Privilege, poverty, and place: competing geographies of the Garden Route Biosphere Reserve, South Africa

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The UNESCO designated Garden Route Biosphere Reserve is an area of cultural and ecological diversity and outstanding natural beauty. Located in the Southern Cape, South Africa, it is an international & national tourism destination. Against a backdrop of apartheid spatial planning, climate change and escalating urbanization are challenges to the Reserve becoming a resilient social and ecological system. From a research perspective, we have used remote sensing and ground truthing to understand the spatial dynamics of land use and land use change. We realize that traditional GIS tools need to be supplemented with participatory technological innovations to engage civil society and policy makers around vastly different perceptions of what the challenges are to future social wellbeing. We reflect on progress in this work and challenges to creating collaborative learning networks embracing science and citizens.