

The Resources Committee Experiment:  
The Rise and Fall of Cross-Ministerial Resource Governance in Japan

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Abstract

Sound natural resource management requires a *fit* between the problem and the institutional arrangement that has been put into place to address the problem. The aim of this paper is to re-examine the long-forgotten legacy of the Japanese Resources Committee (RC), a governmental experiment that enjoyed brief success in addressing resource challenges immediately after World War II<sup>2</sup>. I will analyze the rise and fall of the RC by examining the functions, impacts, and philosophical ideals embraced by RC participants, investigating not only the factors behind the rise of this special institution but also those that contributed to its fall. The RC was created in the hope that human and institutional ingenuity could overcome the material challenges of devastated post-war Japan. Although the experiment took place 50 years ago and was short-lived, there are many lessons to learn from a contemporary perspective when an integrated approach to resource problems is much wanted than ever.

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<sup>2</sup> Saburo Ohkita, in his recollection of early institutionalization of resource issues, says: “The fact that organization like the Resources Committee was established within the Japanese government, where traditional conventions and short-sighted problem definition still prevailed, was itself an experiment” (Ohkita 1949: 316).