an environmentally friendly transportation network and the provision of green areas.

Themes

1. "City Lifestyle": city facet
2. "Sustainable Urbanism": Limassol sustainable development
3. "Park Design": area strategic indicator
4. "Public Transportation": active Limassol initiative

Key Indicators

Mindset of residents
 Promoting a sense of well-being
 Engage community
 Fostering a sense of community
 Smart city technologies
 Promotion of environmental, economic, and social sustainability
 Urban planning and transportation projects
 Green and accessible spaces
 Recreational opportunities
 Pedestrian-friendly infrastructure
 Smart city technologies
 Urban planning and transportation projects
 Pedestrian-friendly infrastructure design that encourages mobility

Figure 3. Key themes—Active City and Socially Sustainable. Source: Authors.

4.2. Theme 2: Tourism Coexistence: Urban Planning and Inclusivity

This theme examines urban planning strategies and inclusivity measures implemented in Limassol, aiming to assess the extent to which the city prioritises the diverse needs of its residents and tourists. Additionally, it extends the discussion to include tourism development and position the city as a sustainable and inclusive destination. Participants provide insights on the strategic planning for Limassol's future, its commitment to accommodating PwD, accessibility of physical exercise and sports, the experiences of disabled residents, and the role of the local government in promoting health through inclusive projects. This umbrella theme addresses the city's overarching development strategies, inclusivity measures, and the impact of urban planning on the well-being of all residents and tourists, particularly those with diverse needs and abilities.

In terms of analysing the interview content, a participant underscored the importance of respecting the needs of all citizens, highlighting a holistic and inclusive approach to urban development:

"There is a strong reaction of organised groups dedicated to the environment and social cohesion that demand the involvement of all stakeholders in the process of developing the city. The main priority should be to live in a city that promotes environmental, economic, and social sustainability and respects the needs of all citizens." [Interviewee III]

As urban landscapes evolve, the critical question is "Does Limassol's urban planning adequately prioritise the needs of its residents?". This inquiry forms the bottom line of exploring the lived experiences of individuals, especially those with physical disabilities,

navigating the city's streets, public spaces, and facilities. Indicative is the excerpt below in terms of living and experiencing the city:

"Yes, unfortunately, I face numerous restrictions in enjoying Limassol due to my disability. Let's start with the inadequate ramps on certain pavements, which create significant challenges for wheelchair users." [Interviewee IX]

In general, urban planning does not ensure the independence of moving around to PwD on wheelchairs:

"I appreciate the city's efforts to provide accessible public transportation. The existence of buses with ramps and designated spaces for wheelchair users has improved my ability to move around the city; however, I still prefer having a companion with me since many public spaces have obstacles in the sidewalks." [Interviewee XX]

The success of urban planning lies not only in the architectural aesthetics but, more importantly, in its responsiveness to the community's diverse needs. Through firsthand perspectives, the participants highlighted that:

"Limassol still faces challenges in its urban planning. Some areas need more infrastructure, making it easier for individuals with mobility impairments to navigate freely. More attention is needed to ensure a fully inclusive city." [Interviewee IV]

As a growing city, Limassol faces the challenge of ensuring accessibility and inclusivity for all residents, and this will reflect on visitors. This question examines participants' perceptions regarding the city's dedication to developing in a manner that accommodates the diverse needs of PwD:

"While there might be intentions to accommodate our needs, the implementation on the ground is sometimes lacking. There is a gap between policy formulations and practical outcomes, especially regarding accessibility in public spaces." [Interviewee II]

The interview results identify a gap regarding Limassol's development as an inclusive urban city. This case adds to the existing literature that supports the rhetorical approach to policy drafting and implementation [59].

Concerning tourism, the participants shared diverse perspectives on tourism coexistence in sustainability and inclusivity, highlighting that the city's limitations also reflect on tourism. In particular, participants argued that since the city cannot be considered an entirely active, sustainable, and inclusive city, the same applies to non-residents and tourists. In this context, participants mentioned whether a strategic plan exists for Limassol's future success and attractiveness as a tourism destination. The participants mentioned that:

"The Deputy Ministry of Tourism seems to have a strategic plan to enhance Limassol's future success and attractiveness to residents and visitors. Their focus on tourism development could contribute to the city's overall prosperity." [Interviewee XXV]

The following responses shed light on the challenges faced by disabled individuals, emphasising the need for comprehensive measures to ensure accessibility, awareness, and inclusivity in Limassol's urban planning that directly affects tourism development:

"Being a disabled resident in Limassol comes with its set of challenges. The responsible parties do not prioritise maintaining and preserving essential facilities like the seaside promenade." [Interviewee XXIV]

The response below provides an understanding of the collaborative endeavours and innovative approaches undertaken by the local authorities and tourism authorities, offering insights into the current state as below:

"It is crucial for the local government to actively involve citizens with disabilities in the planning and decision-making processes in urban and tourism planning and development. These individuals possess firsthand knowledge of their unique needs and challenges." [Interviewee XIX]

Tourism authorities must be in direct contact with all stakeholders in developing Limassol as a socially sustainable and accessible destination. Avenues of communication should be established with the PwD's association to make Limassol accessible. Failing to provide a seamless provision of disabled services establishes the city as unsustainable as a tourism destination. The main topics of the discussion, as emanated from the interview content, are the following:

1. Urban Inclusivity: Limassol planning urban
2. Sustainable Tourism: City inclusive tourism
3. Accessible Design: Participants' diverse architectural
4. Wheelchair Accessibility: public space term

The above themes guide the essence of inclusivity and incorporate the relation to sustainable tourism as embedded in urban planning and development. Furthermore, focusing on residents' heavy reliance on cars highlights a critical challenge. Despite urban developments, the deeply ingrained car-centric mentality poses a barrier to achieving an active city. Thus, the effectiveness of urban planning strategies and the need for comprehensive initiatives that address physical infrastructure and cultural and behavioural aspects. The main results of the analysis are in Figure 4.

Themes

1. Urban Inclusivity: Limassol urban planning
2. Sustainable Tourism: City inclusive tourism
3. Accessible Design: Participants' diverse architectural
4. Wheelchair Accessibility: Public space term

Key Indicators

- A common vision for the city
- Respect the needs of all citizens
- Creating awareness about the needs of PwD
- Inclusive policies
- Educating the public, businesses, and service providers
- Foster a more inclusive mindset
- Actively support the disability community
- Foster a more inclusive mindset
- Actively support the disability community

Figure 4. Key Inclusivity themes. Source: Authors.

Examining Limassol's urban planning and inclusivity measures reveals positive strides and persistent challenges. Firstly, the participants' feedback underscores the city's ongoing efforts to enhance accessibility. Positive aspects include the provision of buses with ramps, designated spaces for wheelchair users, and the development of accessible parks. However, challenges persist, such as inadequate infrastructure in certain areas, obstacles in sidewalks, and the need for proper ramps or elevators in public buildings. The participants' varied perspectives highlight the complexity of evaluating residents' health and happiness. While some attribute well-being to the city's climate, others identify significant challenges like traffic congestion and limited green spaces. This diversity in perspectives underscores the need for an approach to well-being, acknowledging that individual experiences can differ widely within the same urban environment [19,20].

The discussion on the existence of a strategic plan for Limassol's future success reveals mixed perspectives. While the Deputy Ministry of Tourism prioritises potential contributions to the city's prosperity, there is also the acknowledgement of broader governmental initiatives like the National Action Plan on Disability. However, concerns are raised

about the practical implementation of policies on the ground, highlighting a potential gap between intentions and outcomes. Even though Limassol has progressed in certain aspects of urban planning and inclusivity, persistent challenges require attention. The gap between policy formulation and practical outcomes, the need for more comprehensive strategies, and the importance of sustained efforts and collaborations emerge as critical areas for further consideration in the city's ongoing development. Consequently, the city will have a natural transition in positioning as an active, sustainable, and inclusive city and, simultaneously, a competitive tourism destination. The collated results of the study are in Figure 5.

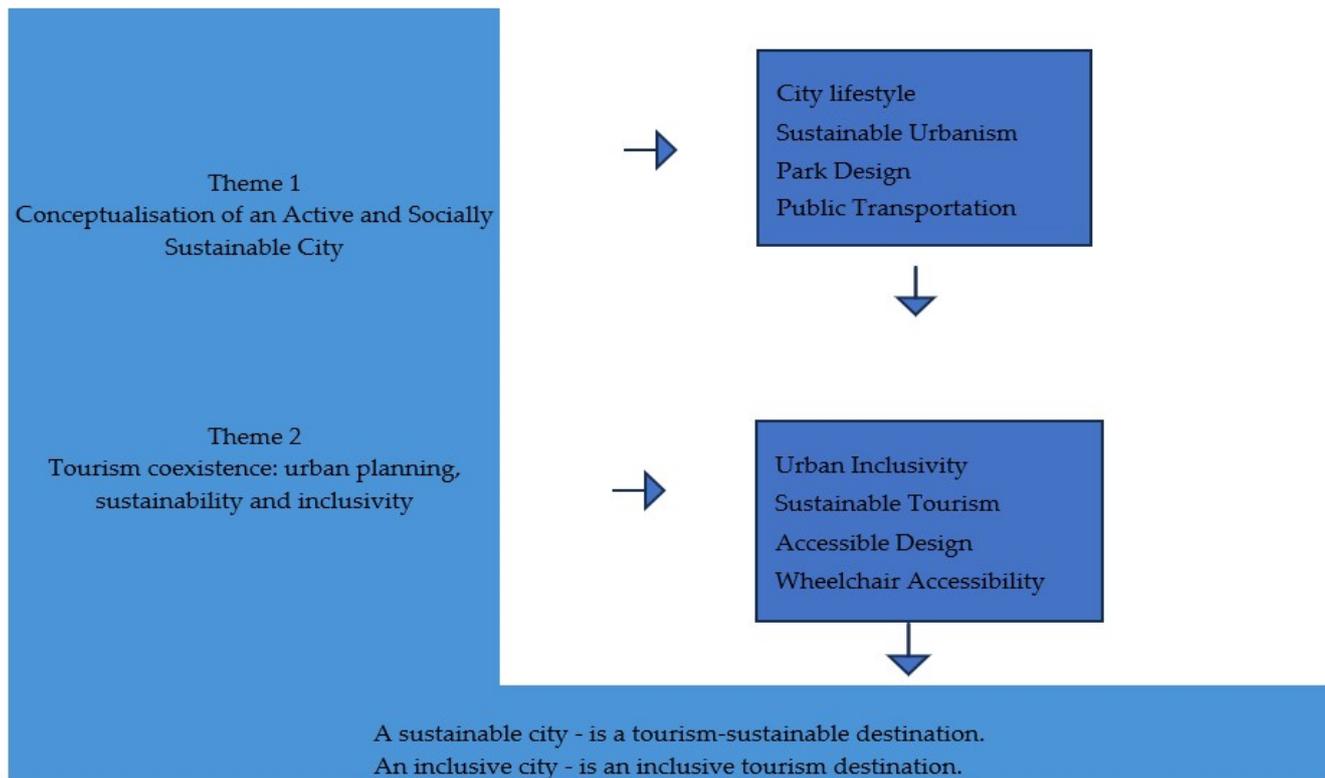


Figure 5. Emerging themes. Source: Authors.

5. Conclusions

In general, the study results lead to valuable conclusions by setting the foundations of inclusive development that fit the needs of PwD by aligning urban planning with tourism development. The same gaps exist in the literature when discussing active, inclusive, and socially sustainable cities [13,16,18]. In particular, urban planning and development neglect essential priorities that make cities active and, at the same time, accessible. Policy making and planning should follow the exact needs and development of PwD sustainably since accessibility is indeed a sustainable development model [13]. The above discussion indicates that it would be beneficial to develop an urban plan that suits the needs of all residents and tourists and provides ease of moving into the city. Local authorities must consider the needs and demands of residents by providing a model of development that is accessible and active for all. In establishing an active, participatory, and interactive city, the voices of PwD must be heard and considered. Such a development will promote social cohesiveness and inclusion without discriminating or excluding practices, enabling the city to become both sustainable and active. Figure 6 reflects on what local authorities, municipal and tourism, should do to ensure that a city/destination is active, inclusive, and sustainable.

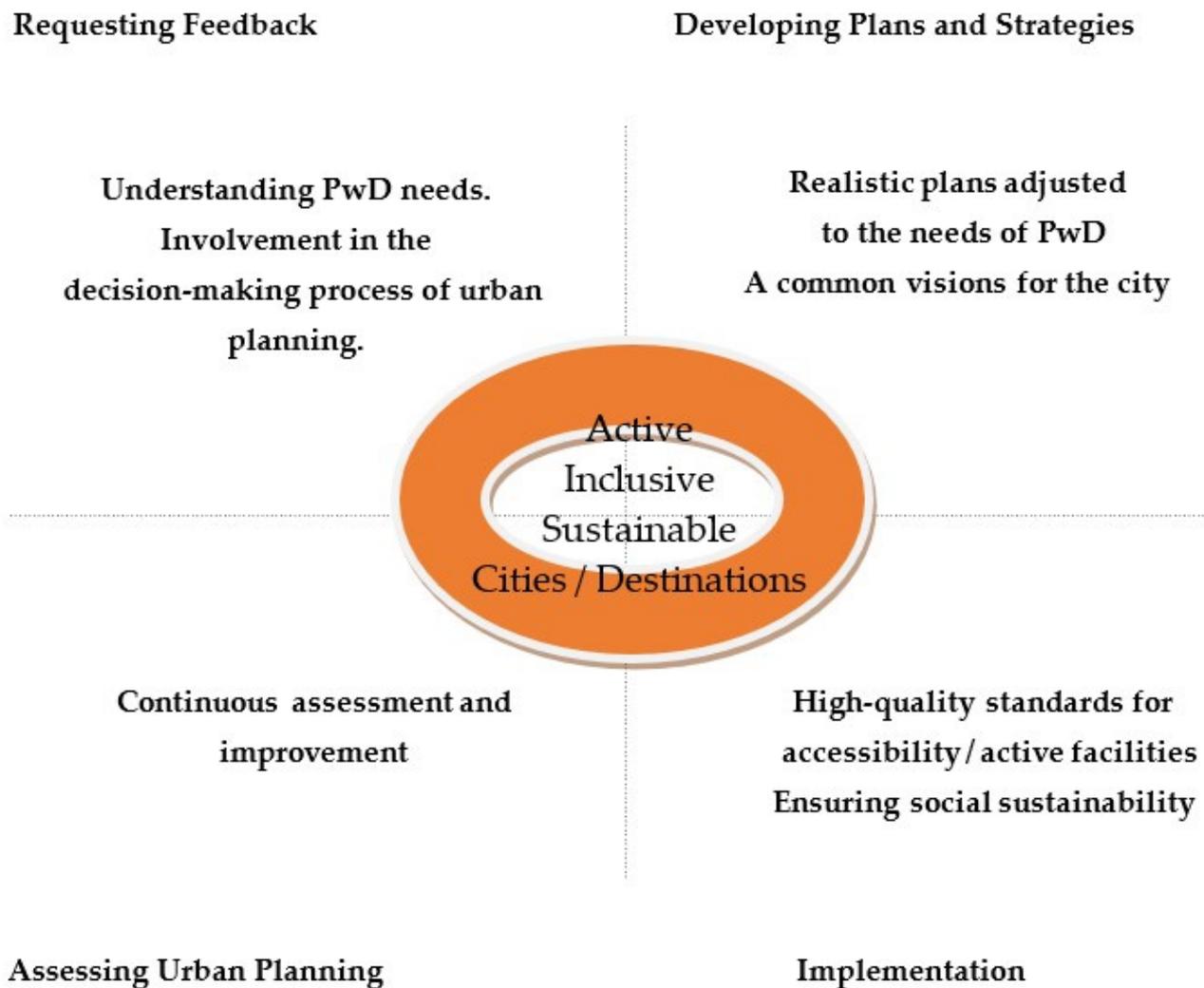


Figure 6. Active, inclusive, sustainable cities. Source: Authors.

For Limassol to become a city that can accommodate PwD needs and be portrayed as an inclusive, sustainable, and active tourism destination, it must provide practical solutions to confronting problems. Only the PwD can communicate their needs and provide a holistic development in terms of urban planning and development. Additionally, imitating the example of cities that manage to be inclusive can provide new insight into urban planning. Getting constructive feedback from the residents can provide real-life scenarios and act directly to improve the city and make it sustainable and active. Practical implications for stakeholders and key policymakers include the design of accessible transportation networks that move to the city easily, recreational facilities related to green spaces that include parks, and communicating all urban policies and planning with the residents as an interactive approach to innovation and inclusion.

Expanding the horizon of future research demands a comprehensive investigation comparing urban development and tourism strategies across all cities in Cyprus to delve into each city's distinct challenges and successes, fostering a holistic understanding of the island's urban landscape. Moreover, expanding this comparative analysis to encompass other island states globally promises to enrich the research with a broader global perspective. In addition, future research should embrace an approach that acknowledges the individual experiences of PwD, encompassing not only physical impairments but also recognising the diverse nature of these experiences within the same urban setting. Understanding the multifaceted factors contributing to varied perceptions of well-being becomes imperative, guiding strategies to promote health and happiness. Furthermore, a detailed examination of

policy enforcement effectiveness in Cyprus and an exploration of how citizen engagement is intricately spun into decision-making processes should be introduced. Additionally, scrutinising and refining the current promotional strategies to create a cohesive narrative aligned with the city's aspirations emerges as an essential aspect that warrants thorough investigation. Another research study can explore the views and opinions of decision-makers on urban planning, social sustainability, and tourism.

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