New project on governance and surprise in social-ecological systems

How does governance contribute to unanticipated challenges or change in social-ecological systems? How can we begin to characterize situations in which governance is having a positive or negative effect on capacities to manage the unforeseen? Two members of ECGG, Steven Alexander and Jeremy Pittman, will tackle these questions in a new project supported by the National Socio-Environmental Synthesis Center (SESYNC) based at the University of Maryland in Annapolis. This project was successful in SESYNC's most recent Graduate Student Pursuit competition.

Working with a team of PhD scholars and established experts from the Universities of Regina, British Columbia, McGill, Vermont, California and Dalhousie, Alexander and Pittman will employ a transdisciplinary, multi-method approach, drawing on Elinor Ostrom's Social-Ecological Systems framework (Ostrom 2007, 2009; McGinnis & Ostrom 2014), to explore the contributions of governance to the emergence of surprise in three case studies: the Mountain Pine Beetle outbreak in British Columbia, the cod-fisheries collapse in the Bay of Fundy, and the drastic eco-hydrological changes occurring in the Lake Champlain Basin. The goals are (1) to synthesize several propositions regarding the role of governance in surprise from numerous sources of social and environmental data and (2) to inform and contribute to actionable strategies for improving governance in the case studies and beyond.

More information on this project can be found on the SESYNC website at the following link: http://www.sesync.org/project/graduate-student-pursuit-rfp/governance-surprise.