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TOURISM CENTER

Tourism in County Level Planning and Policy Documents: Summary of Findings

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In spring 2015, the tourism subcommittee of the University of Minnesota Central Regional Sustainable Development Partnership (CRSDP) identified a research need at its spring planning session. The subcommittee wanted to assess if and how county-level comprehensive plans address tourism to inform future planning efforts. Tourism and recreation are not always explicitly named or framed in comprehensive plans. In these instances, the language around tourism and recreation can either facilitate or hinder their development. This project examines language in current county-level comprehensive plans within the Central region and identifies opportunities to modify the language to aid communities in tourism development funding and purposeful planning.

The researchers used the Community Capitals Framework (CCF) to guide their analysis of the county-level comprehensive plans. The CCF, a widely known framework of analysis of community development, categorizes a community's capitals into seven types: natural, cultural, human, social, political, financial, and physical/built (Flora & Flora, 2013). The researchers asked the following research questions: Do county-level comprehensive plans elaborate on different types of community capitals relevant to tourism development? If so, how are they elaborated upon? Is there any other type of community capital not included in the CCF but relevant to tourism development that was elaborated in the plans?

METHODOLOGY

The CRSDP includes 12 counties: Becker, Benton, Cass, Crow Wing, Hubbard, Kanabec, Mille Lacs, Morrison, Otter Tail, Stearns, Todd, and Wadena counties. Of the 12 counties, Hubbard and Otter Tail counties do not have a comprehensive plan.

Analyzing comprehensive plans is analyzing written words, not numbers, and directed content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) was the method used to analyze the 10 comprehensive plans. Each type of community capital was assigned a category. The minimum unit of analysis was typically a sentence; occasionally, it was an entire paragraph.

One researcher analyzed the comprehensive plans, and a second researcher reviewed the analysis results. During the initial analysis, three different approaches towards a capital emerged from the data:

Approach one: "Critical capital"—preserving or developing a capital critical to tourism

Approach two: "Capital commitment"—devoting a capital to develop tourism

Approach three: "Importance recognition"—recognizing the importance of tourism when identifying a capital

The texts not categorized into the initial categories were set aside into the "uncertain" category. After conferring with each other, the researchers merged most of these texts into existing categories. The researchers also agreed that the remaining small number of texts represent a new type of capital—tourism industry, which refers to capitals specifically relate to the tourism industry. Therefore, a new "tourism industry" category was created.

The researchers further reviewed analysis results for each of the three approaches towards community capitals. A pattern emerged from the texts under the second approach—capital commitment—and the researchers further categorized these texts into "asset-based" or "need-based." Asset-based policies refer to those that advance tourism objectives by building from the community's existing assets. Need-based policies, on the other hand, refer to those that develop

tourism by creating a new asset, bringing in resources from outside the community, or modifying existing assets.

After qualitative analysis was completed, the researchers quantified the qualitative analysis results. A descriptive approach was used to present both qualitative and quantitative findings.

CHARACTERISTICS OF COMPREHENSIVE PLANS

Each of the 10 counties created their comprehensive plan at different times, ranging between the years of 2002 and 2013. Each plan included input from county staff, and four also received help from a variety of outside organizations. Only Mille Lacs County comprehensive plan had a tourism section. Seven other plans had a recreation section.

COMMUNITY CAPITALS

Of the seven types of community capitals, natural capital (57.8%) was the most frequently identified, followed distantly by physical (24.4%) and cultural (6.4%) capitals. None of the other four types of capitals were identified more than 4% of the time. The tourism industry capital, added to the analysis framework by the researchers, was identified 3.5% of the time. Among all quotes, 6.2% addressed more than one type of capital simultaneously.

As described, three approaches towards a community capital emerged during data analysis. Of all the quotes, 78.6 percent were categorized under the first approach, 16.9 percent under the second approach, and 4.5 percent under the third approach. The first approach was more frequently adopted for natural, physical, and cultural capitals. The second approach was most frequently adopted for political and financial capitals. For social, human, and tourism industry capitals, the various approaches were adopted with the same frequency.

The researchers further categorized all the quotes under the second approach as either need-based or asset-based policies, as described earlier. Need-based policies accounted for 61.4% of the quotes, with the remaining 38.6% asset-based. Natural, cultural, and tourism industry capitals are the ones with more asset-based policies than need-based policies. Physical (24.3%) and political (14.3%) capitals were the ones with the highest percentages of need-based policies.

DISCUSSION

Results revealed that existing policies address community capitals unevenly. One possible reason for such asymmetry may be the nature of the comprehensive plan itself, as the inclusion of land use and natural resource management policies is required for a comprehensive plan, whereas other types of policies are left to the counties' discretion. The frequency of mentioning natural capital also reflects the amount of natural assets a county possesses and the relationship between these natural assets and tourism development.

Tourism-related physical capital is the second most frequently identified community capital, although the legal definition of a comprehensive plan does not incentivize the inclusion of physical capital. This suggests physical assets are integral to tourism development-related efforts. It also indicates strong potential for outdoor recreational tourism in Central Minnesota.

In terms of cultural capital, the emphasis on community/rural character shows the importance of maintaining a community's authenticity and roots to Central Minnesota counties. Additionally, the mention of festivals/events indicates the value such activities bring to tourism development. The infrequent mention of political, financial, and human capitals shows where opportunities lie if

counties want to take advantage of their comprehensive plans as a tool to leverage resources for tourism development.

The newly identified tourism industry capital extends and enriches the community capitals framework. It allowed analyzing the availability and flow of community capitals that relate to diverse aspects of the community. Such analysis resulted in a holistic understanding of the counties' policies related to tourism.

This project also uncovers three approaches toward community capitals in a comprehensive plan: (1) critical capital—preserving or developing a capital critical to tourism, (2) capital commitment—devoting a capital to develop tourism, and (3) importance recognition—recognizing the importance of tourism when identifying a capital. The first approach was adopted much more frequently than the second. The structure of a comprehensive plan may be a reason for this, as quotes categorized under the first approach mainly came from the land use section, a section required by law. Additionally, the first approach has a more malleable definition than the second approach. Therefore, to use the comprehensive plan as a tool to leverage resources for tourism development, it is important to link different types of capitals explicitly to tourism planning and development.

Among the quotes under the second approach, there was a greater emphasis on building, acquiring, and developing new assets as opposed to enhancing, maintaining, or leveraging existing assets. Clearly, there is a tendency to emphasize capitals that are missing in communities rather than leveraging existing ones when it comes to tourism development. Therefore, it is important to increase awareness of existing community capitals within Central Minnesota counties. The tourism industry capital, meanwhile, was the second most frequently identified asset-based policy. This result indicates that supporting existing tourism businesses, such as resorts, is a relatively common practice in current comprehensive plans.

INTRODUCTION

Anecdotal evidence suggests that more intentionally including tourism in county-level policy and planning can influence sustainable community tourism development. In spring 2015, the tourism subcommittee of the University of Minnesota Central Regional Sustainable Development Partnership (CRSDP) identified a research need during its spring planning session. The subcommittee wanted to assess if and how tourism is addressed in county-level comprehensive plans to inform future planning efforts. How language is phrased in these plans can either facilitate or hinder tourism and recreation development. This project examines language in current county-level comprehensive plans within the 12-county Central region of Minnesota, to identify opportunities to modify the language to aid communities in seeking tourism development funding and purposeful planning.

The researchers used the Community Capitals Framework (CCF) to guide their analysis of the county-level comprehensive plans. The CCF, a widely accepted framework of analysis in community development, categorizes the capitals a community has into seven types: natural, cultural, human, social, political, financial, and physical/built (Flora & Flora, 2013). In this framework, capitals are defined as resources/assets that are invested to generate further resources/assets (Flora & Flora, 2013, p. 10-11). Flora and Flora define each type of capital as follows:"

- Natural capital: Includes the air, water, soil, biodiversity, and weather
- Cultural capital: Determines how one sees the world (...) what one values
- Human capital: Education, skills, health, self-esteem
- Social capital: Involves mutual trust, reciprocity, groups, collective identity
- Political capital: Ability of a community or group to turn its norms and values into standards, which are the translated into rules and regulations
- Financial capital: Savings, income generation, fees, loans, (...) taxes, tax exemptions, etc.
- Physical/built capital: Human-constructed infrastructure"

In this study, the researchers asked the following research questions: Do county-level comprehensive plans elaborate on different types of community capitals relevant to tourism development? If so, how is each capital elaborated upon? Are there other types of community capital not included in the CCF but relevant to tourism development that was elaborated upon in the comprehensive plans?

METHODOLOGY

This section documents the process of gathering and analyzing the comprehensive plans.

GATHERING COMPREHENSIVE PLANS

The Central RSDP region includes 12 counties: Becker, Benton, Cass, Crow Wing, Hubbard, Kanabec, Mille Lacs, Morrison, Otter Tail, Stearns, Todd, and Wadena counties. Of the 12 counties, Hubbard and Otter Tail do not have a comprehensive plan.

The researchers acquired the plans through county websites. The legal authority of a county's comprehensive plan is defined by the Minnesota Statute 394.22, which says the document must contain the "policies, statements, goals, and interrelated plans for private and public land and water use, transportation, and community facilities ... which constitute the guide for the future

development of the county or any portion of the county” (Minnesota Statute 394.22). Therefore, the researchers selected only plans pursuant to the Statute and did not include similar planning documents, such as stand-alone land use plans.

For the counties that initially did not have comprehensive plans posted on their websites (Hubbard and Otter Tail), the researchers contacted both the county clerk and the county administrator by phone and e-mail. They received e-mail responses confirming that neither counties had established comprehensive plans pursuant to the Minnesota Statute 394.22 at the time of the study.

DATA ANALYSIS

Analyzing comprehensive plans is analyzing written words, not numbers, and directed content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) was the method used to analyze the 10 comprehensive plans. This is an appropriate method, because the community capitals framework is an established theory that offers value to, but has not been extensively used in, tourism research. As such, the framework has the potential to be extended and enriched (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Each type of community capitals was assigned a category (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The minimum unit of analysis was typically a sentence (Ghaedi, Mahdian, & Fomani, 2015); occasionally, it was an entire paragraph (Ghaedi et al., 2015).

One researcher analyzed the comprehensive plans, and a second researcher reviewed the analysis results. During the initial analysis, three different approaches towards a capital emerged from the data:

Approach one: “Critical capital”—preserving or developing a capital critical to tourism

Approach two: “Capital commitment”—devoting a capital to develop tourism

Approach three: “Importance recognition”—recognizing the importance of tourism when identifying a capital

As such, three sub-categories were created for each category to represent the three approaches (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

For each comprehensive plan, the researchers met to discuss and resolve any discrepancies in analysis results (Snell, Surgenor, Dorahy, & Hay-Smith, 2014). They also met to discuss the creation of sub-categories within each category and the creation of a new category (Snell, et al., 2014). These verification steps increased the reliability of data analysis (Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013).

Texts not categorized under the initial categories were set aside into an “uncertain” category. After conferring with each other, the researchers merged most of these texts into existing categories. The authors also agreed that the remaining texts represented a new type of capital—tourism industry, which refers to capitals specifically related to the tourism industry. Therefore, a new “tourism industry” category was created, under which the remaining texts were categorized.

Some quotes mentioned more than one type of community capital. For example, one quote may mention natural and cultural capitals simultaneously. This quote would then be included in both the natural and cultural capital categories. A “multiple capitals” category was also created, and the quote could be included in this category as well. Doing so allowed the researchers to analyze all the mentions of a particular capital while also capturing those quotes that mention more than one type of capitals.

The researchers further reviewed analysis results for each of the three approaches towards community capitals. A pattern emerged from the quotes under the second approach—capital

commitment, and the researchers further categorized these quotes into “asset-based” or “need-based.” Asset-based policies refer to those that advance tourism objectives by building from the community’s existing assets. Need-based policies, on the other hand, refer to those that develop tourism by creating a new asset, bringing in resources from outside the community, or modifying existing assets.

The analysis of asset vs. need-based policies was contingent upon the type of action verb used. For example, verbs such as “preserve,” “support,” or “sustain” were generally indicative of asset-based policies. Verbs such as “create,” “provide,” or “develop,” on the other hand, were generally indicative of need-based policies. The analysis process was similar to that of other community capital categories, where one researcher did the initial analysis, which was then reviewed by and discussed with the other researcher.

After the qualitative analysis, the researchers quantified the qualitative results. A descriptive approach (Vaismoradi et al, 2013) was used to present both the qualitative and quantitative findings.

Throughout the data analysis process, the researchers exchanged research memos on a regular basis. The memos served as the personal research diary meant to improve rigor of the analysis (Vaismoradi et al., 2013), documenting the organization of text under the “uncertain” category, the creation of new categories, and the process of quantifying the qualitative results.

RESULTS

CHARACTERISTICS OF COMPREHENSIVE PLANS

Each of the 10 counties created their comprehensive plan at different times, ranging between the years of 2002 and 2013 (Table 1). Each plan included input from county staff, while four also received help from a variety of organizations. Only Mille Lacs County included a tourism section while seven others include a recreation section.

Table 1: Basic information about the 10 analyzed comprehensive plans.

County	Year	Writer and consultants	Planning process description	# of quotes	Tourism section?	Recreation section?
Becker	2003	County staff (w/ support of the CMR)	p. 6 - 7	82	--	--
Benton	?	County Staff (w/ support of the CMIF)	p. 1-1, 1-2, 1-3	20	--	--
Cass	?	County staff	p. 3	33	--	Yes
Crow Wing	2003	County staff	p. 9 and Appendix A	56	--	Yes
Kanabec	2002	County staff	p. 6 - 7	4	--	--
Mille Lacs	2013	County staff (w/ support of the ECDC)	p. 6 - 8	49	Yes	Yes
Morrison	2005	County staff (w/ support of the RFDC)	p. 6, 14 - 18	24	--	Yes
Stearns	2008	County staff	p. 1-3, 1-2	68	--	Yes
Todd	2009	County staff	p. 4, 7 - 8	39	--	Yes
Wadena	2013	County staff	p. 7 - 12	31	--	Yes

Note: CMR=community resource planning; CMIF=Central Minnesota Initiative Foundation; ECDC=East Central Development Commission; RFDC=Region Five Development Commission.

COMMUNITY CAPITALS

Of the seven types of community capitals, natural capital (57.8%) was most frequently identified, followed distantly by physical (24.4%) and cultural (6.4%) capitals (Table 2). None of the other four types of capitals was identified more than 4% of the time. The tourism industry capital, added to the analysis framework by the researchers, was identified 3.5% of the time. Among all the quotes, 6.9% addressed more than one type of capital simultaneously.

As described earlier, three approaches towards a community capital emerged during data analysis:

Approach one: "Critical capital"—preserving or developing a capital critical to tourism

Approach two: "Capital commitment"—devoting a capital to develop tourism

Approach three: "Importance recognition"—recognizing the importance of tourism when identifying a capital

Of all the quotes, 78.6% were categorized under the first approach, 16.9% under the second approach, and 4.5% under the third approach. The first approach was adopted more frequently than

the second approach for natural, physical, cultural, social, and human capitals. The second approach was more frequently adopted for political and financial capitals. The two approaches were adopted with same frequency for tourism industry capital.

Table 2: Identification frequency of community capitals in data analysis.

Community capital	First approach	Second approach	Third approach	% *
	Preserve/develop capital critical to tourism	Devote a capital to develop tourism	Recognize importance of tourism	
Natural	50.9%	4.7%	2.2%	57.7%
Physical	17.5%	5.4%	1.5%	24.4%
Cultural	5.2%	1.0%	0.2%	6.4%
Tourism	1.5%	1.5%	0.5%	3.6%
Political	1.2%	2.7%	--	4.0%
Social	1.2%	0.7%	--	2.0%
Financial	0.5%	0.7%	--	1.2%
Human	0.5%	0.2%	--	0.7%
%	78.6%	16.9%	4.5%	100%

*Based on 406 quotes.

The researchers further categorized the quotes under the second approach into either need-based or asset-based policies, as described previously. Need-based policies accounted for 61.4% of the quotes, with 38.6% asset-based (Table 3). Natural, cultural, and tourism industry capitals are those with more asset-based policies than need-based policies. In fact, natural capital alone accounts for nearly half of the asset-based policies. On the other hand, physical (24.3%) and political (14.3%) capitals had the highest percentage of need-based policies.

Table 3: Identification frequency of asset-based and need-based policies in data analysis.

Community Capital	Asset-Based	Need-Based	% *
Natural	17.1%	10.0%	27.1%
Physical	7.1%	24.3%	31.4%
Tourism	7.1%	2.9%	10.0%
Cultural	4.3%	1.4%	5.7%
Political	1.4%	14.3%	15.7%
Social	1.4%	2.9%	4.3%
Financial	0.0%	4.3%	4.3%
Human	0.0%	1.4%	1.4%
%	38.6%	61.4%	100%

*Based on 70 quotes.

What follows is a description of the findings relevant to each of the eight capitals, including quotes from county plans that exemplify the three approaches taken to address the capitals.

Natural capital

Natural capital is the most frequently identified type of capital. Three major types of natural capital emerged from data analysis—surface water, land/vegetation, and wildlife. An example of a policy that addresses surface water is included in Cass County’s plan: “*Develop and implement management plans for high priority wetlands.*” Stearns County’s plan, on the other hand, illustrates a land/vegetation-related policy: “*Encourage open space protection through techniques such as conservation easements, parkland acquisition, and limited residential development emphasizing*

conservation design.” An example of a wildlife-related policy appears in Becker County’s plan: *“Protect existing fish and wildlife habitat, including consistent enforcement of rules, ordinances, and County policies.”* Oftentimes, a quote addresses more than one type of natural capital. Morrison County’s plan includes an example of this: *“Preserve natural resources identified as critical and sensitive including wildlife habitats, wetlands, forest lands, etc., within Morrison County.”*

The examples above fall under the first approach toward natural capital, which is preserving or developing a capital critical to tourism. There are also small percentages of quotes that fell under the second and third approaches, respectively. An example of an asset-based policy under the second approach (developing a capital to develop tourism) is included in Becker County’s plan: *“Manage public lands to support the growth of recreation and tourism through sustainable natural resource management.”* An example of a need-based policy under the second approach, on the other hand, is a quote from Cass County’s plan: *“Develop an integrated green space and recreation system within Cass County that provides diverse, developed and underdeveloped, recreational opportunities for all residents and visitors while protecting unique scenic and natural areas.”*

A quote from Crow Wing County’s plan illustrates the third approach (recognizing the importance of tourism): *“Citizens see tourism as one of the County’s strongest economic assets and feel that resorts, shopping opportunities, healthy natural resources and the rural northwoods atmosphere will keep tourism strong well into the future.”*

Physical capital

Physical capital is the second most frequently identified type of capital. Four types of physical capital emerged from data analysis: parks, trails, recreational facilities, and other physical capitals. An example of a park-related policy is included in Benton County’s plan: *“New Park Development: Take advantage of opportunities to acquire new park and open space areas in those locations identified for both natural beauty, and the existence of unique environmental, plant, animal, social, or historical features.”* Another quote from Benton County’s plan serves as an example of a trails-related policy: *“Trails: promote the development of an interconnected trail system utilizing public participation and trail advocacy groups.”* A quote from Crow Wing County’s plan illustrates policy related to recreational facilities: *“Identify all of the County’s recreational resources and determine areas for future expansion, connections, and provision of recreational facilities.”* An example of physical capital that does not fall under the previous three types appears in Mille Lacs County’s plan: *“Maintain public hunting and fishing access within the County.”* Often, a quote addressed several types of physical capital at once. An example of this came from Crow Wing County’s plan: *“Recommend funding mechanisms for making improvements to existing recreational facilities and for acquiring new parks, open space, and trails.”*

The examples above fell under the first approach towards natural capital. There are also small percentages of quotes that took the second and third approaches respectively. A quote from Becker County’s plan illustrates an asset-based policy under the second approach: *“Promote the County’s tourist and recreational assets and locally-owned resort properties.”* A quote from Stearns County’s plan, on the other hand, serves as an example of a need-based policy under the second approach: *“Provide a regional trail system... in order to support a variety of recreational activities... and support tourism and economic development.”*

An example of the third approach appears in Crow Wing County’s plan: *“Tourism is clearly an important aspect of the region’s economy and the transportation infrastructure must be able to accommodate both the residential population and visitors.”*

Cultural capital

Three types of cultural capital emerged from data analysis: community/rural character, festivals/events, and other cultural capitals. A quote from Stearns County's plan includes a policy related to community/rural character: *"Encourage revitalization of the traditional downtown areas throughout the County to create walkable, sustainable, appealing communities that reflect the unique character of Stearns County cities."* An example of festival/event-related policy appears in Becker County's plan: *"Continue to support festivals and recreational events, and work with promoters of special events to reduce nuisances and costs."* There was also scattered identification of other cultural capitals. For instance, *"Identify and protect significant historic and archaeological sites"* appeared in Todd County's plan, and Crow Wing County's plan included, *"Contact the State Historical Preservation Office (SHPO) for data on historical and archeological sites."*

The examples above illustrate the first approach toward cultural capital. There were also small percentages of quotes that took the second and third approaches, respectively. Quotes from the Mille Lacs County plan illustrate both asset and need-based policies under the second approach. An example of an asset-based policy includes, *"Promote and help to preserve the County's historical and cultural assets,"* and an example of a need-based policy is, *"Support the creation of a historical and cultural asset inventory, and use it as a tourism driver."*

A quote from Crow Wing County's plan illustrates the third approach: *"Residents also expressed that parks, historic sites, and other recreational opportunities are important assets that enhance quality of life and economic vitality."*

Political capital

Two types of political capital were identified: regulation/plan and cooperation/collaboration. Slightly more quotes were identified as taking the second approach rather than the first.

A quote from Todd County's plan provides an example of regulation/plan political capital under the first approach: *"Enforce floodplain, shore land and wetland ordinances and regulations in a consistent manner. The County will update and maintain these regulations on a regular basis as appropriate."* A quote from Crow Wing County's plan illustrates the second approach toward regulation/plan: *"Develop a park and open space master plan that establishes goals and strategies for the long-term integration, protection, expansion and recreational use of the County's public land base."*

An example of cooperation/collaboration under the first approach appeared in Wadena County's plan: *"Encourage cooperation between Wadena County and municipalities in efforts to link recreation opportunities."* A quote from Mille Lacs County's plan, however, provided an example of cooperation/collaboration under the second approach: *"Develop a working relationship with governmental agencies to protect state anglers' allocation of fish harvest on affected lakes within the County to promote recreation, tourism, and economic development."*

Under the second approach, both asset and need-based policies emerged. An example of an asset-based policy was included in Crow Wing County's plan: *"Coordinate the management of designated recreational activities on County-owned lands in Crow Wing County for recreational uses."* An example of a need-based policy, on the other hand, came from Todd County's plan: *"Encourage active and ongoing participation and partnership among local units of County government to plan and implement public and private recreation."*

Social capital

A small number of quotes were categorized as social capital. For example, a quote from Wadena County's plan illustrated the first approach toward social capital: *"Create a network of business and organizational providers of recreation, leisure, and cultural opportunities in the County in order to coordinate seasonal calendars of activities, expand services, and create viable businesses opportunities in areas of need."* An example of an asset-based policy under the second approach appeared in Becker County's plan: *"Support the recruitment and marketing efforts of the Chamber of Commerce, economic development organizations, the Tribal Council, and other promotional efforts."* An example of a need-based policy under the second approach was evident in Mille Lacs County's plan: *"Develop partnerships with private businesses, non-profit agencies, and governmental units to promote tourism and recreation."*

Financial capital

A limited number of quotes were classified as financial capital, and slightly more were identified as taking the second approach rather than the first. An example of the first approach toward financial capital came from Wadena County's plan: *"Research possible Legacy funding for procurement to assist with potential larger scale projects."*

All the quotes that fell under the second approach toward financial capital were need-based. One example appeared in Crow Wing County's plan: *"Establish a recreation improvement and expansion fund."* Another example came from Wadena County plan: *"Research grant opportunities for funding of this plan with the Minnesota Office of Tourism."*

Human capital

Three quotes were categorized as human capital. A quote from Cass County's plan illustrated the first approach toward human capital: *"Promote the implementation of a program to educate residents and visitors about harmful exotic species and fish diseases."* Another quote under the first approach was found in Todd County's plan: *"Encourage the formation and continuation of lake associations to get more citizens involved in the management and protection of the County's lakes."* One quote from Cass County plan used the second approach and was need-based: *"Provide [recreation] program specific staff and financial resources."*

Tourism industry

A small number of quotes were categorized as tourism industry capital. A quote from Crow Wing County's plan provides an example of the first approach toward tourism industry capital: *"Retain existing resorts; assist them with expansion and improvement to allow them to meet growing needs in a manner that doesn't degrade natural resources."* Another example appeared in Stearns County's plan: *"Protect tourism and related resources from detrimental development activity and conflicting land uses."*

An example of the second approach toward tourism industry capital that is asset-based came from Cass County's plan: *"Sustain the forestry and tourism economy while providing public lands for hunting, fishing and other recreational uses."* An example of a need-based policy under the second approach, on the other hand, came from Mille Lacs County's plan: *"Encourage establishment/expansion of privately owned recreational businesses."*

Two quotes of tourism industry capital took the third approach. One of them came from Stearns County's plan: *"Acknowledge tourism's economic value and the prospective contribution of this industry to both the diversity of the County economic base and the potential for growth."*

Multiple capitals

Some quotes addressed more than one type of capital. One example under the first approach appeared in Becker County's plan: *"Encourage participation in conservation programs that protect agricultural practices, the County's rural character, and enhance natural resource conservation."* This quote is relevant to both cultural (rural character) and natural (natural resource) capitals.

An example of an asset-based policy under the second approach was included in Mille Lacs County's plan: *"The main goal identified for future long term planning is for the County to support its tourism, recreational, and cultural assets."* The identification of both tourism and cultural assets touches upon both tourism industry and cultural capitals. A quote from Mille Lacs County's plan also provides an example of a need-based policy under the second approach: *"Develop partnerships with private businesses, non-profit agencies, and governmental units to promote tourism and recreation."* The inclusion of both non-profit agencies and governmental units addresses both social and political capitals.

Lastly, the third approach was illustrated by a quote in Crow Wing County's plan: *"Citizens see tourism as one of the County's strongest economic assets and feel that resorts, shopping opportunities, healthy natural resources, and the rural northwoods atmosphere will keep tourism strong well into the future."* This quote acknowledges the importance of tourism to the county's economy and points out the relevance of natural, cultural, physical, and tourism industry capitals.

DISCUSSION

Study results revealed that current county policies address community capitals unevenly, as five of the eight capitals each represented less than 5% of the quotes. A possible reason for the asymmetry may be the nature of a comprehensive plan itself. One purpose of a comprehensive plan is to “*contain objectives, policies, standards and programs to guide public and private land use, development, redevelopment and preservation for all lands and waters within the jurisdiction of the local governmental unit*” (MN statute 473.859). While the inclusion of land use and natural resource management policies is required for a comprehensive plan, other types are left to the county’s discretion. Aside from being a legal requirement, the frequency of mentioning natural capital also reflects the rich natural assets of Central Minnesota and the intimate relationship that natural assets (e.g., land, water, wildlife) have with tourism development.

Tourism-related physical capital was the second most frequently identified community capital, although the legal definition of a comprehensive plan does not incentivize the inclusion of physical capital. This suggests that physical assets, such as recreational centers, trails, and scenic roadways are integral to the tourism development efforts included in the plans. It also indicates the strong potential for outdoor recreational tourism in Central Minnesota.

In terms of cultural capital, the emphasis on community/rural character underscores the importance of maintaining authenticity and roots to the counties in Central Minnesota. Additionally, the mention of festivals/events demonstrates the value of these activities to local and regional tourism efforts.

The infrequent mention of political, financial, and human capitals, on the other hand, indicates areas of opportunities for counties to leverage a comprehensive plan for tourism development. A county should clearly state what political, financial, and human capitals are needed, as well as how these capitals can best foster tourism development.

The newly identified tourism industry capital extends and enriches the community capitals framework (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). It allows analyzing both the availability and flow of community capitals that relate to the diverse aspects of a community or region. This approach provides a holistic understanding of the counties’ policies related to tourism.

This project also uncovered three approaches towards community capitals in a comprehensive plan, namely, developing/preserving community capitals crucial to tourism (critical capital), devoting community capitals to tourism development (capital commitment), and recognizing the importance of tourism (importance recognition). Results of the analysis showed an uneven distribution among the three approaches. For example, the second approach (16.9%) was identified much less frequently than the first (78.6%). This finding is illustrated by the fact that all 10 plans included a land use section, while only one had a separate tourism/recreation section. Quotes categorized under the first approach mainly came from the land use section, whereas the less frequent tourism or economic development sections were key sources of quotes categorized under the second approach.

The structure of a comprehensive plan, however, is not the only reason for the uneven distribution of quotes among the first, second, and third approaches. The first approach—developing a capital crucial to tourism—has a more malleable definition compared to the second approach, which requires an explicit use of capitals for tourism purposes. Therefore, a policy that seeks to build an ATV trail, which, in the context of central Minnesota, arguably has a clear tourism development purpose, would have been categorized as a policy under the first, not the second, approach. Clearly, to use the comprehensive plan as a tool to leverage resources for tourism development purposes, it is important to link different types of capitals explicitly to tourism planning and development.

Among the quotes under the second approach toward community capitals, there was a greater emphasis on building, acquiring, and developing new assets as opposed to enhancing, maintaining, or leveraging existing assets. Clearly, there is a tendency to emphasize capitals that are missing in communities rather than leveraging existing ones. One way to change this tendency is to increase the awareness of existing community capitals within the counties of Central Minnesota.

Asset-based policies within the comprehensive plans were almost entirely related to natural and cultural capitals—capitals that cannot be easily created by policymakers or public agencies. A notable exception, however, was the tourism industry capital, which was the second most frequently identified asset-based policy. This finding indicates that supporting existing tourism businesses, such as resorts, is a relatively common practice addressed in current comprehensive plans.

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Appendix A

Cultural Capital	# of quotes	% of Capital	% of Total
First Approach	21	80.8%	5.2%
Community or Rural Character	11		
Festivals or Recreational Events	3		
Other	7		
Second Approach	4	15.4%	1.0%
Other	4		
Third Approach	1	3.8%	0.2%
<i>Cultural Capital Total</i>	26	100%	6.4%
Financial Capital	# of quotes	% of Capital	% of Total
First Approach	2	40.0%	0.5%
Second Approach	3	60.0%	0.7%
Third Approach	-	-	
<i>Financial Capital Total</i>	5	100%	1.2%
Human Capital	# of quotes	% of Capital	% of Total
First Approach	2	66.7%	0.5%
Second Approach	1	33.3%	0.2%
Third Approach	-	-	
<i>Human Capital Total</i>	3	100%	0.7%
Natural Capital	# of quotes	% of Capital	% of Total
First Approach	206	88.0%	50.9%
Land or Vegetation	39		
Surface Water	101		
Wildlife	28		
Other	38		
Second Approach	19	8.1%	4.7%
Land or Vegetation	5		
Surface Water	4		
Wildlife	3		
Other	7		
Third Approach	9	3.8%	2.2%
<i>Natural Capital Total</i>	234	100%	57.7%
Physical Capital	# of quotes	% of Capital	% of Total
First Approach	71	71.7%	17.5%
Parks	19		
Recreational Facilities	8		
Trails	35		
Other	9		
Second Approach	22	22.2%	5.4%
Parks	4		

Recreational Facilities	-		
Trails	8		
Other	10		
Third Approach	6	6.1%	1.5%
<i>Physical Capital Total</i>	<i>99</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>24.4%</i>
Political Capital	# of quotes	% of Capital	% of Total
First Approach	5	31.3%	1.2%
Cooperation and Collaboration	3		
Laws, Regulations, Ordinances	1		
Other	1		
Second Approach	11	68.8%	2.7%
Cooperation and Collaboration	9		
Laws, Regulations, Ordinances	2		
Third Approach	-	-	-
<i>Political Capital Total</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>4.0%</i>
Social Capital	# of quotes	% of Capital	% of Total
First Approach	5	62.5%	1.2%
Second Approach	3	37.5%	0.7%
Third Approach	-	-	-
<i>Social Capital Total</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>2.0%</i>
Tourism Industry Capital	# of quotes	% of Capital	% of Total
First Approach	6	40.0%	1.5%
Second Approach	7	46.7%	1.5%
Third Approach	2	13.3%	0.5%
<i>Tourism Industry Capital Total</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>3.6%</i>
Total Number of quotes	406	-	100%