

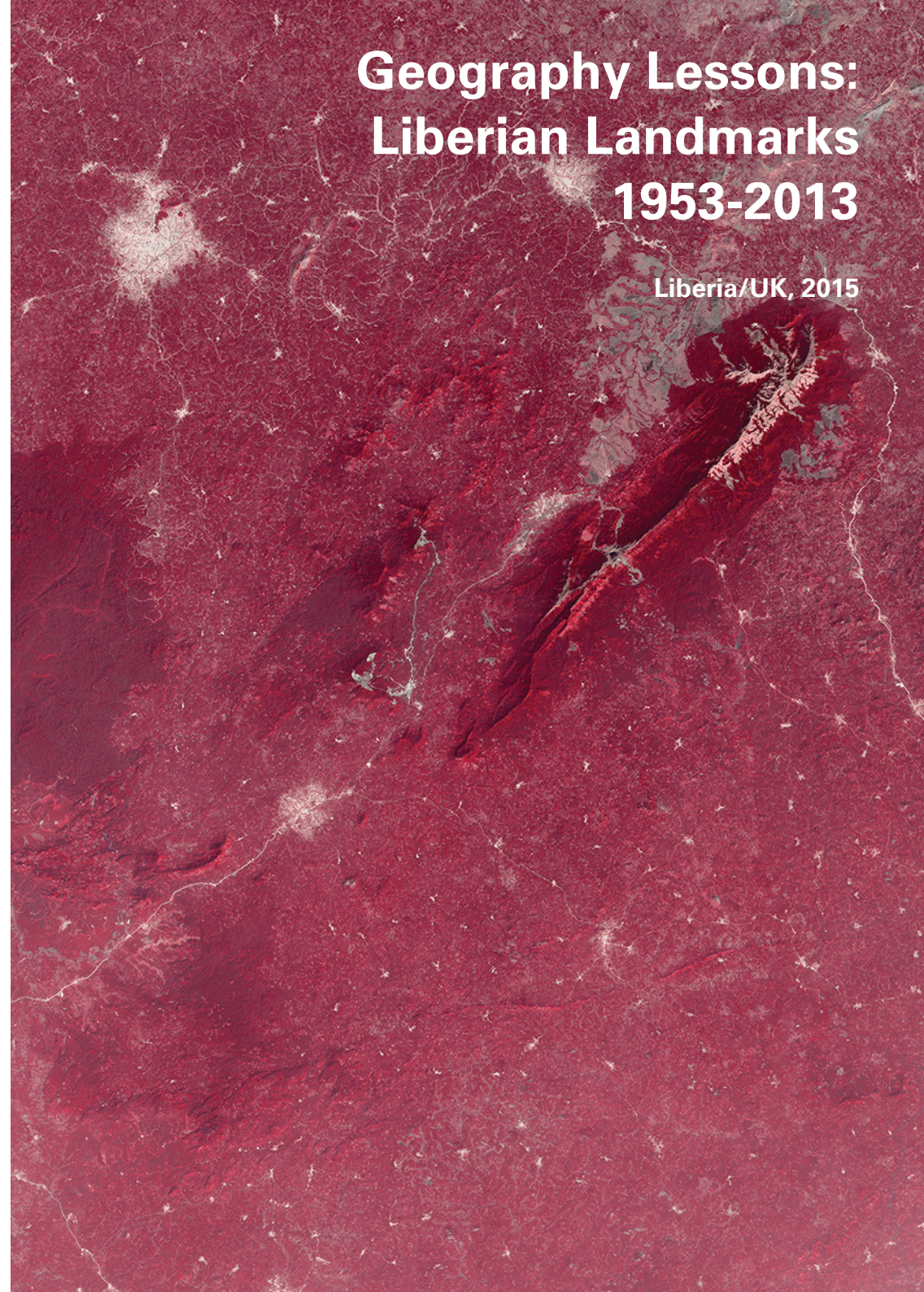
*Image: Landsat imagery showing deforestation due to iron-ore mining in region bordering Liberia, Guinea and Ivory coast.*

# Geography Lessons: Liberian Landmarks 1953-2013

Liberia/UK, 2015

**Site Writing**

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PhD by Design**





Yeke'pa Mano Settlement,  
Liberia, 1955.



## Geography Lessons: Liberian Landmarks 1953-2013 (2015)

*'I wanted the sensation of instability... Like a Tower of Babel, it requires real participation from the public.'*

'Geography Lessons: Liberian Landmarks' responds to two seemingly unconnected sites - 'landmarks'; an iron-ore mine in Liberia and Britain's largest piece of public art.

The mine, formerly Mount Nimba, was the design of the Liberia-American-Swedish Mining (LAMCO) Company, built alongside the 1960's new-town of Yekepa. LAMCO economised these 'vacant' landscapes and inhabitants as part of a broader project to re-engineer Liberia along Western lines.

Depleted of ore, at the onset of the 1989 Liberian Civil war, LAMCO abandoned Yekepa. In 2010 Yekepa was reclaimed by Arcelor Mittal – the largest producer of structural steel and joint-commissioners of the 'Orbit'. Designed by Anish Kapoor the Orbit lies at the centre of land revitalized for the 2012 London Olympics, in East Stratford, where UCL have since expanded.

Arcelor Mittal have a 25-year mining concession for an uninterrupted supply of iron-ore in exchange for a 'Social Corporate Responsibility' package inclusive of revitalizing Yekepa. Following Ebola, the offshoring of profits to low-taxation enclaves and an unstable global iron-ore market, Yekepa's revitalization is pending.

Standing at 114.5 metres high the Orbit is Britain's largest piece of public art. Constructed out of 2,000 Tonnes of steel, 60% is claimed as recycled. The scar from mining at Yekepa stands 250 metres deep and 4 km<sup>2</sup> in area. The Elizabeth Olympic Park (6.5sq km), producing displacement and privatizing public space, is considered one of the least used urban spaces within London.

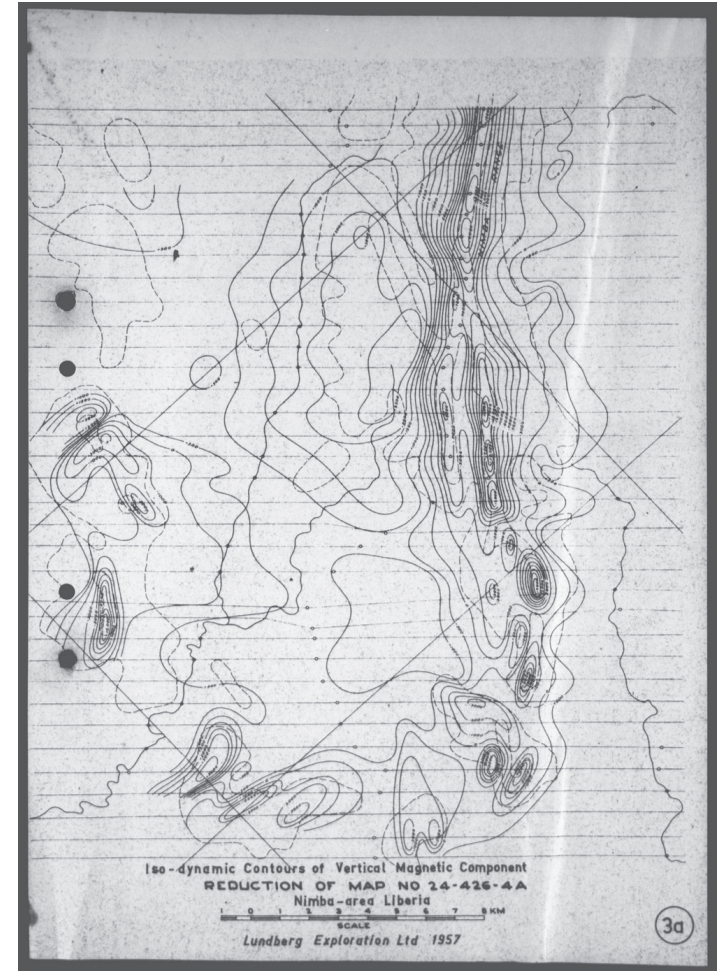
Where physical geography is understood as the proximate arrangement of environmental features and places, 'Geography lessons' couples the remote and invisible margins of Liberia's extraction industries to the Orbit, revealing ideological performance of architecture/art common to utopias. The void of the mine in proximity to the solidity of the Orbit, as opposite ends of the extraction process, articulates the structural unevenness of exchanges between the Global South and North that prevail today. Using a landscape model, photos and soil-samples from the mine at Yekepa, Geography Lessons are presented to the public at the foot of the Orbit.

This project is the precursor to 'Uppland'.



Yekepa  
Lamco Town,  
Liberia, 1960

Contour Map of  
Nimba Mountain  
Range, Lamco, 1957



'Building a railroad in  
Liberia, 1970'



Postcard of Nimba Mountain 1970/2015



DEPLETING A MOUNTAIN - Peak One of Mount Nimba, showing the elevation before production began, and the pit which has resulted from the bites of 888 shovels with a bucket capacity of ten tons each. See story on LAMCO's first 25 million tons on page 4.



**IRON ORE SHIPMENTS  
1963-1979**

Year	Metric Tons Shipped
1963	1,797,450
1964	6,875,124
1965	8,316,310
1966	8,106,790
1967	7,759,350
1968	8,733,260
1969	10,691,180
1970	11,281,120
1971	10,031,780
1972	11,325,810
1973	12,785,960
1974	12,979,030
1975	8,754,280
1976	9,130,050
1977	8,238,900
1978	10,788,170
1979	10,241,770
<b>Total</b>	<b>128,036,334</b>

Left: Postcard of Ore Shipments 1963/2015

Right: Postcard of Yekepa Community hall 1968/2015



VISITORS INSPECT GIANT ORE SAMPLE - The Vice President of the Federal Republic of the Cameroon, Hon. John Foncha (2nd from left) and Vice President Tolbert of Liberia (2nd from right) admire a giant ore sample which is mounted on the grounds of the Sandy Clark Square in Yekepa, on the occasion of their visit to Nimba in January. (See page 12 and 13 for story.) At left is Mr. Olie Wijkstroem, President and General Manager of the LAMCO J. V. Operating Company.



'Geography Lessons' teaching material, 2015



Left: Postcard, Coring drill Yekepa - The Orbit, London

Right: 'Geography Lessons' vestments, 2015

