

## **Developing the practice of resilience thinking at a country scales using a practice-based research initiative: The Akili Complexity and Integration Initiative**

Tally Palmer, Stefanie Freitag

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The objective of the South African National Research Foundation (NRF) is “to support and promote research through funding, human capacity development and the provision of the necessary research facilities, in order to facilitate the creation of knowledge, innovation and development in all fields of the natural and social sciences, humanities and technology, including indigenous knowledge systems”. Within the NRF, the Applied Research and Innovation (ARI) directorate takes responsibility for ensuring research reaches implementation and is used to the benefit of South Africans. Currently, the most developed applied research programme supports the competitiveness and development of South African industry, and the ARI goal is to extend this focus to applied research supporting public good – including sustainable management in the context of people and natural resources (social-ecological systems). In order to accelerate this goal, ARI has developed the Akili Complexity and Integration initiative that aims to develop the capacity of researchers and communities of practice to acknowledge and take account of the complexity of the contexts within which research is applied. Akili focuses on building both knowledge about complexity and integration and the practice of action research and contextual learning, where research is an integral part of research process, outcome and use. In the first three years the Akili focus will be on the nexus between land water and energy, with the catchment as the primary biophysical and social-ecological frame. The Akili initiative is a national programme focused on mobilising networks and engaging a research and practice community. In this paper Akili it is analysed from the perspective of developing the practice of resilience thinking at a country scale. A reflexive evaluation of Akili project is presented using an intersubjectivity evaluation cycle, drawn from Lincoln and Guba, including criteria such as : prolonged engagement, persistent observation; peer debriefing; negative case analysis; progressive subjectivity and member checks.