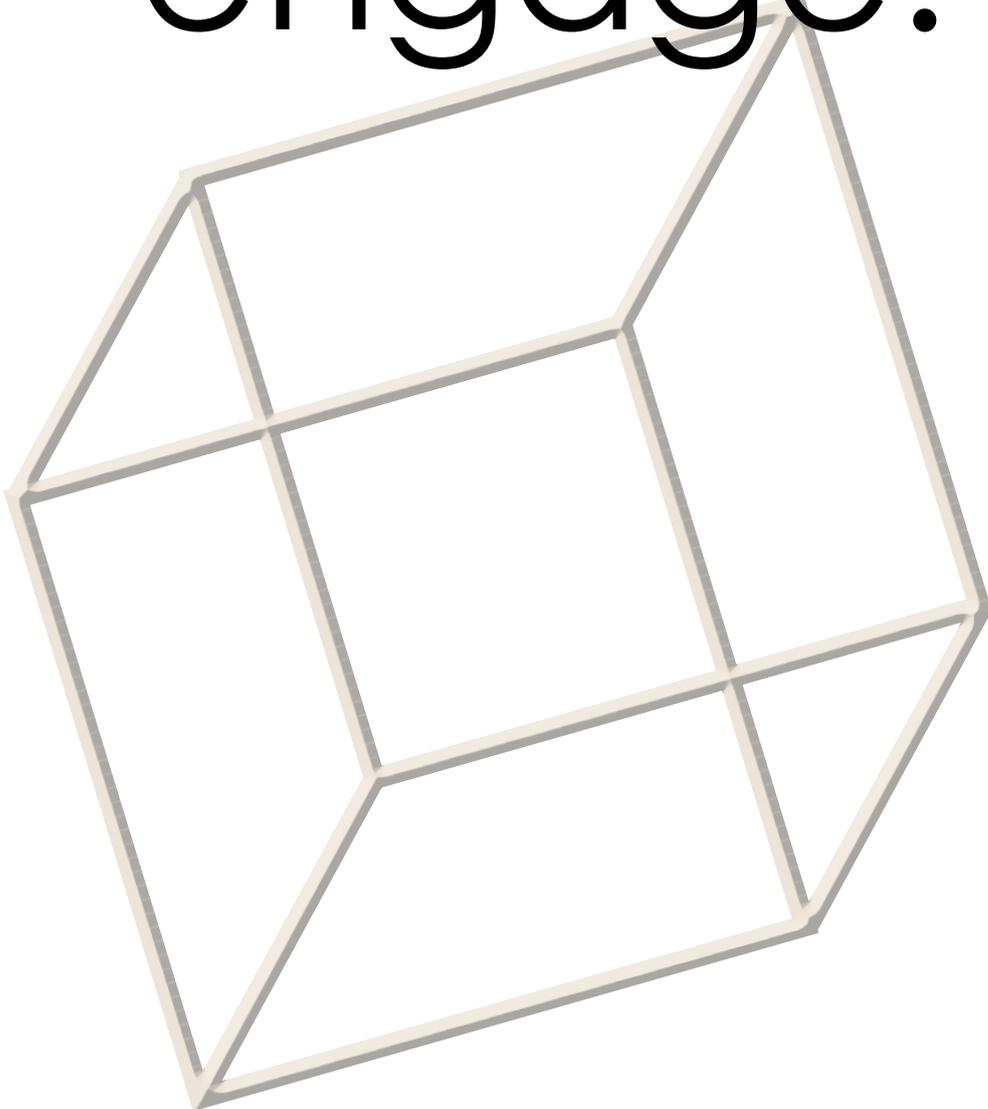


Space-museum
continuum:
engage!



The space-museum continuum: engage!

By Pavel Mirea & Steve Mills



This space has witnessed many transformations. A laboratory space for the Museum and the Southern Romania Archaeological Project (SRAP) where thousands of pieces of pottery, bone, stone, building material and plant remains were carefully washed, sorted, counted, weighed, measured, drawn, catalogued and stored. A seminar/conference room hosting presentations about Alexandria, Teleorman County, archaeology and local identities with delegations from Romania, Europe and further afield. As an artistic space for participants of the MPP project it became a place to nurture thoughts, craft expertise and create new associations and meanings. As an engagement space for the *Night of the Museum* event, held every year in May, people from Alexandria participate in a range of educational and performance activities.

So what was the building originally built and used for before becoming a museum? Twenty-five years ago it was a school-workshop hall filled with lathes, milling and drilling machines, planers and other mechanical equipment, and where students learnt how to use these machines. It was a space where students were educated to become good members of the 'working people' and worthy defenders of the 'new socialist order'. It was not just about work but also about ideology. But times have changed and the engine noises have been transformed into whispers, questions and exclamation.



We remember the students and children talking, shouting, singing, laughing, bickering, grumbling, but always learning; we remember so many questions. This has always been a space that generates questions and, we would like to think, not a few answers. We hope more questions will be transformed into answers in this space and that people will “seek out” new ideas that, dare we say it, “...boldly go where no one has gone before.”

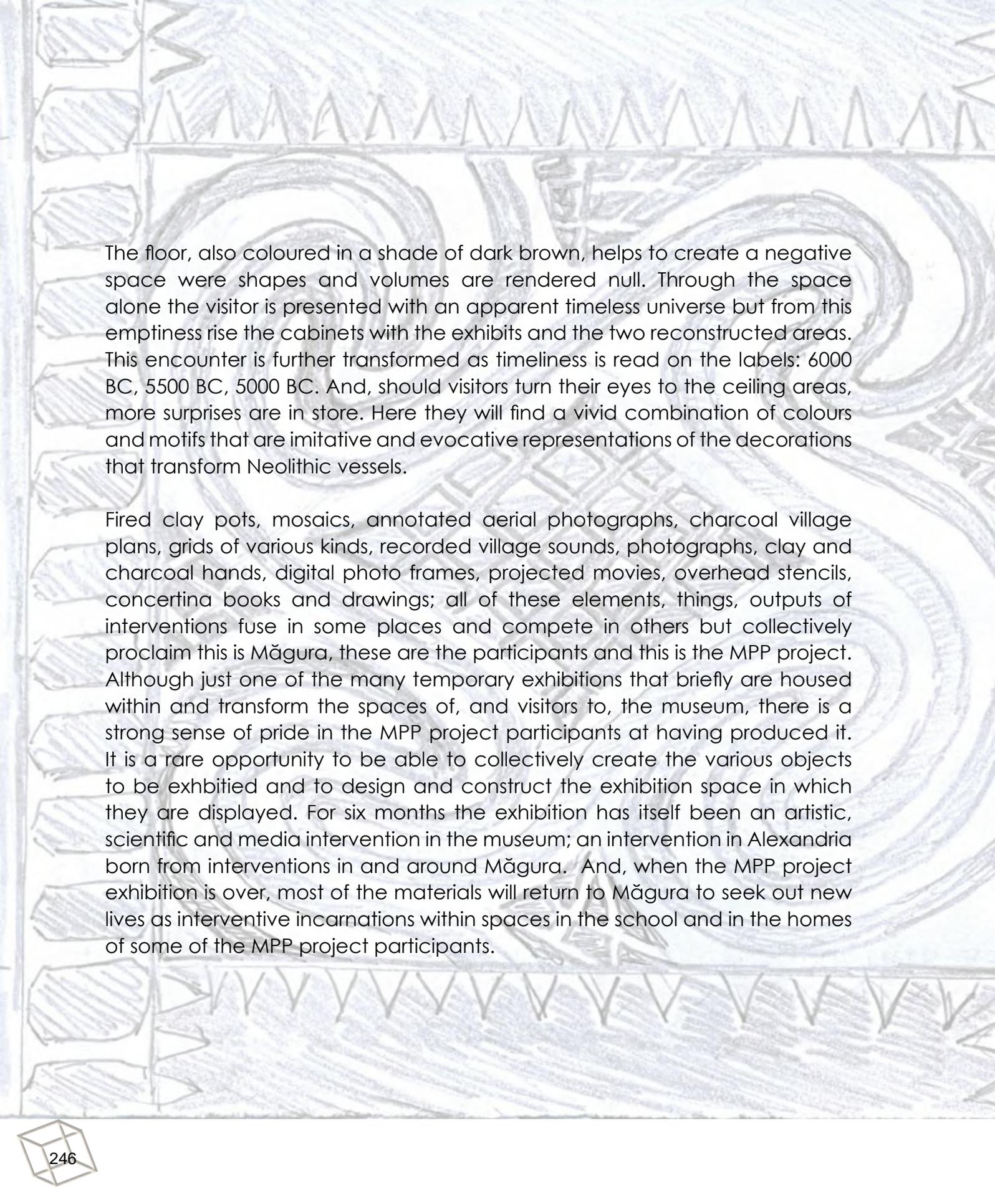
Before the MPP project, and probably before the SRAP, the members of the museum staff had a dream of how the various spaces on the first floor could eventually be used. For various reasons it has taken many years for this dream to be realised. There have been many discussions, 'business meetings', frustrations and negotiations until the scribbles on countless spare pieces of paper that accumulated over the years have eventually led to plans, formal designs and finally action. Transformations are rarely easy and usually, if and when they succeed, are a hard-fought battle won.







After many days, weeks and months the space has gradually transformed. The ceiling, the walls, the windows and the floors have equally experienced the changes. The walls are newly painted in shades of brown. These earthy colours suggest to the visitor the feeling of returning to the earth where archaeological remains are discovered. This return is achieved gradually because each room is painted in a different shade: from the lightest brown suggesting more recent times to the darkest brown suggesting more ancient times.

The background of the page is a light blue-grey illustration of a Neolithic site. It features a central area with large, concentric circular patterns, possibly representing a circular structure or a specific type of pottery. This central area is bordered by a horizontal band containing a series of sharp, triangular peaks pointing upwards, resembling a row of small structures or a decorative frieze. The overall style is that of a hand-drawn sketch or a stylized architectural plan.

The floor, also coloured in a shade of dark brown, helps to create a negative space where shapes and volumes are rendered null. Through the space alone the visitor is presented with an apparent timeless universe but from this emptiness rise the cabinets with the exhibits and the two reconstructed areas. This encounter is further transformed as timeliness is read on the labels: 6000 BC, 5500 BC, 5000 BC. And, should visitors turn their eyes to the ceiling areas, more surprises are in store. Here they will find a vivid combination of colours and motifs that are imitative and evocative representations of the decorations that transform Neolithic vessels.

Fired clay pots, mosaics, annotated aerial photographs, charcoal village plans, grids of various kinds, recorded village sounds, photographs, clay and charcoal hands, digital photo frames, projected movies, overhead stencils, concertina books and drawings; all of these elements, things, outputs of interventions fuse in some places and compete in others but collectively proclaim this is Măgura, these are the participants and this is the MPP project. Although just one of the many temporary exhibitions that briefly are housed within and transform the spaces of, and visitors to, the museum, there is a strong sense of pride in the MPP project participants at having produced it. It is a rare opportunity to be able to collectively create the various objects to be exhibited and to design and construct the exhibition space in which they are displayed. For six months the exhibition has itself been an artistic, scientific and media intervention in the museum; an intervention in Alexandria born from interventions in and around Măgura. And, when the MPP project exhibition is over, most of the materials will return to Măgura to seek out new lives as interventive incarnations within spaces in the school and in the homes of some of the MPP project participants.

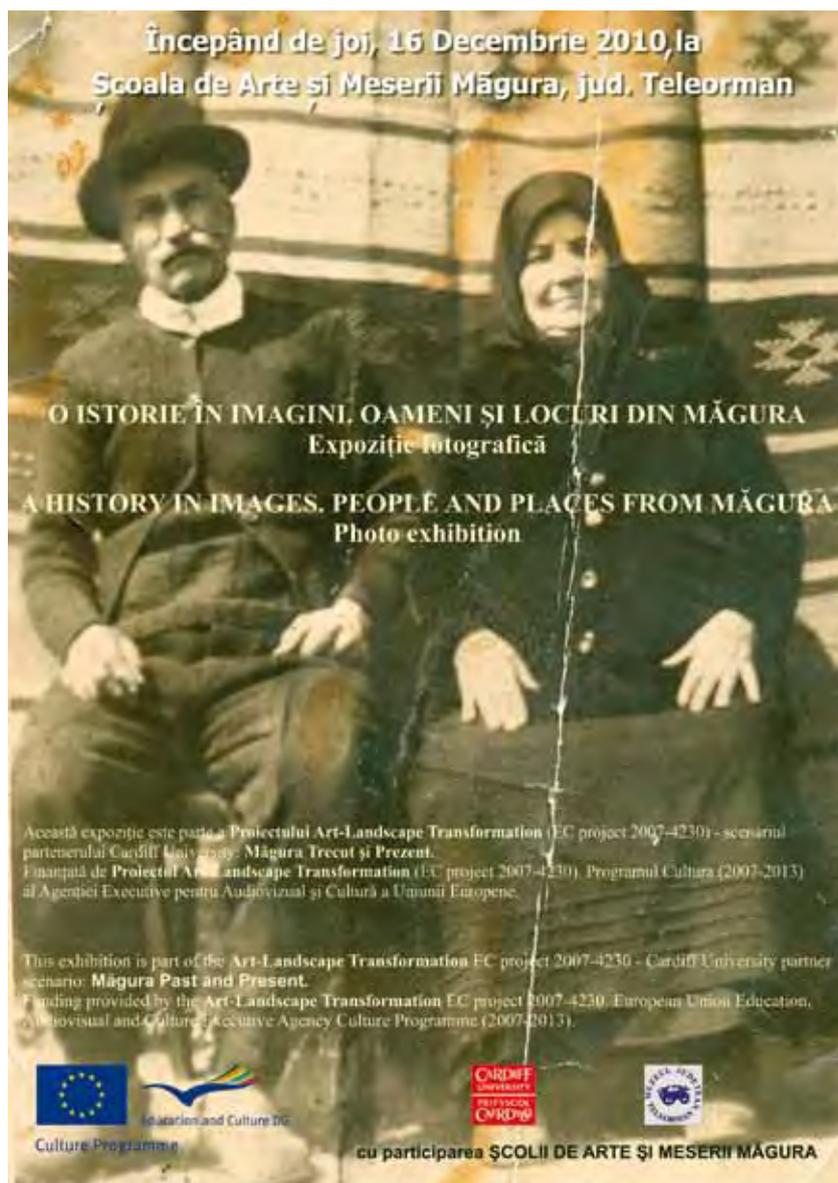




There is the important, and sometimes contentious, issue of ownership when creating an exhibition of outputs produced by many different participants. Who owns what? Who has copyright? With respect to contractual obligations, all outputs are the property of the MPP project as a collective and of the European Community more widely; no one person has ownership or copyright over of any one object or output. This agreement has taken some negotiation at different phases of the project because artists are used to owning their creations and museum staff their exhibitions and archaeologists and scientists are used to claiming some ownership of their data, interpretations and rights to publication (and in some cases of archaeological sites and associated material culture). So do the MPP project participants own their drawings, sound recordings, clay objects, mosaics and photographs? Yes, but we hope all participants appreciate that any one output (e.g., an individual or collection of drawings, a clay pot or a series of photographs) is only meaningful in the context of, and as a contribution to, the combined output of the project. This is in keeping with the spirit and purpose of the project; anything else falls short. This integration of ideas and outputs is what the project exhibition aimed to disseminate: Măgura Past and Present is about a rural community and its relationship to landscape, heritage and place and the processes and challenges involved in collaboratively trying to define, interpret and represent that.



Is this collective aspiration a return to a socialist ideal? Individual and group expressions and opinions have been actively encouraged throughout the MPP project, but we acknowledge that they can only flourish and be contextualised in relation to some larger endeavour. It is not so much what any individual creates that matters, but in how that individual creation is effective in, and becomes part of the negotiation of, what constitutes the expression of a community and its relationship to place at any given time. To be of positive value, intervention requires considerable and continuous negotiation and compromise and all three must go hand in hand. This is rarely easy to achieve and it remains to be seen to what extent the MPP project, its variety of outputs and the exhibitions, has been able to succeed in this and instill enthusiasm for similar and better projects in the future.



**Începând de joi, 16 Decembrie 2010, la
Școala de Arte și Meserii Măgura, jud. Teleorman**

O ISTORIE ÎN IMAGINI, OAMENI ȘI LOCURI DIN MĂGURA
Expoziție fotografică

A HISTORY IN IMAGES. PEOPLE AND PLACES FROM MĂGURA
Photo exhibition

Această expoziție este parte a Proiectului Art-Landscape Transformation (EC proiect 2007-4230) - scenariul partenerului Cardiff University: Măgura Trecut și Prezent.
Finanțată de Proiectul Art-Landscape Transformation (EC proiect 2007-4230), Programul Cultura (2007-2013) al Agenției Executive pentru Audiovizual și Cultură a Uniunii Europene.

This exhibition is part of the Art-Landscape Transformation EC project 2007-4230 - Cardiff University partner scenario: Măgura Past and Present.
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Culture Programme **cu participarea ȘCOLII DE ARTE ȘI MESERII MĂGURA**

TELEORMAN COUNTY MUSEUM
ALEXANDRIA - 3 NOVEMBER 2010-3 APRIL 2011

MUZEUL JUDEȚEAN TELEORMAN
ALEXANDRIA - 3 NOIEMBRIE 2010-3 APRILIE 2011

**'MĂGURA PAST AND PRESENT'
PROJECT TEMPORARY EXHIBITION**

TRANSFORMARE
RĂU
RIVER
RIVER

PEOPLE
TELEORMAN
CLIMIYA

**EXPOZIȚIA TEMPORARĂ
A PROIECTULUI
'MĂGURA PAST AND PRESENT'**

ACTION
ACTIUNE
LANDSCAPE
PEISAJ
VINO



Culture Programme

Art Landscape Transformations EC project 2007-4230
Cardiff University partner scenario: Măgura Past and Present



Culture Programme

ART - LANDSCAPE TRANSFORMATION EC PROJECT 2007 - 4230



MAGURA PAST AND PRESENT

MAGURA TRECUT SI PREZENT



As with all the other interventions, many people have played their part during the design and implementation phases of these museum space transformations: Ecaterina Țânțăreanu, Pompilia Zaharia, Florin Otomega, Traian Măzărar, Liviu Nicolescu, Cătălina Dănilă, Constantin Tudorică, Emil Pășcălău and Ducu Nicolae. This list is only the start, to be more comprehensive we have to include all of the contributors who have played a part however big or small: the Mayor, School Director, teachers, school children, other participants and hosts from Măgura, and the other MPP project archaeologists, scientists and artists. Furthermore, this is only one output from one partner scenario in the wider Art-Landscape Transformations EC project 2007-4230; the list of participants continues to grow.

The finishing touches are now being applied to transform the museum spaces. The MPP project participants eagerly await the opening day. That day will be the end of one phase and the start of the next; being a continuum there is still a long way to go...

But for the time being we have done our intervening and now is the time for visitors, we hope, to "Engage!"





MĂGURA PAST AND PRESENT

20

SCAPE

ACTION

PEOPLE

RIVER

transform



LĂNITA