**Future Fracking Fears of Drakensberg Tourism Business Owners: The Case of a heritage site under threat**

Sustainable development goal 7 recognises energy insecurity as a challenge. Resource extraction such as that of unconventional oil and gas (UOG) is perceived as an answer and pursued by some countries in the global north and more recently in the south although it has been described as ‘fool’s gold’ (Murtazashvili & Piano, 2019). Hydraulic fracturing to obtain ‘natural gas’ has been purported to carry numerous health and environmental risks but South Africa has chosen to award exploratory fracking rights. A UNESCO world heritage site, the Drakensberg, is part of a targeted South African site (exploratory right 350). This paper contributes to scholarship on fracking and rural communities. The data is derived from interviews obtained during a recent ‘Climate change, fracking and communities’ qualitative multi -disciplinary interpretive study. The paper reports on the views of a future of fracking in the Drakensberg from the perspective of 4 selected formal tourism business owners located near a national park. The theoretical framing combines Meng’s (2017) threats to the anthroposphere with Pripich and Coulon’s (2018) triple risks. Their views revealed a fear of displacement, exposure to pollution of the heritage site which they believed would not recover due to disturbances to the rock art, biodiversity, species population growth, tranquillity and the relaxed rural lifestyle of the heritage site. The contamination of natural resources which locals depend upon in their daily lives, was also expressed. Tangible and intangible heritage and socio-economic losses were highlighted as imminent should fracking occur. Theoretical insights signal likely threats to the domestic & international tourism market of fracking the Drakensberg, in addition to natural resources contamination and destruction of a pristine world heritage site. The study recommends that South Africa reconsider ER 350 and its energy pathway and invest in renewable forms of energy as suggested by the President’s Climate Change Commission.

Keywords: Hydraulic fracturing (Fracking), extractive energy, Tourism, risks, heritage site