GODS, GOOD'S, CRISIS
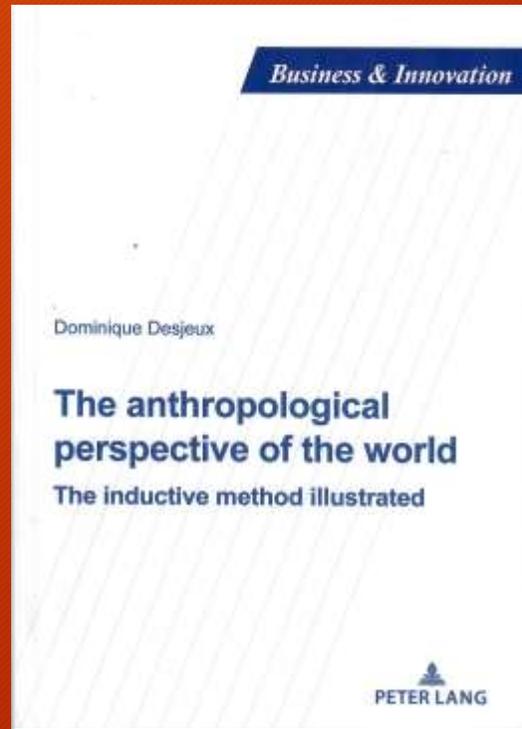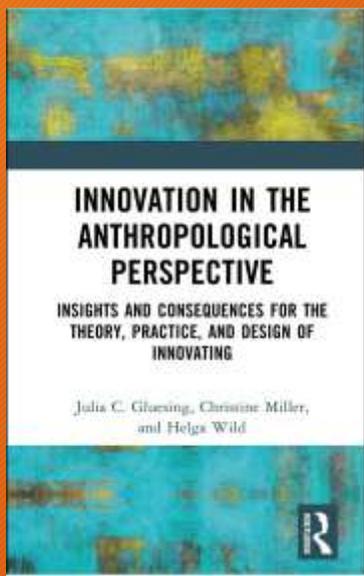
CARSTEN CLAUS – OBERKORN - GERMANY
DOMINIQUE DESJEUX - PROFESSOR EMERITUS, SORBONNE HUMANITIES
UNIVERSITÉ PARIS CITÉ - FRANCE
JULIA GLUESING – WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY
LUCIA LAURENT-NEVA – VISUAL SIGNO- UNITED KINGDOM
GBAS 2025, TOKYO, JAPAN June 14-16

the journey of innovation: from idea to realization

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Innovation as a messy, conflictual and collective process

- In my book *The market of the Gods*, innovation is not approached mainly
  - from the point of view of the individual
  - from the point of view of new technologies
  - from the moment when a new technology, a new organization, or a new service is created
  - It is not limited to capitalism and the Industrial Revolution, unlike the economists and Schumpeter in particular
- Innovation is seen as a process over time, as a journey that has existed since the dawn of human society. It's about how societies are changing.
- This journey follows three main non-linear, often intertwining and conflictual stages.

Instead of asking why Christianity succeeded between the 1st and 4th centuries AD, I looked at the éléments of the system of action

I asked myself the following questions:
What problems and debates arose before the invention?
What logistical problems needed to be solved?
What were the triggering events?
What were the stakes of change?
What standards were put in place?
Was there a mobilizing personality?
What constraints were encountered along the way?
I discovered that innovation was the product of a conflict between two main Jewish groups before becoming that of Christians a century or two later.

The three main stages of innovation process: invention, innovation and reception/adoption

- 1 - Invention is the period during which a whole series of new goods, technologies or services are created. Most of which will disappear before being adopted by an organization (company, army, administration, NGO, distribution, family, recycling, etc.).

- 2 - Innovation is the collective process, the interplay of players (engineers, marketers, financiers, IT specialists, salespeople) within an organization, which leads to the transformation/reinterpretation/hybridation of inventions into a "product" acceptable to end-users.

- 3 - Adoption is the moment when a good or new service is adopted by end-users, whether the invention is new or not. The important thing is that it is a novelty in the social milieu that receives it. To be accepted, it must often incorporate elements of the host culture and thus have been transformed from the original invention..

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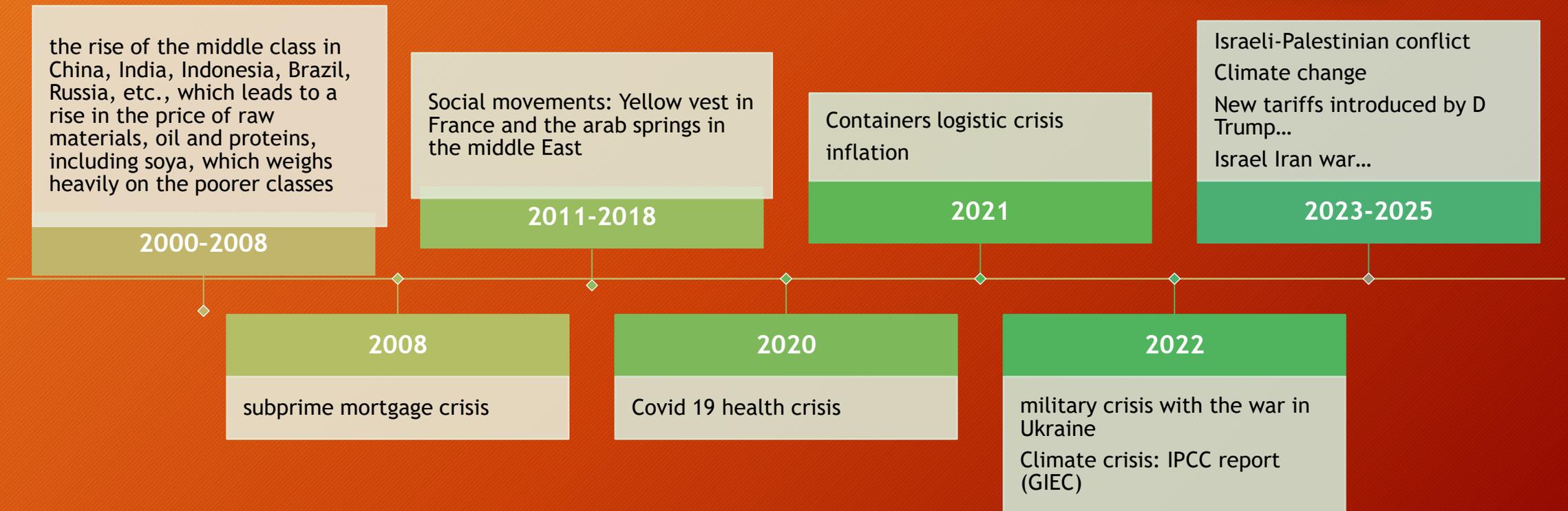## Method : an inductive (or abductive) qualitative approach for observing innovation processes

- It's an empirical practice based on dozens and dozens of qualitative observations of innovation journeys carried out in different parts of the world (Europe, the USA, Brazil, Africa, and Asia (China, Thailand, Singapore)...

- It is an inductive method, which means that when I start a qualitative field study, I don't know where I am going.

the crisis, an important trigger for the innovation process

The multiplication of recent crises as moments of opening or closing to new practices, to new processes of innovation

2000-2008

the rise of the middle class in China, India, Indonesia, Brazil, Russia, etc., which leads to a rise in the price of raw materials, oil and proteins, including soya, which weighs heavily on the poorer classes

2008

subprime mortgage crisis

2011-2018

Social movements: Yellow vest in France and the arab springs in the middle East

2020

Covid 19 health crisis

2021

Containers logistic crisis
inflation

2022

military crisis with the war in Ukraine

Climate crisis: IPCC report (GIEC)

2023-2025

Israeli-Palestinian conflict

Climate change

New tariffs introduced by D Trump...

Israel Iran war...

The collective process of innovation is embedded in three main constraints

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The material, social, and symbolic constraints of the situation that organise the innovation process

A few material constraints	A few social constraints	A few symbolic and psychosocial constraints
• Time • Space • Budget • The system of concrete objects • Energy and climate change • Logistics	• Learning • Social norms • "Predigital" and digital social networks	• Personal or professional identity • Perceived risks • Mental burden

The case of The market of the Gods
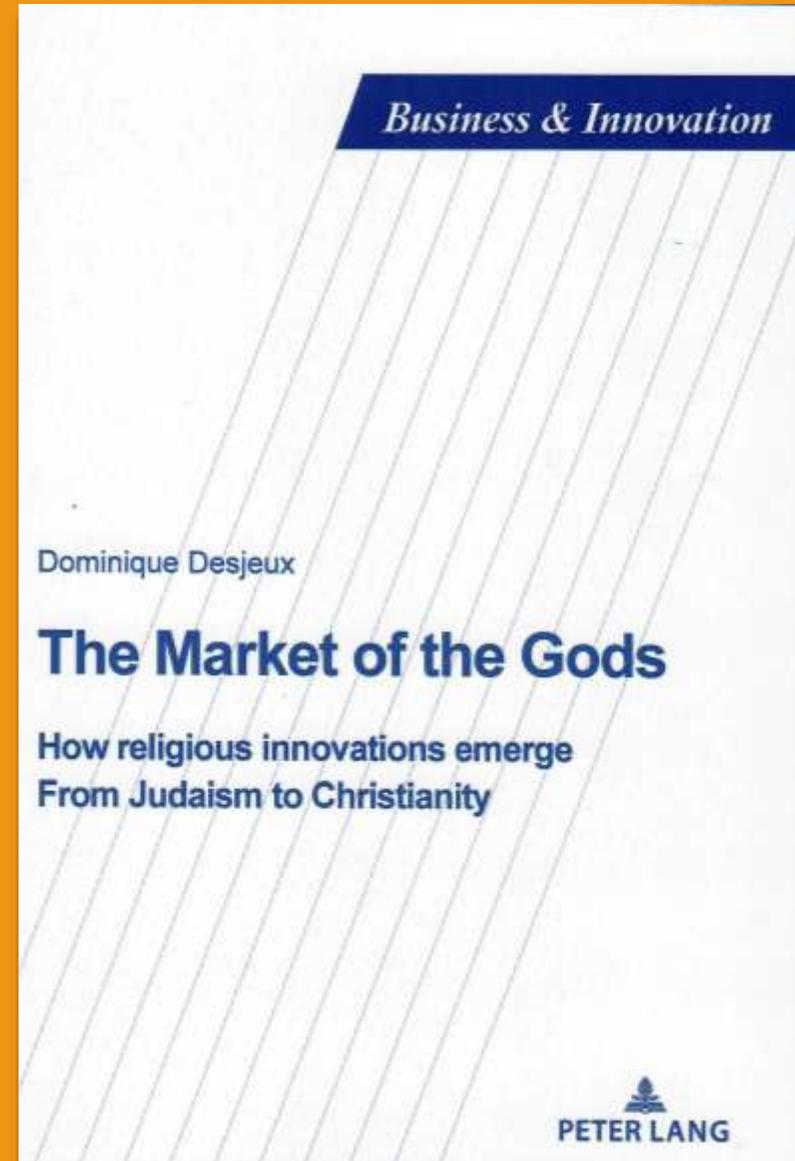
The "5" crises that triggered the emergence of monotheism between 1200 and 400 BCE (Before Common Era) with Yahweh and then Jesus.

The climate crisis and the copper economy (15th-12th B.C.): At the heart of polytheism: the encounter with Yahweh (Blacksmith)

the Babylonian deportation crisis (6th B.C.): A cross between Egyptian tradition, Zoroastrian monotheism and Hebrew religious culture

Alexander's conquests

The rise of Greek culture (4th-1st century BCE): cultural unification,

the common Greek language, debates on circumcision, proselytism, the resurrection of the dead

The destruction of the temple (A.D. 70)The tension between two survival strategies, one based on the proselytizing "Rabbi Jesus", the other on the rules of the Torah.

Decline in Jewish population from 5/7M to 1M between 1st and 7th centuries Monetary crisis of the Roman Empire (4th)Institutionalization of Christianity

The five main components of the jewish system of action

- A Jewish diaspora: a "pre-digital" social network through which the Judeo-Christian movement would spread.
    - It is developed around the Mediterranean, particularly in Alexandria and Babylon, and later in Antioch and even as far as Lyon (France), from the 4th century BCE to the 1st century CE.
- The standard Greek language:
    - The Koine (κοινή) is equivalent to today's Globish ("global English"), served as a medium for spreading Jewish, and later Roman and Christian, culture.
- A mean of diffusion the information:
    - A book, the Torah was translated into Greek in the third century BCE and became known as the Septuagint.
    - It would become one of the tools of proselytism among Hellenized "pagans."
- A practice: Proselytism
    - "I will make you a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach the ends of the earth," declared the prophet Isaiah as early as the 6th century BCE.
    - Therefore, some Jews were proselytizers long before the future Christians.
- A mobilizing personality such as Jacques, Pierre and Paul

Two debates emerged in the 2nd century BCE, : on the existence of eternal life and the other on the necessity of circumcision.

- The Greek domination of the Ptolemies was a source of tension and revolts among the Jews, the most famous of which was the Maccabean Revolt (2nd century BCE).
  - The Maccabees had been massacred while observing the Sabbath. In response to this contradiction of the righteous being punished, the idea emerged that there is eternal life beyond death, and thus, the sufferings on earth could be endured with the hope of a better afterlife.
- Around the second century BCE, the Greek practice of gymnasiums spread in Israel. Athletes competed in the nude. The Greeks mocked the exposed glans of the circumcised Jews and barred them from gymnasiums and baths.
  - Consequently, some of the Jewish elite sought to hide their circumcision
- The debates about converting pagans, questioning circumcision, and believing in eternal life after death were already underway before the first century CE, the time of the arrival of the Jewish messiah, Jesus.

The two major crises which made the strategic choice between the different factions of the Jewish people

The conquests of Alexander the Great,

- The first dates back to the conquests of Alexander the Great, which led to the dominance of Greek culture between the 4th and 1st centuries BCE.
  - This period brought about the cultural unification of the Mediterranean, largely due to the spread of the "common language" of Greek.
  - At the same time, it introduced debates and tensions within Jewish culture regarding circumcision, proselytism, and the resurrection of the dead, all of which would be central to the discussions about the survival of the Jewish people.
    - "I will make you a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach the ends of the earth," declared the prophet Isaiah as early as the 6th century BCE. Therefore, some Jews were proselytizers long before the future Christians.

The "black swan" event: the Destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE: A Threat of disappearance for the Jewish People

- It is an unforeseen occurrence—the revolt of the Zealots against the Romans, led to the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE.
  - The end of the Temple priesthood raised new questions about the survival and unity of the Jewish people and the strategy to be followed to avoid disappearing.
  - In the face of this existential threat, Jews developed two opposing survival strategies.

The Strategic Dilemma of the Jews After the Destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem

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The rabbinic movement: refocusing on its "core business" and maintaining complex rules

- The first was that of the rabbinic movement, which was emerging from the teachings of Rabbi Hillel.

- This movement would be the foundation for the gradual implementation of the 613 commandments derived from the Torah.

  - After the destruction of the Temple, a Pharisaic rabbi, a disciple of Rabbi Gamaliel, who was himself a disciple of Hillel, Johanan Ben Zakkai, reorganized Judaism from the city of Yavneh.

  - He had not participated in the Zealot revolt against the Romans, who therefore allowed him to reconstitute Judaism.

- This strategic choice led to a significant demographic shift:

  - the Jewish population adhering to the Torah decreased from 5 or 7 million to 1 million between the 1st and 7th centuries CE,

  - while the Judeo-Christians grew to 9 million within three centuries.

The process of adoption 21

The spread of Judeo-Christian religion thanks to synagogues as logistical platforms...

The second strategy was that of the "Judeo-Christians." They believed that the Jewish religion needed to open up to the pagan world to grow and avoid extinction. They referred to "Rabbi" Jesus, who would become Jesus Christ, and who had been resurrected.

The Judeo-Christian movement grew within the synagogues established around the Mediterranean. These synagogues served as "logistical platforms" for the dissemination of the religion.

The adaptation 23

...and simplification of religious rules

- Since the time of the Apostle Paul, the proselytizing Jewish movement sought to simplify the rules of Judaism by
  - Eliminating dietary restrictions and circumcision.
  - A single ritual, baptism, replaced the many purification rituals involving water.
  - There was no requirement to attend school, making this "religious offer" more economical than Rabbinic Judaism
  - Offering a better future through the promise of resurrection.
- This innovation simplified daily life
  - by reducing the mental burden associated with religious rules
- It offers an enchanting view of the afterlife.
- The simplification of rituals and the low cost of learning the new faith partly explain the success of the Christian monotheistic innovation in the western Mediterranean from the 2nd century CE onwards

The monetary crisis of the Roman Empire, an opportunity for Christians

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The strategic condition for the spread of religious innovation: the standardization by the State action

- Finally, the Christian movement, which had separated itself from its Jewish origins, became institutionalized in the 4th century CE, thanks to an alliance with Emperor Constantine and the monetary crisis that shook the Roman Empire.
  - In 313, Emperor Constantine published the "Edict of Milan", making Christianity a legal religion on an equal level with "paganism", which ceased to be the official religion.
  - By becoming a Christian, Emperor Constantine gave himself the right to "confiscate all the treasures of precious metals from pagan temples" and then to melt them down "to make a new currency, the Solidus, to pay soldiers," as Bruno Dumézil writes.
  - Christians become a kind of substitute administration

The creation of a standard

- All that remained for Constantine to do was to unify all Christian religious currents to create a "standard," the Nicene Creed, which would encourage the spread of innovation.
  - Cf Vinsel, Lee. Moving Violations (Hagley Library Studies in Business, Technology, and Politics) (p. 301). Johns Hopkins University Press. Édition du Kindle.
  - (Réguler la route : histoire des normes et de la sécurité automobile)

In order to spread, Christianity incorporated into its practices some of the "pagan" practices used to combat everyday misfortunes.

- But if they want to prevail, Christians must adopt certain pagan practices of the past.
  - "Jerome, like Augustine, another early Church Father, declared that "it was better to worship the saints in the pagan way than not to worship at all […] In time, holy images of Jesus and John the Baptist first, then those of other figures and, preferably, paintings of saints and angels, also decorated the walls [of churches]".
  - Finally, churches responded to requests for "mental or physical healing", "personal advice" or "punishment of the wicked".
  - Many objects of pagan origin, such as candles, bells and holy water, which protects against disease and promotes harvests, have been preserved".
- All these practices have to do with life, illness, death and protection.

opening

- Religions seem to have developed at a time when people needed to protect themselves and explain the uncertainties and risks of everyday life, illness and death.
  - The "turning over of the dead", which I observed in Madagascar, renews the alliance between the living and the dead.
  - As in most agrarian societies, the ancestors are supposed to guarantee good harvests, prevent illness and help them have many children.
- In the market of the gods, the deities who won were those who promised the best social security.
- This is still true today, particularly in the form of what is known as "populism", often supported by charismatic religious movements. It reflects the insecurity of the working classes, as it always has.

Innovation is a journey triggered by a crisis that follows several paths under the constraints of situations.

- Most often, the innovation process is triggered by a crisis.

- It then follows a path from crisis, invention, and innovation to adoption/reinterpretation that mobilizes actors, objects, places, information, social networks, and meaning or imagery.

- Among these actors, the State often plays a direct or indirect role in the innovation process by promoting the construction of infrastructures, the standardization of goods and services norms, or by compelling action.

- The success of the innovation will depend on the material, social, and symbolic constraints that organize the entire process.

- To understand who adopts or rejects an innovation, one must ask who stands to gain or lose from its adoption.

the objectives of technical and organizational innovations: to simplify life and cut costs

- Between 1750, when the era of coal and consumption began in England and Western Europe, and 2000, all innovations were broadly organized around 5 objectives:
  - Simplify the use of consumer goods thanks to industry, chemistry and industrial energies.
  - save time,
  - use less human energy
  - boost productivity and increase the quantity of goods consumed
  - pay less, lower the costs and prices of goods consumed

The tensions between degrowth and historical innovations

- This is in direct tension with the degrowth strategies needed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions,

- This may mean doing more on our own,

- which increases the time needed to cook, garden, make yoghurt, repair appliances, buy second-hand, walk or cycle, etc.

- which requires shortening supply chains by buying locally, which risks increasing production costs and the mental burden of new apprenticeships.

The emergence of a form of austerity: a process of innovation that cannot be taken for granted

- Today, there are very few economic players who know how to manage this transition.

- The religious dimension of "sacrifice" can re-emerge at the heart of a new behavior of frugality.

- This seems to herald the return of Max Weber's "Protestant ethic", which enabled the accumulation of the capital needed for industrial production.

- This was made possible by a transition that took Europe out of the world of bioenergy and into the world of fossil fuels.

- "Protestant austerity", as well as Chinese austerity, would allow us to save money to invest in renewable energies and more sustainable products.

- This simply shows the scale of the task over 10, 20 or 30 years.

- As a Chinese proverb says: when you're far from the mountain, you can't see the path you have to take, but as you move forward, you discover the way to cross the mountain. Translated with www.DeepL.com/Translator (free version)

La Chine du futur ou le discours de frugalité (NYTI, June 3, 2023)吃苦 Chīkǔ

- China's young people are facing record-high unemployment as the country's recovery from the pandemic is fluttering. They're struggling professionally and emotionally. Yet the Communist Party and the country's top leader, Xi Jinping, are telling them to stop thinking they are above doing manual work or moving to the countryside. They should learn to "eat bitterness,"

- Mr. Xi instructed, using a colloquial expression that means to endure hardships.

- Today the party's propaganda machine is spinning stories about young people making a decent living by delivering meals, recycling garbage, setting up food stalls, and fishing and farming.

- In December he told officials "to systematically guide college graduates to rural areas."

- The article, about Mr. Xi's expectations of the young generation, mentioned "eat bitterness" five times. He has also repeatedly urged young people to "seek self-inflicted hardships," using his own experience of working in the countryside during the Cultural Revolution.
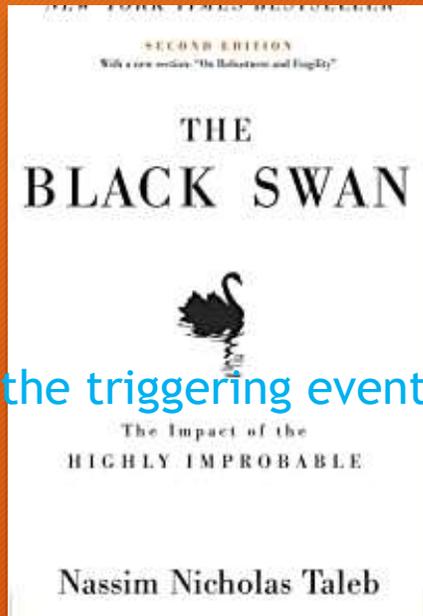
Appendix

A simplified model of the innovation journey: from crisis to constrained adoption by social actors.

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Society is seen as a vast system of action, organized into fields of force along a trajectory that begins with the triggering event (the crisis) and continues through to the adoption of the innovation (under material, social, and symbolic constraints)

Distribution

BtoB
adoption, reinterpretation
or rejection of innovation

**Mobility
Logistics**

Production
Inventions
and innovations
in business

Consumption
adoption, reinterpretation
or refusal of innovation

THE
BLACK SWAN

the triggering event

The Impact of the
HIGHLY IMPROBABLE

Nassim Nicholas Taleb

Environment, waste

Circular economy, business or consumer