FROM BRENNILIS



TO FUKUSHIMA



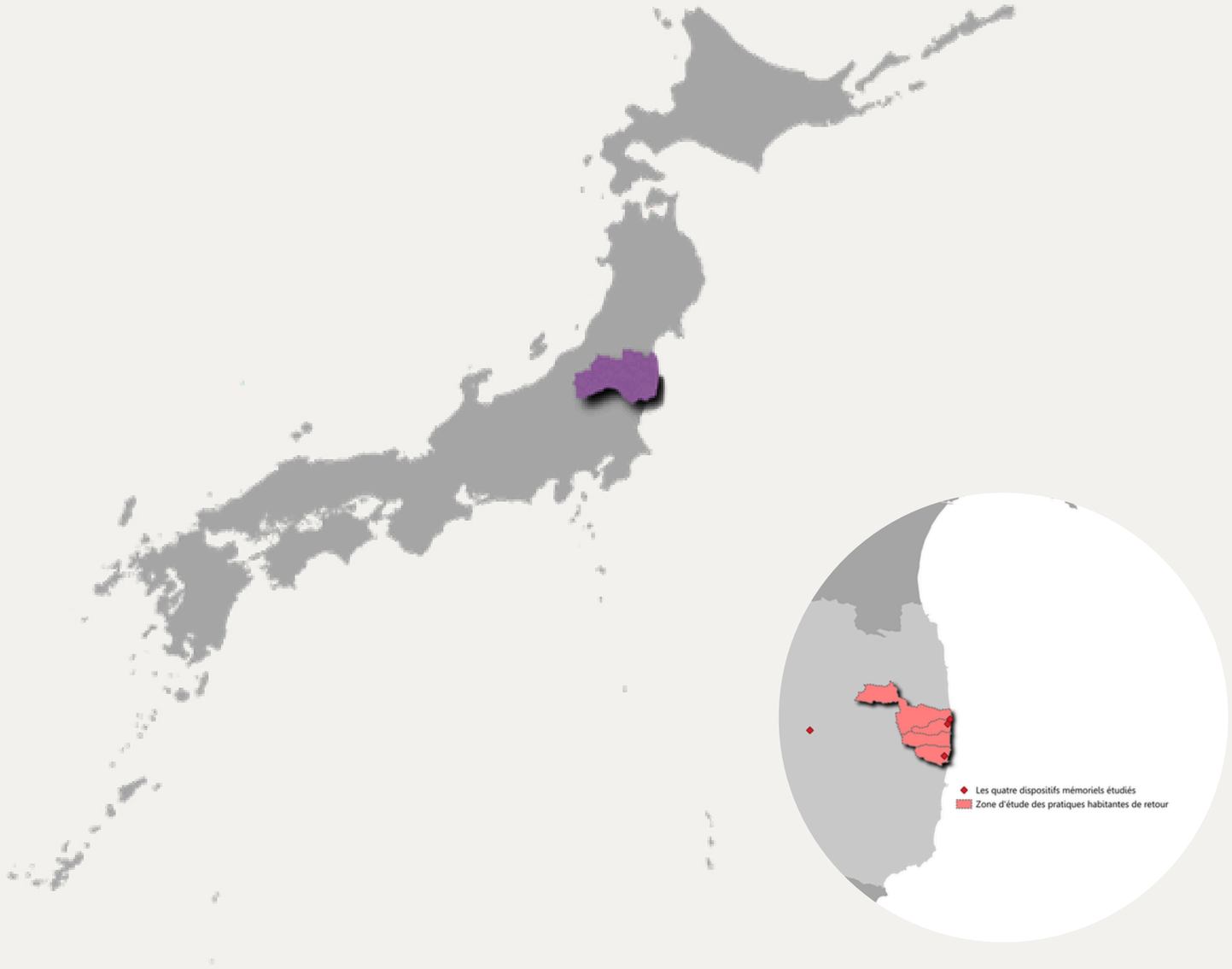
TRACES OF A POPULAR MEMORY IN SPACE AND ATMOSPHERE

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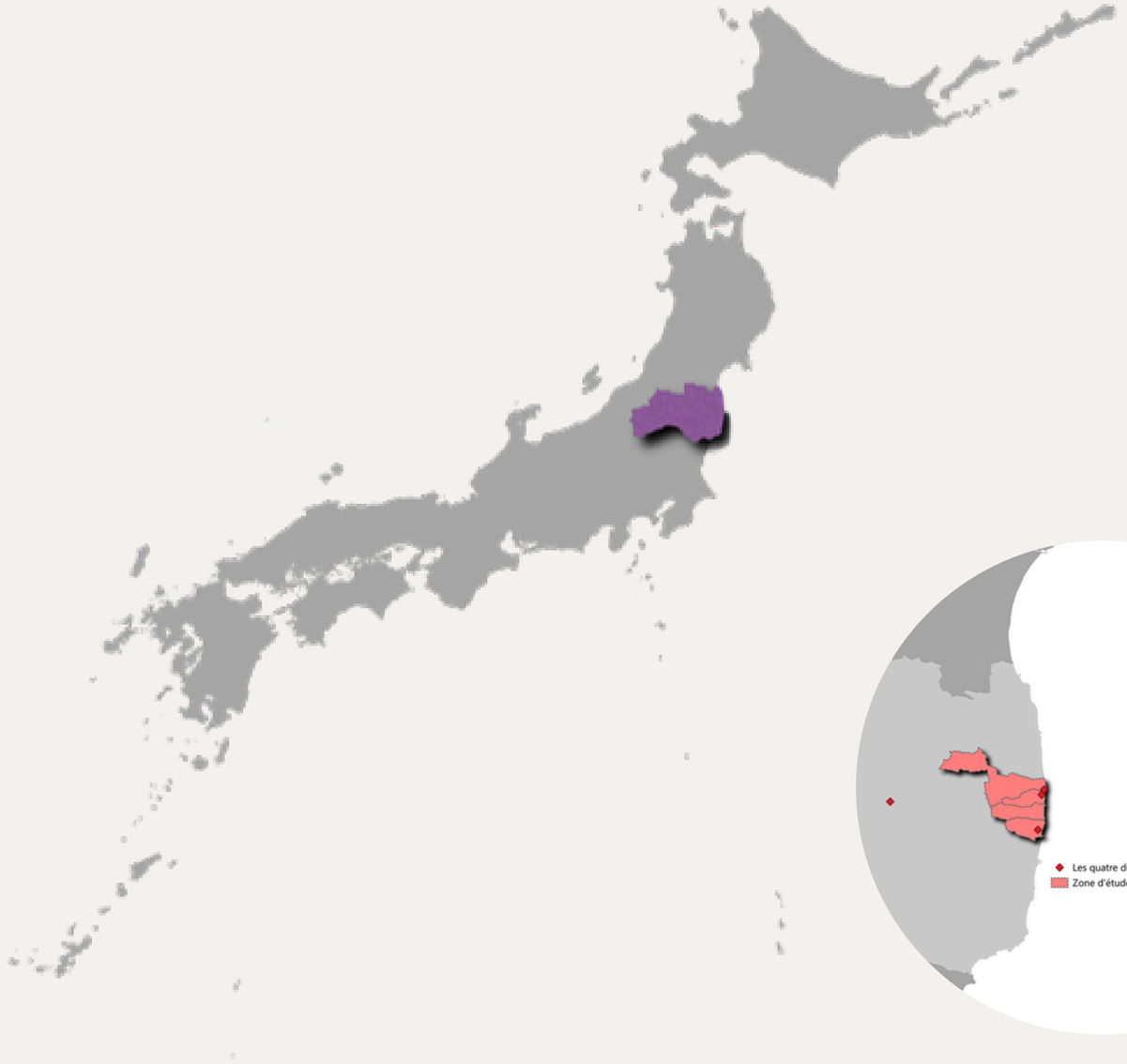
STUDY DAY *DECOMMISSIONING FESSENHEIM : ERASING AND TRANSMISSION* – 21ST SEPTEMBER 2026

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Spatial structuration of memories in post-nuclear territories



Spatial structuration of memories in post-nuclear territories



Geography

Semiotics

Geosemiotics

1 Two territories with some similar characteristics

1.1 A full decommissioning process

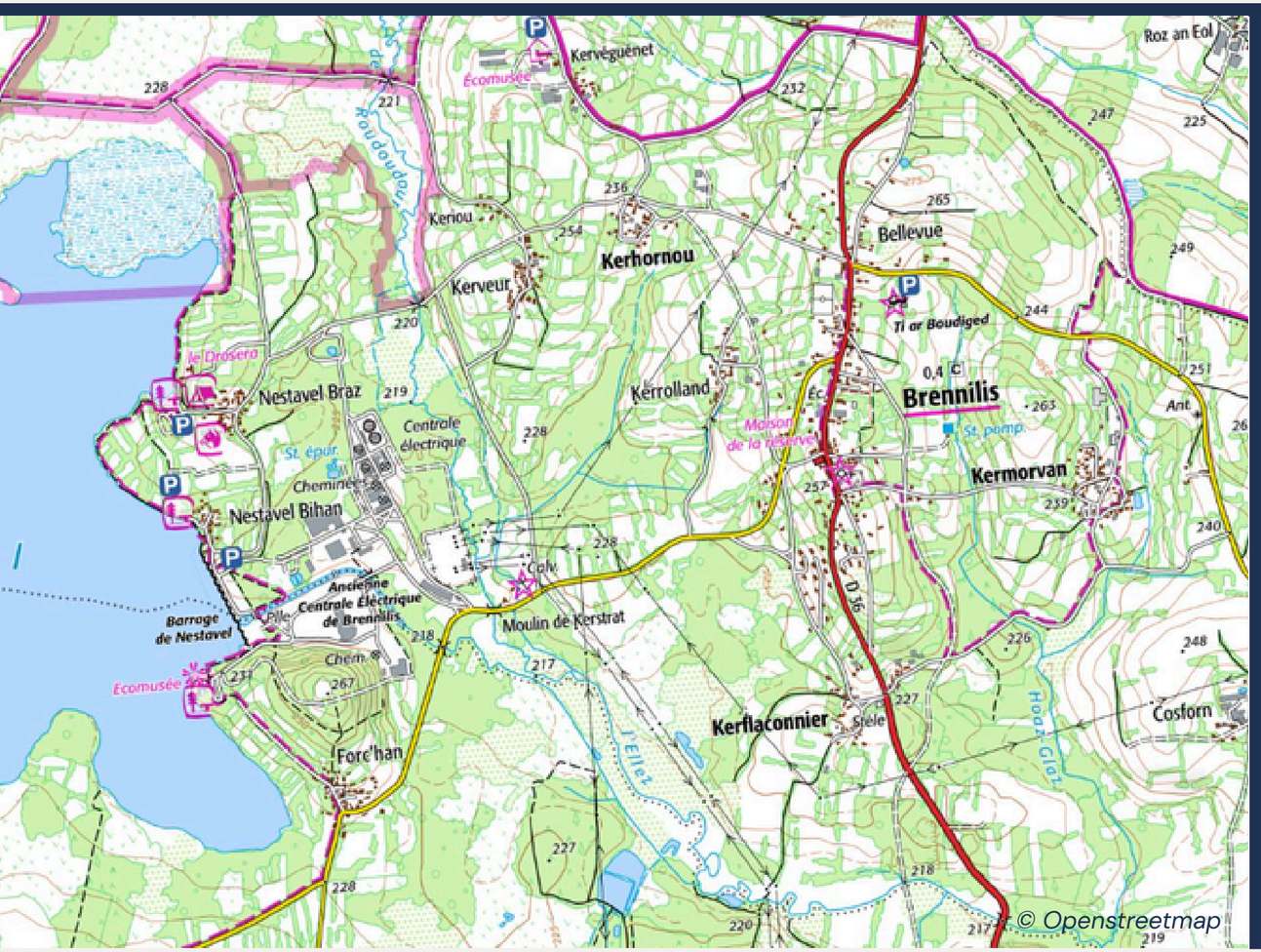


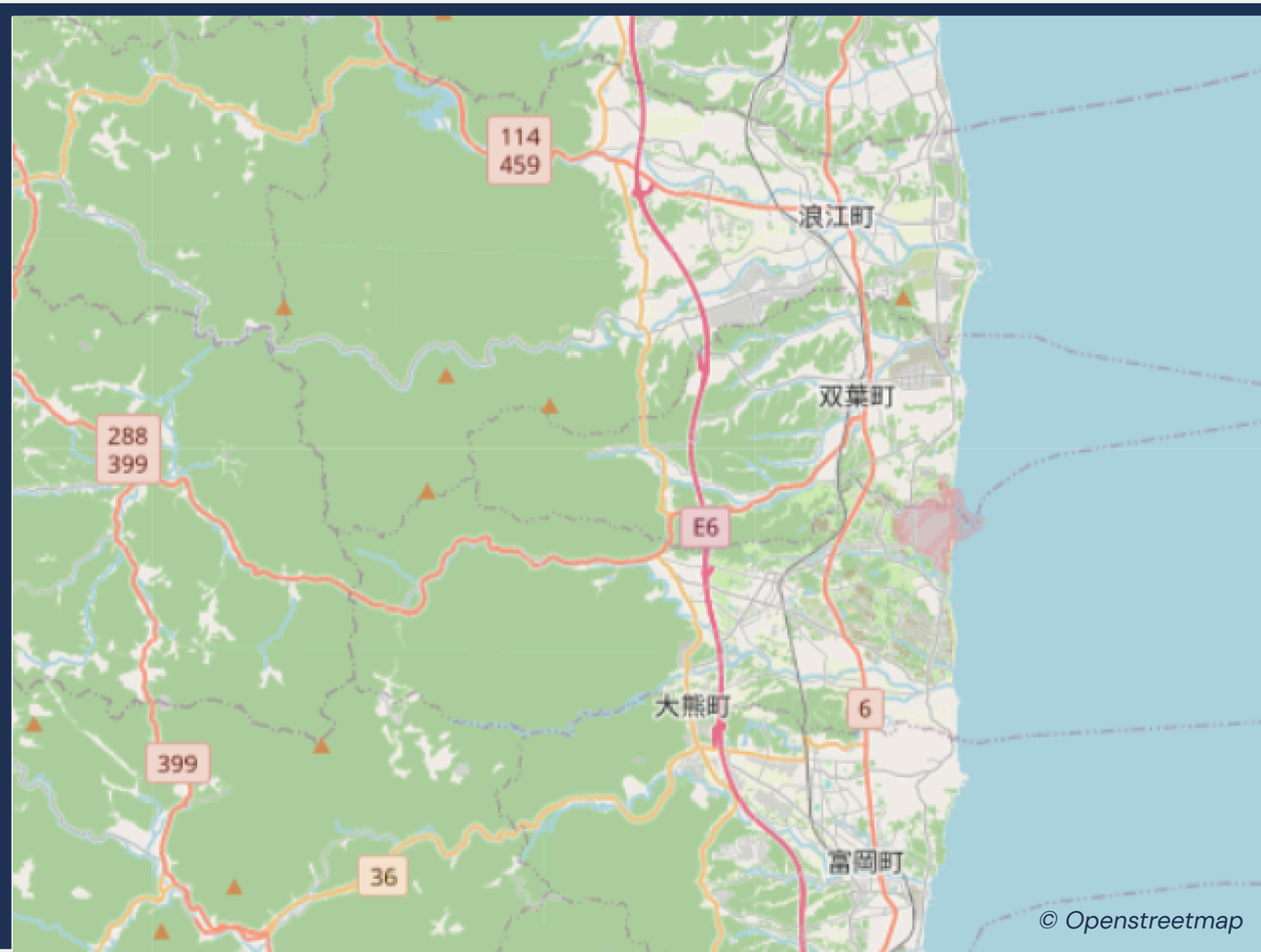


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1 Two territories with some similar characteristics

1.2 The Yeun Elez and Fukushima : two rural regions





1 Two territories with some similar characteristics

1.3 A local / national opposition to nuclear energy



© 20 minutes



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1 Two territories with some similar characteristics

1.4 Persisting local legends and myths





© Takobue / Dreamstime

The proximity of a legendary place emphasizes the sacredness of a ritual : [...] the Yeun Elez / manmade lake of Brennilis (Samhain ceremony / Heven of the Britanny Gorsedd). **Moigne, 2023**

[...] the nuclear ghost in Brennilis reactivates the myths and legends of this region in Brittany, partly fed by the communication games between transparency and opacity of the authorities and EDF. **Le Touze, Schneyders, 2023**

This album [*L'Ankou*, Spirou et Fantasio, n°2000 - 2019] *is born from the encounter of my grandmother stories and the jitters provoked in me by the mystery of nuclear energy.* J.-C. Fournier in **Gallego, 2025**

For instance, members of the Ōmoto 大本 movement have been conducting rituals to soothe the wandering souls (chinkon 鎮魂) in the coastal areas of the disaster-stricken region. **Isomae, 2025**

Tohoku is a part of Japan already associated with a rich tradition of folk tales and ghost stories and the thousands of untimely deaths and the tsunami's horrific aftermath [...] certainly offered fertile material for whatever superstitious tendencies existed among the population. **Wynn Kirby, 2022**

Since its construction, the Ô-Jizô-san has essentially been a catalyst of mortuary rituals as visitors. In seeing the tall statue, passersby, small groups of visitors as well as occasionnal Buddhist monks have come to pay their respects, pray and make offering for the dead. **Boret, 2018**

The popular memorialization process in post-nuclear territories intertwines with local legends and stories about places of fear and death.

2 Methodology of a test field : abduction and indicial paradigm

Abduction is the process of forming an explanatory hypothesis. It is the only logical operation which introduces any new idea; for induction does nothing but determine a value and deduction merely evolves the necessary consequences of a pure hypothesis.

C. S. Peirce





But the [...] indicial paradigm can become a tool allowing the clearing of the mists that more and more darken a complex social structure. [...] The existence of a deep connexion explaining superficial phenomenons is confirmed precisely when we assert that direct knowledge of such a connexion is impossible.

If reality is opaque, there is favourable zones, clues allowing its deciphering.

C. Ginzburg, 1980

3 The power plant and the village : vitalizing and decommissioning

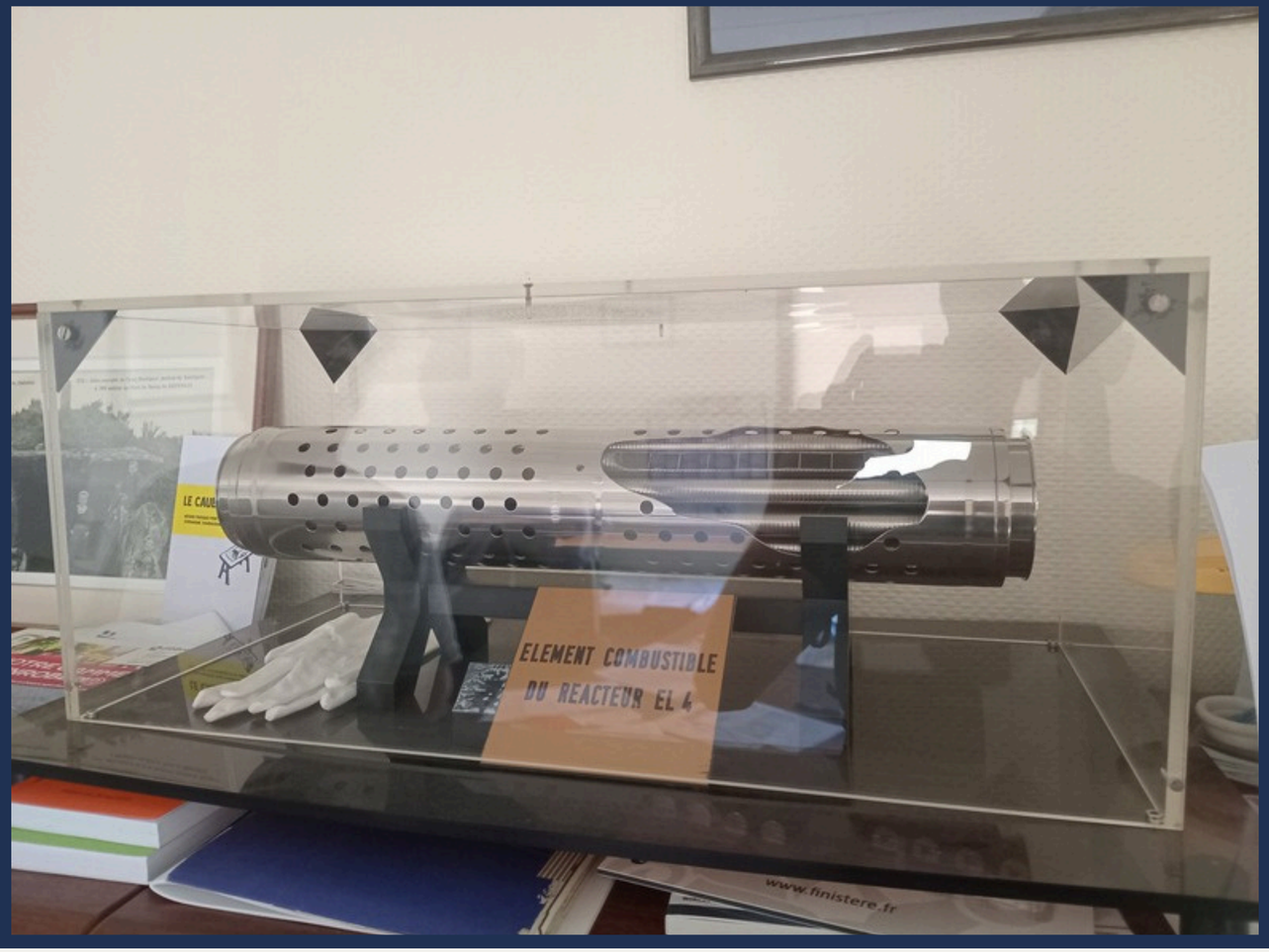


The old EDF allotment at the exit of the village.



The old CEA allotment at the exit of the village.

3 The power plant and the village : vitalizing and decommissioning



A fuel element of the EL4 power plant exposed in the office of the Brennilis mayor.

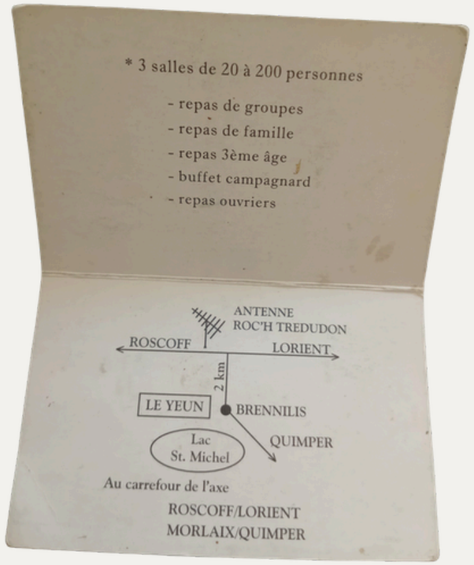


Poster exhibited on the city hall of the village, informing of the visits organised at the power plant.

3 The power plant and the village : vitalizing and decommissioning





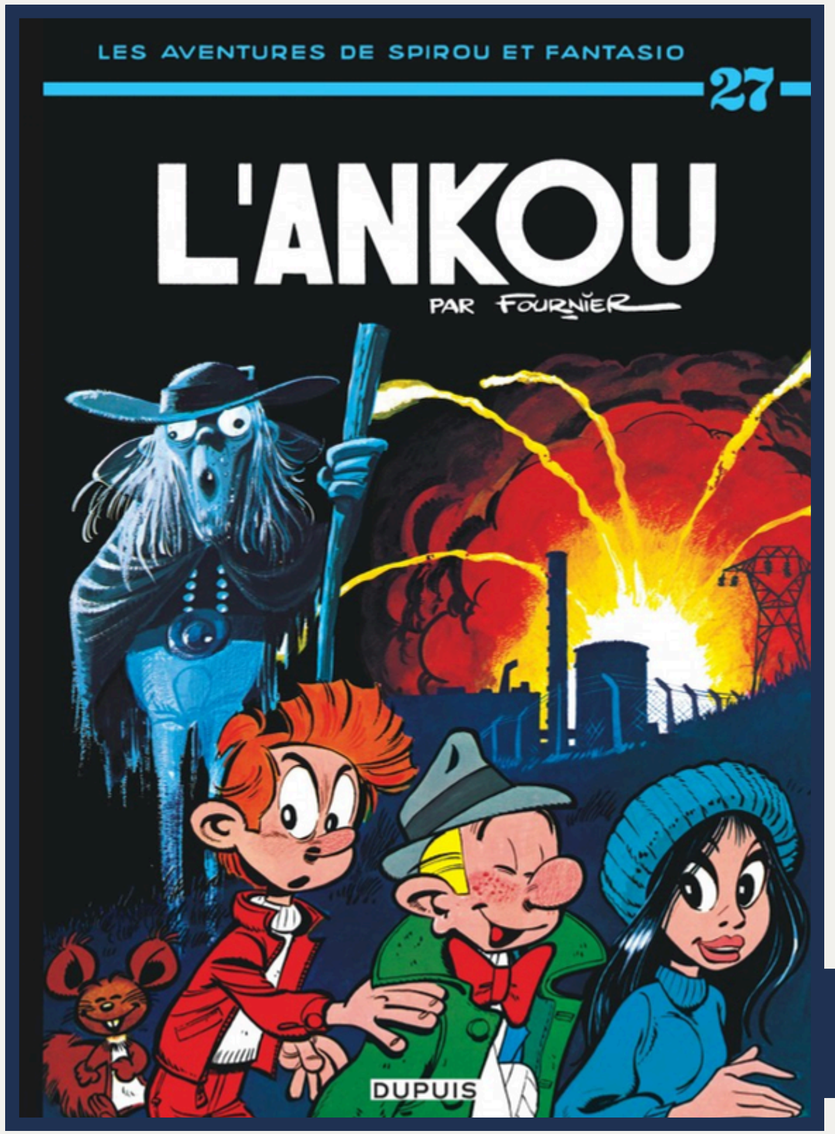


Then, they shut down the plant, completely. Decommissioning, everything was shut down. It was frightening. But no. EDF made me a contract. And I made a room just for EDF. **Interview B4**

But people here, they were happy with their plant. [...] They earned their living with the plant. Most of the peasants (sic)*, they had little farms around here [...]. Well, these people, almost each one of them had a job near, at the plant.* **Interview B4**

It has been very hard. Very complicated. The plant, it was all of our lives. I remember when I saw the command room in a tipper truck, I cried. **Interview B2**

4 The power plant and the Ankou : an outsider point-of-view ?



It is an association made between death and the power plant to provoke fear. **Interview B1**

I gave it to my grandchildren. They told me nothing, I have it at home. I am not scared. **Interview B2**

I read it a long time ago. I think I gave it to one of my grandchild. [...] I think we were happy [of the album], it was pleasing to... Yes, I think... It was a long time ago. I think I liked it. **Interview B4**

The story of Spirou et Fantasio *L'Ankou*, published in Spirou magazine (n° 2000 to 2019, 1977).

4 The power plant and the Ankou : an outsider point-of-view ?



The artificial lake of Saint-Michel. A local myth locates the Gates of Hell in the bottom of the lake.

The Gates of Hell, they were here before the power plant. It already existed. And one day, it [the plant] will be gone. Maybe one day, we will sell little chunks of it just like the Berlin Wall. **Interview B5**

It is mainly the Ancients that feared the Ankou and death. Today, young people, they don't think about that. They don't know it. **Interview B2**

People [from Brennilis] were never scared. At that time, there was even people [...] from the CEA who fished in the restricted zone. **Interview B1**

People who have a problem with the plant, they are people who are not from Brennilis. We have the nuclear culture. **Interview B2**

4 The power plant and the Ankou : an outsider point-of-view ?

View of the Brennilis power plant from the village of Botmeur.



© Le Youdig

participative observation of 09/16/2026, 4h45 p.m

Two people enter the hostel to make a reservation.

The client : We have been told people from Brennilis are harsh *(laughing)*.
I am from Botmeur. But I don't come often to Brennilis. Because of the plant. When we were young, they gave us the jitters : << We well take you to the power plant, by night ! >>

The owner : Who told you this ?

The client : My grandfather, Isaac.

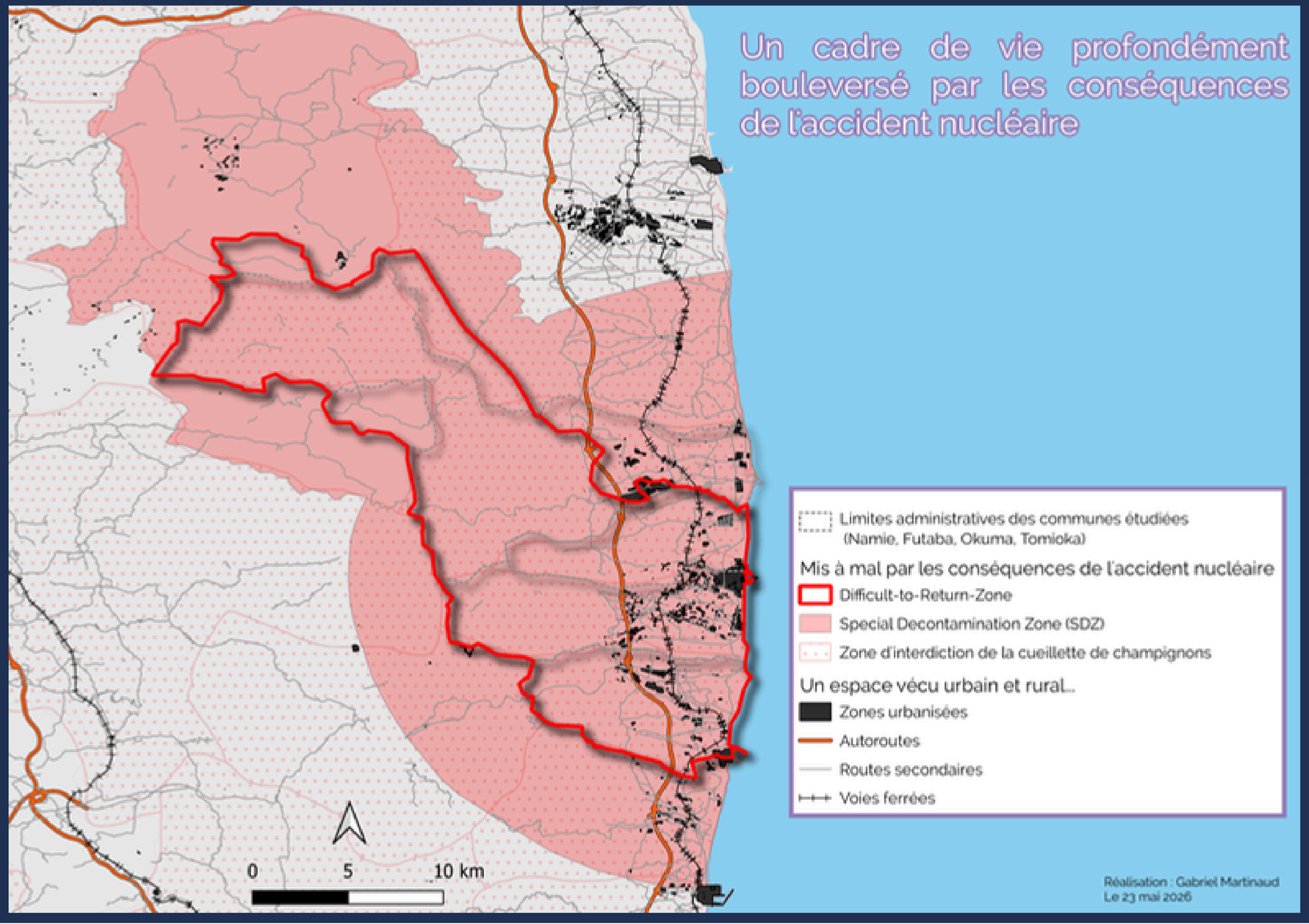
The owner : Isaac ? I knew him. He was'nt afraid of the plant... He had economic benefits from it...

5 Gain of bearings, loss of bearings in post-nuclear territories



View of the Brennilis power plant from the village of Brennilis.

5 Gain of bearings, loss of bearings in post-nuclear territories





↑ The restricted area of Fukushima, called the *Difficult-to-Return-Zone*. © Sato Shinya

← Map of the different restriction zones after the accident of Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant.