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B E R L I N

TOWARDS AN INSTITUTE FOR
SOUTHERN MODERNITIES
[ISM_s][©]

“Research: accumulate
Write: leave out”
(Hubert Fichte)¹

In the European Middle Ages and the early Modern period, the city that lay deepest inside the continent of Africa, which had connections to the Ancient Egyptian civilisations of Alexandria and al-Qābira/Cairo, as well as to Baghdad and Basra further east in Mesopotamia, was Timbuktu in Mali. Timbuktu developed into a centre of Islamic scholarship with great mosques, a university, and a library where today the heritage of Islamic learning in Africa is again being cultivated and preserved in spite of overwhelming economic and social problems that Europeans can barely imagine. If we are able to progress with our variantological research to the point that we are in a position to make a substantial gift to Timbuktu, something that will enrich it, then we shall hold our next workshop on the Deep Time Relations of Arts, Sciences, and Technologies there. The following text is formulated like a gesture. The gesture is a request for hospitality — the prerequisite of this is the implicit offer of hospitality.

© Together with Anthony Moore I developed the idea for this institute in Arles in southern France. ISMs is still imaginary, but nevertheless real. In a first draft it was presented at Andreas Broeckmann's Re:Place conference in Berlin 2008.

¹ In: *Hälfte des Lebens*, Leonore Mau: *Hubert Fichte* (Hamburg, 1996), p. 123.