

# Call for Papers

## **Mabo's Cultural Legacy: The Mabo Decision, 25 Years On**

An Interdisciplinary Workshop

University of Stuttgart, Germany

November 16-18, 2017

A quarter of a century ago, the High Court of Australia ruled in favour of a claim by a group of Indigenous Australians, led by Eddie Koiki Mabo, to customary, legal title ("native title") to land. The Mabo decision of 1992 radically altered Australian law in its rejection of what the High Court judges called the "enlarged notion of terra nullius," said to be the legal basis upon which the British occupied the land in 1788. Mabo shook the foundations of the majority, non-Indigenous population's belief in the legitimate settlement of the continent by the British. More than any other event in Australia's legal, political and cultural history, the Mabo decision has challenged ways of thinking about land, identity, belonging, and history.

The Mabo decision's most material benefit for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples has been the recognition of native title rights to land in more than 300 cases. Today, native title is recognised in some form or other across 30 percent of the land mass of Australia. However, the vast majority of Indigenous Australians, whose native title rights have been swept aside by what courts call the "tide of history," have gained little from Mabo. What's more, while the High Court acknowledged the existence of Indigenous peoples' *property* rights in Mabo, it refused to recognise Indigenous *sovereignty*.

Has this denial of sovereignty killed off the struggle for meaningful land rights for decades to come? Have Indigenous Australians benefited in other ways from Mabo? How has Mabo changed Indigenous/non-Indigenous relations? Has Mabo really caused a "paradigm shift" (Collins and Davis) or a "seismic shift" (Birns and McNeer) in Australian historical consciousness? To what extent has Australian law, history, geography,

anthropology, language policy, environmental policy, media, political and social affairs, as well as Australian literature, art, film and other forms of cultural expression, been challenged and/or transformed by Mabo?

The Department of English Literatures at the University of Stuttgart, in cooperation with the Association for Australian Studies/Gesellschaft für Australienstudien, is organising an interdisciplinary Workshop to promote discussion and debate about Mabo's cultural and historical legacy. The Workshop proper will run for the whole of Friday, Nov. 17 until lunchtime on Saturday, Nov. 18. An informal conference 'warming' will take place on the evening of Thursday, Nov. 16.

**We invite proposals for 15-20 minute papers that address Mabo's influence and impact on diverse aspects of Australian society and culture.**

Please send an abstract (250-300 words) for your proposed paper, along with a bio note (up to 100 words), by **11 August 2017**, to: **maboworkshop2017@gmail.com**

Principal organiser: Geoff Rodoreda, University of Stuttgart

Collaborator: Eva Bischoff, Trier University

Supported by: The Association for Australian Studies / Gesellschaft für Australienstudien: [www.australienstudien.org/index.php/en/news](http://www.australienstudien.org/index.php/en/news)

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