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- DR 09010 -

The Social Dimensions of Idea Work in Haute Cuisine: A Bourdieusian Perspective

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November 2009

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The Social Dimensions of Idea Work in Haute Cuisine: A Bourdieusian Perspective[‡]

ABSTRACT:

This paper analyzes idea work in haute cuisine through three case studies. Mobilizing Bourdieu's praxeology, we consider idea work as a practice, an activity that takes sense and meaning in the social world. Thus, idea work reflects the position of the agent in the field and the struggles to maintain or improve this position. In grand restaurants, the chefs play a key role in idea work, even if they involve other people. Idea work is rooted in their personal experience, but is also shaped by the restaurant' style and haute cuisine rules. Idea work relates to chefs' reflection as well as emotions and feelings.

Key-Words:

- Bourdieu
- Creativity
- Field
- Habitus
- Haute Cuisine
- Gastronomy
- Practice

RESUME :

Nous proposons de définir la production d'idées comme une pratique, c'est-à-dire comme une activité qui prend son sens et sa valeur dans un contexte social, pour analyser le travail créatif dans les cuisines de trois grands restaurants.

Mots-clés :

- Champ
- Créativité
- Gastronomie
- Idées
- Pratique

JEL classification : M0, M1, L83

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The social dimensions of idea work in Haute Cuisine: a Bourdieusian perspective

Introduction

The paper aims at analyzing how idea work takes place in grand restaurants. Idea work is a core experience in haute cuisine organizations, where creativity is a pre-requisite to maintain their positions. We mobilize Bourdieu's sociology to frame idea work as a practice and to analyze three cases of chefs' idea work.

Bourdieu's praxeology provides a strong framework to understand the nature of practice and account for it. Moreover, it is particularly relevant for the study of creativity and idea work, since Bourdieu experienced it with the case of Flaubert (Bourdieu 1966), Moliere (Bourdieu 1966) and more generally in arts with the field of literature (Bourdieu 1992), paintings and contemporary arts (Bourdieu et al. 1965, Bourdieu 1984).

In his study of Flaubert's creative project, Bourdieu argued that the social origins and the family background are largely insufficient and naïve to give account of the social dimensions of creativity. He showed that the choices of a writer are much more influenced by the literary community he/she enters when he/she begins to write and he/she has to situate. Flaubert did not want to write as dominant writers. This was more constitutive of his project than being the dunce son of a bourgeoisie family. Bourdieu also replaced Flaubert's work in the whole context of the literary field. He analyzed the driving forces of this social world. He positioned Flaubert and his work with regards to this field and analyzed that Flaubert built his position in opposition to the dominant streams. Bourdieu also showed how Flaubert could escape the strong social structures that weighted upon writers and create a new equilibrium by promoting the pure esthetic and a disinterested posture for artists.

Drawing on Bourdieu's work, we consider idea work as a practice: it is the doing of an agent, him(her)self understood as a social individual, which means that the social world, taken as a field, positions the agent, informs practice and endorses it with meaning and value. We therefore understand practice as the dynamic expression of an agent's habitus (a set of dispositions and beliefs) in a particular field (Bourdieu 1990: 56). Thus practice is grounded in individual experience and influenced by the field while it affects the field in return.

As a consequence, idea works as a practice is an activity performed by an individual whose possibilities are conditioned by his/her personal dispositions, his/her past experiences, his/her position and trajectory in the field. Idea work has social meaning and value. It has

both cognitive bases but is also based on perceptions through the immediate embodiment of agents in the field.

In the next section, we highlight the main contribution of research on creativity and its current challenges. We assert that Bourdieu's praxeology can help to better comprehend what really happens in idea work practices and to give a better account of idea work. In such an attempt, we present the main concepts of Bourdieu's framework we will use later: practice, field and habitus.

Then, we turn to the presentation of our empirical study. We analyze idea work through three cases of grand restaurants and their chefs. We collected both secondary data and primary data, through interviews and observations. Our three cases are Michelin starred restaurants. In grand restaurants, the chefs play a key role in idea work, even if our analysis highlight that chefs involve other people. Idea work is rooted in chefs' personal experience, but is also shaped by the restaurant' style and haute cuisine rules. It relates to chefs' reflection as well as emotions and feelings.

I. Background

1°)Outcomes and current challenges in creativity literature

Creativity is now acknowledged as an essential characteristic for organizations. It has long been seen as a basic skill for artists or those whose job is to invent and design new products, materials or services (Bourguignon 2006). However it is now widely considered as necessary for organizations in all economic sectors, in order to build a competitive advantage in a complex environment (Weaver 2000). Describing and explaining the genesis of creativity, the development of new ideas, is a burning issue in creativity literature. In 1971, Piaget already considered that "the real problem is to explain novelties. The crux of my problem […] is to explain how novelties are possible and how they are formed" (Piaget 1971: 1). In this attempt, some researchers studied individual cases of creative people, considered as genius, such as Darwin, Einstein, The Curies, Picasso (Wallace and Gruber 1989, Simonton 1997), other developed simulation models (Simon 1986, Boden 1999, Latiers et al 2006). These pieces of research favored the cognitive aspects of creativity and focused on the individuals. Following Drazin et al (1999), many authors consider creativity as a "persons's psychological engagement" (Drazin et al. 1990: 301).

As Sternberg and Lubart (1996) argued, cognitive processes had been taken to the whole of creativity, while other important features are ignored. Moreover, the collective dynamics has produced little attention.

Among the few, Kern (2006) questioned the relationship between individual and collective creativity. She showed that rules and artifacts can be vectors for creativity and posits that individual creativity makes sense within a specific social group and, in turn, impacts collective creativity and rules. Hargadon and Bechky (2006) exemplified that creativity may emerge not within a single individual, but rather across the interactions of multiple actors in the process. They describe four types of social interactions: help seeking, help giving, reflective reframing, and reinforcing. They outline the factors that favor such interactions. However, they still remain within a cognitive approach of creativity, building on social cognition in organizations (Meindl et al. 1996, Thompson et al. 1999, Weick and Robert 1993)

process

The importance of the social context in creativity has been outlined by Csikszentmihalyi (1990) and Ford (1996). However, the social context is mostly considered as a set of features that enhances or constrains creativity (Feldman et al 1994, Perkins 1988, Simonton 1996), a set of factors that complements individual factors. According to Ford (1996), the social dimension comprises multiple social domains (sub-groups, organization, field, institutions, market) that will constitute filters for individual creativity to become a successful innovation.

For instance, Feldman (1999) considered that the dimensions explaining creativity should include family aspects, education and preparation, characteristics of the domain and the field, historical forces.

Csikszentmihalyi outlined the social dimension of creativity, recognized as such in a specific historical and social context: “Rembrandt’s contemporaries did not believe he was that creative and preferred the work of several painters less well known to us. Rembrandt’s “creativity” was constructed after his death by art historians who placed his work in the full context of the development of the European painting” (Csikszentmihalyi 1990: 198-199).

The social context is also presented as a constrain, or, more scarcely, as a facilitator for creativity: Skinner (1972) proposed a more deterministic view of creativity, advancing that creativity is shaped by the social and cultural context within which it grows and develops. In a mirroring perspective, Csikszentmihalyi (1988) studied the organizing power of society: “it was the tremendous involvement of the entire community in the creative process that made the Renaissance possible. It was not a random event” (Csikszentmihalyi 1988: 336). Kupferberg (2006) synthesized this institutional perspective through the concept of “creativity regime” as a set of institutionalized norms that define what is accepted or recognized as

creativity within a given social field. Any creativity regime is characterized by both innovation norms and struggles for recognition. Such struggles involve motivational and inspirational aspects as well as strategies of protection of the new ideas and communication within the field and across fields.

As a conclusion, research on creativity has privileged individual and cognitive aspects. Some researchers focused on the collective dimensions of creativity and on its social aspects. However, there is still a need for research emphasizing the relation between the individuals within a social perspective, bridging both cognitive and non cognitive elements, personal experience and institutional aspects of creativity. Bourdieu's praxeology can help us in providing such framework and account for creativity and idea work as a practice.

2°)Defining idea work as a practice with the lens of Bourdieu's praxeology

Bourdieu's framework on practice is particularly relevant to for the study of creativity and idea work because it may help to solve two concerns: first, the possibility, through a robust theoretical and empirical scheme, to empirically investigate and account for creativity practices; second, the possibility to integrate in one system both personal and social elements, going further than considering the influence of social aspects on individual creativity. Bourdieu studied creativity and arts within the field of literature (Bourdieu 1992), paintings and contemporary arts (Bourdieu et al. 1965, Bourdieu 1984).

a. Practice as a social activity

Practice is a central theme in Bourdieu's work. It is the concept he refers to account for social life. By practice, Bourdieu means "concrete human activity" (Bourdieu 1990: 13), which always takes place in the social world, even for very basic activities. Human beings are always part of their social world and this conditions their activities. In particular, the social context gives meaning and value to practice. The permanent dialectic between social structures and personal elements grounds Bourdieu's social theory. In his words, human beings are agents who both act and are acted, neither rational actors nor completely constrained by social structures.

To account for practice and its logic, Bourdieu privileges relationship - independent from individuals' will or voluntary choices, and distinct from interactions - and dispositions, which are conditioned by the context of the field and its structure. "Habitus, field, and capital, can be defined, but only within the theoretical system they constitute, not in isolation. [… They] are

designed to be put to work empirically in systematic fashion" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 96).

Bourdieu defines social worlds in terms of fields, microcosms in the macrocosm of society at large. Fields are historically built and evolve through time. Pictured at a given moment, they are structured spaces of positions, ruled by their own stakes and specific interests (Bourdieu 1990). Agents participating in a field generally take for granted inherent rules and develop a habitus adapted to the field (Bourdieu 2002: 114). Social fields work are fields of forces, spaces for struggles between agents in order to dominate the field. Bourdieu highlights the weight and forces exerted on agents through the structure of the field but at the same time he insists on theirs conditioning and not determining agents' conduct (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 135-138). Agents' positions in the field depend on the capital they possess.

The volume and the distribution of the various forms of capital between agents explain their positions and their possibilities of action. Through competitive relationship, agents try to preserve their capital, acquire additional capital, or increase the value of their capital (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 108-109). The possession of capital not only ensures a dominant position in the field but also provides more opportunities for action and creates the conditions for increasing future capital. Each field privileges different sorts of capital, not only economic capital, but also cultural or social capital. When capital achieves social recognition, it produces symbolic effects. These are forms of symbolic capital. The prestige and the hierarchy in social order resulting from the distribution of symbolic capital appears natural and taken for granted by most agents in the field because it has been integrated into their habitus.

Habitus is the system of durable dispositions and beliefs mobilized to generate practice. The construction of the habitus is a long-lasting process. It is the product of the social trajectory. Being involved in the field, agents develop perceptions, appreciations and beliefs of what to do and what not to do (Bourdieu 1977: 95). They assimilate the structure of the field, its rules, its stakes and its common assumptions. Habitus is also a 'structuring structure' (Bourdieu 1990: 52). While stating that their environment, experience and history condition habitus, Bourdieu insists on the creative, active, inventive capacity of agents (Bourdieu 1990: 53-56). Habitus 'makes possible the achievement of infinitely diversified tasks' (Bourdieu 1977: 95). It is an 'art of inventing' (Bourdieu 1990: 55), which allows improvisation in the particular context of a new practice.

Bourdieu insists on the embodied dimension of habitus. Agents have an immediate relationship with the world. It is a 'relation of presence in the world, of being in the world, in the sense of belonging to the world. […] We learn bodily' (Bourdieu 2000: 141). As a

consequence, ‘the world is comprehensible, immediately endowed with meaning’ (Bourdieu 2000: 135) and agents develop a practical sense.

b. Idea work as a practice

Defining idea work as a practice implies that idea work is embedded in the social context of the field, with its structure, its rules and its stakes. The field conditions the nature of the activities composing idea work.

The purpose of idea work is orientated towards the stakes of the field. Ideas are valued through the field. Idea work in haute cuisine is related to creativity, which is both a stake and a capital. Idea work can be a collective practice but it can also remain the fact of a single agent, particularly the chef in haute cuisine field. Idea work expresses the habitus of the chef and is conditioned by his position inside the field. As a matter of fact, to account for idea work, we need to understand the context of the field and the position of the agents, through their habitus, their positions and trajectories within the field.

Idea work regards activities that are embedded in cognitive and perceptual, reflexive and non-reflexive elements. Habitus, which drives idea work, is not a cognitive structure. It includes some cognitive elements such as beliefs and thoughts but its mainly includes dispositions for action that can remain at a pre-reflexive stage because the agent develop a tacit understanding of the field. Being part of the field, he/she “comprehends” it in an immediate way and develops a complicity with the way the field works. As a practice, idea work is based on this complicity that mobilizes feelings, perceptions, esthetic judgments.

II. Empirical study of idea work in the field of haute cuisine

1°)Methodological issues

We base this research on three in-depth case studies in the field haute cuisine. We selected restaurants of different size, location, and cooking style and position in the field. Table I summarizes our sampling criteria and the main characteristics of our cases.

Case A	Case B	Case C
Paris	Paris	Eastern-France.
Third star awarded in 1998	Third star awarded in 1996	Two stars awarded in 2002
Innovative, "avant garde", exploratory cuisine, often compared to modern art	Minimalist and innovative cuisine based on sensitiveness, creativity	Innovations rooted in classicism, terroir

	focused on vegetables.	
Dominant position in the field “creator”	Dominant position in the field “master of vegetables”	Medium position in the field “rising chef”

In order to identify idea work and creativity practices, we based our approach on performed tasks as real work. We collected information from multiple sources: secondary data, interviews and observation. These sources also provided us with the multifaceted data that we needed to address the sensitive aspects of gastronomy and cooking.

- Secondary data: we collected these data mainly from gastronomic magazines, the internet and television. They provided us with journalists' interviews with Chefs, descriptions of the restaurants and food, and visual accounts of dishes, cooking and creative sessions.
- Direct observation in each of the three kitchens, before, during and after lunch. During these periods, we had the opportunity to observe many facets of the kitchen life: the work of preparation in the kitchen, before-sitting briefing, cooking during sitting and last debriefings after sittings. We systematically transcribed our observation notes in full details immediately after our observations. Although this was sometimes exhausting, it guaranteed both a greater freshness and accuracy of our data.
- Interviews. We interviewed each three chefs and each three second-chef (kitchen-chef in case C) for two hours. We had informal conversations with chefs and their cooking teams and we also conducted individual formal interviews with chefs and their second-chefs separately. These interviews followed semi-structured format and the same interview guide oriented towards the identification of idea work. These interviews lasted about two hours each. While conversations, informal discussions, observations and impressions were transcribes in the form of open notes in our dairy, these formal semi-structured interviews were audiotaped, precisely transcribed and debriefed with interviewees.

We first used our data to trace idea work and the creation of new dishes. We thus concentrated our attention on how things happened in these situations: who different actors are, what they do and how they do it. We used these categories as a first step in selectively coding our data, based on our understanding of idea work as social, processual and situated practice. We also used our data to position the three chefs in the field of haute cuisine, to analyze chefs’ habitus through biographical elements, observation of their work, beliefs they express through their interviews.

2°)The field of haute cuisine

The field of haute cuisine is highly institutionalized (Rao et al 2003). The Michelin Guide is the most important and internationally acknowledged reference (Karpik 2000, Rao et al.

2003). Michelin stars grew in importance during the past decades and are today the criterion most valued by all agents in the field (Karpik 2000). As such, elite restaurants are those awarded with at least one Michelin star.

Today, haute cuisine values specific forms of capital. Most important are the Michelin stars. The number of stars is a professional certification, long a core value in the field with significant market value (Parkhurst-Ferguson 1998: 20). Second, the ability to innovate and be gastronomically creative is highly valued today, with the prerequisite of technical excellence (Parkhurst-Ferguson 1998: 637; Rao at al. 2003). Being considered a reference for particular cooking techniques or specific food products is another form of capital (Durand et al 2007). Image and media coverage have also become a form of valuable capital since the 1970s, particularly to value innovation (Rao et al. 2003: 22). Besides media coverage renders the restaurant all the more attractive to customers. Network and relational forms of capital are also very important. Economic capital is also of some importance although not fundamental: grand restaurants' margins are generally low (5 percent or less according to Johnson et al 2005: 291).

According to Ferguson (2001), cooks have become dominant agents in the field of haute cuisine. Their status radically changed during the second half of the twentieth century: from unknown employees of ‘restaurateurs’, they have become TV stars, counselors of major food companies and are now considered in French society as artists.

In haute cuisine, idea work is now shown as a performing art (Ferguson 2001): films on chefs show them cooking but also working on new dishes; chefs participate to professional fares (the most prestigious are Madrid fusion in Spain, and the Iron chef in Japan) where they compete on creativity by imagining and conceiving new dishes in a given time.

Idea work deals with two main purposes: “carte blanche au chef” and new dish creation. “Carte Blanche” is the possibility for the chef to design a last-minute customized menu for the clients who ordered it. New dish creation ensures the renewal of the menu and is essential to ensure the position of the chef and his restaurant. In the current paper, we will focus on idea work related to new dish creation.

3°)Idea work in three grand restaurants

a. restaurant A and chef A

Chef A was born in the late fifties, a son of cooks. He began to work in the kitchen of his father, by obligation and without any passion. Then, he got trained to haute cuisine in Parisian restaurants where he took apprenticeship. With these experiences and additional travels around the world, he discovered different forms and sources of inspiration. He

improved his cooking techniques and became a passionate cook in search of new mixes, new influences. Chef A introduced lots of new species (herbs, spices) in French cuisine. He is reputed to be one of the most, if not the most creative chef in France. He is renowned for being a precursor of fusion cuisine and exotic combinations, with “incredible combinations of flavors and textures, permanent genre trangression” (Beauge 2003). Chef A has been awarded three stars for nearly 20 years and he occupies both a dominant and very specific position in the field of haute cuisine, as, as Wells (1997) puts it, "the classmate who had most fun as well as most trouble sitting still".

Restaurant A is located in a luxury Parisian hotel near the tourist and business district of the Champs-Elysées. It employs 37 persons and serves 50 clients twice a day.

Chef A dedicates special moments to his idea work: he saves his mornings to “think about [his] personal work” (interview). It is in fact the moment he devotes to the design of a special meal (for particular and on-order events) and to the creation of new dishes. The creation of new dishes is a regular activity for chef A. He finds inspiration in paintings; he is found of modern contemporary art. He is also inspired by the spices and ingredients he discovers while travelling, particularly in Asia and Africa. Chef A has also works regularly with H, an academic, professor of chemistry, with whom he investigates molecular chemistry in food ingredients. Together they founded the stream of “molecular gastronomy”. They situate their work in a constructivist approach, directly referring to such work as that of Kandinsky. Every month, the chemist gives to chef A new findings on textures, impacts of combinations in the texture of ingredients. Chef A uses them as stimulating challenges or ideas for new combinations. “My encounters with the raw materials always start my imagination working. […] My work with H. doesn’t change my cooking but gives me more opportunities for exploring ingredients and techniques, and for emphasizing flavours” (Bangkok Post 17/03/06). For instance, chef A developed a foie gras chantilly, which mobilizes the foundations of French gastronomy but radically modifies its rules. This chantilly is served with orange reduction and grilled Paris mushrooms. The dish opens new perspectives on one of the most important ingredient of French gastronomy with both a revolutionary texture and the mix with the sugared, acid and spicy flavour of orange.

The initial development of a new dish is a personal work of chef A. He regularly discusses the new combinations with H or his second-chef, but he is the one who proposes, initiates, tests and adjusts the dish through personal tryouts. Then, chef A writes a technical note where he indicates the principles of the dish, the ingredients and codifies some of the techniques. A he explained us, this codification is now stronger than what it used to be in the past when it only consisted in general descriptions or even drawings. Then, chef A gives the technical note to his team and they talk about the new dish: the ingredients, the approach, the techniques, but also its coherence with the style of the restaurant, the innovations. Then,

domain chefs prepare the dish. Chef A is not necessarily in the kitchen during their trials. As he explained us, this enables him to distance from his initial ideas: “If you don’t have in your team people able to constrain your work, you cannot go along. Alone, you remain too close” (interview with Chef A). We also observed that this distance is a way to assess the technical feasibility of the dish. After these sessions, Chef A tastes, evaluates and corrects the resulting dish, before deciding to display it on the menu.

b. Chef B and restaurant B

Chef B was born in 1956 in Brittany, a soon and grand-son of cooks. His first professional experience was in one of the most famous restaurant in this region. He then developed a strong and diverse culinary culture pursuing his apprenticeship in other regions, in some of the best classical and nouvelle cuisine oriented restaurants. Chef B is renowned for his innovativeness and minimalist cuisine. His cooking is based on renewed textures and the mixing of tastes, such as in his famous candied tomato desert. He is also renowned for his long-lasting low heat roasted poultries, which he serves with unusual vegetable or even flowers. Ever since the end of December 2000, chef B chose to orientate his cooking towards vegetables and he decided to make them the stars in his restaurant. On this ground, he built a very specific position in the field of haute cuisine in which he is now considered as a genius innovator and unquestioned master of vegetable. He now occupies a dominant position in the field of haute cuisine.

Restaurant B is located in Paris, in a residential area. Since 1986, it has been owned and run by chef B, who bought it from his mentor, a leader of Nouvelle Cuisine. Restaurant B has been awarded three stars since 1996. It is a small restaurant, with a 30 seats dining room and a refine design. Restaurant B cooking team is composed of twenty-five cooks, most of them apprentices in their training or internship. Turnover in restaurant B is purposely high. Contrary to sous-chefs who have been working with the same chef for years, second-chefs at Restaurant B frequently change: Chef B nominates the most promising cook among those who have previously headed various domains. These second-chef are generally in their twenties. They work as sous-chef during one to three years and then they leave. Chef B encourages them to launch their own restaurant, frequently investing his money in the project and helping with advice. Chef B considers being a second-chef as training for future haute cuisine chefs. He therefore involves his second in innovation.

Chef B finds most of his inspiration outside the restaurant. He therefore tries not to be in the kitchen before mid morning and to save these quiet morning hours to distance himself from his work. Chef B is particularly inspired by arts (music, sculpture, and painting). He also

happened to work with perfume designers to find new associations : “I interpret recipes based on the fragrances she created for me […] the mangosteen fruit fragrance with vineyard peach, rose and vanilla inspired me with the Brittany lobster with beer vinaigrette and bergamot honey"(interview).

Chef B wants to involve his second and some domain chefs in the creation of new dishes. He explains his ideas using verbal elements but also paintings and drawings or music pieces. “I give them my ideas […], some elements. Let’s take for example something I had in mind, a combination of taste I was thinking of. […] It was a harmony of spinach, oranges, carrot, sesame oil, lemon with a light caramelized deglazing of langoustines. I tell them: 'well: carrots, oranges, I want them as a fine mousseline. So you mash carrots, superbly and very finely. In the meantime, you simmer orange zests, just very slowly simmered and tender zests. Then next, you add them to the mousseline. You mix it so that the carrot mousseline takes the orange flavor. Just to have a hint, just like a guess. Spinach just lightly cooked in salted butter. Sesame oil, a zest of candied lemon. Just like that. […] Here is what I tell them' ” (interview). For this particular dish, Chef B also showed us the card he drew with his color pencils. He represented raw vegetables (carrots, spinach and orange) and a sort of fluffy mousseline. The final dish was not represented. Yet, on this card, the contrast of the pastel colors and the type of drawings were most sticking. They rendered the freshness, the harmony and happiness of his idea: a springtime feeling dish, but based on wintertime ingredients. Back to the restaurant's kitchen, the second and domain chefs prepare a dish. Then they taste it with Chef B: *“*sometimes it is completely out, but sometimes it is really nice, they add new things*”* (interview with chef B). On this base, chef B and his chefs discuss and exchange. They talk, they smell, touch, the dish and engage in collective cooking trials to progressively adjust the texture, the proportions, and then the design in the plate

c. Restaurant C and Chef C

Chef C was born in the early seventies in southern France. He originally planned to study medicine and his parents were not at all involved in the world of restaurants. Chef C nearly became a cook by chance when he met Alain Ducasse and they both engaged in conversations and exchanges on culinary matters. He was rapidly recruited as commis in Ducasse’s Monte Carlo gourmet restaurant. From this moment he really chose cooking. He attended a culinary school, then became apprentice in various kitchens, among which Paul Bocuse’s, and even ran his own restaurant for a few years in Nice. Then he chose to join Ducasse who entrusted him with the opening of various restaurants around the world (Paris, Tokyo, Moscow, New-York…). In particular, chef C has been in charge of the launch of

Ducasse's Essex House in New York, where he had to face very harsh critics in the first year before the press and clients finally adhere to the restaurant and cuisine. These years in the US, as chef C told us, have both been particularly difficult and important for his making as a chef. At the beginning of year 2005, chef C came back in France appointed chef at a provincial gourmet restaurant where he still is. Because of his background, age, past experiences around the world and years spent in what the French press calls the "Ducasse galaxy", chef C is widely acknowledged as a Ducasse's protégé in the field of haute cuisine. Given the dominating position of Alain Ducasse, this means that chef C is himself dominated among the dominants: his name is attached to his mentor's but it also is a name associated with the finest restaurants around the world, with two or even three Michelin stars.

Chef C's restaurant has itself a specific history. The restaurant is situated in the north-eastern province of Champaign and is of a very traditional style. The building itself is a classical 18th century castle and the cuisine was always renown for being both classical and of the finest refinement. It has long been one of the best French gourmet restaurants with three Michelin stars awarded each year between 1986 and 2003. When the chef founder retired his successor did not meet the same success and had to leave, after he rapidly was sanctioned by Michelin (within 18 months): the restaurant was downgraded to two stars within the next 9 months on the base of deceiving service and, most importantly misjudged innovations (*Le Monde*, 01/04/2005). It was even on the verge of being further demoted form another star when the chef left 9 months later and chef C was appointed to replace him.

When he arrived, chef C had then to tackle both with the restaurant's recent failure and with its history of success and reputation for refined classical cuisine. This last point is of importance as clients' expectations were very specific: same cuisine and style as before. Yet, as chef C told us, he needed to impose his own style and cuisine even though he also had to take into consideration the restaurants, its history, its localisation and its customers. This was not an easy task and it directly impacted idea work.

We observed and chef C and his seconds confirmed that this work happens quite regularly in the kitchen between sittings. When the place is quiet chef C discusses his general ideas with his second chefs and possibly with the fish or meat chef. He evokes seasonal products or colours and what he would take pleasure in, how they would be nice sitting together in a plate, how they fit the restaurant. They talk together on this vague ground and imagine associations. Then one of them cooks; it is not always the same person. As chef C puts it, "the one who feels it does it". They roast, fry, season…. and they taste. And again they discuss, arrange and cook. Then, when the dish satisfies them they discuss its aesthetics in order to set its presentation before turning to organizing its implementation in everyday kitchen work and displaying it on the menu.

In the following pages, we outline major features of idea work in haute cuisine that emerged from our three cases and discuss their contribution with regards to the literature on creativity.

III. Idea work: lessons from haute cuisine

1°)The core role of idea work and creativity in the field of haute cuisine

For our three cases, creativity is first a matter of identity and position in the field of haute cuisine. It is through their creativity that chefs express themselves and affirm their dominant position. When he introduced major changes in haute cuisine, chef B declared: “I want to mark the history of haute cuisine. I want to create a cooking trend”. Chef C, who is not yet part of the dominant group of three stars chefs, asserts: “I have nothing yet, I have no image, I have everything to build. To be identified, to be outside the crow, the message comes first, cooking comes second” (interview with chef C).
The expression of idea work in inherent to their being chefs in haute cuisine. Creativity is a major component of the field of haute cuisine. Being recognized as creative is both a capital and a stake to maintain or improve their position in the field. As such, their idea work is subject to the critics and comments of clients, guides, critics. For instance, chef A highlights the risk of “fausses notes” as ideas badly received. Chef B, before introducing a major shift in his restaurant, talked to the clients to explain it but also the the Michelin guide manager.

In all their idea work, chefs always refer to the feasibility of their ideas according to their context. They always look for harmony between their ideas, their cooking style and their restaurant. For instance, chef C, who is most disposed to Mediterranean cooking, constrains himself being now in Eastern France: “there is no use talking Mediterranean cooking here” (interview). He chose to work on local products and to find dishes that could be served with champagne, which is the major product in the region. Chef A learnt this rule in a cruel way. In the early 90’s, he developed a highly creative cuisine in his previous restaurant in a small town where the clients did not come anymore. He rapidly met bankruptcy and chose to move to Paris in order to match his cooking ideas with clients who could value them.

This dialectic relation between idea work and chefs’ position in the field of haute cuisine largely exceeds an influence of the social context on individuals. Previous research highlighted social characteristics such as family environment, educational background, culture of the field, that would influence idea work (Feldman 1999).

2°)Idea work as a collective practice?

Idea work reveals to be a collective process in our three cases. Chefs associate external persons, but also cooks from their teams: second chefs, domain chefs. Their team is more or less large, their participation vary, but for the three cases, the chefs keep the control of idea work, choosing who and how they involve people, remaining leaders, deciding what they will do with these ideas, if they will be developed and implemented or not. In the whole process of creating a new dish, the idea work reveals to be the most personal phase, centered on the chef. This may be due to the specific context of haute cuisine where restaurants as organizations are largely represented by the chefs leading them.

Chefs personal history, with their regional roots and their encounters are determinant in idea work and chefs' orientation, in how they situate themselves and how they orientate the search of new ideas. For example, Chef B recalls his Briton origins to explain his permanent taste for seafood and old vegetables. The chefs they could meet during their first years in haute cuisine play a key role. Chef B positions himself according to the three three-star-chefs who trained him, and according to his grand-mother who was a famous roaster and gave him the passion of fire at the same time she transmitted him this specific technique. Chef C's encounter with Alain Ducasse was determinant. It is in Ducasse's team in built his network. He met in Ducasse's kitchen his best friend who is now a three star chef. They call each other by phone everyday and this friend is the first to share chef C's new ideas.

In this perspective, our analysis is in line with the distinction made by Amabile et al (2005). For them, creativity, as "coming up with fresh ideas for changing products, services and processes so as to better achieve the organization's goals" (Amabile et al. 2005: 367) is mostly individual, whereas innovation, for its part, is "the successful implementation of creative ideas within an organization" (Amabile et al., 1996) and is mostly a collective practice. Yet, we noted that, despite dialogues with other cooks and other people involved in idea work, the generation of ideas remains mostly the chefs prerogative. They also play the role of selection / retention as described by Simonton (1999) in his evolutionary view of creativity.

A major consequence of this individual nature of idea work is that the ability to conduct idea work that fits with the field cannot be transferred from an individual to another by imitation or observation or explications. It is part of the habitus, a personal disposition built in a specific field. In this perspective we rejoin Chia and MacKay (2007) who assert that such dispositions needs to be regrown as opposed to transferred (Chia and MacKay, 2007: 233): "becoming skilled in a practice […] is not simply a question of deliberately acquiring a set of generalized

capabilities that can be transmitted from one individual to another […] Skills are […] regrown […] through training and experience in the performance of particular tasks". In fact idea work practice can also be compared to productive inquiry in the sense outlined by Cook and Brown (1999:388): "productive inquiry is that aspect of any activity where we are deliberately (though not always consciously) seeking what we need in order to do what we want to do." It is an inquiry because Chefs are seeking new ideas. It is productive because they ultimately aim to produce a new dish for the menu.

3°)A practice deliberately organized in time and space

The basis for idea work is outside the daily operational cooking for our three chefs. Of course, it happens that, while cooking, they think about something new. However, all three of them acknowledge that they need to extract from the restaurant kitchen. As such, it is a moment they organize, in time and space: chef A has monthly appointments with H., his chemistry friend. Chef B organizes work sessions with fragrance creators, musicians, and sculptors. All chefs need to talk to the cooks team they associate to the creativity process outside the cooking hours, preferably in the mornings. All of them take the opportunity of their travels abroad to discover new cooking cultures but also more largely different cultures: paintings, music, …

This need for specific space and time for idea work has been analyzed by Elsbach and Hargadon (2006) who advance that workload pressure impedes creativity. They recommend to balance this conditions with mindless activities. In the kitchen of grand restaurants, the pressure during services is high, due to the performing nature of the activity, time constrains, physical conditions (heat, noise, proximity) and the pressure for excellence. This explains why second chefs cannot play a key role in creativity, being too much involved in operational activities. Work focus and attention width have been acknowledged to exert an influence on creativity (Runco, 2004; Simonton, 1999; Uzzi and Spiro, 2005), by conditioning the number of “knowledge elements that are available for combination into new variation” (Amabile et al., 2005: 368). These elements are as numerous and varied as attention is wide. In the kitchen of a grand restaurant, the second-chef (including in restaurant C) is focused on daily operational excellence with fundamental responsibility for daily kitchen operations and maintenance of the operational perfection necessary to gain and retain three Michelin stars. The second-chefs’ universe, their locus of practice and focus of attention, is the kitchen. In contrast, a Chef’s work allows a far wider attention deployment to a large scale of domains. Chefs are in charge of relations with existing suppliers and the search for new suppliers, they manage worldwide relations with media, clients, and peers that they meet at professional social events. They are in also touch with creators in other fields, particularly in the arts. In

all, Chefs' are exposed more heterogeneous contact (Perry-Smith, 2006). Their attention is wide, producing numerous and varied elements to be used into new combinations whereas second-chefs do not have such opportunities.

As highlighted by Amabile et al. (1996: 1161) workload and time pressure impedes creativity. In grand restaurants and as a consequence of their responsibilities, second-chefs dedicate all their time and energy to the daily operations in order to achieve excellence at each sitting. In contrast, Chefs save moments during the sitting to escape this pressure and accomplish more "mindless" activities (Elsbach and Hargadon, 2006), such as discussing with clients in the dining room, wandering around the kitchen, exploring the fridge etc. Sometimes, a Chef is not even in the kitchen during a sitting, whereas second-chefs always are.

Grand restaurants are very formalized and hierarchical organizations with roles clearly defined. Amabile (1996) and Farmer, Tierney and Kung-Mcintyre (2003) suggest that these traits are impediments to creativity. The responsibility of second-chefs are clearly defined in relation to daily operations. They participate to idea work if the chef asks them to, but they cannot lead the process and exert their full creativity by developing new dishes in the restaurant. In this attempt, theu need to change their position and conditions to practice by leaving the restaurant and becoming chefs. a second-chef cannot be creative. In order to exert their creativity, they need to change their status and their conditions for practice by becoming Chefs themselves.

4°)The importance of emotions and perceptions

The basis for new ideas are very large. Idea work may begin with cooking raw ingredients, sensorial search in gastronomy. For example Chef A likes to find contrasts between the appearance of a dish and its taste. He elaborated a dish with oysters and Spanish ham from the idea that it could be ugly to see but delicious to eat. Among the ingredients, the three chefs may begin their thinking with a product they select from seasonal products (truffle), regional products (champagne) or the will to honour a "forgiven" vegetable. Chefs may also look for new textures, emulsions of chocolate (which has not been done before chef A implemented a technique based on decomposing proteins, oil and water). Chefs also find ideas in arts: music, rhythm, style, painting, colors, etc. in order to conceive new dishes but also to organize new menus. Chef A finds inspiration in modern paintings, the emotions it provokes. He is also found of using the five senses in his search and in the emotions he wants to create for guests. Chef B looks for textures. He likes to think about oppositions between well-known flavours and a surprising, unexpected texture. Chef C is also interested in visual contrasts and in transforming taste assembly in contrasts. They all mobilize their five senses as well as they favour emotions in their idea work.

Amabile et al (2005) evidenced the interrelation between creativity and affect. They showed that creativity provoked reactions from others that generated affective feelings for the creator and impacted his/her creativity. However, the role of perceptions have not been explored so far.

Conclusion

In this paper we analyzed the social dimensions of idea work in haute cuisine mobilizing Bourdieu's praxeology. We ambition to contribute to a better understanding of idea work and how it takes place, first, by providing a description of idea work in grand restaurants kitchens. Seonc, we aimed at showing how a Bourdieusian perspective can advance current literature on idea work.

The chefs are now dominant agents in this field. Creativity is a key capital to assess a chef's position in the conquest of stars. Their creative practice is even put under spotlights through fares where chefs are asked to create new dish and compete to be awarded the chef of the year, meaning the most creative one.

Even if chefs involve other people in idea work, they remain the leading person in this practice. In our three cases, for the creation of new dishes, idea work mostly takes place outside daily cooking. Chefs organize idea work spaces and times, where they invite cooks or other people who do not cook. Chefs idea work expresses their habitus, mobilizing their dispositions and thoughts they developed and acquired through their training, encounters, travels, past jobs experiences. It is not a cognitive work, it encompasses feelings, perceptions, esthetic judgments. Idea work also reflects chef's position in the field, his style. As such, it represents the encounters of histories, the history of the chef and the history of the field.

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