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Resident Perceptions of Whale Watching in the Dominican Republic: A Sustainability Study

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Social and Environmental Sustainability in Whale Watching



- Environmental & Social Sustainability in Whale Watching
- Methods
- Results
 - Perceptions of Cetaceans and Protective Measures
 - Perceptions of Whale Watching
 - Conflict as a Cost
- Recommendations



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Environmental & Social Sustainability in Whale Watching

"Not only does the industry **support local businesses**, but it brings with it a sense of identity and cultural pride, helping to **foster an appreciation for the marine environment.**"

(<http://www.ifaw.org/united-states/defending-whales/whale-watching>)



"Another benefit is that whale watching is quite simply, a **valid counter-argument to whaling.** Whale watching directly competes with whaling, as the two activities are incompatible."

(http://www.wdcs.org/connect/whale_watch/story_details.php?select=59)

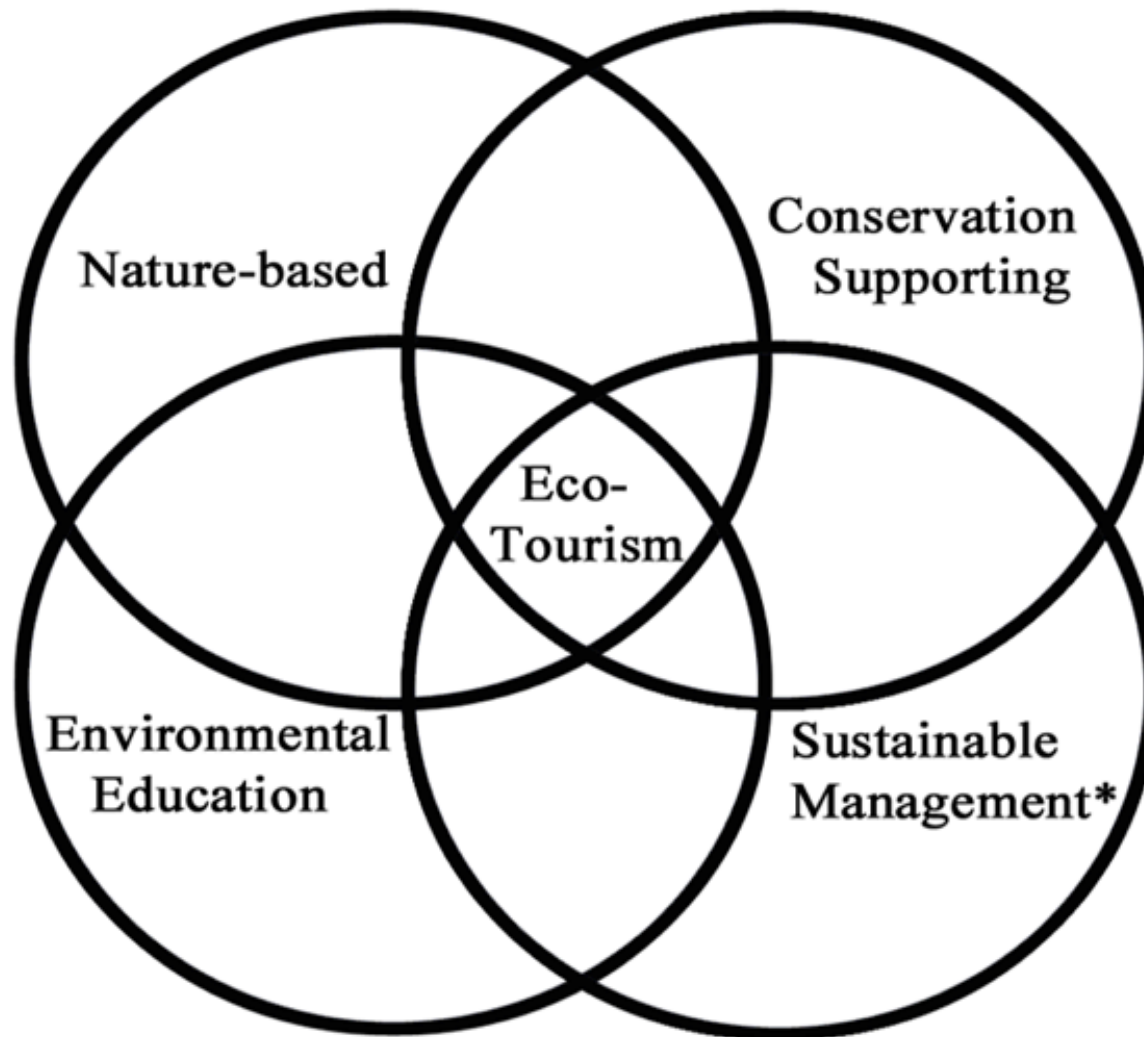


"Data obtained from whale watching vessels and details of whale watching activities are matters of importance for the on-going work of the IWC and can **directly benefit whale conservation.**"

(<http://www.greenpeace.org/international/en/publications/reports/whale-watching/>)



CHARACTERISTICS OF ECOTOURISM (RESTRICTIVE DEFINITION)



*Ecological, social, and economic sustainability.

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Potential Negative Effects for Cetaceans



- Harassment
- Increased energy expenditure
- Changes in behavior
- Noise pollution
- Habituation to humans

(Parsons 2012)

Image: [http://newswatch.nationalgeographic.com/files/2012/10/beggar-](http://newswatch.nationalgeographic.com/files/2012/10/beggar-dolphin-feeding.png)

[dolphin-feeding.png](http://newswatch.nationalgeographic.com/files/2012/10/beggar-dolphin-feeding.png)



Local People and Sustainability

- Ethical obligations to local people
- Success of conservation
- Support for sustainability programs in the long-term

(Liu et.al. 2013; Redpath et. al. 2013)

Potential Negative Impacts for People



From tourism in general:

- Overcrowding
- Environmental impacts
- Increase in criminal activity
- Loss of cultural integrity
- Increased cost of living
- Competition for the use of resources

(Andereck et. al. 2005)

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What are local
perceptions of the whale
watching industry and
associated efforts to
protect cetaceans?





SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

1 NO POVERTY



2 ZERO HUNGER



3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



4 QUALITY EDUCATION



5 GENDER EQUALITY



6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION



7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY



8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE



10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION



13 CLIMATE ACTION



14 LIFE BELOW WATER



15 LIFE ON LAND



16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



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Study Location and Methods

Whale Watching in the Dominican Republic



Methods

- Qualitative interviews
- Three groups:
 - Non-whale watch employees (Non-industry),
 - Whale watch operators (Industry)
 - Government/historic respondents.
- Coding analysis (Saldana 2013)
- Social exchange theory (Ap 1992)





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Results and Discussion



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Results and Discussion

Perceptions of Cetaceans and Protective Measures

Local and Whale Watch Operator Perceptions of Cetaceans

Non-industry

- Positive
- Descriptors: Innocent, beautiful
- Need for protection
- No described conflict with fishermen

Industry

- Positive
- Descriptors: Large, charismatic, amazing, entertaining, intelligent
- Understanding
- Need for protection



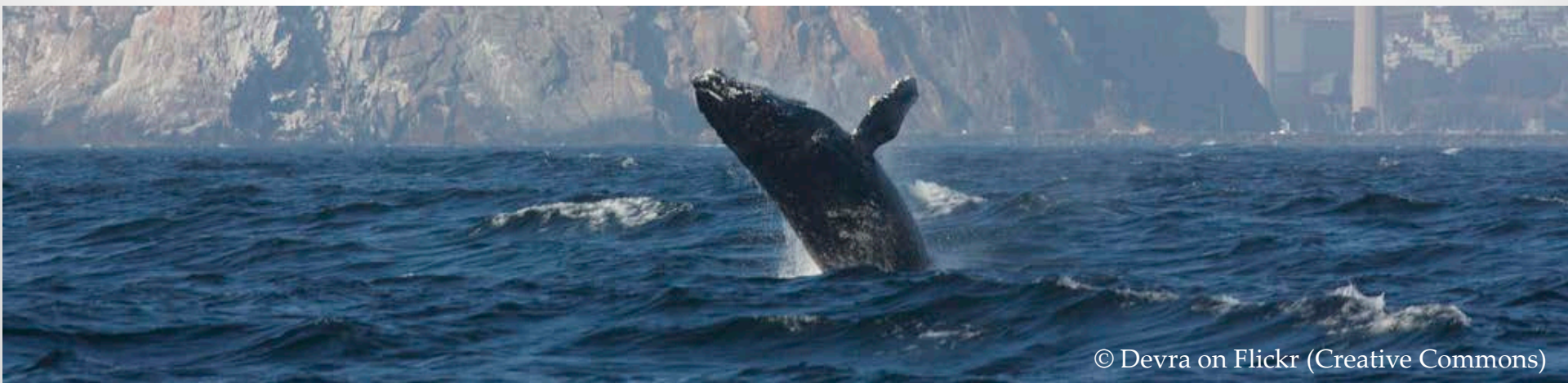
Described Threats to Cetaceans

Non-industry

- Entanglement
- Predators
- Sediment
- Ship strikes
- Whaling

Industry

- Whale watching
- Entanglement
- Noise pollution
- Vessel traffic
- Whaling



Local Support for Protective Measures

- "Here, I learned that the **whales are productive, economical, and cultural**. More or less they come every year. Economically because they leave money and it's a **way to earn some money**. Part of that, **we also have to protect them** and all of that."
- "Well, if it [protective measures] is **feasible**, then I think so. I think so, we can [protect cetaceans from the threats that they listed]. Within what's possible, we can."

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Support due to value to the community.
- "Well, if it [protective measures] is **feasible**, then I think so. I think so, we can [protect cetaceans from the threats that they listed]. Within what's possible, we can." **Feasibility.**

Local Conflict with Regulations

- "Do not impose rules such as the catamarans can go while the smaller boats can't go, but **everyone should have the ability to go and watch the whales.** It's very bad that the small ones can't see the whales, and all the big ones can see them."
- Fairness v. necessity for whale watching limits.





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Results and Discussion

Perceptions of Whale Watching

Costs

Benefits

Competition

Lack of Community
Investment

Direct/Indirect
Economic

Community
Pride/Character

Personal Experience



Local Perceptions of Whale Watching Benefits

- "For us it is very valuable because when the time of whales is back, there's a lot of people that come. **It's good for all the restaurants and people who work on boats, for the people that sell and the hotels.**"
- "I like it personally. I like it because **it's very fun**; these are things that I do not see every day and it makes my job, it makes people outsiders come and meet both the whale watching and Samaná. **It's advertising Samaná.**"

Local Perceptions of Whale Watching Benefits

- "For us it is very valuable because when the time of whales is back, there's a lot of people that come. It's good for all the restaurants and people who work on boats, for the people that sell and the hotels." **Direct and indirect economic benefits.**
- "I like it personally. I like it because **it's very fun**; these are things that I do not see every day and it makes my job, it makes people outsiders come and meet both the whale watching and Samaná. **It's advertising Samaná.**" **Personal experience and community character.**

Local Perceptions of Whale Watching Costs

- "Like I said before, the economic factors and what we call **competition** [are issues] because... there are several people that want to do it simpler, appropriating a small boat or a yacht **without any type of discipline**. So that could affect [the whales] and we can try to regulate it."
- "The only thing I see wrong is that the whales come and everyone thinks to benefit from money and this, but **they do not invest some money in the community**."

Local Perceptions of Whale Watching Costs

- "Like I said before, the economic factors and what we call **competition** [are issues] because... there are several people that want to do it simpler, appropriating a small boat or a yacht **without any type of discipline**. So that could affect [the whales] and we can try to regulate it." **Increased competition and conflict.**
- Local perspective: "The only thing I see wrong is that the whales come and everyone thinks to benefit from money and this, but **they do not invest some money in the community**." **No investment from the industry or the government.**

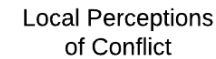


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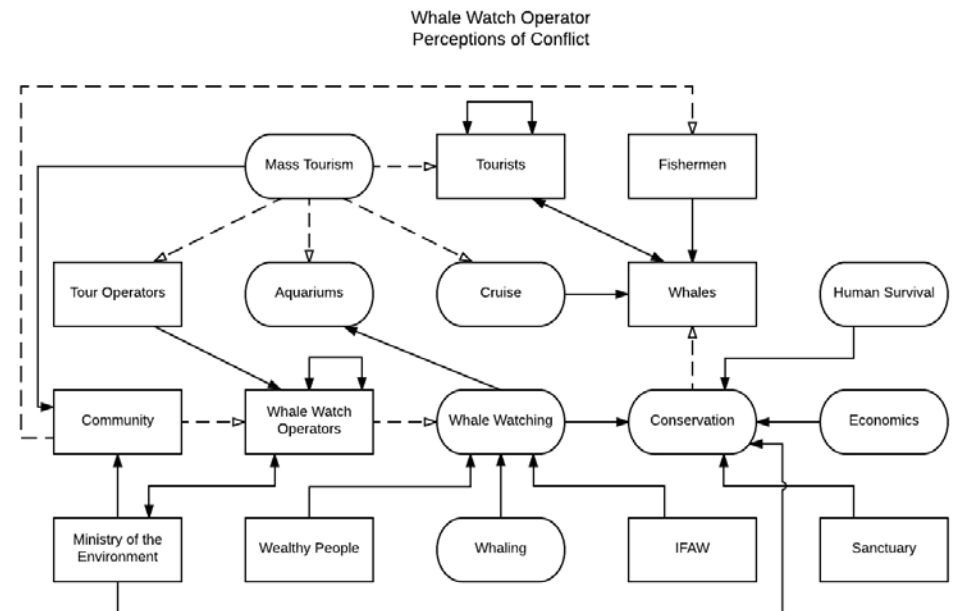
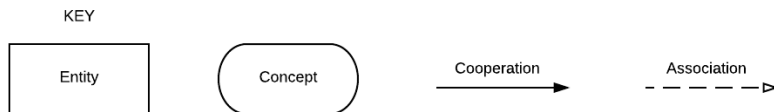
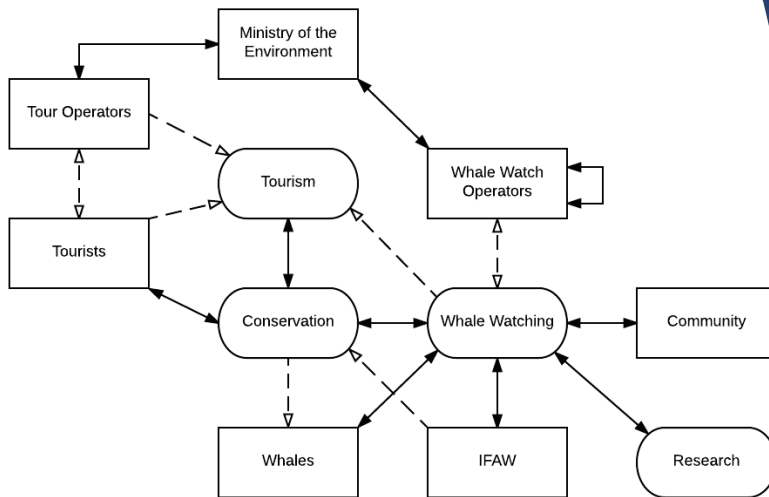
Results and Discussion

Conflict as a Social and Environmental Cost

Non-industry Perceptions of Cooperation And Conflict in Whale Watching



Whale Watch Operator Perceptions of Cooperation and Conflict in Whale Watching



Conflict with the Government

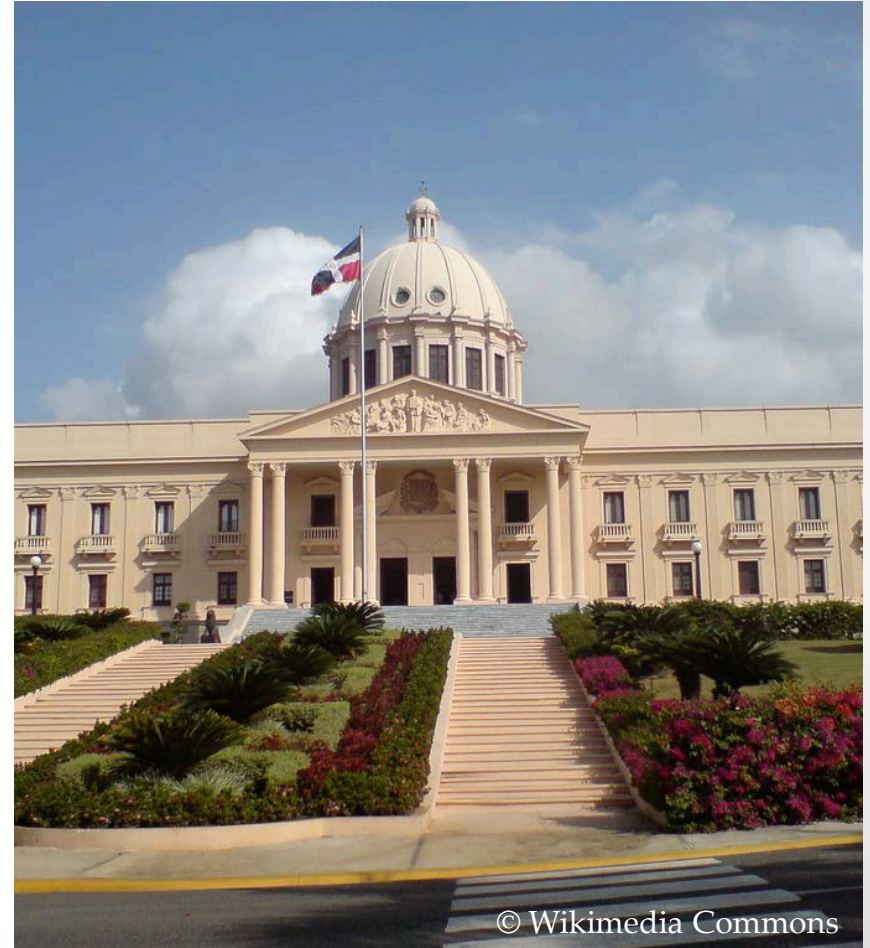
- Non-industry perspective: "Each person that goes to see the whales pays \$100 (Dominican Republic pesos) of taxes to the environment ministry, but **that money does not stay in the community**, instead, it goes directly to the Ministry."
- Industry perspective: "And they [government officials] always treat us like... we're like only interested in money, we're completely commercial..."

Conflict with the Government

- Non-industry perspective: "Each person that goes to see the whales pays \$100 (Dominican Republic pesos) of taxes to the environment ministry, but **that money does not stay in the community**, instead, it goes directly to the Ministry." **Unclear use of whale watching government fees.**
- Industry perspective: "And they [government officials] always treat us like... we're like only interested in money, we're completely commercial..." **Signs of unrest in negotiating with the government.**

Complex Relationship Between the Industry and the Government

- **Mistrust** among some industry practitioners and the government
- Perceived **undermining of industry cooperation**
- **Inability to participate** in co-management activities
- Feeling of **undermined regulations** by some whale watch operators



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Recommendations

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- **Prioritize regulations** to protect cetaceans
- **Maintain relationships** between government and industry
- **Increase government outreach** to the community
- **Support local organizations** developing human capacity in the community

Acknowledgements



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FUNDACIÓN GLOBAL
DEMOCRACIA Y DESARROLLO



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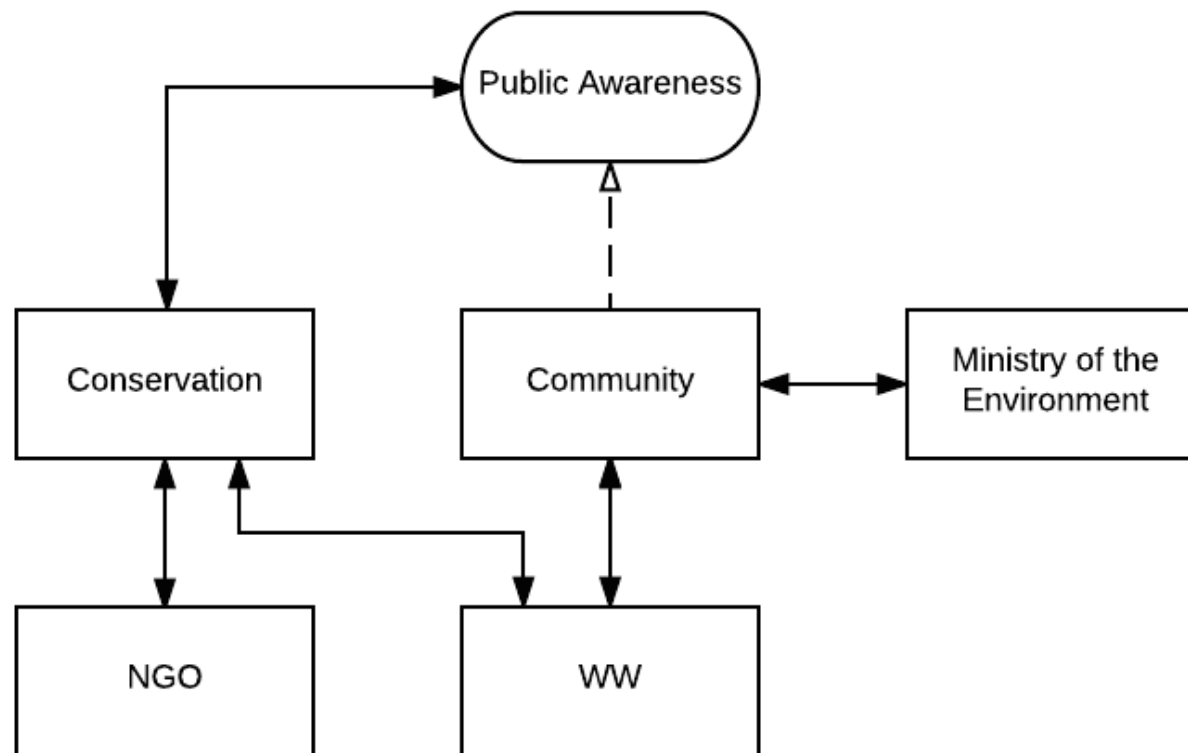


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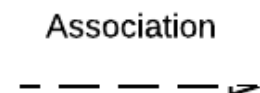
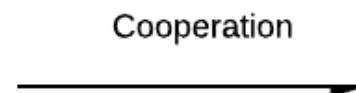
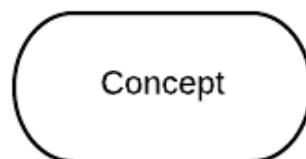
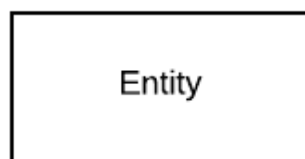
Whale watch operator responses



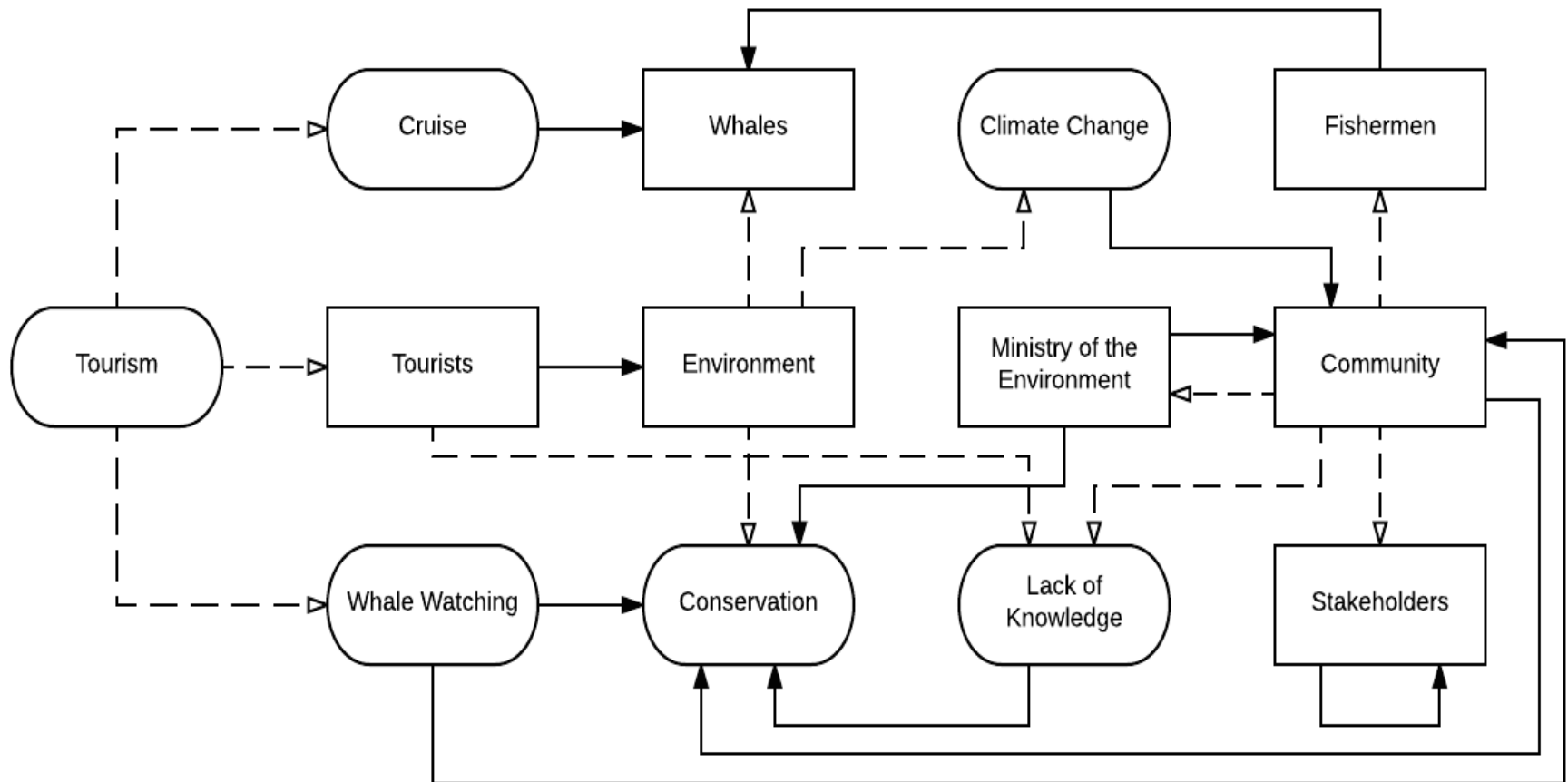
Local Perceptions of Cooperation



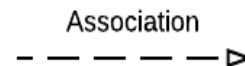
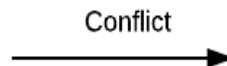
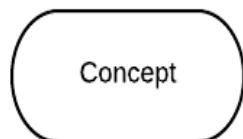
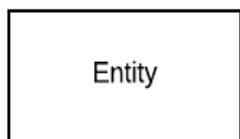
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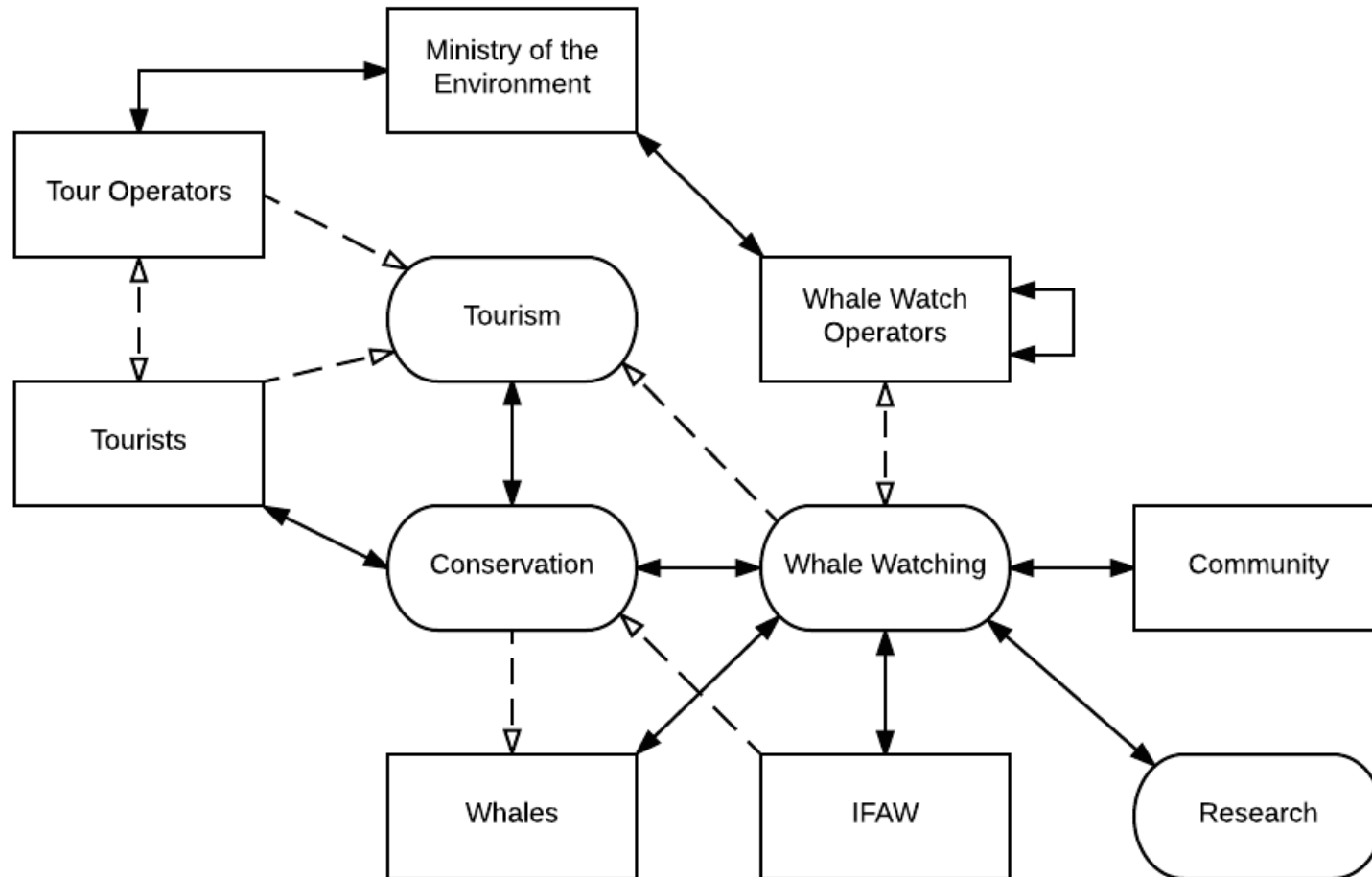
Local Perceptions of Conflict



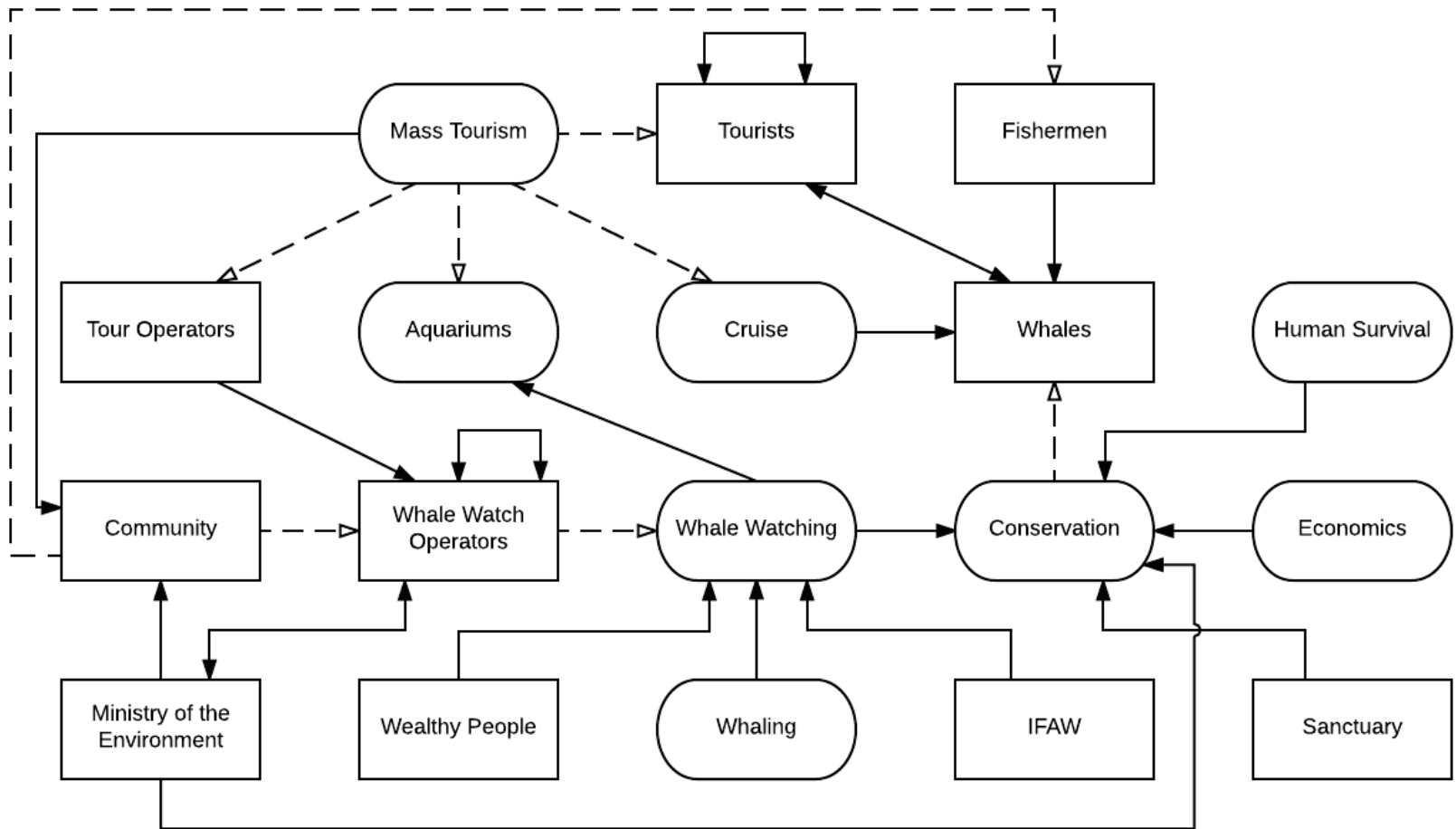
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Whale Watch Operator Perceptions of Cooperation



Perceptions of Conflict



KEY



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The Role of Whale Watching

- Alternative to whaling.
- Can be designed to promote educational, scientific, and **conservation** goals.
- Whale watching operations can provide a means of gathering data on cetacean species.
- Significant **economic benefits** for coastal communities.

* When properly managed.

(Neves 2010, Hoyt 2005)



Image: <http://media-cdn.tripadvisor.com/media/photo-s/01/7d/86/d9/whale-watching-sydney.jpg>