The possibility of hydraulic fracturing (fracking) in the Karoo has encountered fierce opposition – this due to its threats to surface aquifer contamination, the possible introduction of persistent organic pollutants and the depletion of a non-renewable energy source. The discourse around it has, however, an elevated dimension: The Karoo is infused with symbolic meaning connected to culture, identity and the environment – it evokes a ‘sense of place’. This lecture explores whether the concept of a sense of place, or place identity, can be infused with legal meaning and as such become a tool in the avoidance of undesirable development.

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