

Chapter 2

Inter-Municipal Cooperation and Regional Waste Management in Japan

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Abstract

There are three significant features of Japan's administrative situation. First, Japanese local governments are given a large range of authority; second the Japanese government has begun taking inclusive measures to counteract the shrinking society; including to promoting inter-municipal cooperation (IMC); and third, the need for wide-area public services has been so strong in Japan that both consolidation and IMC measures are advanced concurrently. In this situation the question is 'what are the principal changes to Japanese IMC?' The principal changes to IMC in Japan are that as an area becomes depopulated, the number of affiliated entities increases. Various IMC initiatives have been developed and making use of IMC methods is closely related with each region's strategy for revitalisation.

IMC methods are significant in the environment area. But in this area nuisance and contiguous costs are intrinsic, and consensus-building amongst the affiliated entities is important. This situation has two characteristics. First, the diversity of IMC initiatives has become prominent. Where partial affairs associations are well-suited for formulating consensus, they will become more developed. On the other hand, where flexibility of a business is given higher value or a central city has already established leadership in the region, the contract type will be preferred. Second, value should be placed on broad fact-finding through IMC before starting the policy-planning process as the Kansai Wide Area Union case shows. In conclusion, IMC strategies are closely related to regional revitalisation in depopulated areas and are worth consideration. How to effectively make use of an IMC system for a garbage disposal service has been significant, and it will gain in importance for local administration stakeholders and citizens in the coming decades in Japan.

Keywords: Inter-municipal cooperation, regional waste management, broader-based

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administration, municipal consolidation, partial affairs association, delegation of duty

2.1. Introduction

Hulst and Mongort (2007) state that ‘a series of developments over the past fifty years have put pressure on local governments’ performance, domain and even existence’. One of the strategies used to deal with the rising scales of production and mobility, and growing market pressures such as privatisation, deregulation, and appearance of government agencies (Hulst and Mongort, 2007) is inter-municipal cooperation (IMC). Japan created the framework of IMC in 1888³ in response to pressures of modernisation after the Meiji Restoration.⁴

IMC has played a role in the implementation of various local government initiatives, including regional waste management. Regional waste management has advanced and is now one of many IMC-driven services.

This chapter provides an overview of the history of IMC in Japan, and discusses the current state of IMC-driven regional waste management in a bid to answer the following questions:

- What are the principal changes in Japanese IMC?
- What is the key to effective IMC-driven regional waste management?

2.2. Framework of Japanese Local Administration

2.2.1. Ordinary Local Public Entities

In Japan, a local public entity has a juridical entity under Article 2, Local Autonomy Law (LAL). There are two major categories of local public entities: ordinary and special. Local public entities are typical local governments in their organisation, affairs, and power. They are subject to the constitutional guarantee of autonomy and are broken into prefectures, which are divided into municipalities. The number of ordinary local public entities in Japan is shown in Table 2.1.

³ The IMC legal framework is stipulated in Choson-sei (The Town and Village Law) which came into force in 1888 (Kamiko, 2010a).

⁴ Japan’s modernisation process is believed to have started in 1868, the year the Meiji Restoration started, marking the transfer of the governing authority from the Tokugawa Shogunate to the Imperial Court (Kamiko, 2010b).

Table 2.1: Classification and Number of Ordinary Local Governments (as of 1 July 2019)

	No.		
Prefectures 47			
To	1	Tokyo	Has different functions from other kinds of prefectures: fire service, water supply, sewerage, etc. (area of special wards)
Do	1	Hokkaido	Has only minor differences from Fu and Ken
Fu	2	Kyoto, Osaka	Have no differences in legal status from Ken
Ken	43	ALL others	
Municipalities 1,724			
City (Shi)			
Designated cities	792		Population of 50,000 or over, etc.
Core cities	20		Population of 500,000 (practically 700,000) or over
(Remaining) Special cities	27		Population of 200,000 or over ¹
Other cities	687		
Town (Cho or Machi)	743		Town and village are the same in their function and authority.
Village (Son or Mura)	189		

Note: Until March 2015, the population requirement for ‘core cities’ was 300,000 or over, and at that time, there was another category of ‘special cities’ with a population of 200,000 or over. The limit of the core cities was lowered in March 2015. Those cities designated as ‘special cities’ by that time may retain the special status with the delegated function.

Source: Created by author.

2.2.2. Characteristics and Affairs of Prefectures and Municipalities

a) Prefectures

Characteristics

Japan’s prefectures – To, Do, Fu, and Ken – are wide-area local governments that encompass municipalities. At present, there are 47 prefectures in the country. The Tokyo Metropolis, the capital of Japan, is the only prefecture designated as To. Hokkaido is also the only prefecture designated as Do. Kyoto and Osaka are designated as Fu and all others are designated as Ken. Each prefecture is situated above the municipalities of which it is comprised, but it cannot exercise hierarchical or authoritarian power over them. Prefectures and municipalities have different tasks, and both levels must cooperate on an equal standing as local entities. According to Article 2 of the LAL, the duties of prefectures fall into three categories:

1. Covering a wider area than a municipal territory
2. Requesting the cooperation and coordination of multiple municipalities
3. Duties deemed inappropriate to be handled by ordinary municipalities when taking such municipalities' scale and characteristics into account

Affairs

The affairs dealt with by prefectures are:

1. Wide-area affairs (e.g. maintenance of national roads, construction of prefectural roads, management of harbours, conservancy of forests and river, public health centres, vocational training, police)
2. Communication and coordination affairs relating to municipalities (e.g. advice, recommendation, guidance for rationalisation of organisation and operation of municipalities)
3. Supplementary affairs for municipalities (e.g. high schools, hospitals, public universities, museums)

b) Municipalities

Characteristics

Municipalities are the local governments involved in affairs closest to the lives of residents. There were 1,724 municipalities (792 cities, 743 towns, and 189 villages) in Japan as of 1 July 2019 (Table 2.1).

Municipalities are primary-level local entities that take charge of all local administration other than those tasks attributed to prefectures. There are three categories of municipal appellation: Shi (cities), Cho (towns), and Son (villages). The following conditions must be met in order to be deemed a Shi (Art. 8, LAL):

1. population of more than 50,000;
2. more than 60% of the total number of residences are located within the central urban area;
3. more than 60% of the population (or their dependents) is engaged in commercial, industrial, or other urban activities; and
4. other conditions stipulated by prefectural bylaws.

Steiner (1965, pp.176), describing the situation in Japanese municipalities, said:

The inhabitants must, first of all, recognize the community as a unit that is meaningful to their lives. This recognition may spring from the closeness of a face-to-face group, in which case the feeling that the inhabitants belong together and that the local community is 'theirs' is likely to be endowed with emotional intensity. It may also spring from a perceived identity of certain needs shared by the inhabitants, and from common efforts to meet them.

Affairs

The affairs dealt with by municipalities are:

1. Affairs relating to residents' life (e.g. residents' registration, family register, residence indication)
2. Affairs relating to ensuring the safety and health of residents (e.g. garbage disposal, fire service, water supply, sewage)
3. Affairs relating to the welfare of residents (e.g. nursing insurance, national health insurance, public assistance)
4. Affairs relating to the urban development plan (e.g. urban design, city parks, municipality roads)
5. Affairs relating to the establishment and management of various facilities (e.g. elementary and junior high schools, libraries, day care facilities, public halls, citizens' halls)

2.3. Special Local Government Circumstances

An overview of the history and current state of Japan's local administration must include a discussion of three Japanese special circumstances: the large range of public affairs, the population decline, and the development of broader-based administration. These three have impacted Japanese local administration and will have a significant effect on IMC.

2.3.1. Large Range of Public Affairs

The authority and responsibilities of the three tiers of government are allocated to them by governing national acts and laws as shown in Table 2.2.

Table 2:2: Authority and Responsibilities of Three Tiers of Government, Japan

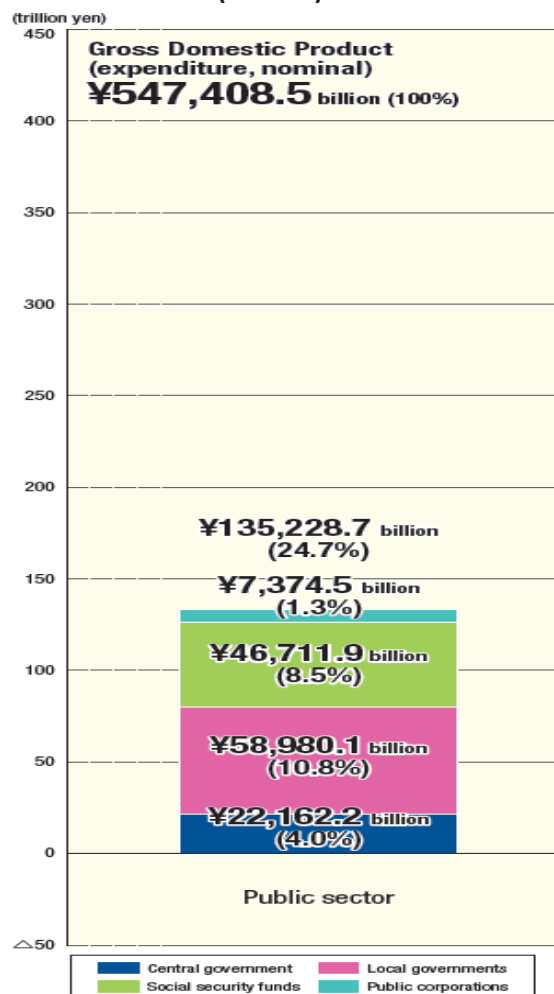
	Basic, safety	Education	Welfare, Sanitation	Social infrastructure	Industry, Economy
Central	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diplomacy • Defence • Judicature • Criminal punishment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University • Subsidy for private school (university) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pension • Social insurance • Licence for doctor • Approval of medicine 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highway • National road (designated section) • First-class river • Airport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currency • Banking regulation • Customs • Regulation on transportation • Regulation on Telecommunication • Economic policy
Local Prefecture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High school • Salary/personnel of elementary/junior high school • Subsidy for private school (others) • Sports facility • Cultural facility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Livelihood assistance (area of town/village) • Child welfare • Elderly welfare • Health centre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National road (other section) • Prefecture road • First-class river (designated section) • Second-class river • Port • Public housing • Urban 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocational training • Support for small businesses

				planning	
Municipality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fire defence • Family register • Resident register 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elementary/junior high school • Kindergarten • Sports facility • Cultural facility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Livelihood assistance (city) • Child welfare • Elderly welfare • Nursery care insurance • National health insurance • Water supply • Sewerage • Waste disposal • Health centre (specific city) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipal road • Small river • Port • Public housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulation on agricultural land use

Source: Created by author.

Local government public services cover a large scope. They include basic services, safety, education, sanitation, social infrastructure, industry, economy, and more. Municipalities focus on affairs that affect residents' life, safety, and health.⁵ Consequently, the local government expenditure (¥58 trillion) is much larger than that of the central government (¥22 trillion) (Figure 2.1). The breakdown of local government expenditure shows that significant portions are spent on sanitation, education, safety, and public welfare (Figure 2.2).

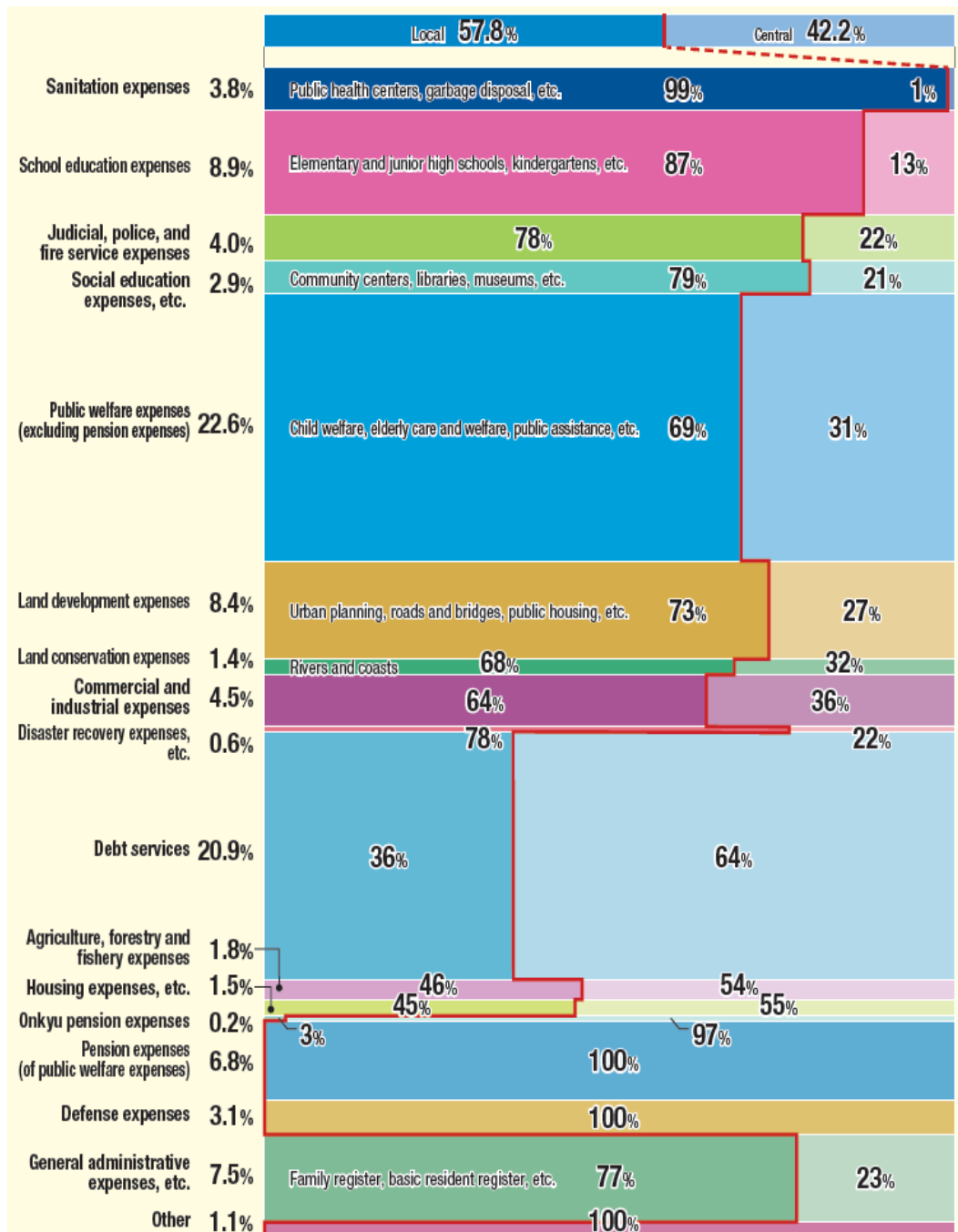
Figure 2.1. Gross Domestic Product (expenditure, nominal) and Local Public Finance (FY2017)



Source: Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (2019), White Paper on Local Public Finance.

⁵ Waste disposal belongs to the field of sanitation in Figure 2.2.

**Figure 2.2. Share of Expenditures by Purpose of Central and Local Governments
(final expenditure based)**



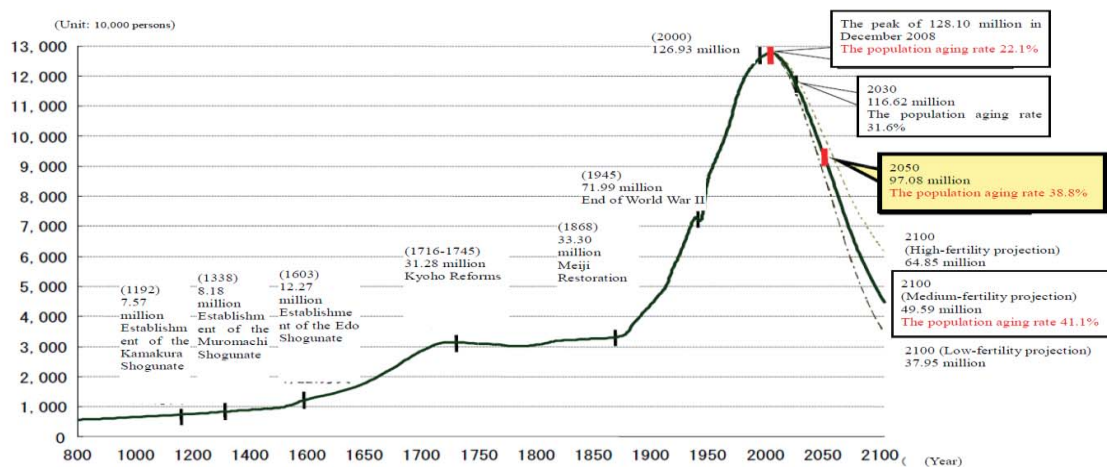
Source: Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (2019), White Paper on Local Public Finance.

Local governments play a principal role in internal public affairs. As earlier stated, residents recognise the community as a unit that is meaningful to their lives. In this situation, waste disposal has been the typical and principal affair of municipalities in Japan.

2.3.2. Population Decline

Japan's population, which recorded a sharp rise in the aftermath of the post-war baby boom (1940s) and the second baby boom (1970s), has been declining steadily after peaking at 128.08 million in 2008. According to the National Institute of Population and Social Security Research, the medium fertility variant projection assuming the total fertility rate is approximately 1.35, showing that the Japanese population will fall below 100 million in 2050 (Figure 2.3).

Figure 2.3. Population Projections for Japan



Source: Long-Term Forecast Study Group, Policy Subcommittee, National Land Council (2011), The Interim Summary of the Long-Term Vision for National Land.

The government has begun taking measures to counteract this. These are generally long-term goals, including:

1. creating 300,000 new jobs for the younger generation by 2020;
2. attaining equilibrium between the number of people moving into and those moving out of the capital region;
3. developing conditions that promote marriage amongst the younger generation, and
4. promoting inter-communal cooperation.

The steady fall in Japan's population has called for immediate and actionable countermeasures. Under the policy that drives this vision, all local governments created various comprehensive strategies for regional revitalisation that incorporate sustainable city policies.

2.3.3. Development of Broader-based Administration

The requirement of local government

Herein, we consider the best size for a municipality that is beneficial to residents. Theoretically, there are four major ways a large population size influences positive outcomes of local governments:

- Large local governments provide more administrative specialists like doctors, nurses, childcare workers, nutritionists, agricultural engineers, building engineers, civil engineers, and librarians. In this way, size is positively related to the administrative skill of the local government.
- The larger the local government, the larger its tax base, accounts, and funds. In that sense, size is positively related to financial stability.
- Large local governments have relatively large populations that are made up of diverse individuals, families, and corporations, which tend to increase the political diversity of the government.
- The scope of public projects and groups potentially influenced by policy are relatively large, which leads to social trust in the government.

A large population size can also negatively impact local government in any of the below-discussed ways:

- Large local governments do not engender close interpersonal relationships between members of the communities.
- Local attachments and subjective orientations are negatively affected by large population size because it negatively influences social embeddedness.
- Residents of local areas with large population sizes are less engaged than their counterparts in smaller municipalities. These social factors negatively influence the competence of the basic local government. However, citizens are expected to select a size based on social preferences.

After the promulgation of the Municipal Government Act in 1888, Japan instituted the administrative village that transitioned local governments from natural villages to administrative villages. This is because an administrative village is believed to be more favourable to the social factors that relate government size to positive outcomes. Moreover, under the requirements of national administrative modernisation in the 20th century, and the responses to decentralisation in the 21st century, the local governments have been expected to deal with the social factors appropriately (Figure 2.4).

Figure 2.4. Relationship Between Size and Political Competence in Local Government

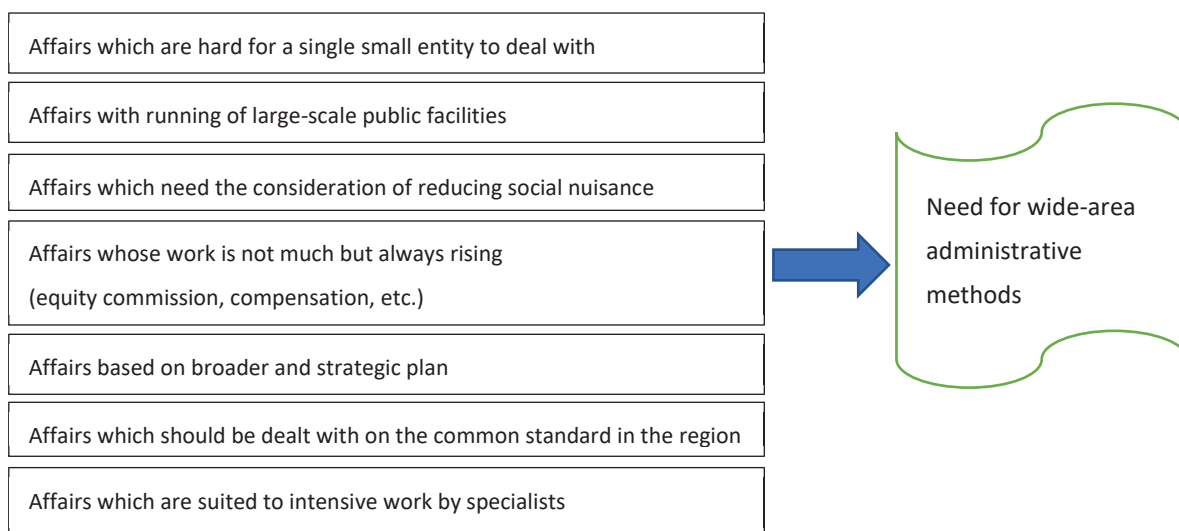


Source: Kimura (2017).

Need for wide-area public services

Municipalities are fully operational entities that manage all the administrative responsibilities allocated to them by law. Local governments manage a broad range of services, some of which are difficult to provide from a small local government’s resources. Figure 2.5 shows some of these services which are imperative in Japan’s modern local government system.

Figure 2.5. Need for Regional Administrative Involvement



Source: Kimura (2017).

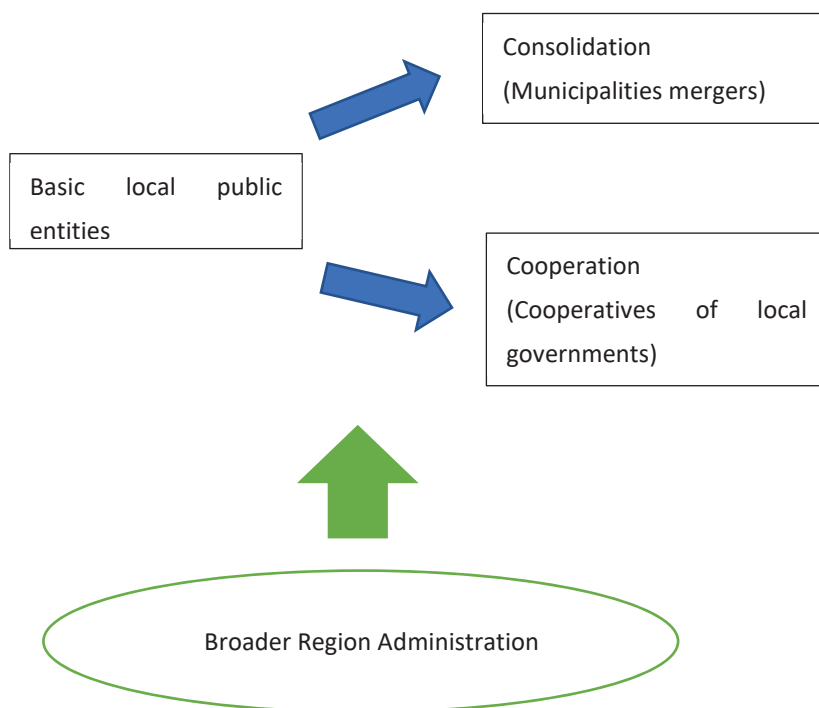
- Services that are challenging for individual small governments to manage.
- Some services need regional administrative management and some need significant clerical attention. Those matters are sometimes challenging for an individual small government to handle (e.g. regional development plans, medical care for the elderly, and forest road maintenance).
- Matters regarding the operation of large-scale facilities.
- Some services require large public facilities that would be challenging for an individual small municipality to manage because of extensive construction and maintenance costs (e.g. refuse disposal, crematoria, and sewage systems).
- Matters regarding the reduction of social nuisances.
- Some activities, such as noise and ground pollution can become nuisances. For those types of problems, cooperation amongst governments for nuisance abatement is crucial (e.g. refuse disposal).
- Although the extent of clerical work regarding some activities may not initially be great, the potential of an increasing volume of work exists. For those activities, sharing the administrative workload is reasonable (e.g. public workers' compensation, retirement allowances for civil service workers, and equity commission).
- Activities based on broad strategic plans.
- Some matters require consensus amongst relevant local governments in a regional unit (prefecture) (e.g. broad area (regional) development plans).
- Some matters should be handled using the common standard of a region.
- Some activities need to be managed in accordance with the common administrative standards of a region (prefecture) (e.g. nursing insurance and elder care services).
- Services that require the attention of specialists.
- Some matters and services need specialists, and the sharing of those human resources is a reasonable way to manage those matters (e.g. fire defence, emergency medical care, and welfare of handicapped people).

Regional administration is required for all of these matters. This situation is a global phenomenon, and every country has local governments facing problems of regional administration. Therefore, wide-area administrative methods are imperative for effective and efficient public services.

What is the orientation of regional governance? In Japan, there have been two approaches to regional governance. One approach has been the *consolidation approach*, which has generally taken the form of amalgamating municipalities.

The other approach is the *cooperation approach*, which involves the coming together of local governments for a goal or task. Local governments can take wide-area administrative methods like establishing partial affairs associations (PAA), delegation of affairs, and so on. When a local government chooses consolidation or cooperation, its decision is based on its preferred size for local government administration. When a local government meets the needs of the regional public services, the local government that prefers a larger administration based on the relevant social factors would choose to consolidate (Figure 2.6).

Figure 2.6. Regional Governance



Source: Kimura (2017).

Municipal consolidation

Municipal consolidation is conducted in municipalities that are the basic local governments. These consolidation is initiated by the national government.⁶ There have been 47 prefectures in existence since 1888, but the number of municipalities decreased from 71,314 in 1888 to 1,718 in 2014⁷ (Table 2.3).

⁶ Japan has three great consolidation movements: Meiji consolidation, Showa consolidation, and Heisei consolidation. They were not mandated by law, but it seems probable that in practice the Meiji consolidation came very close to being mandatory and that and the Showa consolidation was also taken under strong pressure from the national government. (Yokomichi, 2007).

⁷ The number of municipalities was 1,724 in June 2019.

Table 2.3. Changes in the Number of Municipalities

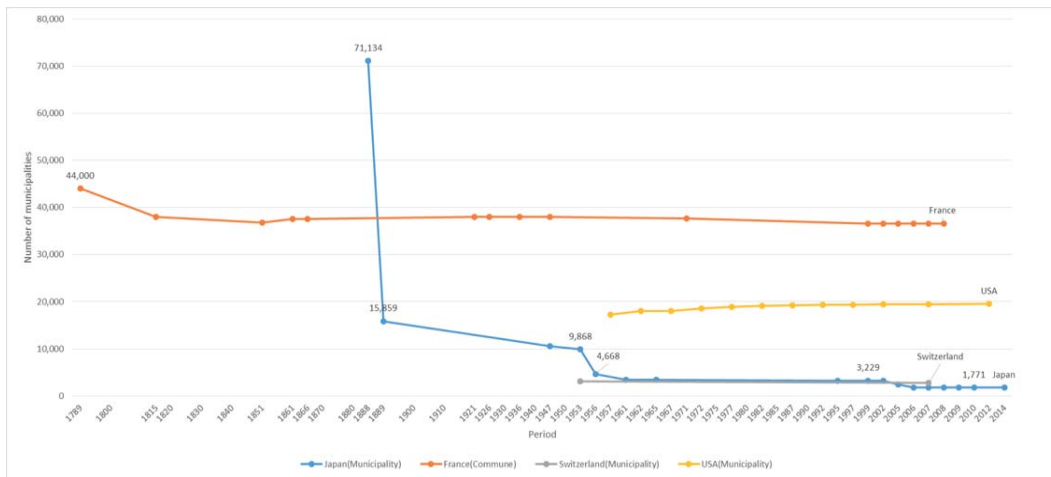
	City	Town	Village	Total	Events
1888	-	-	-	71,314	
					Big Consolidation of Meiji Standard minimum size 300–500 households • To properly execute functions such as elementary school, taxation, family register, etc.
1889	39	15,820		15,859	Municipal Government Act (1889.4)
1945. Oct	205	1,797	8,518	10,520	
1947. Aug	210	1,784	8,511	10,505	Local Autonomy Law (1947. 5)
1953. Oct	286	1,966	7,616	9,868	Towns and Villages Amalgamation Promotion Law (1953. 10 Expired in 1956. 9)
					Big Consolidation of Showa Standard minimum size 8,000 in population • To effectively manage at least one junior high school.
1956. Apr	495	1,870	2,303	4,665	New Municipality Construction Law (1954. 6 Expired in 1961. 6)
1956. Sep	498	1,903	1,574	3,975	
1961. Jun	556	1,935	981	3,472	
1965. Apr	560	2,005	827	3,392	Law concerning Special Measures for Municipal Amalgamations (June 1965. Effective for 10 years)
1995. Apr	663	1,994	577	3,234	3rd Extension of the above law (1953. 3 Expired in 2005. 3)
1999. Apr	671	1,990	568	3,229	Big Consolidation of Heisei
2002. Apr	675	1,981	562	3,218	
2005. Mar	722	1,423	366	2,521	
2005. Apr	739	1,317	339	2,395	Law concerning Special Measures for Municipal Consolidation
2006. Apr	779	844	197	1,820	
2007. Apr	782	827	195	1,804	
2008. Apr	783	812	193	1,788	
2009. Apr	783	802	192	1,777	
2010. Feb	783	799	189	1,771	
2014. Apr	790	745	183	1,718	

Source: Created by author.

The primary reason for this large decrease is the municipal consolidation that occurred during the three great consolidation movements. The first of these was the Great Meiji Consolidation of 1888–1889, when the number of municipalities declined to about one-fifth of the original number, from 71,314 to 15,859. Between 1953 and 1961, the Great Showa Consolidation was conducted, resulting in a further decrease of about two-thirds, from 9,868 to 3,472. Finally, the Great Heisei Consolidation was implemented between 1999 and 2010, which decreased the number of municipalities by about one half, from 3,229 to 1,771.

The latest consolidation, the Great Heisei Consolidation, was implemented in a unique context. Amongst other things, it was in response to the ongoing decentralisation process⁸ and the financial deterioration of the local governments. These conditions intensified the consolidation’s influence on local governments’ administrative management, reinforcing their administrative and financial foundations, and installing efficient municipal public services. The number of Japanese municipalities has reduced to about one-fortieth in 120 years. This sharp decline is contrary to the stable trend in France and the United States (US) (Figure 2.7).

Figure 2.7. Change in Number of Basic Local Government Municipalities



Source: Kimura (2017), pp.58.

⁸ With the enactment of the Uniform Decentralization Law in April of 2000, local government, the delegated function system that was reinforcing centralisation was abolished and municipalities were expected to conduct all of their administrative business independently under the principle of autonomous decision making. The reform was controversial, and it was argued that municipality consolidation and increased competencies of local governments were requisite for transferring the numerous administrative duties. In that context, the Great Heisei Consolidation was powerfully advanced (Kimura, 2017).

Japan's consolidation has made positive impacts like boosting effectiveness through economies of scale, establishing new identities, etc. on the regions. On the other hand, they have caused new issues such as an overflow of public facilities in new districts. For example, if two cities, each of which has a library, have consolidated, the new city now has two libraries. These overflows became hot issues amongst the municipalities in the 2010s, prompting urgent action by the municipalities.

Cooperation

Outline

As earlier mentioned, local governments have two options when responding to the needs of the regional citizenry. One is to consolidate and the other is to cooperate (Figure 2.6). Japan has progressed in the area of consolidation, which local governments have efficiently employed alongside cooperation. Regional needs have encouraged the development of cooperative arrangements, which are wide-area administrative methods stipulated in the LAL. It is a global development; as other countries have pursued IMC. For example, as shown in the bottom row of Table 2.4, the US has special districts, school districts, and so on; the United Kingdom has combined authorities, joint boards, and so on; France has SIVU, Métropole, and so on; Germany has Ober regionale-gemeindverland, Amt/Samt gemeinde, and so on; and Italy has Unione di comuni, Comunità montane, and so on.

Table 2.4. Comparison of Countries

Item	United States	United Kingdom	France	Germany	Italy	Japan
Style	Federal	Singular nation	Singular nation	Federal	Singular nation	Singular nation
Tier of local government unit	State + two tiers (or one tier)] County Municipality	England parallel; two tiers single tier Two tiers County – district (single tier) Unitary (Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland) single tier; autonomous government	Three tiers Region Department Commune	Land + two tiers (parallel; Kreis-freie Stadt) Kreis Gemeinde (parallel; Kreis-freie Stadt)	Three tiers Regime Provincial Commune	Two tiers Prefecture Municipality
Main affairs of basic local government	education, police, health, welfare, road, fire-fighting, water and sewerage, transport	(single tier) local plan, regulation of development, housing, environment sanitation, social welfare	elementary school, kindergarten, childcare centre, city planning, road, waste collection, cleaning	school house (building/maintenance), sewage, waste disposal, livelihood assistance	social welfare, health, public works, vocational education	social welfare, health, operation of elementary/junior high school, road, fire-fighting
Main MIC systems	Special district School district	Combined authority Joint board	SIVU Métropole	Ober Regionale-gemeindeverland Amt/Samt Gemeinde	Unione di comuni Comunità montane	Cooperation association

Source: Created by author.

Types of inter-municipal cooperation

Administrative demands are highly diverse, therefore local governments must be highly specialised and integrated into a broader region. In addition, the number of sectors, whose concerns are believed to be more efficiently and rationally administered under mutual and joint cooperative agreements between or amongst local governments rather than by individual local governments, is increasing. In this context, the IMC system is adopted. The local governments which co-found an IMC will be called affiliated entities hereinafter.

Altogether, there are six types of these systems of wide-area methods, and they can be broadly categorised according to whether they have corporate legal status. The corporate legal status type is classified into two types: PAAs and wide-area unions. Both types are referred to as unions, and they are designated as special local public entities under the LAL. The non-corporate legal status type is classified into contract type and other type. The contract type is further classified into three categories: delegation of duties, agreement, and substitution (Table 2.5).

Table 2.5. Types of Inter-Municipal Cooperation

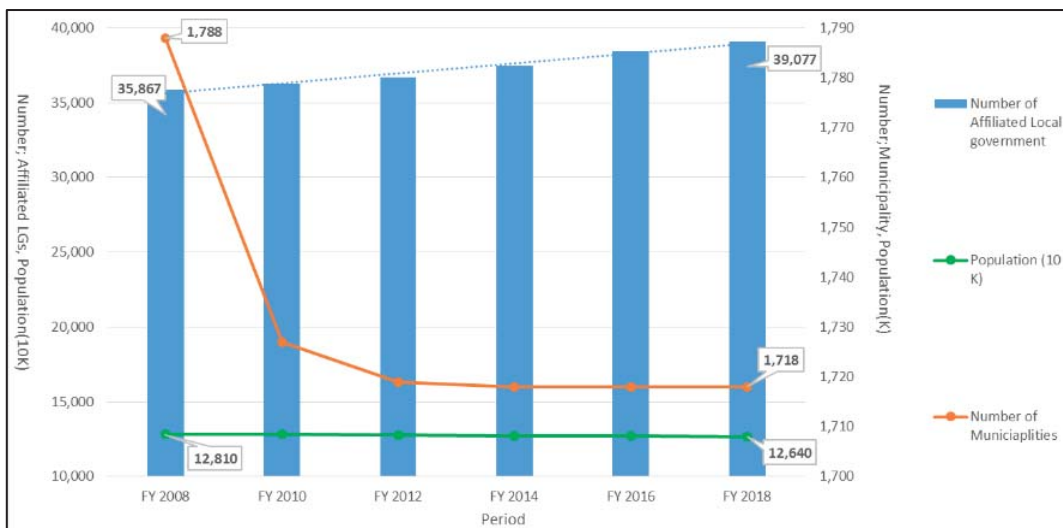
Method		Contents of system	
Corporate legal status type	Partial affairs association	The association is established amongst prefectures, municipalities, or special wards for the purpose of jointly administering a part of their functions. It has a corporate legal status. It is stipulated as a type of union by the Local Autonomy Law (See Chap. I, IV3(2)).	
	Wide-area union	The association is established amongst prefectures, municipalities, or special wards for the purpose of jointly administering a part of their functions. It has a corporate legal status. It is stipulated as a type of union by the Local Autonomy Law (See Chap. I, IV3(2)).	
Non-Corporate legal status type	Contract Type	Delegation of duties	A local government may delegate a portion of its affairs to other entities. And it may force the delegated entity (trustee) to administer and execute affairs in that portion pursuant to its regulations.
		Agreement	This method has a one-for-one style and can ensure flexibility in the contents of cooperation. Based on this legal framework, the affiliated entities take measures for sharing of roles.
		Substitution	A local government may act as an agent for another one.
	Other Type	Council	An ordinary local public entity may establish a council through which it can consult with other entities to establish regulations and administer a portion of the affairs jointly pursuant to such regulations.
		Shared administrative organisation	An ordinary local public entity may consult with other entities to establish regulations and jointly set up committees, affiliated organisations, and chief executive and may jointly provide members supplementary personnel and expert members for such committees and organisations pursuant to such regulations.
		Dispatch of personnel	A chief executive, committees, and the members of a local public entity may request other local public entities to send one or more of its personnel to administer and execute affairs.

Source: Created by author.

Current Situation

The current legal framework for wide-area government was presented in the LAL in the 1950s. Since then, local governments have actively practiced wide-area administrative methods. IMC is established through the partnership of several local governments. The total number of municipalities has been decreasing since 2008⁹ alongside national population. Under this situation, the number of the affiliated entities has been growing. Figure 2.8 shows that more municipalities have begun to make use of IMC in depopulated societies, where there is a shortfall in users of public services. Local governments are required to strategically invest in and maintain their public facilities in light of the reduced number of users.

Figure 2.8. Change in Number of Affiliated Entities of IMC



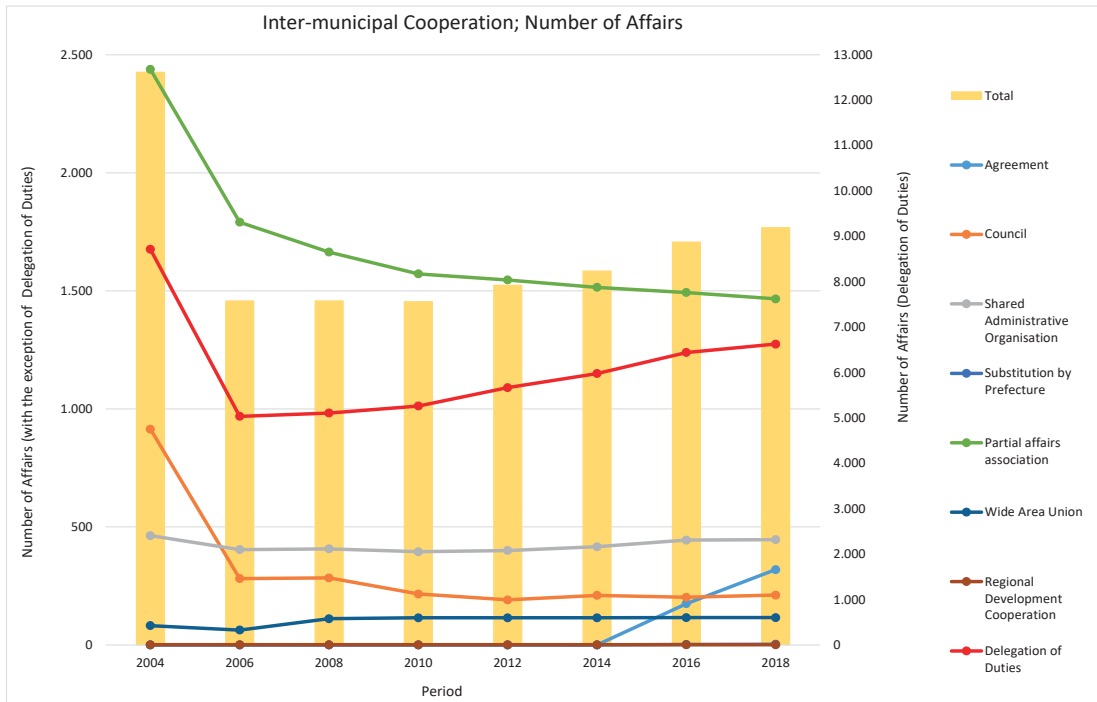
IMC = inter-municipal cooperation.
Source: Created by author.

Next, we focus on the breakdown of IMC. The total number of IMC affairs remained essentially the same between 2006 and 2010, but significantly increased in 2012. This increase can be attributed to the increase in the number of delegation of duties type (duties such as issuing residency cards and matters regarding medical care for the elderly) by many administrations. The number of PAAs steadily decreased, mostly because of the Great Heisei Consolidation. This trend reflects the disbanding of related associations that accompanied a reduced need to merge as the municipalities consolidated. The numbers of councils and shared administrative organisations remained mostly stable and the

⁹ The Heisei Consolidation movement began in 1999 and since 2004 the number began to decrease remarkably.

number of regional unions, established in 1996, gradually increased. These suggest that the demand for a broad-based public service is significant for consumptive investment such as issuing residency cards and matters regarding medical care (Figure 2.9).

Figure 2.9. Change in Number of Affairs of IMC



IMC = inter-municipal cooperation.
Source: Created by author.

In low density areas, the demand for public services has shifted to a new framework; from building infrastructure to more meticulous public services such as issuing residence certificates and approvals for nursing care. Generally, the applicable IMC types such as the delegation of duties and agreement have become popular.

2.4. Principal Inter-Municipal Cooperation

In this section, we provide an overview of the principal IMC under the corporate legal status type and non-corporate legal status type. The representative type for the former is a PAA and that of the latter is delegation of duty.

2.4.1. Partial Affairs Associations

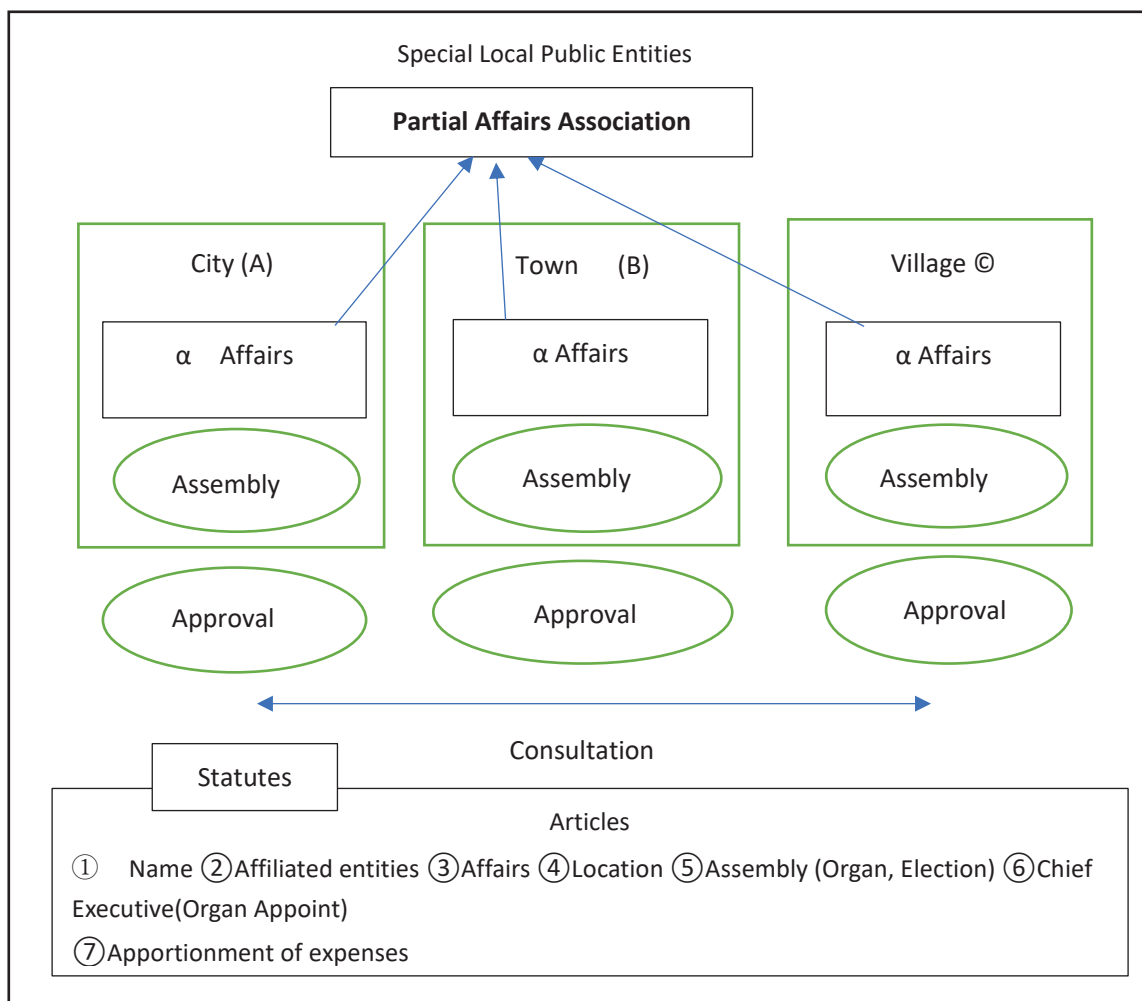
Outline

This section focuses on the structure, status, and agenda of PAAs. PAAs are not regulated to the extent that they are in the jurisdiction of the local governments that are affiliated. When several local governments agree to jointly administer some of their services or other matters and establish a PAA, they simply give all responsibility for those matters to the PAA.

The need for PAAs

As shown in Figure 2.5, some local public matters are difficult for individual governments to manage, particularly those that are costly or require significant or specialised staff. For those matters, PAAs can effectively support and supplement local government efforts. An image of the PAA structure is shown in Figure 2.10.

Figure 2.10. The Structure of a Partial Affairs Association



Source: Created by author.

If a city (A), a town (B), and a village (C) have common concerns (α affairs in Figure 2.10) and they all agree that establishing a PAA would be a reasonable approach to managing those concerns, they can create a PAA and transfer the α affairs to it for administration by following the process stipulated by Article 284 of the LAL. The basic characteristics, processes, and responsibilities of PAAs are stipulated by statute.

Merits of PAAs

The merits of PAAs for the wide-area method are summarised in Table 2.6.

Table 2.6. Merits of Partial Affairs Associations

Points	Remarks
Corporate legal status	PAAs have corporate legal status and they can independently carry out the acts of law and hold properties. Therefore, they can supply public services through the operation of large public facilities, e.g. refuse disposal, fire-fighting, nursing home, school house, water supply, hospital.
Dual representative system	PAAs have their own chief executive organisations, assemblies, and auditors. Through those dual representative systems (presidential system), they can clarify where the responsibilities lie for their management.
Disposal of multiple affairs	PAAs can discharge multiple responsibilities if they define them in their statutes. Moreover, the complex-PAA system was established incrementally in 1974; that the affairs were common to all the affiliated governments is not required for the complex PAA.
Grand-scale budget use	PAAs compile their own budgets. They can make a scale of expenditures through using shares from affiliated entities and local bonds.

PAA = partial affairs association.

Source: Created by author.

First, PAAs have corporate legal status, meaning that they can provide public services through large public facilities and, therefore, cover a wide range of public services. PAAs can manage public services using the Internet and those that require facilities.

Second, PAAs use a dual representative system comprising a chief executive, administrator, and deliberative body (PAA assembly). Moreover, the system is based on the checks and balances principle. This system recognises the delegation of responsibilities and contributes to the transparency and democratic management of the PAA.

Third, PAAs can handle the numerous matters that need to be administered when these

matters have been defined in their articles. Moreover, the complex-PAA system was incrementally established in 1974; it was not necessary that the services were common to all of the affiliated entities. Therefore, it was easier to join a PAA as an affiliate because the PAAs were internally individualised.

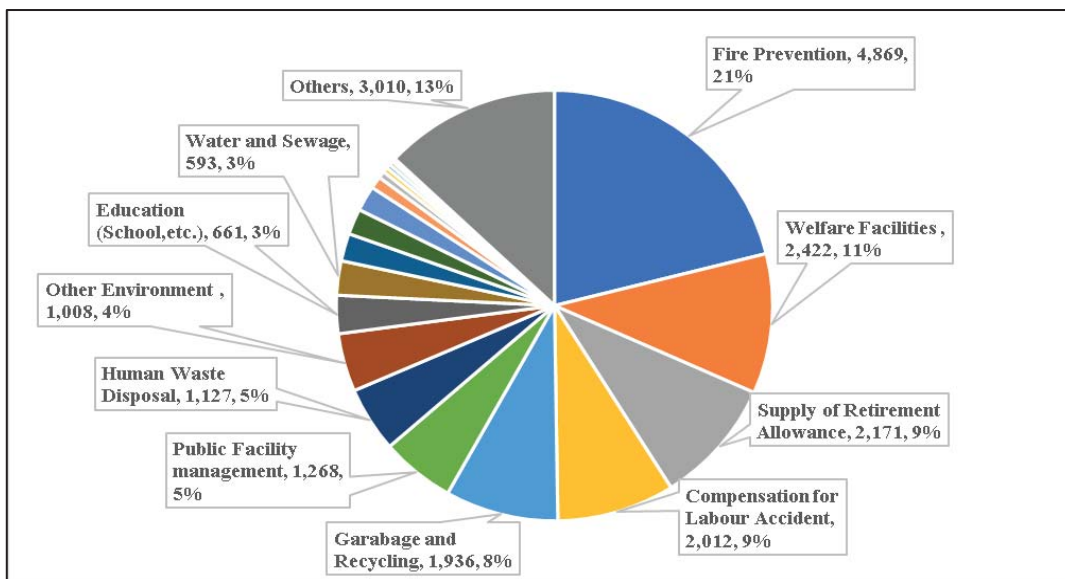
Fourth, PAAs have independent budgets and they can manage high expenditure by selling shares, local bonds, and so on. Taken together, the merits of a PAA can create comprehensive and stable public administrations.

These merits clearly distinguish PAAs from the other types of administration and their superiority has led many local governments to affiliate with PAAs.

Affairs of PAAs

Based on the number of PAAs as at 2018, fire prevention (21%), welfare facilities (11%), and supply of retirement allowances are principal areas (Figure 2.11).

Figure 2.11. Number of Affiliated Entities of Partial Affairs Association (FY2018)



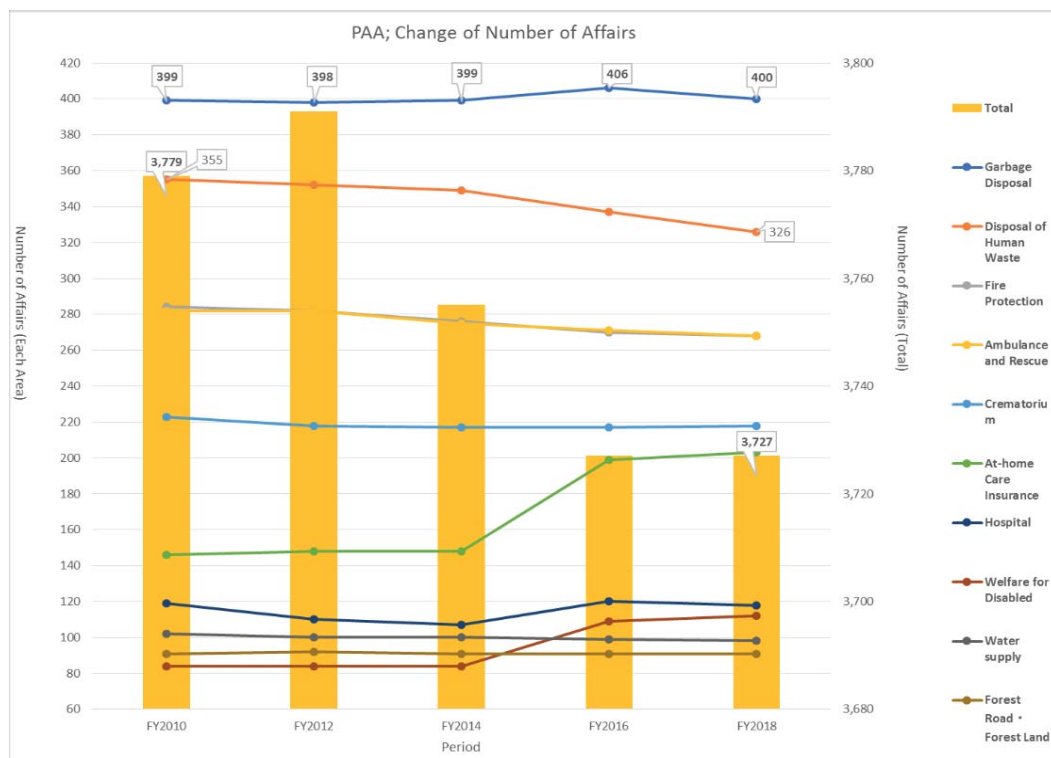
PAA = partial affairs association.
Source: Created by author.

There are two principal PAA field types. The first type is the operation of large public facilities like fire prevention, welfare facilities, and garbage disposal and recycling. This type involves providing public services through the use of public facilities. The second type is ‘not so frequent but highly probable needs’ like retirement allowances, compensation for labour accidents, and such. A PAA has corporate legal status as shown in Figure 2.10 and it can independently make contracts, hold assets of its own, and manage large budgets.

PAA trends

The number of PAAs has steadily decreased since 2014, mostly because of the Great Heisei Consolidation. When the affiliates merged, there was no need, in some cases, to retain the related PAAs. The total consolidation of public entities cancels the need for partial association. However, certain principal affairs such as garbage disposal, human waste disposal, fire prevention, crematorium, etc. are retained. This shows that the corporate legal status type is well-suited for these public services. Typical PAA types have been garbage disposal and fire prevention, but nowadays the growth of social welfare stands out as indicated by the increase in at-home care insurance and welfare for the disabled (Figure 2.12).

Figure 2.12. Change in Number of Affairs

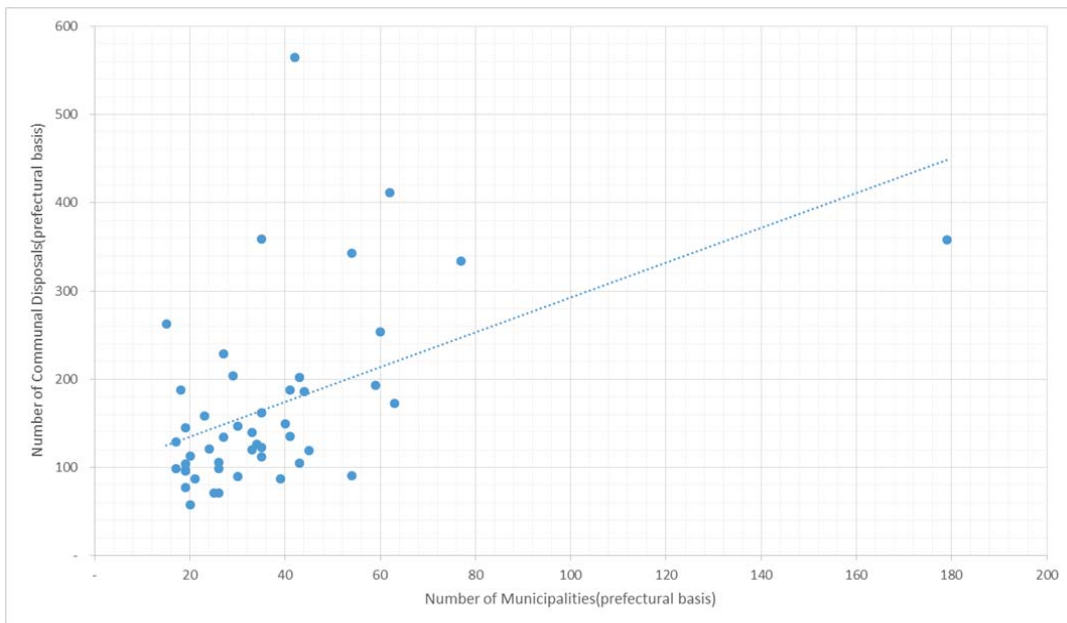


PAA = partial affairs association.

Source: Created by author.

Making use of wide-area administrative methods is discretionary in principle. Whether the method is adopted by the affiliates depends on the agreement between them. Then, where are wide-area administrative methods aggressively used? Are many methods adopted in a region where a lot of municipalities are located? Figure 2.13 shows the relationship between the number of municipalities per prefecture to the number of communal disposals per prefecture.

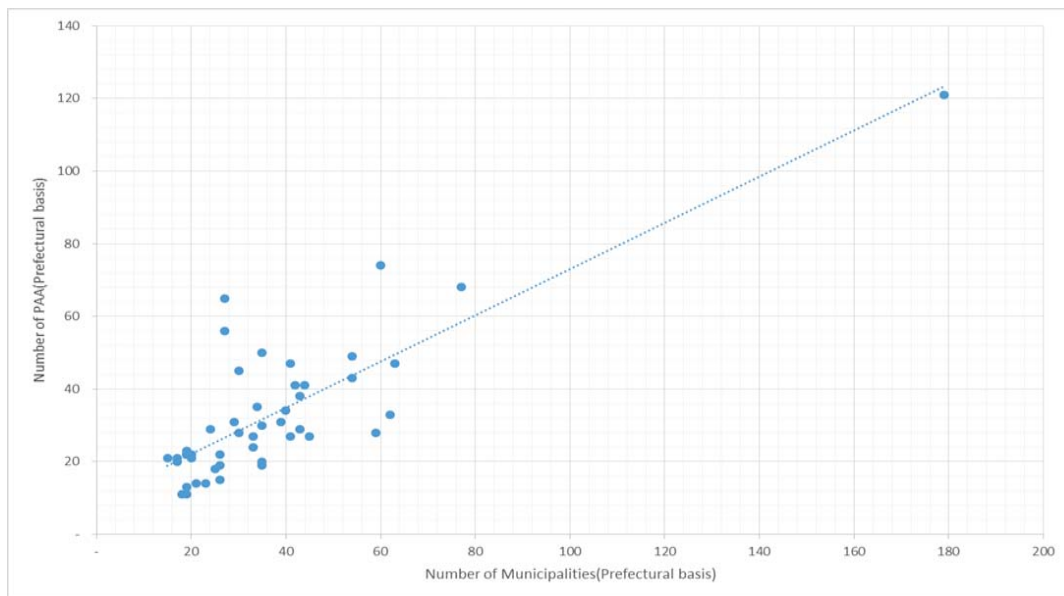
Figure 2.13. Relationship Between the Number of Municipalities and that of Inter-Municipal Cooperation by Prefecture (r = .489)



Source: Created by the author using Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (2014), Survey of the System of Joint Administration in 2010–2018.

The correlation is weak ($r = .489$), suggesting that regions with many municipalities do not always set up many communal disposals. The alternative causes, such as the development and motivations of local governments, may influence the observed differences amongst the prefectures. However, each local government should explore options for effective utilization of wide-area administrative methods. Figure 2.14 shows the relationship between the number of municipalities per prefecture and the number of PAAs per prefecture.

Figure 2.14. Relationship Between the Number of Municipalities per Prefecture and the Number of Partial Affairs Associations per Prefecture ($r = .821$)



Source: Created by the author using Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (2014), Survey of the System of Joint Administration in 2010–2018.

The correlation is quite strong ($r = .821$), suggesting that PAAs have become positively established in regions with many municipalities and are a principal wide-area administrative method.

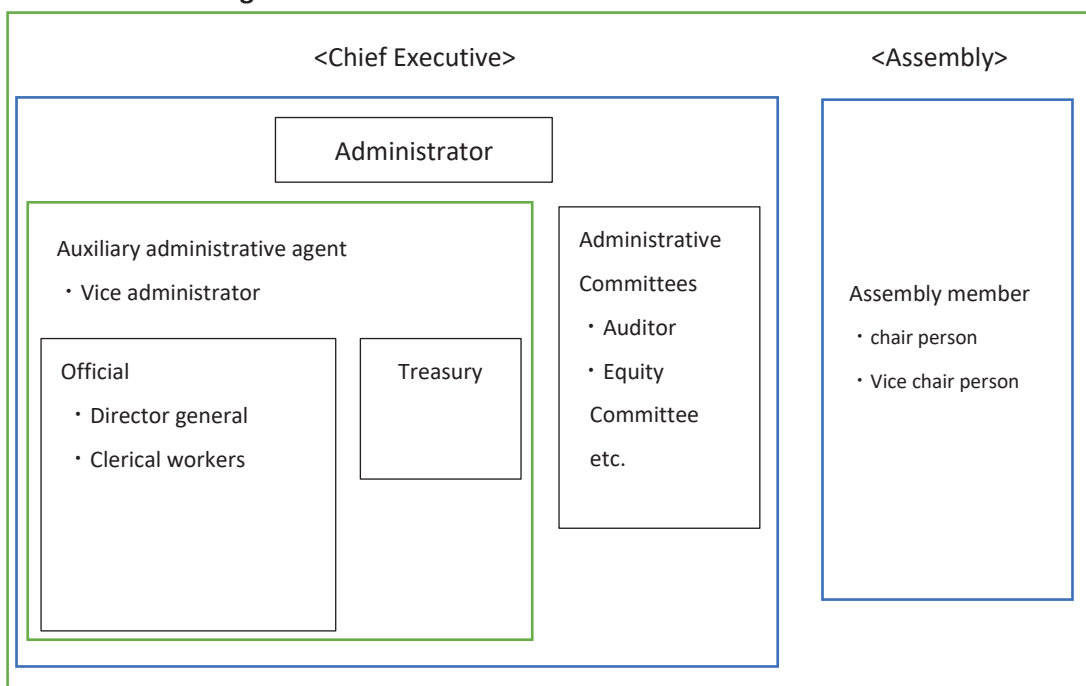
Organisation

The creation process of a PAA is stipulated in Article 284 of the LAL. First, de facto consultations amongst the potential affiliates are held, where they consider statutes such as organisational design. These include the structure of the chief executive officer of the PAA, the assembly members, methods of election, matters and services to be administered by the PAA, the burden of charges to the affiliates, and so on. Second, each mayor (chief executive officer) of the potential affiliates submits a bill of incorporation of the PAA and a bill of the draft of the statute. Third, after each individual assembly has approved the bills, the chief executive officers of the potential affiliates conduct an official consultation. If all the potential affiliates are municipalities, the chief executive officers submit the application to organise the PAA to the governor (of the prefecture). Otherwise, they submit the application to the minister of IMC .

Structure of a PAA

A PAA is established through consultation amongst the affiliates (Article 284, LAL). This consultation is a joint legal act. A PAA is a special local administration and the LAL is applied accordingly (Article 292, LAL). The structure of a PAA is pursuant to the ordinary local government, and, like one, is planned as a dual representative system. Figure 2.15 shows the structure of a PAA. The head of a PAA is called the administrator. The administrator has the status and functions similar to a governor or mayor of an ordinary local government pursuant to the LAL. The administrator has administrative responsibilities that include submitting bills to the assembly. The PAA assembly makes resolutions, submits bills, investigate duties, and so on. A PAA's chief executive officer and assembly are expected to manage the services and other matters through a system of checks and balances as shown in Figure 2.15.

Figure 2.15. Structure of Partial Affairs Associations



Source: Created by the author.

PAA statutes

The LAL is *mutatis mutandis* applied to a PAA as the basic management rule, but some items are exclusively set down by a PAA's statute. Statutes provide the fundamental structure and rules that govern PAAs. When the affiliates agree to establish a PAA they automatically agree on the contents of the PAA statute. The consultation has the capacity

to enact law and statutes, which are the subsisting basis of the PAA, and are binding on the affiliates. Therefore, the bylaws and rules enacted by the PAA should be compatible with its statutes. Figure 2.16 below shows the seven articles that guide PAA creation (Article 287, LAL).

Figure 2.16. Required Items of Partial Affairs Associations

Items of Statutes
① Name ②Affiliates ③Affairs ④Place of Office ⑤Assembly (Composition, Election) ⑥Chief Executive Officers (Composition, Appointment) ⑦Apportionment of expenses

Source: Created by author.

If any one of the above is missing, the statute is invalid, and establishment of a PAA will not be approved by a minister or governor.

The reasons for requiring these items are as follows:

Name

There is no specific legal regulation regarding the name of a PAA. However, a PAA is expected to pay attention to the following points.

1. The name should include the PAA.
2. The name should include the types of matters that the association administers, such as fire defence or public affairs association.
3. The name can include the name of the gun (county) if the affiliates are all members of that county to clarify the PAA’s identity.

Affiliates

Each affiliate’s name should be stated in the statutes. If all of the affiliates are municipalities of a prefecture, a description, such as ‘all the municipalities of X prefecture’ is considered acceptable. However, if the number of affiliates is up to 10 (e.g. all of the municipalities in a county), listing each one would be appropriate.

Affairs (services and other matters)

The function of a PAA is valid within the scope of the named services and matters of communal disposal, and the affiliates forfeit responsibility for that function at the same time the PAA assumes it. For example, if Town X establishes a PAA regarding fire defence with Village Y, X and Y lose the individual authority to enact fire prevention bylaws. The matters of communal disposal should be written in the statutes as specifically as possible.

Place of office

Place of office means the location of the main office. The block number should be specified in the statutes. A PAA must observe Article 4(2) of the LAL. In establishing or moving the office location in accord with the preceding paragraph, consideration must be given to traffic conditions, geographic proximity to other public offices, and so on to maximise the convenience of the residents.

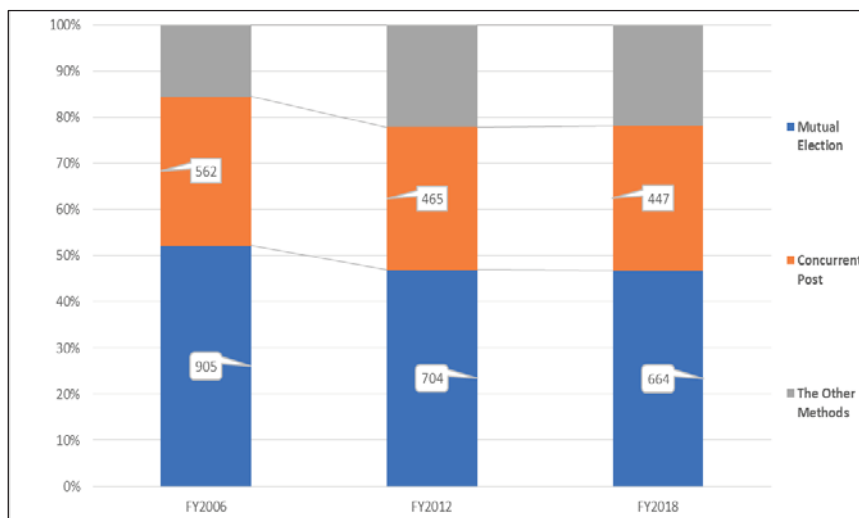
Assembly

Assembly seats, terms, chairpersons, vice-chairpersons, methods of election, and panels of candidates should be stipulated in the statutes. The method of electing PAA assembly members is specifically described in the statutes. The affiliates must use direct suffrage, which is very different from the rule in ordinary local governments. Statutes set forth the number of assembly members, the parent population of the elected PAA assembly, and election methods.

Chief executive officers

The role of the chief executive officer and the method of appointment of the administrator are determined by the statutes (Article 287, LAL). There were 1,379 (91.9%) administrators elected from amongst governors or mayors. Only 21 were elected from amongst members of the PAAs' assemblies. Most PAA administrators are selected from amongst the heads of the affiliates. The management of a PAA influences the affiliates' policies. Therefore, selecting the head is central to ensuring the uniformity of policies. Figure 2.17 shows the distribution of methods of appointment.

Figure 2.17. Partial Affairs Associations' Administrator: Change of Election Methods



Source: Created by the author.

In 2018, 47% (664) of entities used mutual elections and about 32% (447) used the concurrent post method. The concurrent post method means a certain mayor regularly accedes to the administrator of the PAA by common consent amongst the affiliates. The use of the concurrent post method is increasing; as direct election of the administrator of the PAA is not required by the Constitution and national law.

Apportionment of expenses

The apportionment of PAA expenses is defined by the PAA statutes. The general standard is provided by the IMC, as follows.

General Standard:

The PAA meets the expenditure with property revenues, charges and fees. When it has deficits, it makes up the difference with burden charge amongst the affiliated entities.

There are several rules regarding expenses. The typical ones are:

a) Fully flexible

This focuses on the flexibility of social and economic change. It does not use a basis, such as population, and a sample style is:

‘The administrator decides the next fiscal year’s budget charge for each affiliate through the approval of the PAA assembly.’ This secures full flexibility, but the affiliates renegotiate the financial burdens every year. Moreover, from the outside, it is difficult to understand the financial relationships between the PAA and each of its affiliates.

b) Variability oriented

This focuses on the variability of the expense burden based on the idea that the apportionment responds if administrative demands on affiliates increase.

The following calculation bases of the apportionments are typical.

(e.g.) per population
per population of the specific region
per number of students
per quantity of water supply

c) Stability oriented

This focuses on the stability of the expense burden. If this style is adopted, the burden amount would not change. It makes it easy for the affiliates to know what to expect to pay to the PAA each year.

The following calculation bases of the apportionment are typical.

(e.g.) per capita
fixed share
per number of houses

In many cases, several bases are adopted and mixed in a calculated formula that is stated in the PAA statute.

Issues with PAAs

The opinion of affiliates

PAAs have both merits and demerits. What do the affiliates think about the current wide-area government? The results of a 2012 survey are shown in Table 2.7.

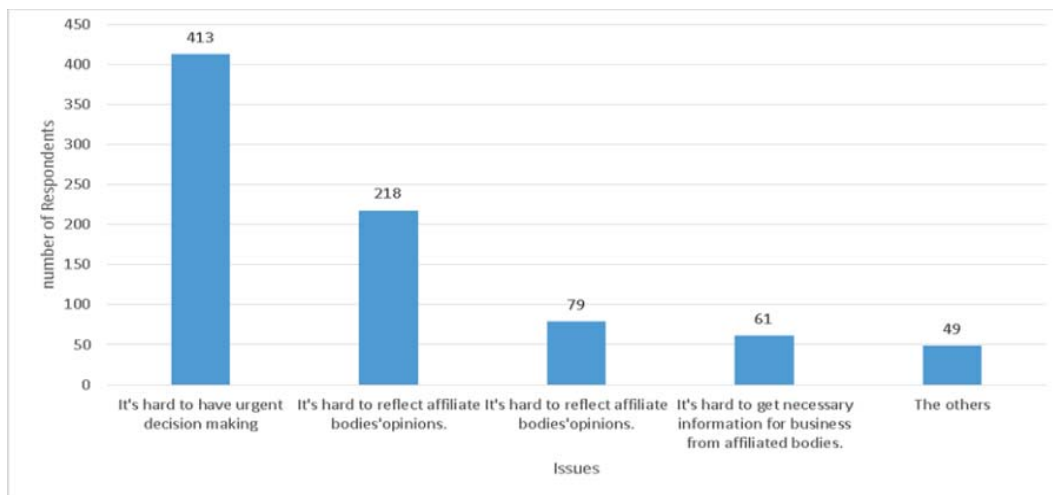
Table 2.7. Issues of Wide-area Government (as of 31 December 2012)

Method of Wide-area administration	Municipalities which operate wide-area administration (respondent)	Answer: The issues exist (Multiple answers allowed)												Answer: The issues do not exist	
		Issues of wide-area administration													
		Total		It's hard to have urgent decision making		It's hard to reflect affiliate bodies opinions.		Where responsibilities lie is not clarified.		It's hard to get necessary information for business from affiliated bodies		The others			
Number of answers	Share(%)	Number of answers	Share(%)	Number of answers	Share(%)	Number of answers	Share(%)	Number of answers	Share(%)	Number of answers	Share(%)	Number of answers	Share(%)	Number of answers	Share(%)
Partial affairs association	1,623	526	32.4	413	78.5	218	41.4	79	15.0	61	11.6	49	9.3	1,097	67.6
Wide-area union	1,578	412	26.1	271	65.8	176	42.7	102	24.8	41	10.0	43	10.4	1,166	73.9
Council	664	174	26.2	149	85.6	61	35.1	32	18.4	14	8.0	15	8.6	490	73.8
Joint establishment of organs and such	706	109	15.4	74	67.9	28	25.7	21	19.3	14	12.8	16	14.7	599	86.984.6
Delegation of duties	1,106	145	13.1	69	47.6	56	38.6	22	15.2	27	18.6	24	16.6	961	86.9

Source: Created by the author using MIC Survey of the System of Transactions of Municipalities (2012).

A significantly high number of respondents (32.4%) agree that there are issues with PAA methods. This is much higher than others and suggests PAAs have been facing more than a few problems. Top of these problems are that ‘It is hard to have urgent decision-making’ and ‘It is hard to reflect affiliate bodies’ opinions’. (Figure 2.18).

Figure 2.18. Types of Problems with Partial Affairs Associations



Source: Created by the author using MIC Survey (2012).

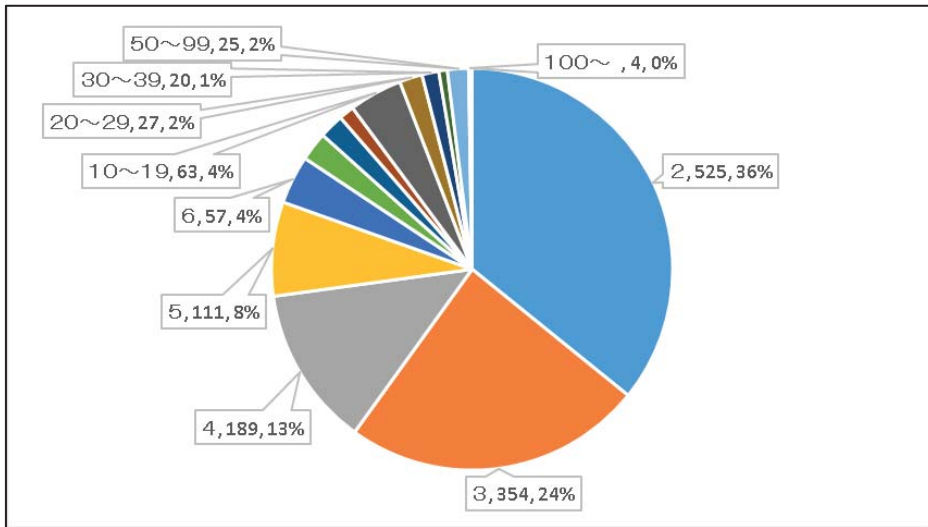
Other major sources of discontent with PAAs concern ‘running out of time’ and ‘an imperfect reflection of views of the affiliates’. In many PAAs, the head of the chief executive is appointed from the heads of the affiliates, and decision making is based on consensus amongst the affiliates. Those structures often seem related to these concerns. Compared to the PAA, the council has fewer problems that take a long time to achieve consensus, but find it easy to include affiliates’ in the decision-making process.

Overall, the affiliates want faster decision making and adequate consideration of their opinions, which leads them to taking simpler and more flexible administrative approaches.

Simplification of the system

Another problem for PAAs is the need to simplify the system. The distribution in the number of affiliates is shown in Figure 2.19. The number varies widely: the largest exceeds 100 and the smallest is just two. About 36% of all PAAs have only two affiliates (mini-PAA).

Figure 2.19. Distribution of Affiliates as of 2018

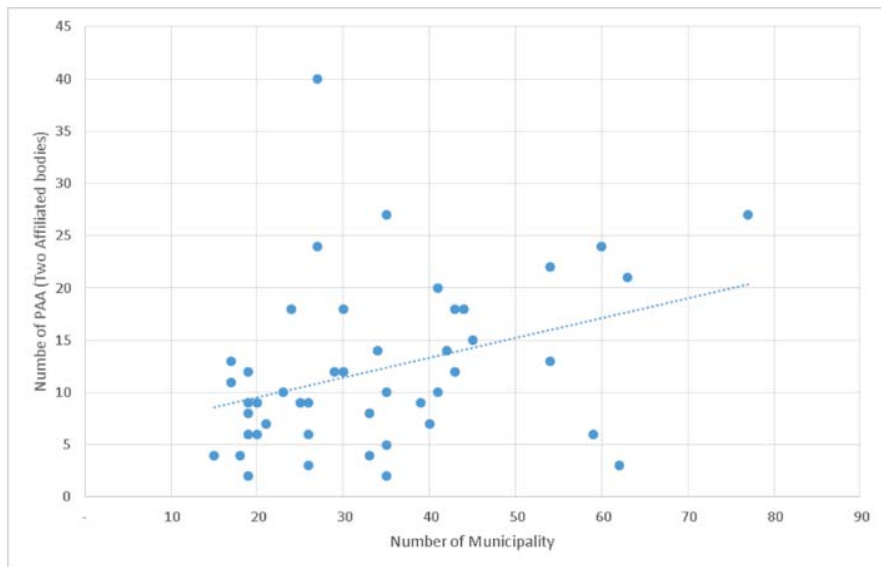


PAA = partial affairs association.

Source: Created by the author using MIC, Survey of the System of Joint Administration in 2018.

The percentage is not low, but it demonstrates overall inefficiency because the purpose is to join efforts. In some cases, the delegation of duties administrative approach would be more appropriate because the need for an independent office and staff might be ambiguous. The relationship between the number of municipalities and the number of mini-PAA's by prefecture ($r=0.35$), as shown in Figure 2.20, is weak.

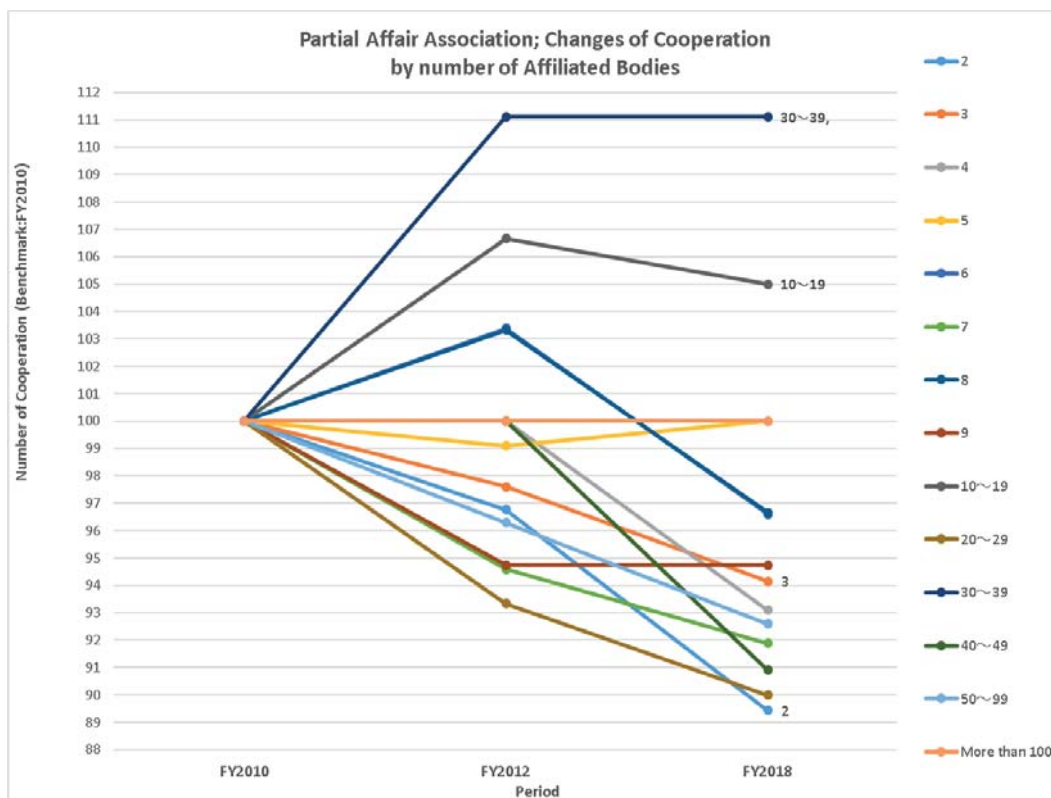
Figure 2.20. Relationship of the Number of Municipalities and the Number of Mini-Partial Affairs Associations by Prefecture



Source: Created by the author using MIC, Survey of the System of Joint Administration in 2014.

This means that the number of mini-PAA is not closely related to the number of municipalities. Currently, mini-PAA are believed to exist because of consecutive municipal consolidations and other historical factors. When these facts are considered, the way forward for wide-area administration is to make a ‘flexible transition’ from a PAA to one of the other methods. In some cases of a mini-PAA, it would be more reasonable to transition to a delegation of duty or to a joint establishment of organ method due to the costs of downsizing. After that, when the situation changes, a further transition may be required. Flexibility is required in today’s local governments. The trend shows that the number of mini-PAA has been decreasing, whilst mid-sized PAA, whose affiliated entities are more than 30 but less than 40, have increased. Increasing in size is one of the characteristics of current PAA (Figure 2.21).

Figure 2.21. Change in Number of Partial Affairs Associations by Number of Affiliated Entities

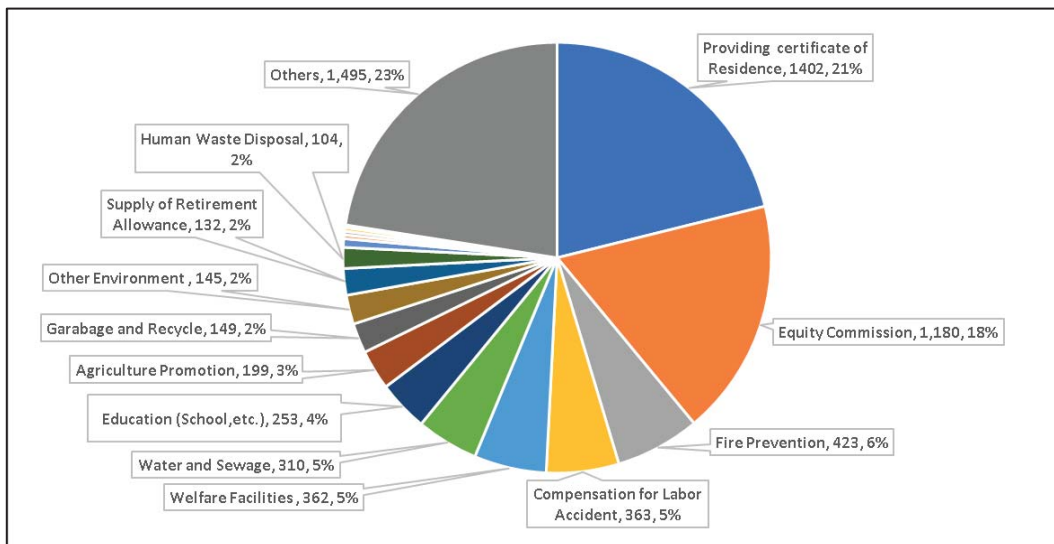


Source: Created by the author using Survey of the System of Joint Administration in 2010–2018.

2.4.2. Delegation of Duty

Delegation of duty is a contract type of IMC. An assignor entity (local government) and an assignee make a consignment contract; the authority concerned by the public affair is relegated to the assignee entity. For example, the bylaw concern of the assignee is applied to the jurisdiction of the assignor. This contract type IMC does not create a legal corporate status, and it makes neither the employments nor the facilities which bring about labour or operation cost amongst affiliates. Consequently, it is flexible and can easily transform to the IMC type a situation demands. The current principal affairs are providing certificate of residence (21%), equity commission (18%), fire prevention (6%), all of which are services which interface with residents' daily lives and require specialists (Figure 2.22).

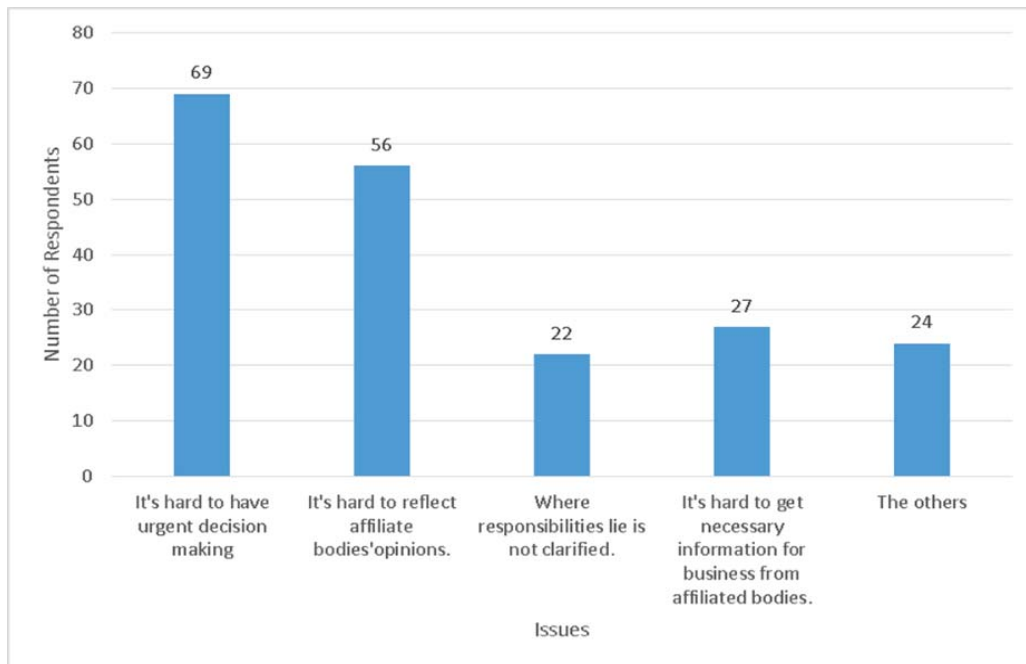
Figure 2.22. Affairs, Delegation of Duty



Source: Created by the author using MIC, Survey of the System of Joint Administration in 2018.

Delegation of duty is popular amongst IMC methods, but it has demerits. In the earlier-mentioned survey, 13.1% reported that problems exist, although this is less than half of the percentage that reported problems with PAAs. The inability to make urgent decisions was again picked as a common problem. This is in addition to 'It is hard to get necessary information for business from affiliates', according to 18.6% of the respondents, which is a remarkably high percentage. Concerning delegation of duties, the insufficiency of necessary information for business seems to be the problem that need to be addressed, but the amount of discontent is much lower here than with other administration methods (Figure 2.23).

Figure 2.23. Types of Problems with the Delegation of Duties



Source: Created by the author using MIC, Survey of the System of Transactions of Municipalities.

2.5. Garbage Disposal and Inter-Municipal Cooperation

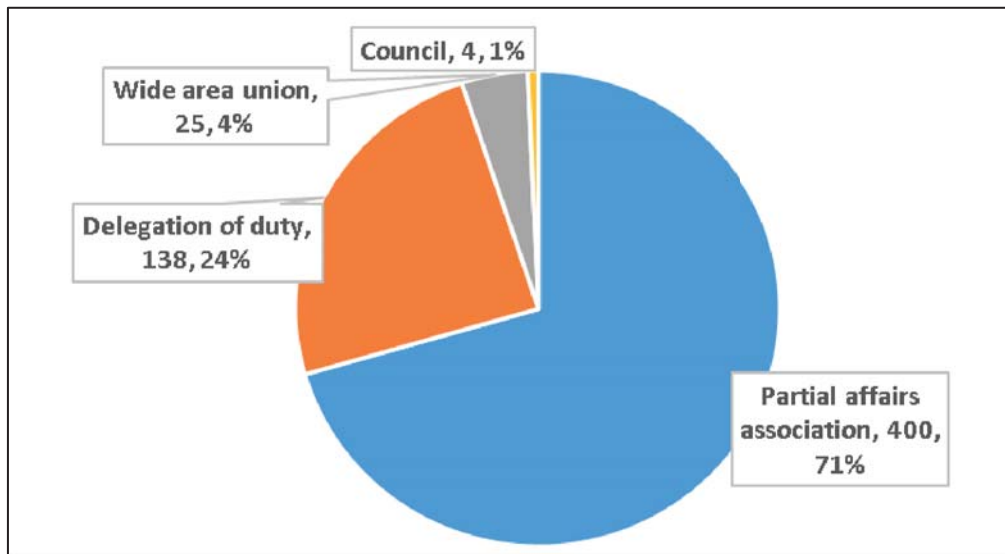
In the preceding sections, we gave an overview of the situation of IMC methods. This section is a survey of garbage disposal and IMC.

2.5.1. Partial Affairs Associations

Situation

PAAs are essential for garbage disposal as they include 71% of IMC entities. This is because garbage disposal services require certain staff and public facilities and corporate legal status type that can independently make contracts with their counterparts (Figure 2.24).

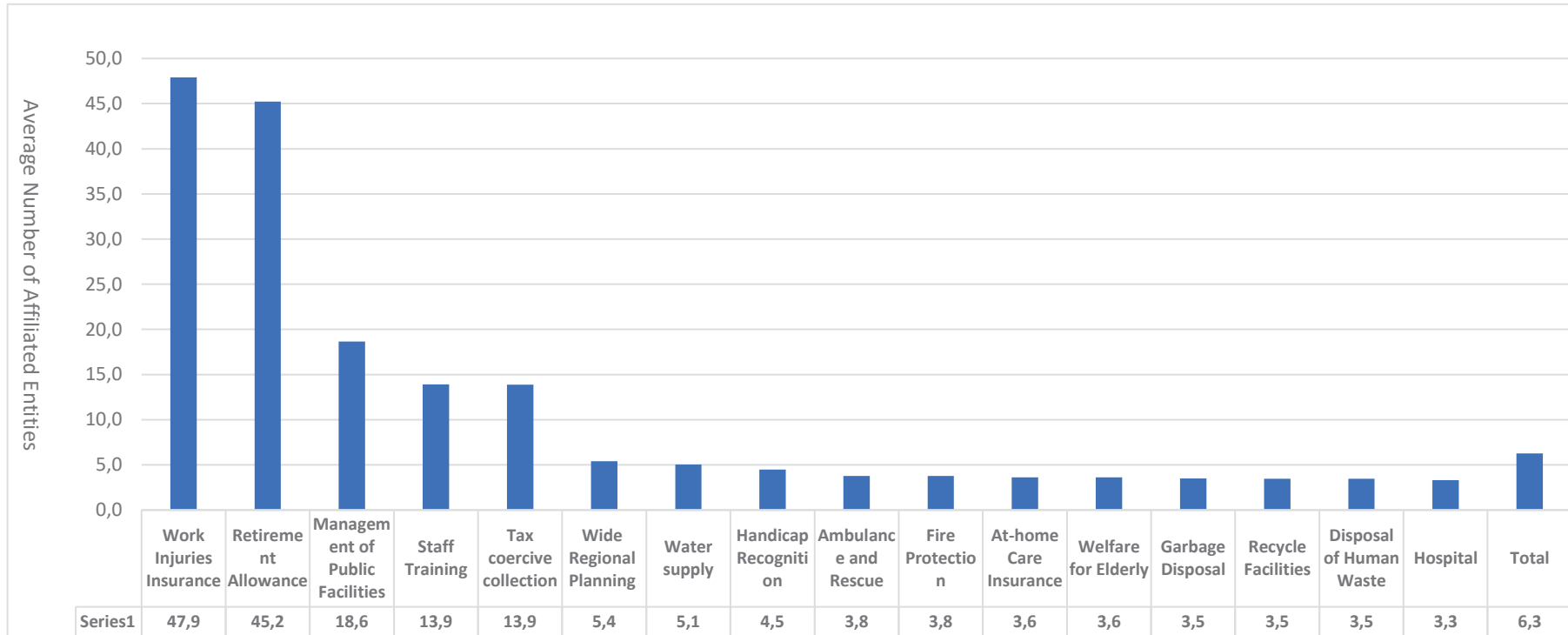
Figure 2.24. Garbage Disposal, Situation of Cooperation (FY2018)



Source: Created by the author using MIC, Survey of the System of Joint Administration in 2018.

The average number of the affiliated entities shows gaps depending on the type of service. The average number of affiliated entities of total PAA is 6.3 and that of garbage disposal PAA is 3.5; it is much fewer than the average (Figure 2.25).

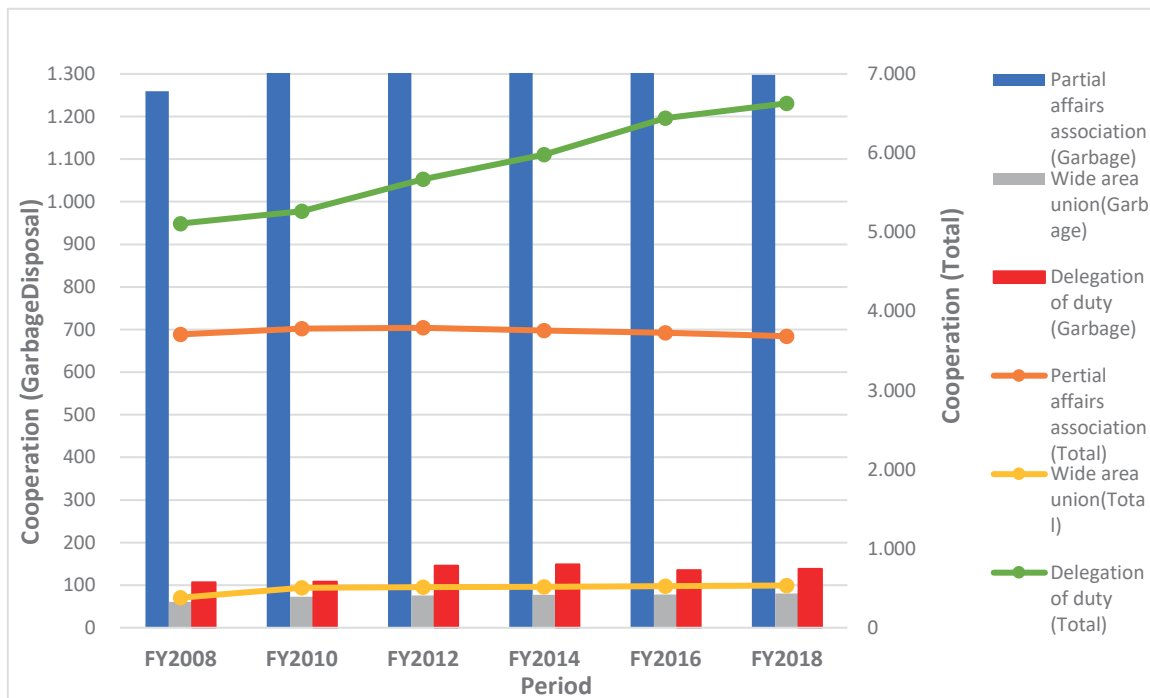
Figure 2.25. Average Number of Affiliated Entities (FY 2018)

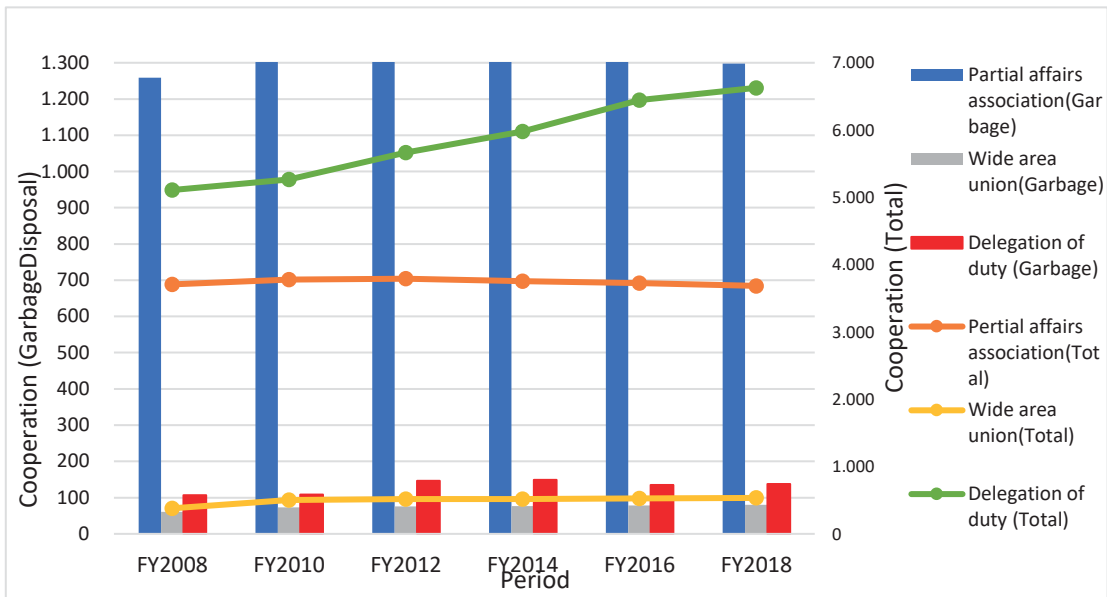


Source: Created by the author.

This suggest that the type of PAA has an impact on the size of the affiliated entities. The type ‘not so frequent but highly probable needs’ is well-suited to mass disposal because it has a large number of the affiliated entities. The other type, ‘operating large size of public facilities’ has generally fewer affiliated entities. It also requires higher cost—investment for the facilities and payment of staffs—therefore the need for smooth consensus-building may cap the number of the affiliated entities. Since 2008, the total number of PAAs has been decreasing, whilst the total number of delegation of duty has been increasing. Under these situations, the number of PAA and the delegation of duty garbage disposal methods remains mostly at the same level (Figure 2.26).

Figure 2.26. Garbage Disposal Cooperation, Change of Number

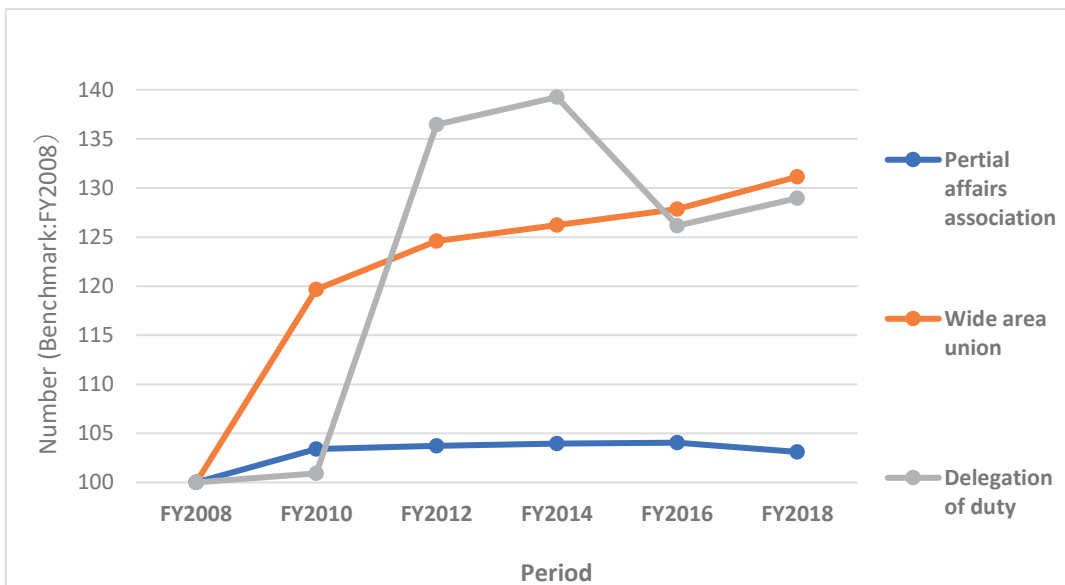




Source: Created by the author.

When we overview the change of the number in recent years with reference to that of the year of 2008, the number of PAA of garbage disposal has been increasing slightly and gradually. On the other hand the number of delegation of duty and wide area union has been fluctuating and increasing. This shows the fact that the new setup and the dissolution of the delegation is carried out more frequently amongst IMC methods.(Figure 2.27).

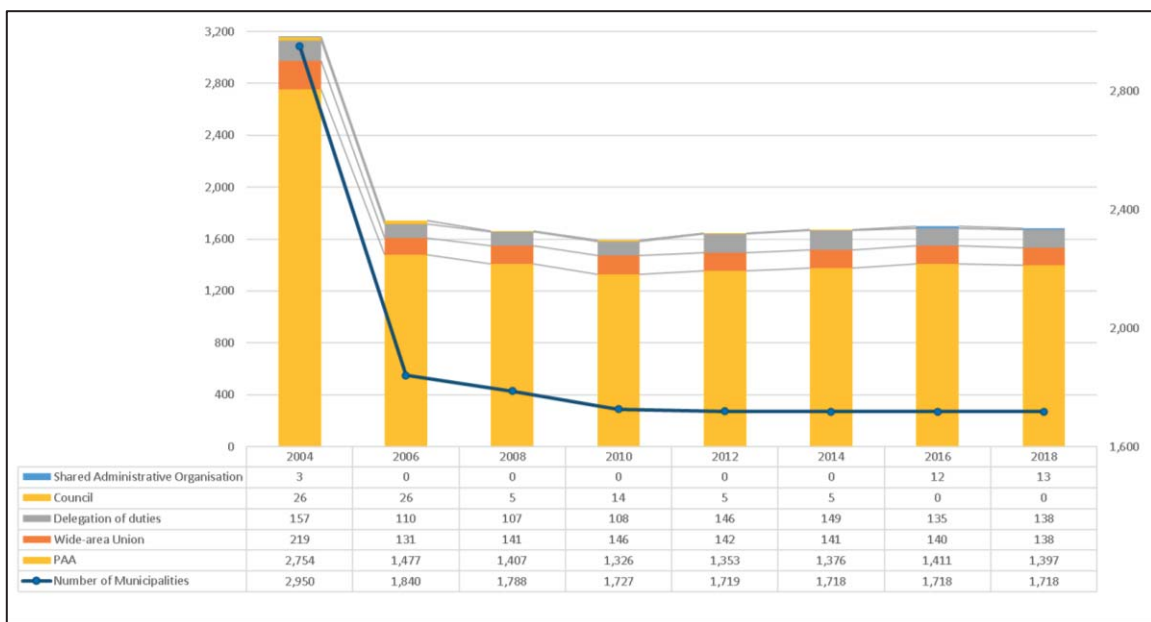
Figure 2.27. Garbage Disposal: Change in Numbers



Source: Created by the author using MIC, Survey of the System of Joint Administration in 2018.

The number of the IMC affiliated entities for garbage disposal shows a decrease in 2006 but a gradual increase since. Meanwhile, the total number of municipalities has significantly decreased because of the Heisei Consolidation. Figure 2.28 shows that, in spite of the progress made by municipal consolidation, the need for broader administration for garbage disposal is still strong. It also shows that IMC growth is still ongoing (Figure 2.28).

Figure 2.28. Garbage Disposal: Change of Number of Affiliated Entities

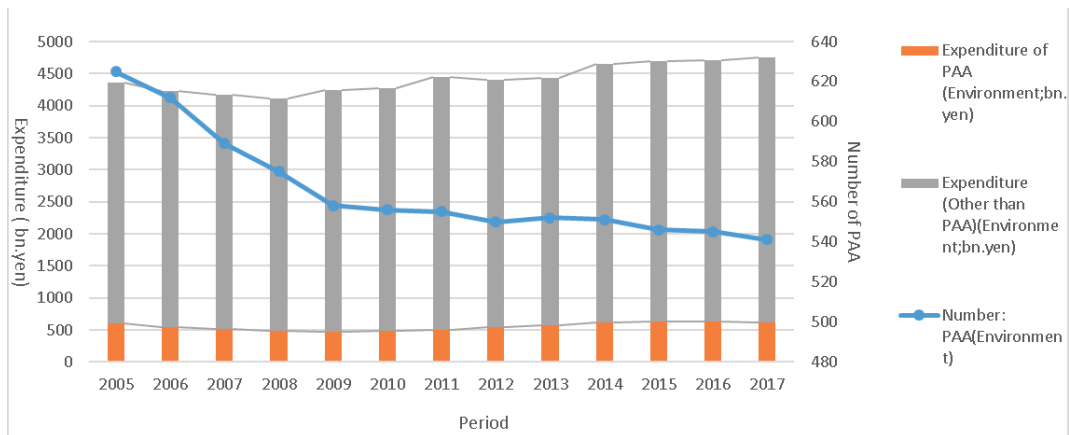


Source: Created by the author using MIC, Survey of the System of Joint Administration in 2004-2018.

Expenditure

Next we shall view the scale of administrative activities through the size of expenditure. In the area of the environment, we shall classify PAAs in charge of environment administration (environment PAA) and others (sole municipality or other types of IMC). The number of environment PAAs steadily decreased, but the total number of PAAs has slightly and gradually increased (Figure 2.29).

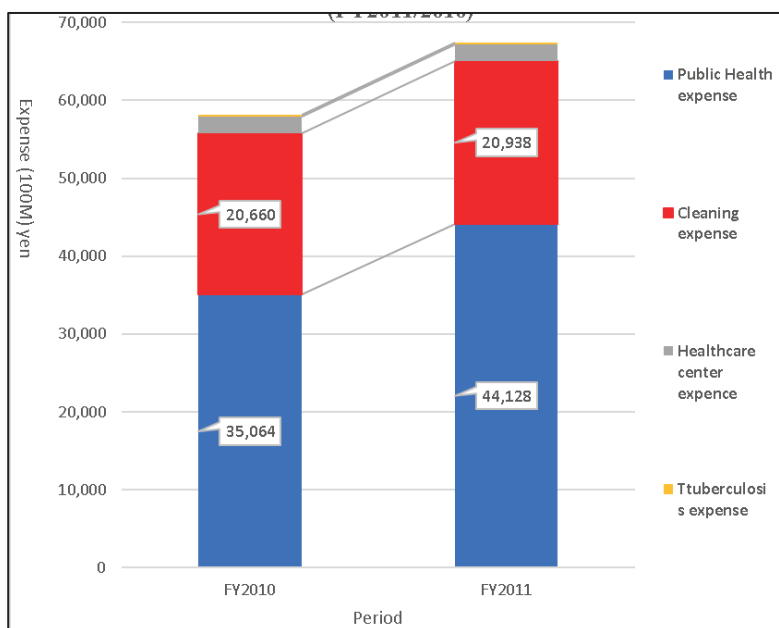
Figure 2.29. Expenditure Size of Environment: Public Affairs Associations and other Municipal Methods



Source: Created by the author using MIC (2019), White Paper on Local Public Finance, 2007–2019.

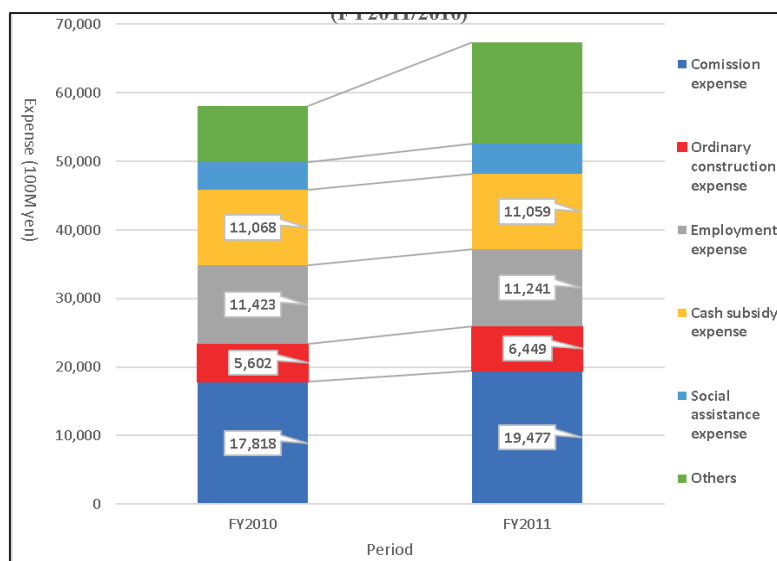
The turning point was the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011. The disaster recovery and the emergency restoration called for more garbage disposal methods. This caused a sharp rise in garbage disposal expenses that are significantly higher than those of 2010, with about 11.4% disposed by PAAs. The commission expenses and ordinary construction expenses also increased in 2011 (Figure 2.30 and Figure 2.31).

Figure 2.30. Change of Environmental Sanitation Expense by Function (FY2011/2010)



Source: Created by the author using MIC (2019), White Paper on Local Public Finance, 2007–2019.

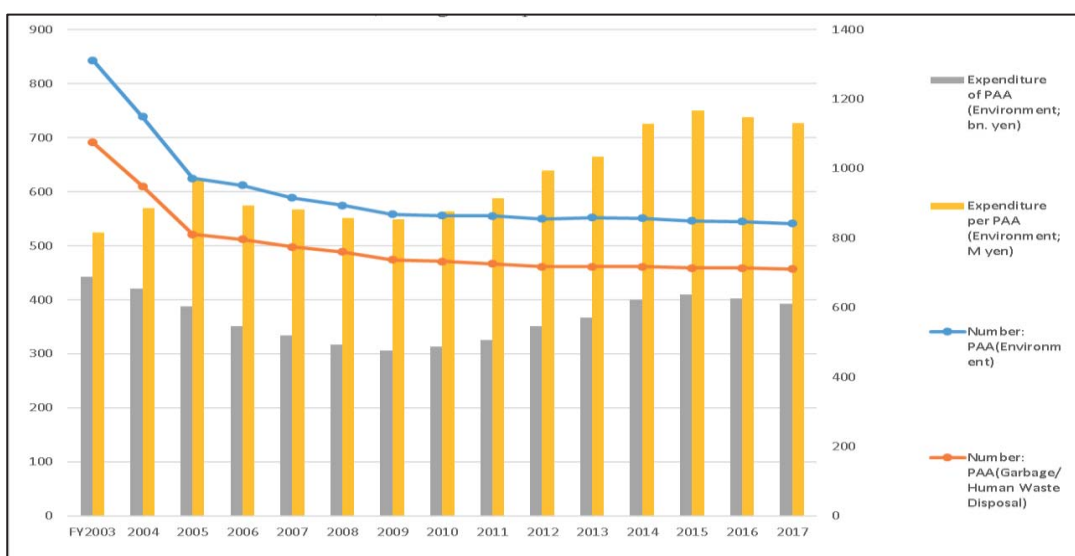
Figure 2.31. Change of Environmental Sanitation Expense by Characteristics (FY2011/2010)



Source: Created by the author using MIC (2019), White Paper on Local Public Finance, 2007–2019.

This is a typical case where a natural and social change has a clear impact on the demand for public service. This disaster showed the important role that PAAs play in the provision of public services. The number of the environment PAAs have decreased, especially those for garbage and human waste disposal PAA. However, the total expenditure of environment PAAs is fluctuating with an upwards trend after 2011. As a result of this, the expenditure per environment PAA draws a similar curve (Figure 2.32).

Figure 2.32. Environment Public Affairs Associations: Change of Expenditure Size



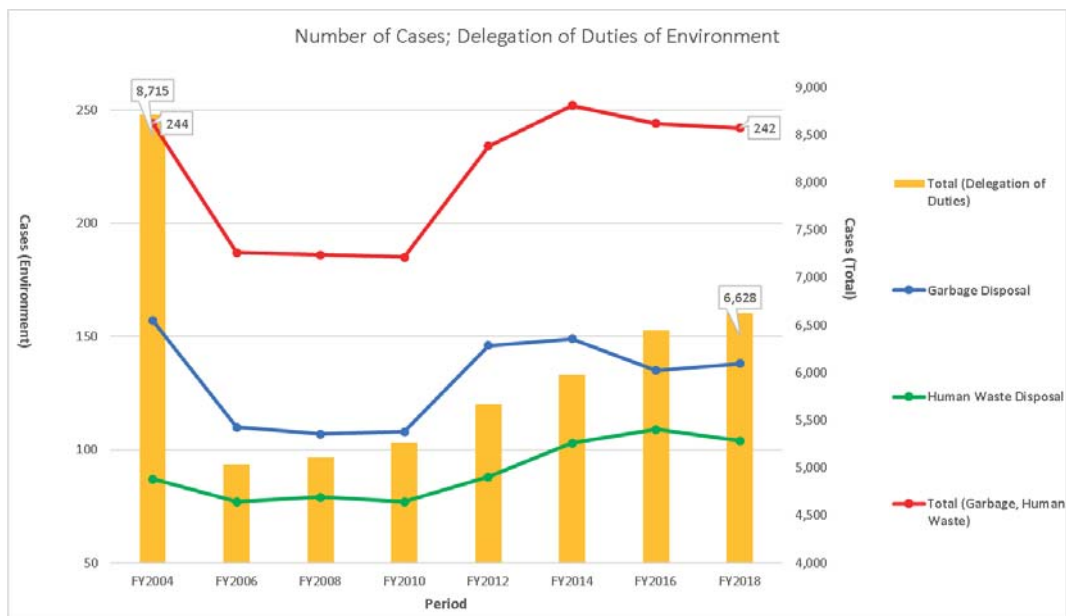
PAA = partial affairs association.

Source: Created by the author using MIC (2019), White Paper on Local Public Finance, 2007–2019.

2.5.2. Delegation of Duty

2011 was a turning point in public service provision: environment expenditure increased significantly because of the disaster recovery and emergency restoration shown in Figure 2.29. By the same token, the number of the affiliated entities, especially PAA and the delegation of duty types, increased as shown in Figure 2.28. Both of them have been principal and preferred IMC methods of most municipalities. Affiliated entities which make much of consensus-building have a preference for PAA, and a central city in the region with the initiative for broader disposal would accept a delegation of duty with neighbouring smaller municipalities (Figure 2.33).

Figure 2.33. Number of Cases, Delegation of Duties of Environment

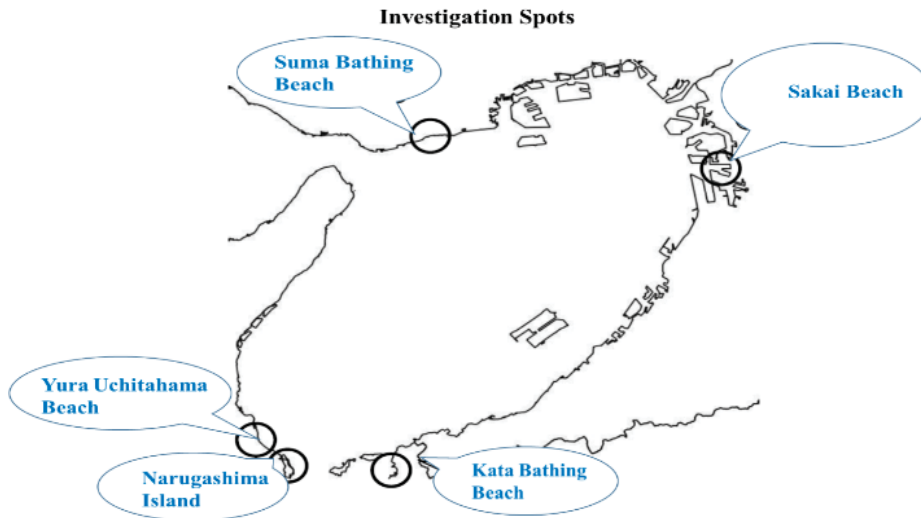


Source: Created by the author using MIC (2019), White Paper on Local Public Finance, 2007–2019.

2.5.3. Wider-area Union

The new wave is the wider-area union (WU). We shall focus on the case of the Kansai WU where plastic garbage is becoming a hot issue. In reaction, the Kansai WU carried a broad area survey of the generation of plastic garbage along Osaka Bay, across each affiliated entity’s boundary as shown in Figure 2.34.

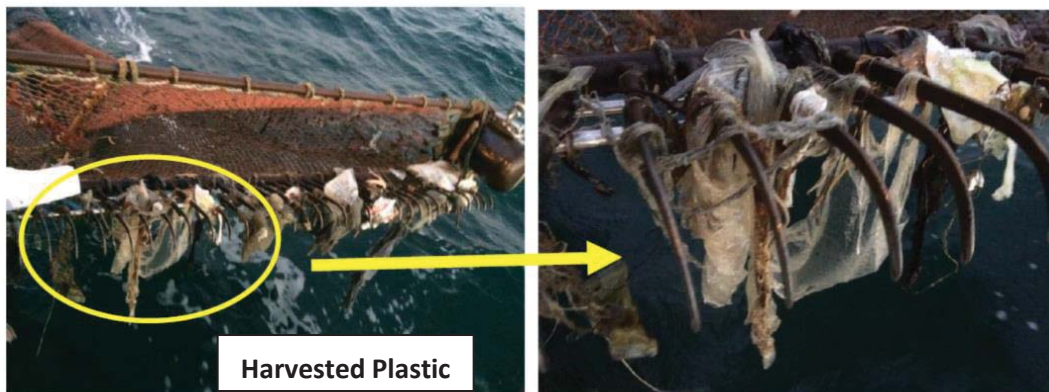
Figure 2.34. Survey at Osaka Bay



Source: Kansai Wider-area Union (2019), Report by the Committee on Counter-measure against Ocean Garbage.

Figures 2.35 shows the results of the Kansai WU fact-finding survey.

Figure 2.35. Plastic Garbage Harvested from Osaka Bay



Source: Kansai Wider-area Union (2019), Report by the Committee on Counter-measures against Ocean Garbage.

General waste disposal is the affair of municipalities. The Kansai WU is implementing the entitlement program. Based on the data and analysis of the surveys, each affiliate can plan regulation (through bylaws) and the other detailed policies. The contemporary society is getting complex and throwing up new administrative demands such as plastic waste. Such situations call for broader area fact-finding functions that can be done through IMC.

2.6. Conclusion

Based on the overview above, the following conclusions are made:

2.6.1. The Principal Changes of Japanese Inter-Municipal Cooperation

The question was ‘what are the principal changes to Japanese IMC? In answer, we came to the conclusion that there are three significant and defining features of Japan’s administrative situation.

1. The large range of public affairs

The local governments are given a large range of authority and responsibilities amongst the total government sectors according to national acts concerned. This is the basic framework and the characteristic of Japanese internal administration.

2. The population decline

The population of Japan has been declining sharply after peaking at 128.08 million in 2008. The government has begun taking inclusive measures to counteract this shrinking society; promoting inter-communal cooperation as one of the central policies. The significance of the IMC system is widely-accepted in the government sector.

3. Need for wide-area public services

The need and the expectation for wide-area public services have been so strong in Japan that both consolidation and IMC measures advanced concurrently.

In light of these, the principal changes to Japanese IMC are:

1. Growing number of affiliated entities

When the need for wide-area public services are still strong and an area becomes depopulated, the reasonable decision is pursuing IMC. This has resulted in a steady increase in the number of the affiliated entities.

2. Progress of diversity

The legal framework is provided in the LAL even as the contemporary society becomes more complex. Various IMC initiatives have been developed, including corporate legal status types and non-corporate legal status types. These are the main changes to the current IMC frame and how to make use of the IMC methods is closely related with each region’s strategy for revitalisation.

2.6.2. The Key to Effective Regional Waste Management

The IMC methods are significant in the environment area. In this area nuisance and contiguous costs are intrinsic and consensus-building amongst the affiliated entities is especially important. Under this situation this area has two characteristics:

1. The diversity of IMC initiatives has become prominent. Where PAAs are well-suited for formulating consensus such as in location of garbage facilities, range of emission standards, scale and timing of investment, they will be more developed. On the other hand, where flexibility of the business is given higher value or a central city has already established leadership in the region, the contract type will be preferred.
2. Much value should be placed on broad fact-finding through IMC before starting the policy-planning process as the Kansai Wide Area Union case shows; for example. This is because precise fact-finding for an upcoming administrative agenda is highly significant.

In conclusion, IMC strategies are closely related to regional revitalisation in depopulated areas and are worth paying attention to. How to effectively make use of an IMC system for the garbage disposal service has been significant but it will gain in importance for the local administration stakeholders and the citizens in the coming decades in Japan.

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