

1. In Brunner's opinion what is or are the problem(s) with governance?

According to Brunner, the problem with governance is the lack of influence of common interest in policy making. Governance is impacted by special interests rather than policy that is determined through participation of a multi-interest, community-based initiative, which is an affront to the tenets of equal rights and dignity for all. To illustrate this problem Brunner uses an example of conflicting natural resource policies towards buffalo and a community-based solution that was ignored by the various government bodies involved.

2. What in Brunner's opinion are the current trends with respect to governance?

With the number of special interest groups proliferating, the number of conflicts over policy increase without any built-in way of resolving them. After the turn of the previous century, the government became more rigid and powerful, and has since resisted the structural change that would allow for what he perceives as necessary fundamental change. Modernization has increased the number of divisions of interest within society. These changes have led to the undermining of "structure of governance adapted to an earlier era." The term "gridlock" describes the inability of the government to make decisions on major issues, as well as "demosclerosis" because its loss of the ability to adapt and "single-issue politics" because of the political consequences of each and every vote. These problems have led to a disconnect—policy makers are no longer connected with the common interest. The number of government agencies has increased exponentially, which, combined with the numbers of public interest groups and the policies and procedures in place to connect the government agencies and bodies together, creates a vast political machine that "does more to frustrate than satisfy those involved." With so many laws and constitutional directories there are overlapping and conflicting policies, as was seen in the case of the buffalo in Yellowstone. All of this results in policies being interpreted and enacted by field officers, meaning "as structures of governance become more complex, democratic accountability through the administrative management paradigm becomes more tenuous...."

3. What in Brunner's opinion should our goal be with respect to governance?

Brunner says that, "clarifying and securing the common interest through policy decisions is the legitimate function and the criterion of governance in a democracy."

4. Do these themes resonate with you? If so, how? If not, why?

Yes, very much so. I, like many other politically like-minded individuals, am very frustrated with our current government in particular—environmental and natural resource policies illustrate the reasons quite well. Although the U.S. was founded with democratic ideals, it is disempowering to see the lack of political will on issues that will upset the powerful business interests. Decisions that *are* made invariably upset some group, leading to lawsuits and appeals and widespread dissatisfaction. The processes suggested in this article to incorporate many interests and reach mutually agreeable solutions seems much more in line with allowing the voice of the people to be heard. Although this process is inherently more democratic, it is rejected by those who want to maintain their power. Changing governance is a necessary task, but imagine the gridlock that would result from attempts to do so.