

Addressing tourism in county-level planning documents: a pilot application of the community capitals framework

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Abstract: Using the community capitals framework (CCF) (Flora, 2004), we examined county-level comprehensive plans within a Minnesota region to identify opportunities for future tourism planning and development. We asked two 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? We used directed content analysis to analyse the comprehensive plans. The frequent mentioning of natural capital indicates strong potential for nature-based tourism in the region. Tourism-related built capital is the second most frequently identified, suggesting its importance to tourism development-related efforts. Analysis also identified two approaches towards a capital: 1) preserving or developing a capital critical to tourism; 2) devoting a capital to develop tourism. Findings suggest applying the CCF to policy documents can help identify opportunities for future tourism planning and development.

Keywords: community capital; tourism development; rural; directed content analysis; policy; tourism planning; comprehensive plan; community development; Minnesota.

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1 Introduction

Public policy has significant effects on tourism development. According to Church (2004), many forces affect how tourism evolves, however, regional and local policies have increasingly been "seeking to influence different aspects of tourism development" (p. 555). Tourism-related policies can strengthen regional development, particularly those where natural environment is the main tourism asset (Hyytia and Kola, 2013). On the flip side, Gordon and Goodall (2000) argued that organisational and institutional structures are not available in rural areas to develop consequential tourism policies. Even when tourism policies exist, positive tourism development is not a guarantee, as conflicting policy frameworks and inadequate policies can have adverse implications on tourism development (Dhakal, 2014). Clearly, it is important to examine how public policies

address tourism development, particularly in rural communities. Doing so can inform future policy making and identify opportunities of modifying policy to aid communities in seeking tourism development opportunities.

The community capitals framework (CCF) (Flora, 2004; Flora et al., 2016), a widely accepted framework of analysis in rural community development, is well positioned to guide the analysis of how public policies in rural communities address tourism development. The CCF advocates for a comprehensive view of community capitals. This is particularly beneficial, as a region's readiness to undertake tourism development is determined by all, not any single, types of community capitals (Macbeth et al., 2004).

Furthermore, several tourism studies have used CCF to understand the relationship between community capitals and tourism development (Dhakal, 2014; McGehee et al., 2010; Stone and Nyaupane, 2016; Zahra and McGehee, 2013). In short, using the CCF as the analytical framework can help us better understand how public policy documents in rural settings address tourism development. To our knowledge, this is the first published study that attempts to link two separate threads of intellectual inquiries in the context of tourism development, namely, public policy and the CCF. Specifically, we analysed comprehensive plans of 12 counties in the central region of Minnesota, with 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 on?

2 Literature review

2.1 Community capitals framework

The CCF defines capital as those community resources or assets that are invested to create new resources (Flora, 2004; Flora et al., 2016). The CCF includes seven types of capitals: natural, cultural, human, political, financial, built, and social.

Natural capital includes water, air, soil, landscape, animal and plant life, and opportunities to interact with nature (Zahra and McGehee, 2013). According to Flora et al. (2016), natural capital "forms the basis of all the other capitals" (p.15), as humans often seek to "use natural capital to build other forms of capital" (p.64). Cultural capital includes heritage, traditions, values, language, stories, dances, and food (Stone and Nyaupane, 2016). Human capital refers to knowledge, skills, health, and self-esteem (Flora et al., 2016). An important aspect of human capital is education and training as opportunities for people from underprivileged areas to build skills, increase productivity, and climb the economic ladder (Stone and Nyaupane, 2016). Political capital is the "accessibility to power through channels of local, regional, state and federal government" (Zahra and McGehee, 2013, p.25). Political capital also refers to residents' ability to engage in actions that contribute to their communities' well-being (Stone and Nyaupane, 2016). Financial capital includes income, savings, fees, taxes and tax exemptions, loans and credits, philanthropy and gifts (Flora et al., 2016). Built capital refers to human-constructed built structures, including infrastructural development, for example, buildings, public facilities, mass transit, highway systems (Flora et al., 2016; McGehee et al., 2010). Social capital involves mutual trust, reciprocity, a sense of shared identity and future; it includes interactions both within and between social groups (Flora et al., 2016). There is a sizable literature on social capital,

with some researchers advocating for the vital role of social capital in community development (e.g., Bebbington, 1999; Putnam, 1993) and others arguing that the presence of social capital alone is not enough (e.g., Boggs, 2001; Portes, 2000).

Flora et al. (2016), while finding it helpful to divide capitals into seven types to foster ‘holistic analysis and action’ (p.15), also argued that the seven types of capitals connect to and interact with each other. Additionally, as Stone and Nyaupane (2016) pointed out, “understanding whether a region is ready to undertake tourism development in a significant way is determined by all community capitals” (p.5). While it is overly simplistic to prescribe a balance of various types of capitals for successful development (Zahra and McGehee, 2013), it is not desirable either to emphasise one capital over the others, which could compromise economic, social, or environmental equity (Flora et al., 2016). Rather, different mixes of community capitals are needed for different forms of community development (Flora, 2004), including tourism (e.g., Fallon and Kriwoken, 2003; Roberts, 2004).

2.2 Community capitals and tourism development

Over the past two decades, a growing number of studies examined the relationship between community capitals and tourism development. Many of the studies took place in Europe (e.g., Johannesson et al., 2003; Karlsson, 2005), Africa (e.g., Fallon and Kriwoken, 2003; Jones, 2005), or Asia Pacific (e.g., Dhakal, 2014; Park et al., 2012). Two others took place in the Americas (McGehee et al., 2010; Lima and d’Hauteserre, 2011). Four used the CCF as the conceptual framework (Dhakal, 2014; McGehee et al., 2010; Stone and Nyaupane, 2016; Zahra and McGehee, 2013), while the others examined various community capitals without referencing the CCF (e.g., Koutra and Edwards, 2012; Macbeth et al., 2004). Most research examined how community capitals affect tourism development (e.g., Karlsson, 2005), while others studied the mutual influence between community capitals and tourism development (e.g., Jones, 2005) or the influence of tourism development on community capitals (e.g., Zahra and McGehee, 2013).

Multiple studies examined the effect of community capitals on tourism development. Most assessed various types of community capitals simultaneously, while a few others focused on a particular type of community capital. Roberts (2004) described capital accumulation and tourism development in Central and Eastern Europe, and argued that social capital is more essential than financial capital to tourism development, as trust, collective action, partnership, and reciprocity – all manifestation of social capital – are critical to the success of sustainable tourism development (STD). Karlsson (2005) reflected that social capital, in the form of social relations and sense of community, is crucial to developing small tourism businesses. Cultural capital in the form of long traditions of smaller businesses also promotes small tourism businesses. Social and cultural capitals reflects the ‘life mode’ (p.113) of a community, while the core of the life mode is grounded in economic production, including tourism production. As such, social and cultural capitals support economic opportunities, which is critical to tourism development and economy.

More recently, Koutra and Edwards (2012) found that lack of capacity building was the cause of tourism’s inability to significantly reduce poverty in Ghana. In order for capacity building to be used as a development objective rather than a measurement to realise short-term results, the authors subsequently proposed a new and clearer definition of capacity building based on the concept of social, human, physical and financial

capitals. Specifically, the authors found that social capital, in the form of community participation, networks and partnership, along with micro-finance/credit (financial capital) facilitated tourism development. However, weak institutions (social capital), lack of investment (financial capital) and insufficient human and built capitals hindered tourism development. In Thailand, Dhakal (2014) described each of the seven capitals a protected wildlife non-hunting area (WNHA) possessed in the context of STD. The author found that the protected WNHA attracted visitors mainly because of natural and cultural capitals. However, weak bridging social capital between villages and strong bonding social capital within a village hindered collaboration between villages in STD. A lack of policy mandate (i.e., political capital) to promote community participation in protected WNHA further held back STD.

Two other studies were focused on a particular type of community capital, one on social capital and the other on human capital. Johannesson et al. (2003) used social capital as an analytic tool to examine how communities in northern Iceland coped with transformations from a resource-based commodity economy to a cultural economy that includes tourism. The researchers found that intra-community bonding and networking, local cooperation, and innovation, all manifestations of social capital, contributed to tourism development in local communities. Later on, Costa and Chalip (2005), in their study of a Portuguese rural community's use of adventure sport in the mix of tourism attractions, pointed out that the community lacked "the human capital required to capitalise on the development opportunities represented by" adventure sport (p.269), as local residents held on to established ways and resisted change.

Other researchers focused on mutual influence between community capitals and tourism development, or how capitals can influence each other, or both. Macbeth et al. (2004), in a conceptual paper, argued that social, political and cultural capitals (SPCC) and regional tourism development 'have a symbiotic relationship' (p.517). The authors argued that SPCC provide important resources that contributed to efficiency and efficacy of tourism development; tourism development, in turn, strengthens a community's SPCC, which is critical to a community's sense of well-being. Empirically, Jones (2005), in her study of ecotourism in Gambia, found that strong social capital, in the form of collective action in projects and resources yielded by links with external organisations, is important to developing ecotourism. Additionally, ecotourism development seemed to enhance structural social capital, but the way in which ecotourism is managed could also erode social capital. Later on, McGehee et al. (2010) found stronger social capital was associated with stronger overall non-social capitals, including cultural, political, human, private built, and financial capitals, but not natural and public built capitals. Given the study area was renowned for abundant natural beauty and resources, the authors were not surprised by the lack of relationship between social and natural capitals. The lack of relationship between social and public built capitals, on the other hand, prompted the authors to call for further study. Most recently, Stone and Nyaupane (2016), in a qualitative study on a Botswana National Park, found tourism development not only enhanced community capitals but also strengthened the influence of various capitals on each other. By adding temporal dynamism to the CCF, the authors showed how community capitals transform over time, with some improved while others reduced.

A few other studies assessed how tourism development affects community capitals. Fallon and Kriwoken (2003), in their case study of Strahan Visitor Center in Tasmania, argued that involving local communities in the development process of a visitor centre could foster social capital, by empowering the communities and helping them establish

“a shared vision of the region” (p.306). The authors also suggested that visitor centres, through innovative and appropriate interpretation, can contribute to local communities’ cultural and environmental capitals. Lima and d’Hautesserre (2011) revealed that ecotourism development enhanced pre-existing natural, social, and human capitals in Amazonian communities in Brazil, at least in the initial stages, and enhanced capitals improved communities’ well-being. Park et al. (2012) reported that financial benefits from participation in rural tourism businesses were associated with higher probability of having strong social capital in rural tourism towns in South Korea. Zahra and McGehee (2013), using the CCF as the conceptual framework, found volunteer tourism in the Philippines strengthened social capital, which in turn enhanced other types of community capitals.

To summarise, previous research demonstrated the value of CCF to study community tourism development, but no research has examined how public policies address tourism development in rural communities. Specifically, no known study has examined public policy documents from a community capitals perspective in the context of tourism development. In this study, we used the CCF to analyse county-level comprehensive plans within the 12-county Central region of Minnesota. Doing so would identify policy change opportunities to aid communities in seeking future tourism planning and development opportunities.

3 Methods

3.1 Sampling

Central Regional Sustainable Development Partnership of the University of Minnesota Extension, the primary funder of this project, works in 12 rural counties in the central region of Minnesota: Becker, Benton, Cass, Crow Wing, Hubbard, Kanabec, Mille Lacs, Morrison, Otter Tail, Stearns, Todd, and Wadena. Therefore, sampling for this study includes comprehensive plans from these counties. Tourism in these counties focuses primarily around natural resources, and the area has strong natural attractions including lakes, forests, rivers and the headwaters of the Mississippi River.

We acquired the plans through county websites. The legal authority of a county’s comprehensive plan is defined by the Minnesota Statute 394.22 (Minnesota Legislature, 2015), 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”. Therefore, we selected only plans pursuant to the Statute and did not include similar planning documents, such as stand-alone land use plans.

Hubbard and Otter Tail counties did not have comprehensive plans posted on their websites. We contacted both the county clerk and administrator by telephone and email. We received email responses confirming that neither counties had established comprehensive plans pursuant to the Minnesota Statute 394.22 (Minnesota Legislature, 2015) at the time of the study.

3.2 Data analysis

Directed content analysis (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005) was the method used to analyse the 10 comprehensive plans. This is an appropriate method, because the CCF 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 and Shannon, 2005). Each type of community capitals was assigned a category (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). The minimum unit of analysis was typically a sentence (Ghaedi et al., 2015); occasionally, it was an entire paragraph (Ghaedi et al., 2015).

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

Approach 1: ‘Critical capital’ – preserving or developing a capital critical to tourism.

Approach 2: ‘Capital commitment’ – devoting a capital to develop tourism.

As such, two sub-categories were created for each capital to represent the two approaches (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005).

For each comprehensive plan, we met to discuss and resolve any discrepancies in analysis results (Snell et al., 2014). We also met to discuss the creation of sub-categories within each capital (Snell et al., 2014). These verification steps increased the reliability of data analysis (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). Texts initially not categorised under any one of the seven capitals were set aside as ‘uncertain’. After conferring with each other, the ‘uncertain’ quotes were resolved, and each was categorised into one of the seven capitals.

Some quotes mentioned more than one type of community capital. The CCF allows for overlap between capitals, so some quotes were categorised into more than one capital. For example, one quote may mention natural and cultural capitals simultaneously. This quote would then be categorised as both natural and cultural capitals. A ‘multiple capitals’ category was also created, and the quote would be included in this category as well. Doing so allowed us to analyse all the mentions of a particular capital while also capturing those quotes that mention more than one type of capitals.

We further reviewed analysis results for each of the two approaches towards community capitals. A pattern emerged from the quotes under the second approach (capital commitment), and we further categorised 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 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 indicative of asset-based policies. Verbs such as ‘create’, ‘provide’, or ‘develop’ were indicative of need-based policies.

Throughout the data analysis process, we exchanged research memos on a regular basis. The memos served as personal research diaries meant to improve data analysis rigor (Vaismoradi et al., 2013), documenting the organisation of text under the ‘uncertain’ category, and the creation of new (sub-)categories.

4 Results

4.1 Characteristics of comprehensive plans

Each of the ten 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 organisations. Only the comprehensive plan of Mille Lacs County includes a section on tourism while seven others include a section on recreation.

Table 1 Basic information about the 10 analysed comprehensive plans

County	Year	Writer and consultants	Planning process description	No. of quotes	Tourism section?	Recreation section?
Becker	2003	County staff (with support of the CMR)	p. 6–7	82	–	–
Benton	2006	County staff (with support of the CMIF)	p. 1-1, 1-2, 1-3	20	–	–
Cass	2010	County staff	p. 3	33	–	Yes
Crow Wing	2003	County staff	p. 9, Appendix A	56	–	Yes
Kanabec	2002	County staff	p. 6–7	4	–	–
Mille Lacs	2013	County staff (with support of the ECDC)	p. 6–8	49	Yes	Yes
Morrison	2005	County staff (with 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

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

4.2 Community capitals

Of the seven types of community capitals, natural capital (59.8%) was most frequently identified, followed distantly by built (25.6%), political (9.7%), and cultural (6.0%) capitals (Table 2). None of the other three types of capitals was identified by more than 2% of the quotes. Among all the quotes, 3.1% addressed more than one type of capitals simultaneously. As described earlier, two approaches towards a community capital emerged during data analysis:

Approach 1: ‘Critical capital’ – preserving or developing a capital critical to tourism.

Approach 2: ‘Capital commitment’ – devoting a capital to develop tourism.

Table 2 Identification frequency of community capitals in data analysis

<i>Community capital</i>	<i>First approach</i>	<i>Second approach</i>	<i>% *</i>
	<i>Preserve/develop capital critical to tourism</i>	<i>Devote a capital to develop tourism</i>	
Natural	55.9%	3.9%	59.8%
Built	20.1%	5.5%	25.6%
Cultural	5.7%	0.3%	6.0%
Political	3.4%	6.3%	9.7%
Social	1.3%	0.5%	1.8%
Financial	0.0%	1.3%	1.3%
Human	0.0%	0.3%	0.3%
%	86.4%	18.0%	–

*Based on 383 quotes.

Of all the quotes, 86.4% were categorised under the first approach and 18.0% under the second approach. The first approach was adopted more frequently than the second approach for natural, built, cultural, and social capitals. The second approach was more frequently adopted for political capital. For financial and human capitals, all quotes adopted the second approach.

The researchers further categorised the quotes under the second approach into need-based or asset-based policies, as described previously. Asset-based policies accounted for 55.2% of the quotes, with the other 44.8% need-based (Table 3). Among policies using the second approach, 34.3% were related to political capital and 31.3% to built capital. Among policies with asset-based approach, 22.4% were related to political capital and 19.4% to natural capital. Among policies with need-based approach, 20.9% were related to built capital and 11.9% to political capital. Political, natural and financial capitals had more asset-based than need-based approach, while built capital had more need-based than asset-based approach. For social, cultural and human capitals, all policies under the second approach were need-based. In fact, natural capital alone accounted for nearly half of the asset-based policies.

Table 3 Identification frequency of asset-based and need-based policies under the second approach in data analysis

<i>Community capital</i>	<i>Asset-based</i>	<i>Need-based</i>	<i>% *</i>
Political	22.4%	11.9%	34.3%
Natural	19.4%	4.5%	23.9%
Built	10.4%	20.9%	31.3%
Financial	3.0%	1.5%	4.5%
Social	0.0%	3.0%	3.0%
Cultural	0.0%	1.5%	1.5%
Human	0.0%	1.5%	1.5%
%	55.2%	44.8%	100%

*Based on 69 quotes.

What follows is a description of the findings on each of the seven capitals, including quotes that exemplify the two approaches taken to address the capitals.

4.3 *Natural capital*

Natural capital was 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 addressed surface water was included in Cass County’s plan: *“Develop and implement management plans for high priority wetlands”*. A quote from Stearns County’s plan illustrated 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 appeared in Becker County’s plan: *“Protect existing fish and wildlife habitat, including consistent enforcement of rules, ordinances, and County policies”*. Oftentimes, a quote addressed more than one type of natural capital. An example came from Morrison County’s plan: *“Preserve natural resources identified as critical and sensitive including wildlife habitats, wetlands, forest lands, etc., within Morrison County”*.

The examples above fell under the first approach toward natural capital. There were also small percentages of quotes that fell under the second approach. An example of an asset-based policy under the second approach was 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 was 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”*.

4.4 *Built capital*

Built capital was the second most frequently identified type of capital. Four types of built capital emerged from data analysis: parks, trails, recreational facilities, and other. An example of a park-related policy was 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 served 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 illustrated 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 built capital that did 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 built capital at once. An example came from Benton County’s plan: *“Develop, maintain and manage a County park, trail and open space system to meet the needs of the Community by utilizing various methods of fiscally responsible funding strategies”*.

The examples above fell under the first approach towards built capital. There were also small percentages of quotes that took the second approach. A quote from Becker County's plan illustrated 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 served 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"*.

4.5 Cultural capital

Three types of cultural capital emerged from data analysis: community/rural character, festivals/events, and other. A quote from Stearns County's plan included 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 appeared 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 illustrated the first approach toward cultural capital. One quote from Mille Lacs County took the second approach, which is need-based: *"Support the creation of a historical and cultural asset inventory, and use it as a tourism driver"*.

4.6 Political capital

Two types of political capital were identified: cooperation/collaboration and regulation/planning, with the former identified more frequently than the latter. There were also more quotes under the second approach than the first.

A quote from Todd County's plan provided an example of regulation/planning 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 illustrated the second approach toward regulation/planning: *"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 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 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"*.

4.7 Social capital

A small number of quotes were categorised as social capital. For example, a quote from Wadena County's plan illustrated the first approach: *"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"*.

The two quotes under the second approach were both need-based. One of them came from Mille Lacs County's plan: *"Develop partnerships with private businesses, non-profit agencies, and governmental units to promote tourism and recreation"*.

4.8 Financial capital

A limited number of quotes were classified as financial capital, and all of them fell under the second approach. A quote from Becker County's plan illustrated the asset-based approach: *"Locally-owned Resort Incentives – consider incentives that minimize the effects of escalating shoreland value on resort properties"*. An example of need-based approach emerged from Wadena County's plan: *"Research grant opportunities for funding of this plan with the Minnesota Office of Tourism"*.

4.9 Human capital

Only one quote was relevant to human capital, and it took the second approach, specifically, need-based. The quote came from Cass County's plan: *"Educate county residents of the trail and its importance to county tourism"*.

4.10 Multiple capitals

Twelve quotes addressed two types of capitals at the same time. Among these quotes, nine took the first approach, and the remaining three took the second approach. There are five combinations of capitals addressed in the same quote. Half of the quotes addressed cultural and natural capitals simultaneously, and another three addressed built and natural capitals together. A quote from Becker County's plan took the first approach to address both cultural and natural capitals: *"Encourage participation in conservation programs that protect agricultural practices, the County's rural character, and enhance natural resource conservation"*. The one quote that took the second approach to address both cultural and natural capitals came from Wadena County's plan:

"Work with the Minnesota State Scenic Byways program for criteria and application rules. Roads that follow the Crow Wing River area may fall under the historical, natural, and recreational areas of the program. Designating Scenic Byway roads normally results in increased tourism activity/dollars in the area".

An example of addressing built and natural capitals with the first approach came from Stearns County's plan: *"Coordinate with all Stearns County departments to ensure that all County policies for protection of significant natural areas and for park and trail*

improvements are consistent with the goals and objectives of this plan". One quote from Cass County's plan used the second approach to address built and natural capitals simultaneously: "*Develop an integrated green space and recreation system within Cass County that provides diverse, developed and undeveloped, recreational opportunities for all residents and visitors while protecting unique scenic and natural areas*".

The remaining quotes addressed each of the following three combinations of capitals: natural and political (second approach), cultural and social (first approach), and political and social (second approach).

5 Discussion

This is the first known study that used the CCF to examine county-level policy documents within tourism development context. Public policies are important to tourism development efforts (Church, 2004), and previous research has demonstrated various community capitals can support tourism development (e.g., Costa and Chalip, 2005; Koutra and Edwards, 2012). Therefore, using CCF to assess how policy documents address tourism development bridges CCF with public policies, while offering a new angle to emerge opportunities for tourism development in rural communities. Our research has shown promises and demonstrated opportunities for more alignment between public policy and community capitals.

Study results revealed that current county policies address community capitals unevenly, and a possible reason for the asymmetry may be the nature of a comprehensive plan. 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*" (Minnesota Legislature, 2015). While the inclusion of land use and natural resource management policies is required for a comprehensive plan, other types of community capitals are left to the county's discretion.

Besides the legal requirement, there are two other possible reasons for the frequent mentioning of natural capital in the comprehensive plans. First, Central Minnesota possesses rich natural assets, and our findings may reflect the intimate relationship that natural assets (e.g., land, water, wildlife) have with tourism development. Second, natural capital, according to Flora et al. (2016), "forms the basis of all the other capitals" (p.15), which could also partially explain the frequent mentioning of natural capital we found.

Tourism-related built capital was the second most frequently identified community capital, although the legal definition of a comprehensive plan does not incentivise the inclusion of built capital. This suggests that built assets, such as recreational centres, parks, trails, and scenic roadways are integral to the tourism development efforts included in the plans. Most built capitals mentioned by the comprehensive plans are publicly, rather than privately, built and related to outdoor recreational activities. The finding demonstrates clear potential for nature-based tourism in Central Minnesota and a strong need for public infrastructure support to realise the potential.

In terms of political capital, there was little research, from a community capitals standpoint, on the relationship between political capital and tourism development. In the current study, political capital in the form of cooperation/collaboration was identified more frequently than that of regulation/planning. The finding indicates counties' awareness of the need for collaborative efforts between different levels of government

and different government agencies to facilitate tourism development. Meanwhile, it is important to recognise that adequate policies are also essential to tourism development, as Dhakal (2014) pointed out that weak community capitals *and* inadequate policies will hinder tourism development.

When it comes to cultural capital, the emphasis on community/rural character underscores the importance of maintaining authenticity and rural roots for 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 financial and human capitals, on the other hand, indicates areas of opportunities for tourism development that counties can leverage in a comprehensive plan. Macbeth et al. (2004) argued strong human capital is important to tourism development, while Costa and Chalip (2005) found a lack of human capital prohibits rural communities from taking advantage of adventure sport tourism for rural revitalisation. Moreover, Koutra and Edwards (2012) found strong financial, human, built, and social capitals facilitated tourism development. Clearly, financial and human capitals are just as important to tourism development. Communities need to adopt a comprehensive approach that fully incorporates these capitals in their tourism development efforts, including clearly stating what financial and human capitals are needed and how these capitals can best foster tourism development. For example, what financial resources can be leveraged and tax policies can be implemented? What knowledge and skills are needed for a viable tourism workforce and what education or training can be offered to build such a workforce?

The infrequent mentioning of social capital deserves some discussion, given the continuous attention it receives in the literature. Researchers (e.g., Bebbington, 1999; Flora, 2004; Karlsson, 2005) have strongly advocated for the vital role social capital plays in allowing communities to take advantage of economic and community-building opportunities, and multiple studies provided empirical evidence that social capital facilitates tourism development (e.g., Fallon and Kriwoken, 2003; Johannesson et al., 2003; Jones, 2005). Meanwhile, other researchers (e.g., Boggs, 2001; Portes, 2000) argued that the presence of social capital alone is not enough for effective community development. Wray (2015) suggested that social capital can accelerate democratising processes, and the implication is that social capital can influence policy making. However, in policy documents themselves, it is not likely to have social capital prominently featured. In fact, several studies looked at how social capital can affect other capitals (e.g., McGehee et al., 2010; Zahra and McGehee, 2013). In other words, social capital may be felt through policies, but not necessarily manifested in the policy documents themselves. This point was driven home by Roberts (2004), who argued, “by definition, the development of social capital is a voluntary activity, and any attempts, either by the state or by ‘development workers’ formally to induce cooperation at once remove its very essence – its voluntarism” (p.61). Therefore, we argue that it is not surprising social capital was mentioned infrequently in the comprehensive plans. The lack of mentioning does not mean social capital is no longer important to economic and community development, of which tourism can be a part. Rather, policy documents may not be the most efficient venue through which social capital is demonstrated, leveraged, and enhanced. In this study, the small number of quotes that addressed social capital made it clear the best conduit for policy documents to nurture social capital is to encourage and support creating and participating in partnerships, programs, and networks.

Lastly, a small number of quotes addressed at least two types of community capitals simultaneously. Stone and Nyaupane (2016) found that various community capitals influence each other, while Flora et al. (2016) argued that the seven types of capitals connect to and interact with each other. Our findings provided further evidence that various capitals interact with each other in the context of tourism development. More specifically, natural capital, abundant in the region and important to its tourism industry, tends to be addressed simultaneously with either cultural or built capital in the comprehensive plans. The finding means the counties have been aware that tourism offerings cannot rely solely on natural capitals. Rather, recognising the importance of cultural and built capitals is important, and integrating different types of capitals is critical to offering successful tourism products.

5.1 Approaches towards community capitals

This study also uncovered two approaches towards community capitals in a comprehensive plan, namely, developing/preserving community capitals crucial to tourism (critical capital), and devoting community capitals to tourism development (capital commitment). Results of the analysis showed an uneven distribution among the two approaches. The second approach was identified much less frequently than the first. 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 categorised 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 categorised 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 and second 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 categorised 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, there was a slightly greater emphasis on enhancing, maintaining, or leveraging existing assets, as opposed to building, acquiring, and developing new assets. In their study of adventure tourism in rural revitalisation, Costa and Chalip (2005) argued that planning work that integrates and leverages rural communities' assets is necessary to take advantage of adventure sport tourism in rural revitalisation. Therefore, this finding is encouraging, as counties seem to be aware of and willing to leverage existing community capitals for the purpose of tourism development. Among asset-based policies, over half were related to natural and cultural capitals – capitals that cannot be easily created by policymakers or public agencies. More importantly, close to half of the asset-based policies were related to political capital. The finding indicates counties did regard their political capital as an effective tool to facilitate tourism development. In terms of need-based policies, it is interesting that close to half were related to build capital, which is also the third most frequently addressed capital among asset-based policies. The finding means that counties

regarded developing new, while also maintaining existing, built capitals as highly important to tourism development.

Furthermore, about a quarter of need-based policies addressed political capital, which was the most frequently, addressed capital among asset-based policies. Clearly, while counties regarded their political capitals as an asset, they also identified a need to developing new political capitals in order to further tourism development efforts.

5.2 Limitations and suggestions for future research

This study provided fresh insights into how public policy documents address tourism development using the CCF. However, it only analysed the comprehensive plans of the rural counties within a region of a US state. Hence, the finding is not generalisable, and more research is needed to analyse public policy documents of other rural counties in other parts of the country. Additionally, by analysing current comprehensive plans, the study only provided a snapshot of how public policy documents address tourism development. Previous research (e.g., Stone and Nyaupane, 2016) has adopted a temporal dimension and shown how community capitals transform over time. Future research needs to examine how public policy documents evolve in how they address tourism development from a community capitals perspective. Lastly, the underlying assumption of encouraging communities to take advantage of community capitals for tourism development is that tourism development benefits the community. Therefore, it is important to assess whether this is the case. Past research has found tourism development can enhance various types of community capitals (Lima and d’Hauteserre, 2011; Park et al., 2012; Zahra and McGehee, 2013), and more research is needed to assess whether tourism development enhances or weakens community capitals.

6 Conclusion

To summarise, natural and built capitals were the most frequently identified among the seven types of community capitals, while financial, human, and social capitals were identified less frequently. We also identified two approaches towards a community capital: ‘critical capital – preserving or developing a capital critical to tourism, and ‘capital commitment’ – devoting a capital to develop tourism. The first approach was adopted more frequently than the second approach for natural, built, cultural, and social capitals. The second approach was more frequently adopted for political capital. For financial and human capitals, all quotes adopted the second approach. Moreover, we categorised the quotes under the second approach into need- based or asset-based policies. Asset-based policies refer to those that advance tourism objectives by building from the community’s existing assets. Need-based policies refer to those that develop tourism by creating a new asset, bringing in resources from outside the community, or modifying existing assets. There was a slightly greater emphasis on asset-based policies than on need-based policies.

Based on our findings and results from previous research, we offer a few recommendations as to how county-level policy documents can address community capitals in the context of tourism development. First, it is important to take a comprehensive approach. It is not desirable to rely heavily on any one or few particular

capitals; rather, mobilising as many types of capitals as possible holds greater promise for successful tourism development.

Additionally, various types of capitals tend to interact and influence each other. As such, policy documents will be more effective if they address and take advantage of these dynamics among capitals. Second, financial, human and political capitals seem to be identified less frequently than natural, built, and cultural capitals in the context of tourism development. It is worthwhile for policymakers to fully recognise the value of financial, human and political capitals for tourism development and address them directly in policy documents. Lastly, given voluntarism is the very essence of social capital, it may be the most effective if policymakers create channels and opportunities that support communities to emerge social capitals organically, instead of formally making a charge to create or strengthen a community's social capital.

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