

ANNUAL MEETING OF THE INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC CITIES, TOWNS AND VILLAGES
(CIVVIH) – ICOMOS

3RD CONFERENCE OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE FOR CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

LIVING HERITAGE :
DISASTER MANAGEMENT

THE VILLAGE OF VRISSA ON LESBOS, GREECE A CASE STUDY ON FAILED MANAGEMENT OF A HERITAGE SITE POST-EARTHQUAKE

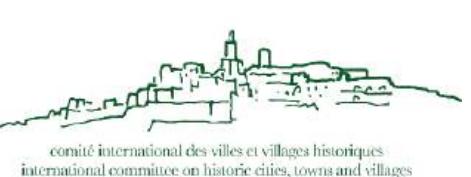
Eleni-Athina Angeli, Yorgos Kourmadas

STRATEGIES FOR ENHANCING
HISTORIC CITIES' RESILIENCE TO
DISASTERS

SEPTEMBER 10-15, 2025
KULDIGA, LATVIA



CIVVIH
ICOMOS



VRISSA, A HISTORIC VILLAGE OF LESBOS



Lesbos belongs to the complex of the *North Aegean Islands*



VRISSA, A HISTORIC VILLAGE OF LESBOS

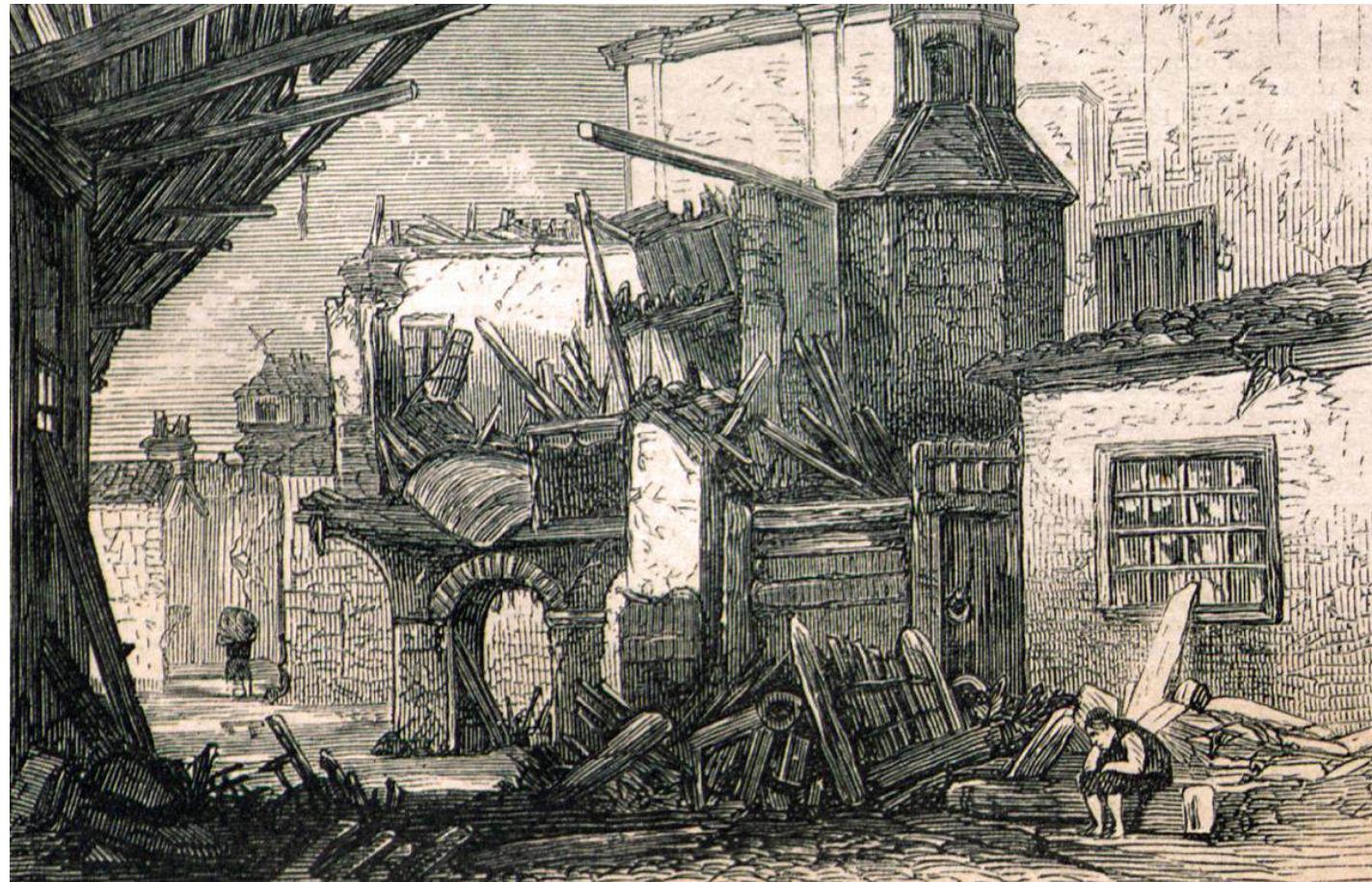


LOCAL ARCHITECTURE OF VRISSA



Most of the building stock dated from
between **1870** and **1930**

THE ARCHITECTURE OF LESBOS: From late Ottoman to Neoclassical



Earthquake of March 6, 1867, Lesbos.



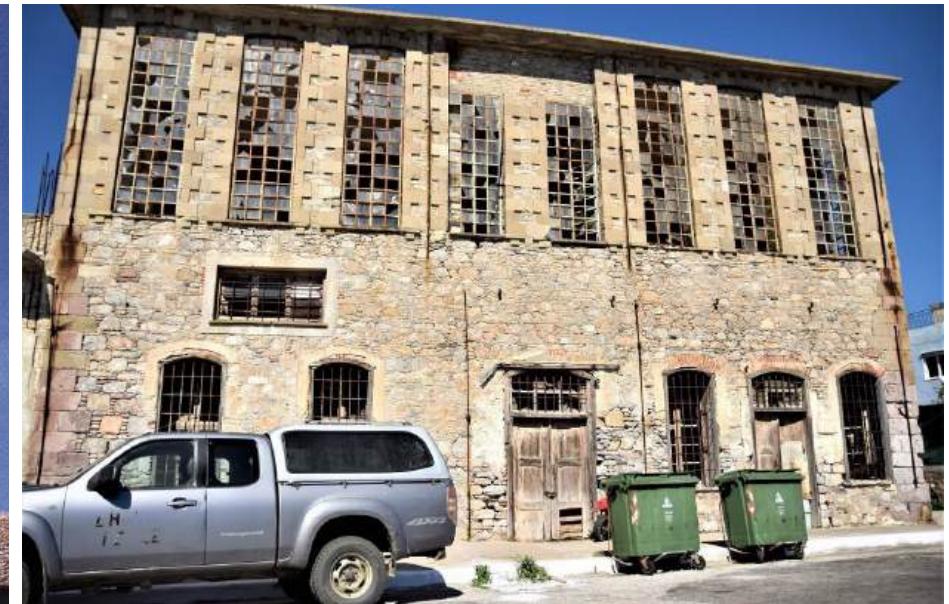
Vareltzidaina mansion, 18th c,
Petra, Lesbos.

Lesbos was Ottoman until **1912**

THE ARCHITECTURE OF LESBOS: Industrial heritage



Olive presses and soap factories



THE ARCHITECTURE OF LESBOS: *Mytilini*, the capital



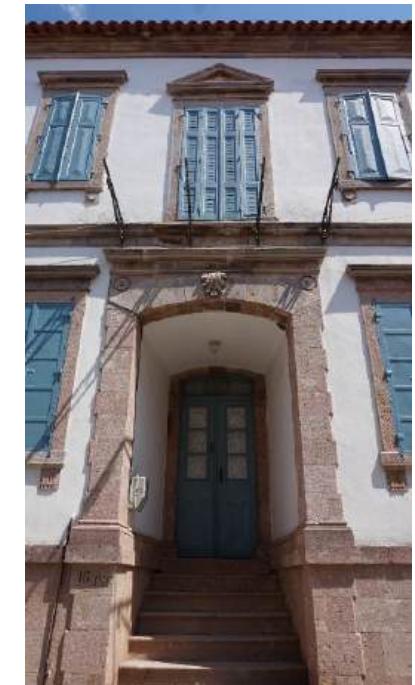
Public buildings

THE ARCHITECTURE OF LESBOS: *Mytilini*, the capital



Houses for the
new wealthy milieu

LOCAL ARCHITECTURE OF VRISSA



LOCAL ARCHITECTURE OF VRISSA - The *suvelikia*



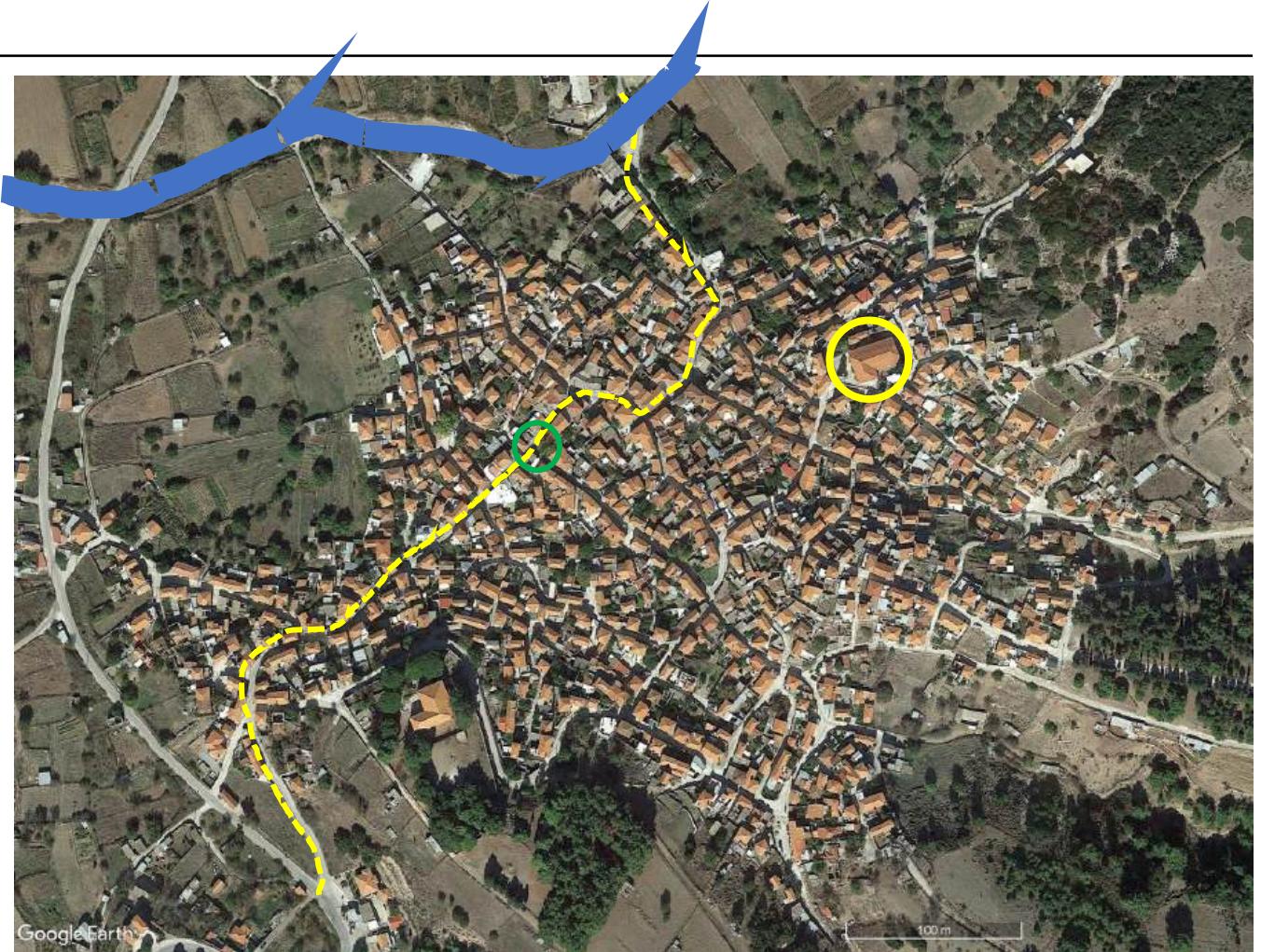
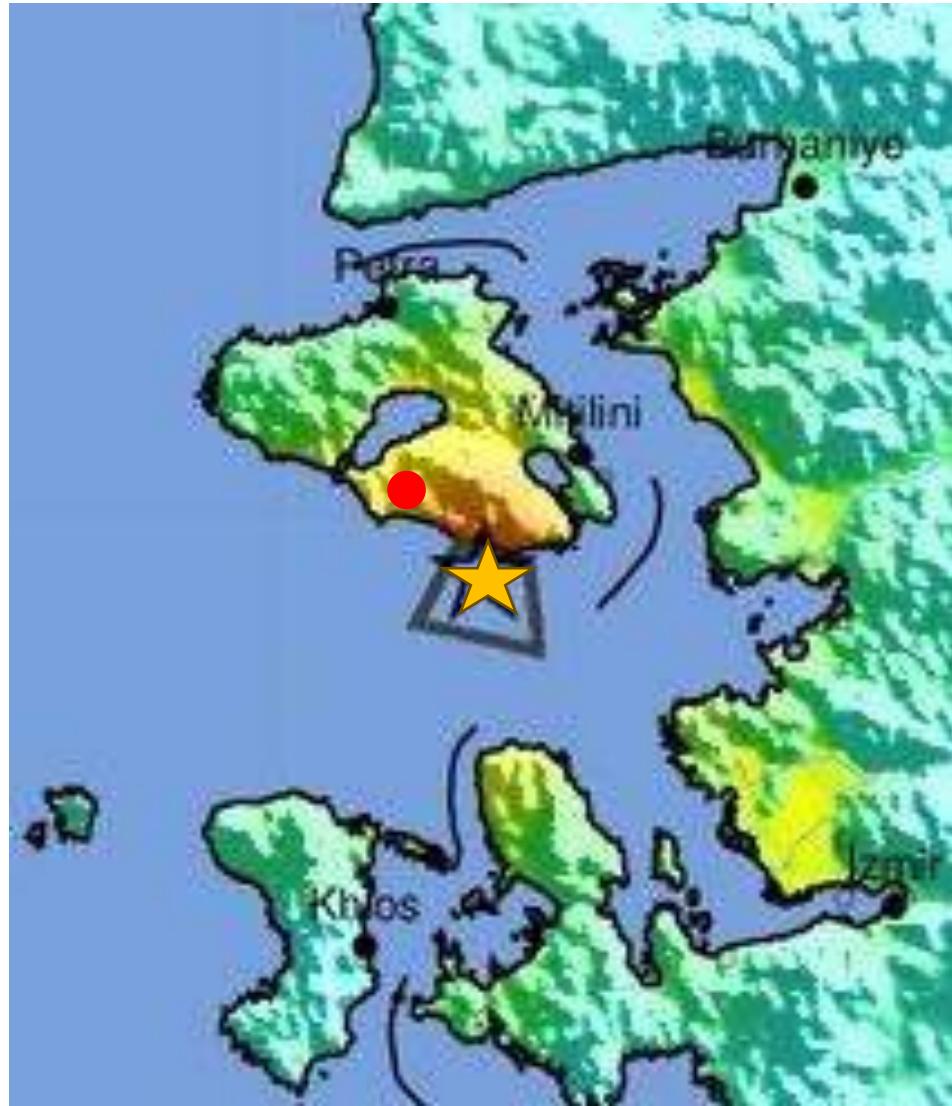
Suvelikia:
the traditional carved stone
frame of doors and windows.

LOCAL ARCHITECTURE OF VRISSA - The *suvelikia*



Suvelikia:
the traditional carved stone
frame of doors and windows.

EARTHQUAKE, 2 JUNE 2017



6,3 R
Epicenter 5km south of Plomari,
12 km depth.

Source: [United States Geological Survey](#)

THE IMPACT OF THE EARTHQUAKE



On the entire southern part of the island:

More than **300** buildings were completely destroyed



More than **1000** buildings were severely damaged



THE IMPACT OF THE EARTHQUAKE



In Vrissa, **268** buildings had to be torn down
Out of a total of approx. 700 village buildings

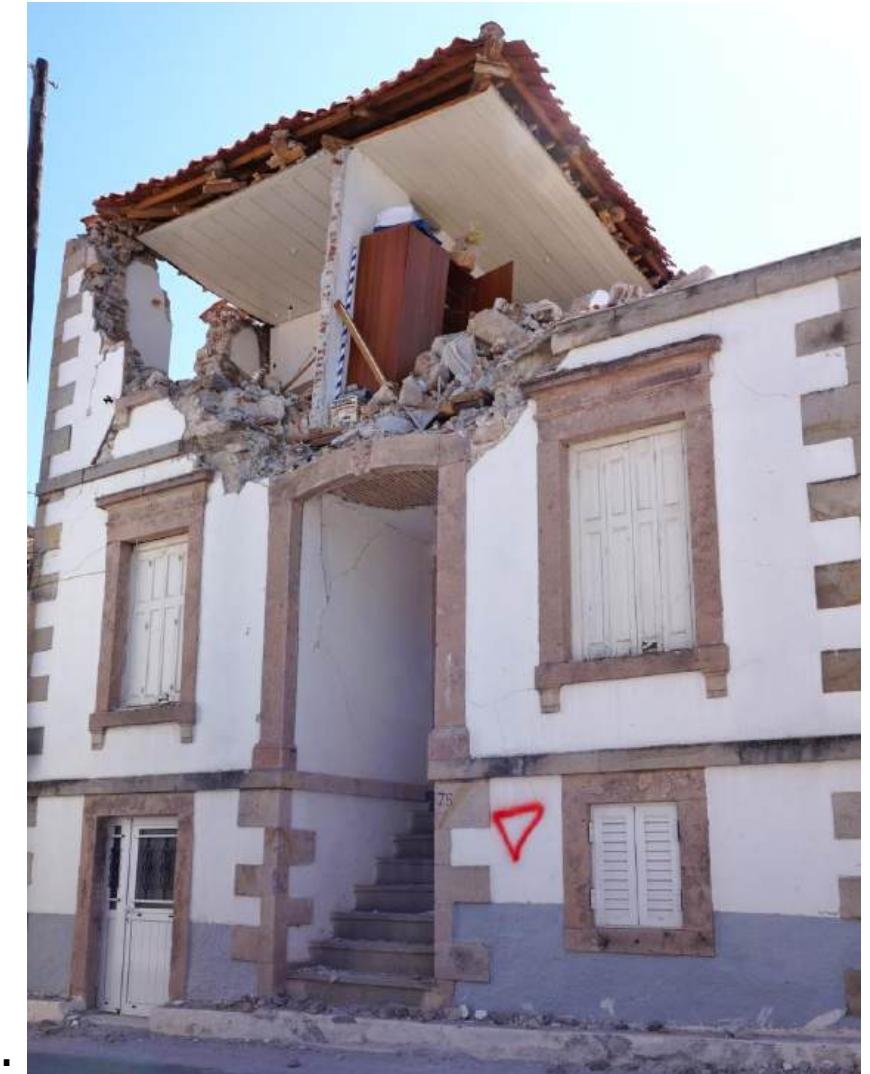
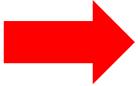


THE IMPACT OF THE EARTHQUAKE - The buildings



Stonemasonries using rounded stones
from the river-bed and clay

THE IMPACT OF THE EARTHQUAKE



Concrete balconies
rammed the top
floor of the houses.

THE IMPACT OF THE EARTHQUAKE



Concrete balconies rammed the top floor of the houses.



AN ANTISEISMIC TIMBER-FRAME SYSTEM - *Frigia*



AN ANTISEISMIC TIMBER-FRAME SYSTEM



THE IMPACT OF THE EARTHQUAKE – Public space



The village's traditional central spot, with the *kafenio* and the plane tree, was destroyed. So were the facades on the main streets.

THE IMPACT OF THE EARTHQUAKE – Public space



THE IMPACT OF THE EARTHQUAKE – Public space



THE IMPACT OF THE EARTHQUAKE – Aspects of everyday life



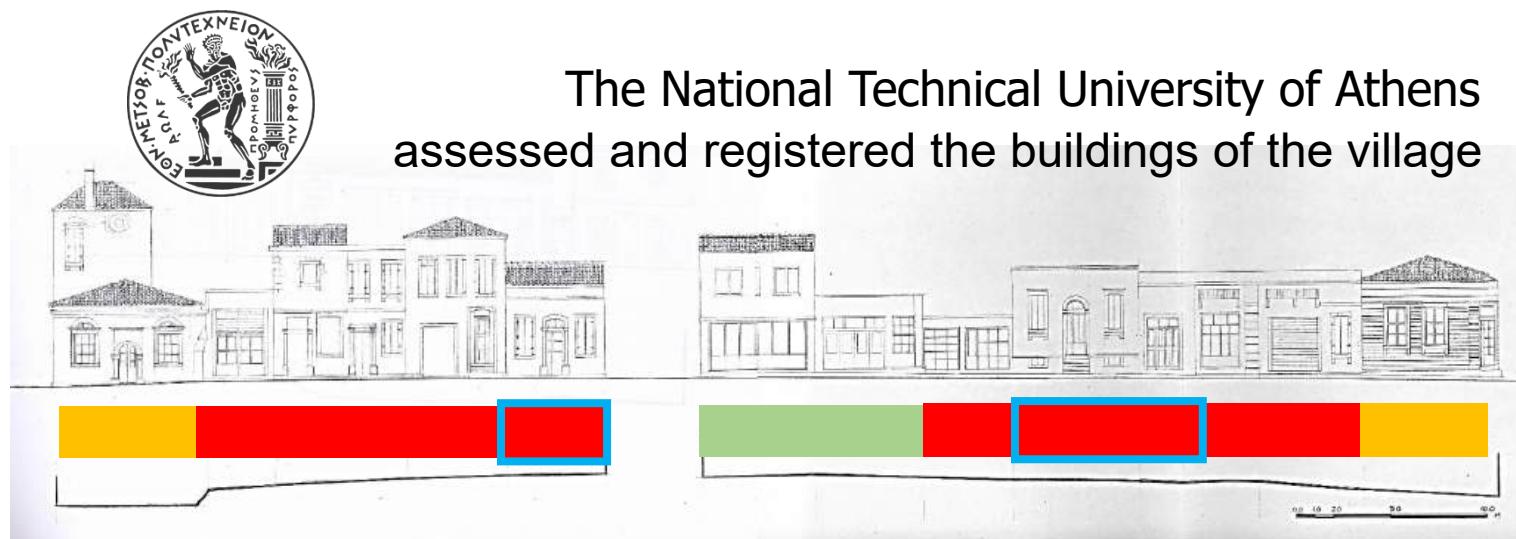
THE IMPACT OF THE EARTHQUAKE – Aspects of everyday life



INITIATIVES FOR THE REBUILDING OF VRISSA



The National Technical University of Athens assessed and registered the buildings of the village



INITIATIVES FOR THE REBUILDING OF VRISSA

ΚΑΤΑΓΡΑΦΗ ΑΞΙΟΛΟΓΩΝ ΚΤΗΡΙΩΝ ΟΙΚΙΣΜΟΥ ΒΡΙΣΑΣ ΛΕΣΒΟΥ		
ΑΙΑ ΚΤΗΡΙΟΥ	ΧΡΟΝΟΛΟΓΙΑ	ΧΡΗΣΗ
B 2.06	189-	ΚΑΤΑΣΤΗΜΑ
ΑΙΑ ΑΡΧΙΚΗΣ ΚΑΡΤΕΛΑΣ ΕΜΠ	ΑΡΙΘΜΟΣ ΟΡΟΦΩΝ	ΗΜΙΥΠΟΓ
46	1	ΑΞΙΟΛΟΓΗ ΣΗ 1-5
ΕΞΩΤ. ΤΥΠΟΛΟΓΙΚΑ ΚΑΙ ΜΟΡΦΟΛΟΓΙΚΑ ΣΤΟΙΧΕΙΑ		ΚΑΤΑΣΤΑΣΗ ΔΙΑΤΗΡΗΣΗΣ
ΛΑΞΕΥΜΕΝΑ ΠΕΡΙΘΥΡΩΜΑΤΑ	ΑΠΛΑ	ΚΑΛΗ
	ΚΟΣΜΗΜΕΝΑ	ΣΗΜΑΝΤΙΚΕ Σ ΒΛΑΒΕΣ
	Α	
ΕΞΩΣΤΗΣ		ΜΕΡΙΚΗ ΚΑΤΑΡΡΕΥ
ΠΡΟΣΤΕΓΑΣΜΑ		ΟΛΙΚΗ ΚΑΤΑΡΡΕΥ
ΔΙΠΛΟ ΠΕΡΙΘΥΡΩΜΑ ΕΙΣΟΔΟΥ		
ΚΛΙΜΑΚΑ ΕΙΣΟΔΟΥ ΣΕ ΕΣΟΧΗ		



ΚΑΤΑΓΡΑΦΗ ΑΞΙΟΛΟΓΩΝ ΚΤΗΡΙΩΝ ΟΙΚΙΣΜΟΥ ΒΡΙΣΑΣ ΛΕΣΒΟΥ		
ΑΙΑ ΚΤΗΡΙΟΥ	ΧΡΟΝΟΛΟΓΙΑ	ΧΡΗΣΗ
B 2.05	1893	ΚΑΤΑΣΤΗΜΑ
ΑΙΑ ΑΡΧΙΚΗΣ ΚΑΡΤΕΛΑΣ ΕΜΠ	ΑΡΙΘΜΟΣ ΟΡΟΦΩΝ	ΗΜΙΥΠΟΓ
75	1	ΑΞΙΟΛΟΓΗ ΣΗ 1-5
ΕΞΩΤ. ΤΥΠΟΛΟΓΙΚΑ ΚΑΙ ΜΟΡΦΟΛΟΓΙΚΑ ΣΤΟΙΧΕΙΑ		ΚΑΤΑΣΤΑΣΗ ΔΙΑΤΗΡΗΣΗΣ
ΛΑΞΕΥΜΕΝΑ ΠΕΡΙΘΥΡΩΜΑΤΑ	ΑΠΛΑ	ΚΑΛΗ
	ΚΟΣΜΗΜΕΝΑ	ΣΗΜΑΝΤΙΚΕ Σ ΒΛΑΒΕΣ
	Α	
ΕΞΩΣΤΗΣ		ΜΕΡΙΚΗ ΚΑΤΑΡΡΕΥ
ΠΡΟΣΤΕΓΑΣΜΑ		ΟΛΙΚΗ ΚΑΤΑΡΡΕΥ
ΔΙΠΛΟ ΠΕΡΙΘΥΡΩΜΑ ΕΙΣΟΔΟΥ		
ΚΛΙΜΑΚΑ ΕΙΣΟΔΟΥ ΣΕ ΕΣΟΧΗ		



ΚΑΤΑΓΡΑΦΗ ΑΞΙΟΛΟΓΩΝ ΚΤΗΡΙΩΝ ΟΙΚΙΣΜΟΥ ΒΡΙΣΑΣ ΛΕΣΒΟΥ		
ΑΙΑ ΚΤΗΡΙΟΥ	ΧΡΟΝΟΛΟΓΙΑ	ΧΡΗΣΗ
B 1.08		ΚΑΤΑΣΤΗΜΑ
ΑΙΑ ΑΡΧΙΚΗΣ ΚΑΡΤΕΛΑΣ ΕΜΠ	ΑΡΙΘΜΟΣ ΟΡΟΦΩΝ	ΗΜΙΥΠΟΓ
81	1	ΑΞΙΟΛΟΓΗ ΣΗ 1-5
ΕΞΩΤ. ΤΥΠΟΛΟΓΙΚΑ ΚΑΙ ΜΟΡΦΟΛΟΓΙΚΑ ΣΤΟΙΧΕΙΑ		ΚΑΤΑΣΤΑΣΗ ΔΙΑΤΗΡΗΣΗΣ
ΛΑΞΕΥΜΕΝΑ ΠΕΡΙΘΥΡΩΜΑΤΑ	ΑΠΛΑ	ΚΑΛΗ
	ΚΟΣΜΗΜΕΝΑ	ΣΗΜΑΝΤΙΚΕ Σ ΒΛΑΒΕΣ
	Α	
ΕΞΩΣΤΗΣ		ΜΕΡΙΚΗ ΚΑΤΑΡΡΕΥ
ΠΡΟΣΤΕΓΑΣΜΑ		ΟΛΙΚΗ ΚΑΤΑΡΡΕΥ
ΔΙΠΛΟ ΠΕΡΙΘΥΡΩΜΑ ΕΙΣΟΔΟΥ		
ΚΛΙΜΑΚΑ ΕΙΣΟΔΟΥ ΣΕ ΕΣΟΧΗ		

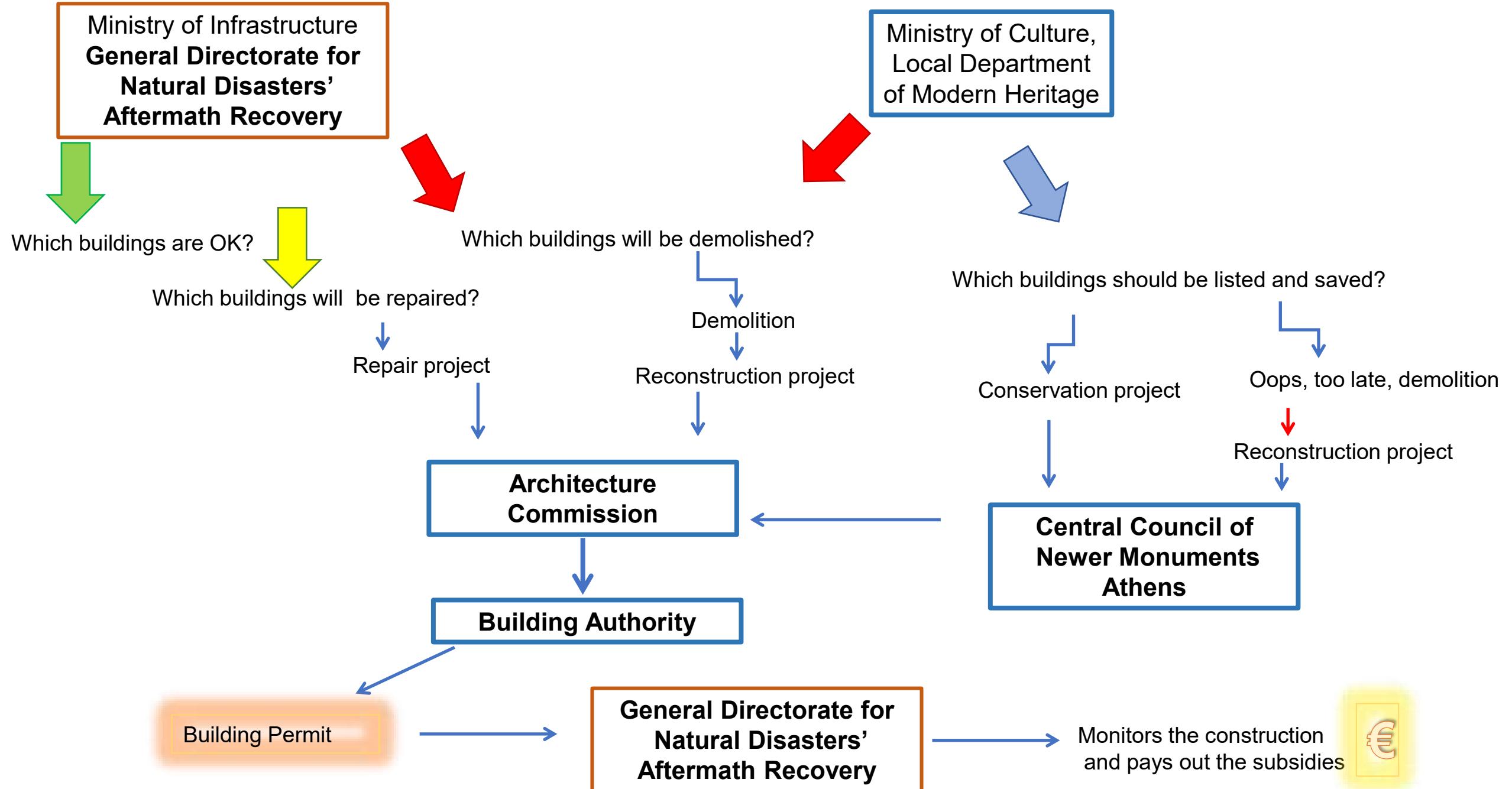


Ministry of Infrastructure
**General Directorate for
Natural Disasters'
Aftermath Recovery**

Ministry of Culture,
Local Department
of Modern Heritage

No planning on behalf of the State or Municipality

Recovery as an affected properties' compensation scheme



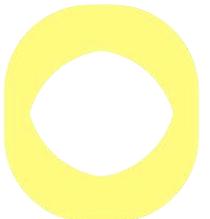
LEGAL FRAMEWORK AFTER THE EARTHQUAKE – 2017/18

General Directorate for Natural Disasters' Aftermath Recovery.

Classification:



No damage



Damaged, can be repaired.



Severely damaged, has to be demolished. Can be rebuilt.

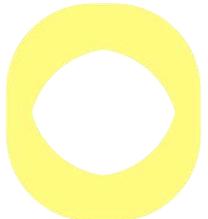
LEGAL FRAMEWORK AFTER THE EARTHQUAKE – 2017/18

General Directorate for Natural Disasters' Aftermath Recovery.

Classification:



No subsidy.



Repair subsidy of **300 €** per floor-surface sq. m.



Reconstruction subsidy of **800€** per floor-surface sq. m. + 200 € per sq. m. bank loan

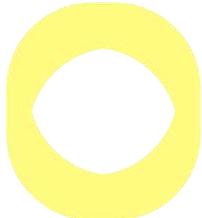
LEGAL FRAMEWORK AFTER THE EARTHQUAKE – 2017/18

Special ad hoc arrangements for Vrissa, because of its heritage status

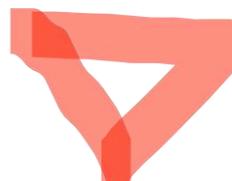
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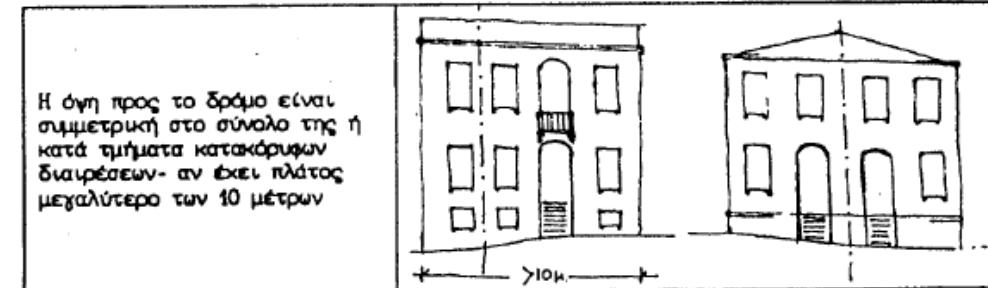
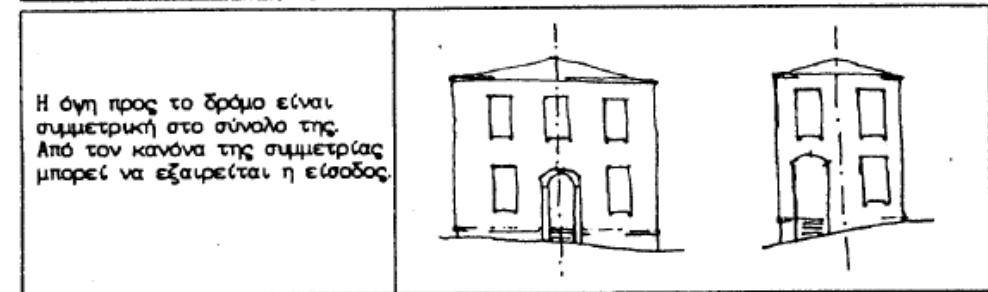
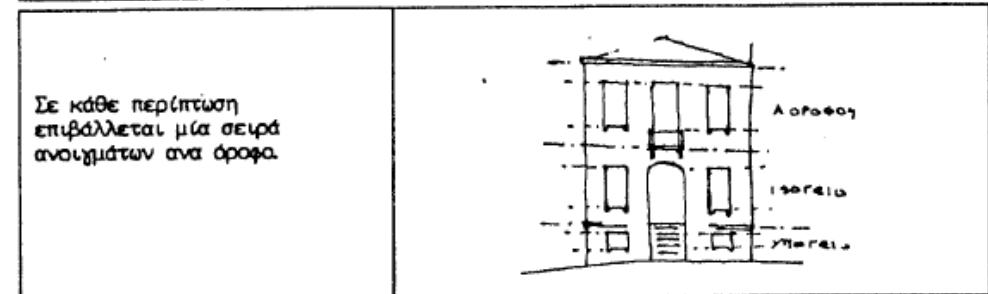
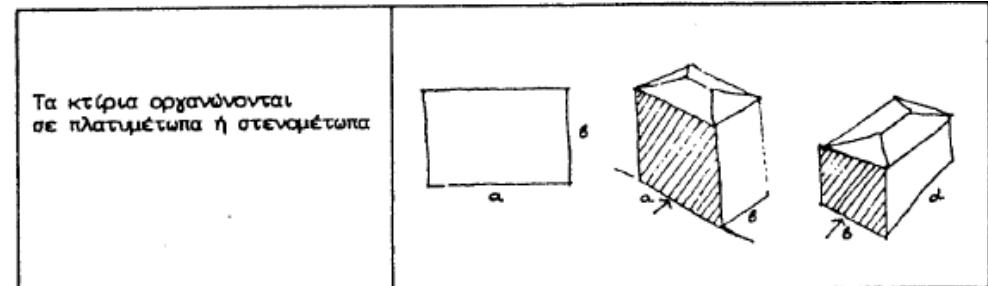
+200 € /sq.m. for building inside Vrissa

+300 € /sq.m for the listed buildings

LEGAL FRAMEWORK BEFORE THE EARTHQUAKE - 2002

- Rules for new buildings (geometry, materials, etc).
- Rules for changing doors and windows, painting, etc.

Everything had to be approved by the local
**Architectural Commission for the North Aegean
Islands**



IMPACT ON THE BUILDING STOCK

Before the earthquake



2024

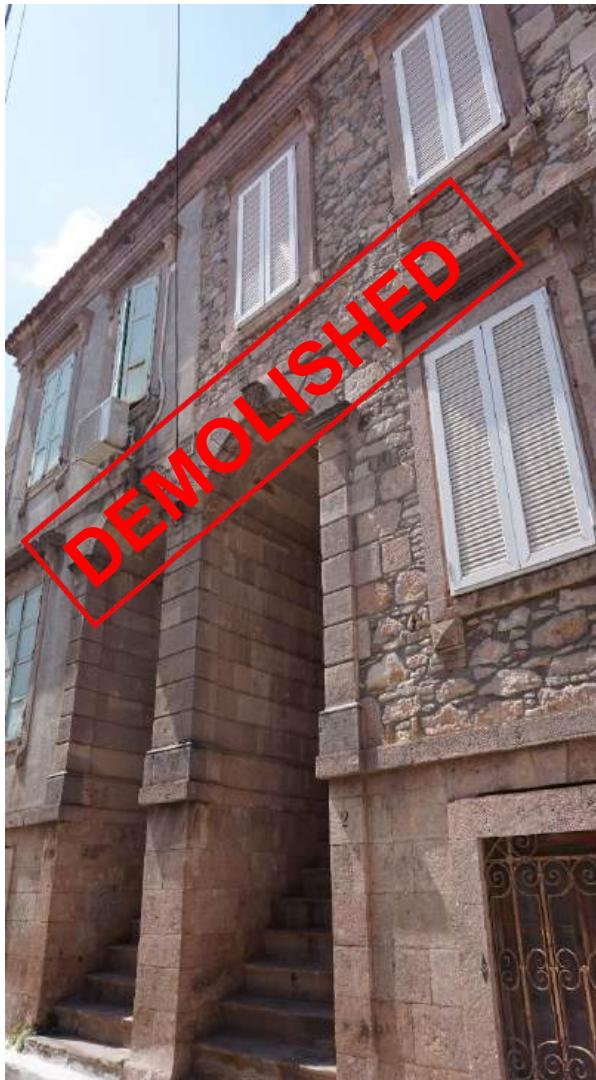


Even buildings assigned yellow (to-be-repaired) had to be demolished because no measures were taken for their protection (propping, shoring).

WHAT ABOUT THE 19 LISTED BUILDINGS?



WHAT ABOUT THE 19 LISTED BUILDINGS? No emergency measures taken



WHAT ABOUT THE LISTED BUILDINGS?



WHAT ABOUT THE LISTED BUILDINGS?

The **2** only listed buildings that were propped up, **5** years after the earthquake, were not the most important ones, but the only ones to have survived neglect.

Shoring cost  extra 65.000 €

Paid by public funds by the Ministry of Culture.

Rebuilding cost 40 m²  30.000 € subsidy

Paid by public funds by the Ministry of Infrastructure.

Real cost of restoration  100.000 € approx.



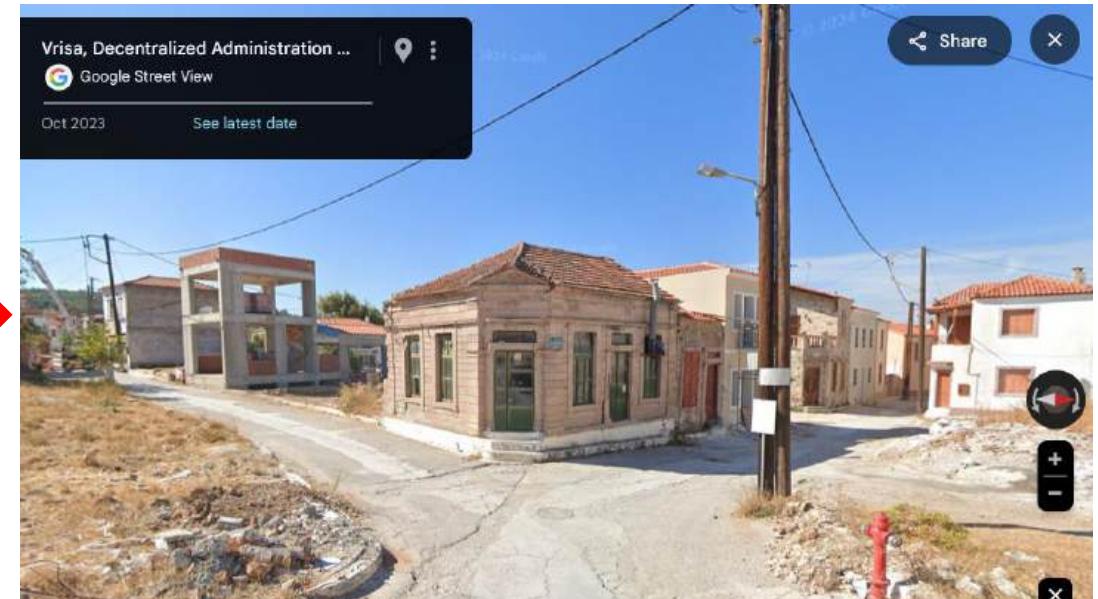
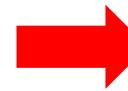
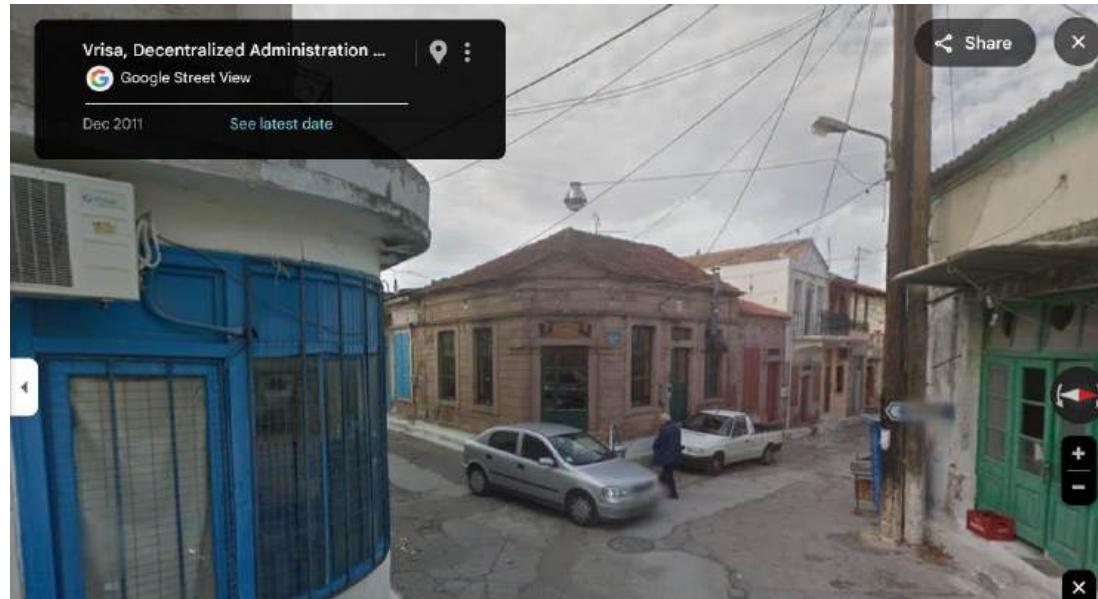
BEFORE & AFTER – The disruption of the urban fabric



BEFORE & AFTER – The loss of authenticity



BEFORE & AFTER – The disruption of the urban fabric



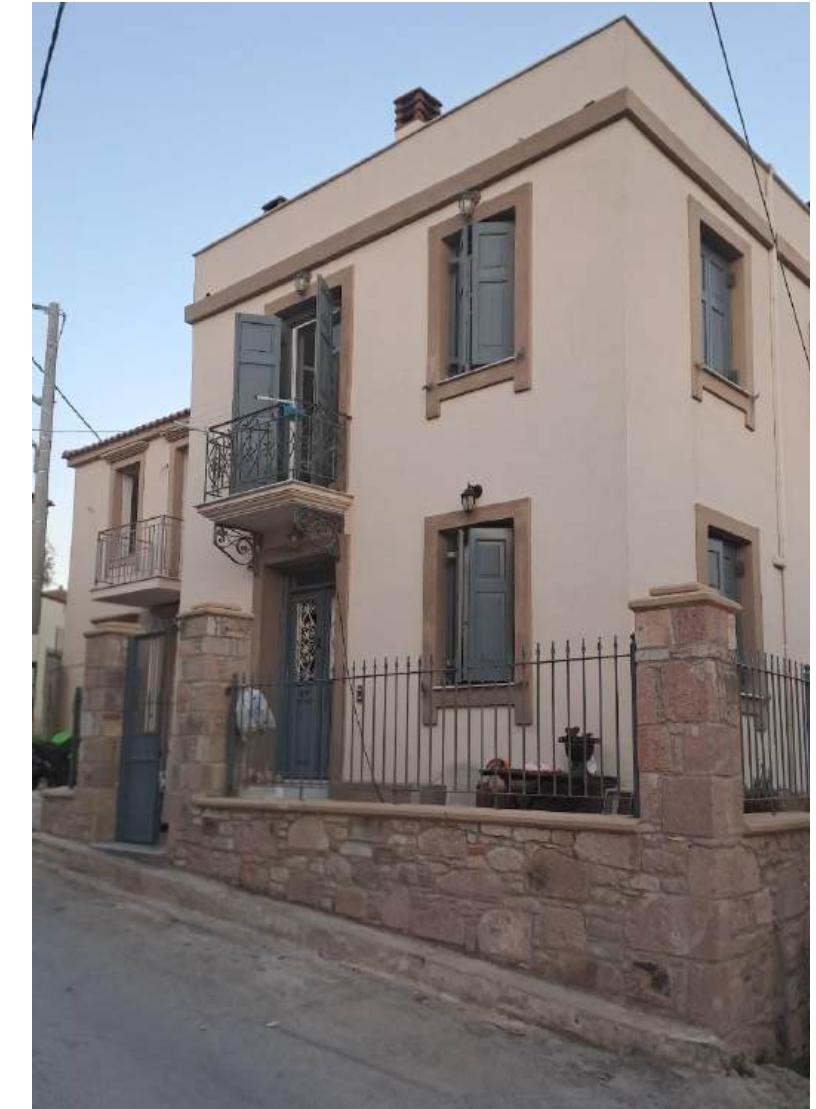
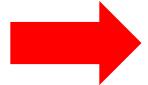
BEFORE & AFTER – The disruption of the urban fabric



What will become of empty lots and the public space?

Urban conservation is much more than an issue of private properties' Insurance compensation

BEFORE & AFTER – The loss of authenticity



Neo – traditional
architecture

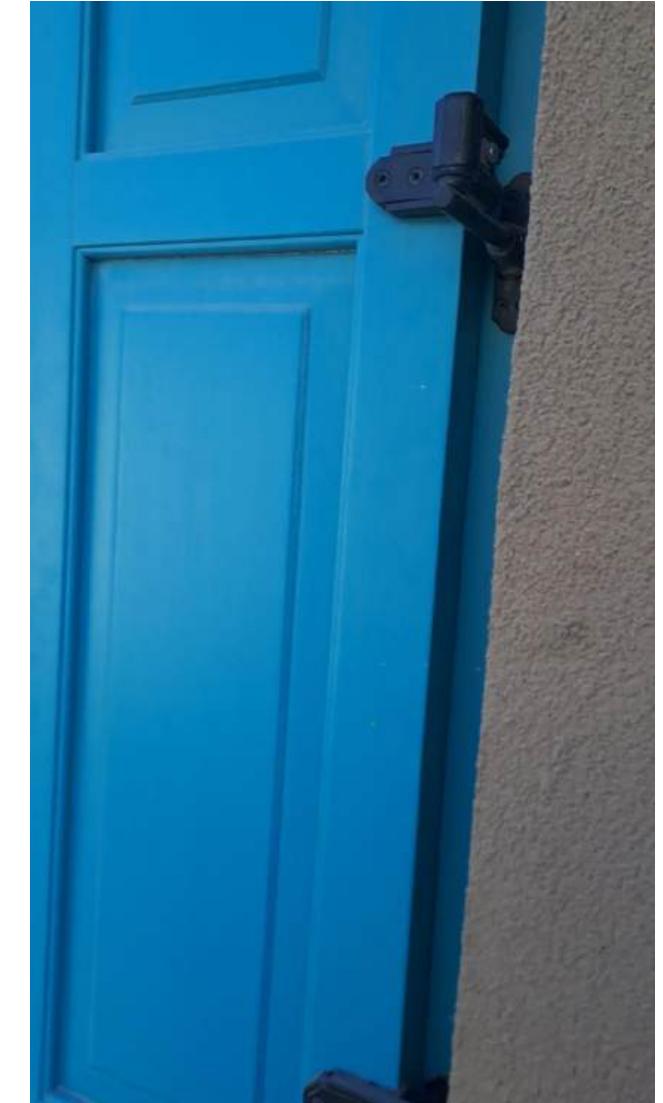
BEFORE & AFTER – The loss of authenticity



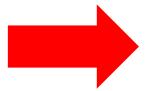
BEFORE & AFTER – Loss of *look & feel*



- At least “Class B” energy efficiency mandatory.
- No restriction on building materials for facades.
- Most owners and engineers chose an External Thermal Insulation Composite System.



BEFORE & AFTER – Loss of *look & feel*



BEFORE & AFTER – Loss of *look & feel*



At least wooden shutters are compulsory – And they are made in POLAND

EMERGENCY STATUS STILL IN EFFECT



August 2025

BUT THE MEMORIES LIVE ON....



August 2016

CONCLUSIONS

- The loss of authenticity and integrity of Vrissa is overwhelming.
- Heritage considerations were in the case of Vrissa an underthought and did not underpin decisions for the village rehabilitation.
- Actual legislation and policy treats a heritage area as an individual properties' issue, not as a place that needs holistic heritage planning and fast protective measures.
- The system that is in place treats heritage places just like any other destruction zone and prioritizes demolition and rebuilding over conservation.
- There are no prevention measures for retrofitting architectural heritage against earthquake.
- There is no monitoring of the on-going process of reconstruction
- There is no system for the protection of heritage, there needs to be a complete overhaul.

Irini Efesiou, 1951 - 2025

*Emeritus Professor
School of Architectural Engineering
National Technical University of Athens*

In memoriam...

