THE CANADIAN CONTEXT: EXPERIENCE AND POTENTIAL

Learning on the Social Acceptance of MBIs in Alberta

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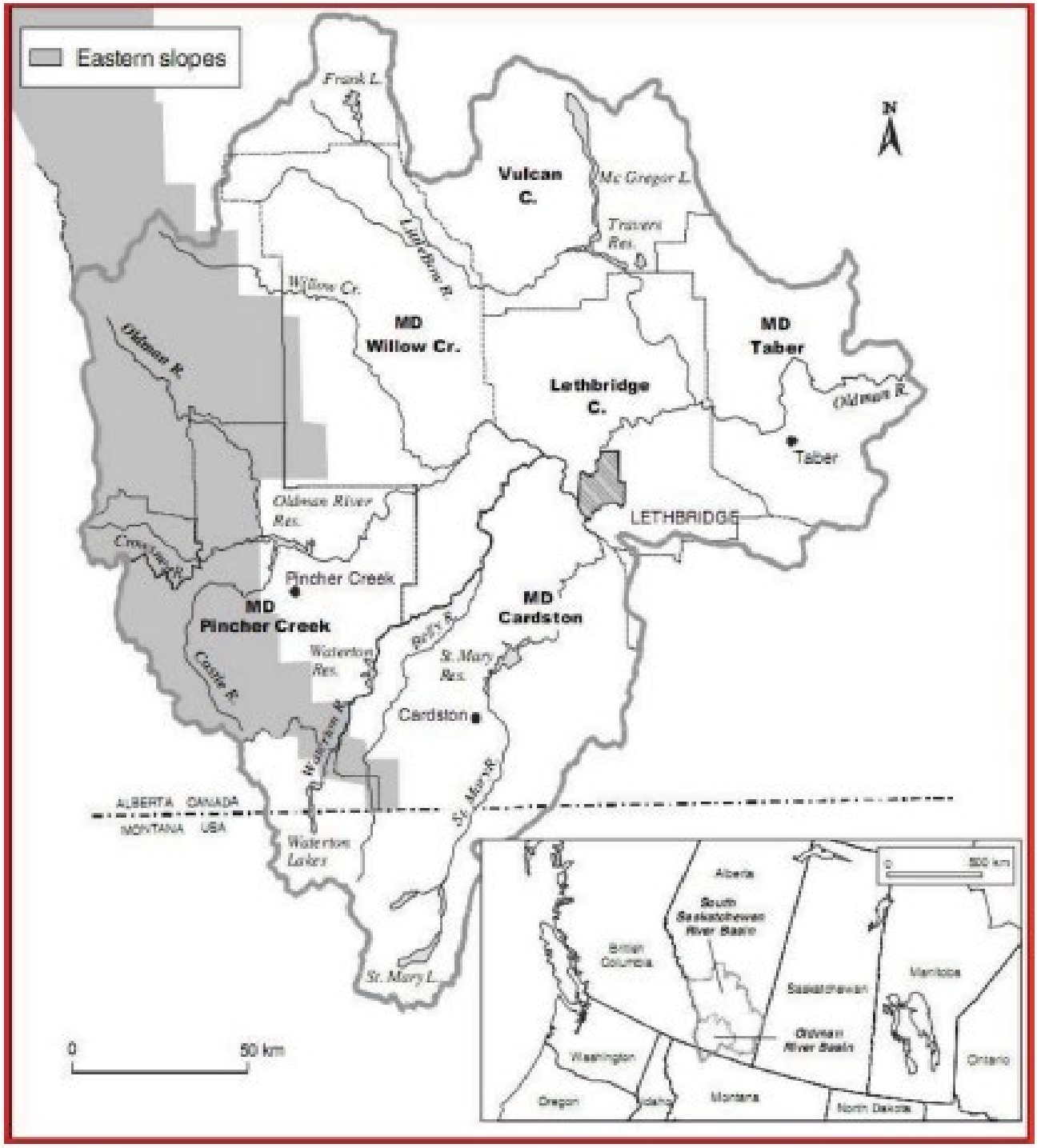
CASE STUDY: PROVINCE OF ALBERTA 2000-2015

KEY INPUTS ON THE SOCIAL ACCEPTANCE OF MBIS

- Current economic models assume that people make rational (or bounded rational decisions), leading to predictable behaviours (Ingram, Schneider, & Deleon, 2007).
- This has led to the development of heuristics and models that rely on generalizations of human behaviour and decision making (Howlett, 2009).
- Evidence suggests that people do not behave in purely economically rational ways, and in fact community, values and preferences influence their decisions and behaviour (Brown, 2006).
- Modern policy design often disregards these crucial influences (Pannell, 2008).
- Empirical studies have shown that policy tools, thought to be efficient and appealing based on economic rationality, have failed due to a lack of understanding of the interests of target populations (e.g., Pannell, 2008; Valbuena, Bregt, McAlpine, Verburg, & Seabrook, 2010).
- The integration of key community perspectives is likely to increase the success of policy tools (Brown, Durning, & Selden, 2008).

OLDMAN RIVER BASIN



MBIS FOR AGRICULTURE RELATED GOALS: CASE STUDY ON SOCIAL ACCEPTANCE

- The Oldman River Basin is a hub for agricultural activity in Alberta and home to all variations of agriculture from intensive livestock operations to mixed farming and government grazing leases
- Relationship between GoA and agriculture is old.
- Environmental issues are complex.
- The agriculture community have experience with numerous government policy and regulatory changes, leading to changes in programs and tools.
- Q method is the systematic study of participant viewpoints. Q-methodology is used to investigate the perspectives of participants who represent different stances on an issue, by having participants rank and sort a series of statements.

Q METHOD PARTICIPANTS

Table 1. Number and distribution of participants.

Sector representation[a]	Sub-sector of representation	Number of desired interviewees	Interviewees	P-set for Q-sort
Agriculture[b]	Farmers: ranching	2	1	1
	Farmers: intensive livestock	2	2	2
	Farmers: mixed	1	1	1
	Agricultural service groups	2	2	2
	Agricultural organizations	1	1	1
Government of Alberta	Ministry of Environment	5	5	3
	Alberta Agriculture and Forestry	3	3	2
	Natural Resource and Conservation Board	1	Declined	Dedined
Other government	Municipal government councillors	2	1	2
	Municipal government staff associated with water and agriculture	2	1	2
Rural community	Rural community leaders (non-government)	2	2	2
Indigenous community	Local Blackfoot First Nations	1	1	1
NGO	Environmental	2	2	2
	Oldman Watershed Council	2	2	1
Alberta academics	Universities of Lethbridge	2	2	2
Media	Local newspaper	1	Declined	0
Total		31	26	24

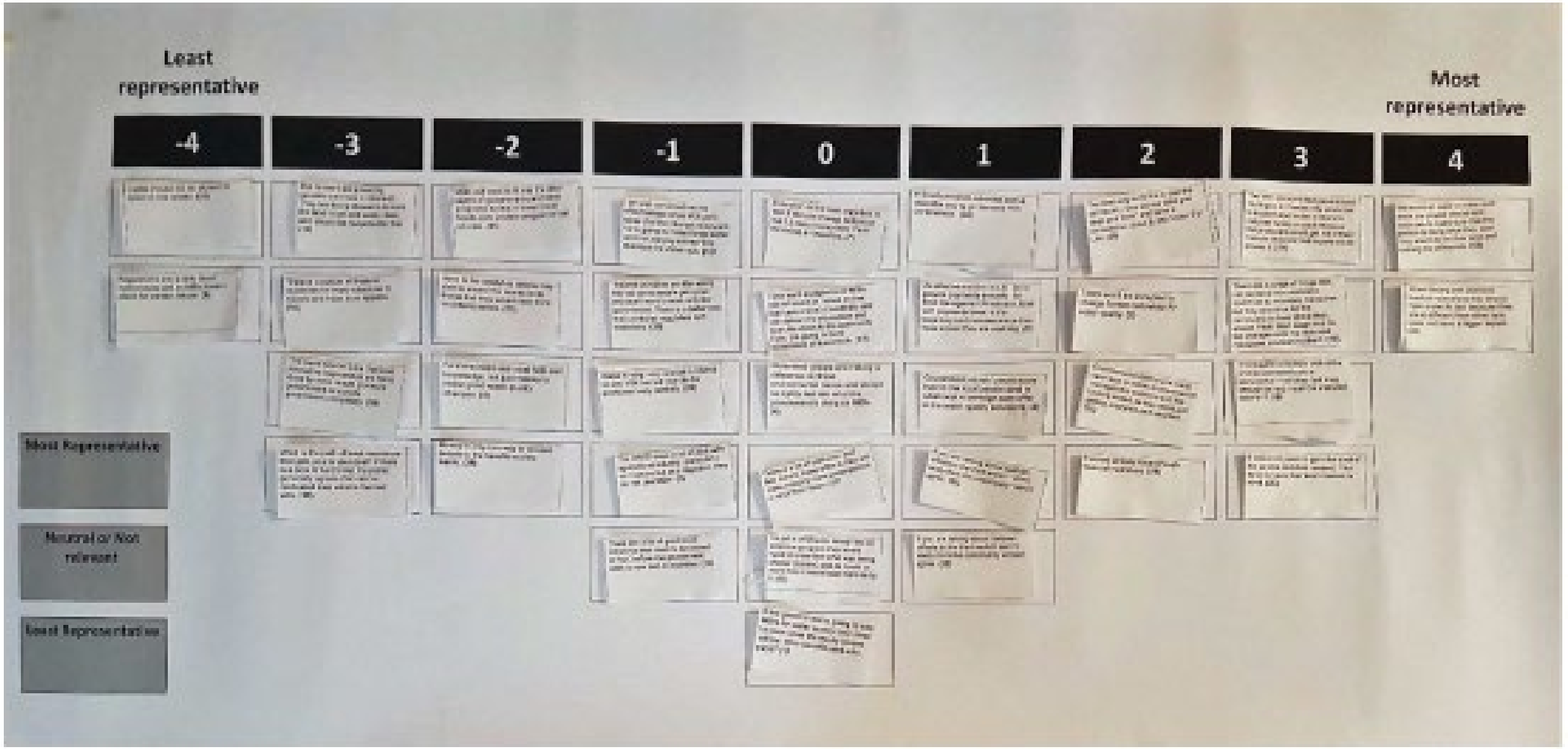


Figure 2. Example of a completed Q-sort.

Factor characteristic	Factor			
	Incentive Orienteers	Rural Advocates	Honest Brokers	Progressive Producers
How discourse is distinct from other factors understanding	Recognition of urgency of the issue Need to work practically with industry to resolve issues	Need for	understanding of rural perspective	Need for brokers to enhance trust and
Affiliated sector (s)[a]	Farmer, broader ag industry, environmental NGO, provincial and municipal government, academic	Farmer and rural community leader	Provincial government and academia	Intensive livestock farmers
Number of defining variables (participants)	11	5	3	2
Gender of variables (number of men and women participants)	8 men 3 women	3 men 2 women	1 man 2 women	2 men
Age range of variables (years)	26–65	36–65	36–54	56–65
Observation about where participants live	Predominantly born in the area	Four live in Willow Creek	City of Lethbridge	Both in Battersea Drain Area
Observation about participants' relevant experience	Have participated for a long time in farming and water management	Have farmed or have family that farm	Have worked on environmental water issues in academia, government of Alberta, or as volunteers for a long time	Have farming, council or watershed leadership experience
Variance explained	21%	13%	6%	6%

CONCLUSIONS ABOUT SOCIAL ACCEPTANCE AND OFFSETS

- Governments, like the Government of Alberta, have made commitments to policy excellence (Hicks & Watson, 2007).
- Policy processes, including policy tool development, are incomplete, and do not adequately assess issues of social acceptance. Offsets have not been readily implemented in Alberta, or Canada.
- The policy tool process could be enhanced by looking at the use of Q method to understand how a community or group of relevant stakeholders think. Q could:
  - be used to enhance the environmental policy development process by proactively capturing, assessing and integrating key community viewpoints on an issue.
  - reveal a great diversity and complexity of environmental beliefs, beyond responses that simply state that someone is for or against something (Addams & Proops, 2000).
  - Reveal that assumptions on group behaviour or consistency are incorrect.
  - Government staff can use these local discourses to build credibility and trust with the community.

THANK-YOU