

Establishing New Codes for Creativity through Haute Cuisine: The Case of Ferran Adrià and elBulli

Ignasi Capdevila, Patrick Cohendet, and Laurent Simon

“*Creativity comes first; then comes the customer.*”

Ferran Adrià

Ferran Adrià is one of the most recognized chefs in the world. His restaurant, elBulli, was awarded five times the title of the Best Restaurant in the World. Through an analysis of the last 30 years of the creative journey of elBulli, this contribution highlights that Adrià and his team of chefs succeeded in articulating two different processes: i) a process of creativity that aimed at defining a new “school” of high cuisine and ii) a process of innovation that was expressed by the new gastronomic experiences offered to the (happy few) customers of the restaurant until its closure in 2011. A careful examination of the coupling and decoupling of these two processes shows how they fueled each other, and how the management of the organization (through a specific type of ambidexterity) was conducive to the adequate articulation of the two processes.

Introduction

Ferran Adrià's restaurant, elBulli, on the northern coast of Catalonia, Spain, gradually gained international recognition, initially as a restaurant among connoisseurs and later as a creative firm that transcended the world of gastronomy. The restaurant was awarded three Michelin stars in 1996 and was awarded five times the title of the Best Restaurant in the World by *The Restaurant Magazine* (2002, 2006, 2007, 2008, and 2009). While becoming one of the most recognized chefs in the world, Adrià contributed to the institutionalization of the new Spanish cuisine (Lubow, 2003) and also gained popularity beyond the domain of haute cuisine. In 2004, *Time* magazine included Adrià in the list of the 100 most influential people in the world, all fields considered. After closing the restaurant in 2011, Adrià and his team began transforming elBulli into a foundation to focus on the enhancement, research, and diffusion of creativity and innovation, with application not only within gastronomy, but to all creative fields.

Like other creative industries, *haute cuisine* has to deal with the balance of tensions between the expressions of creative values and the managerial and commercial aspects (Caves, 2000). The competitive advantage in the world of haute cuisine is strongly based on the chefs'

creativity and capacity to bring novelty to the market. Nevertheless, creativity in gastronomy can be applied in two distinct ways, either to introduce novelty for product differentiation or to develop a market innovation by defying the existing rules (Lampel et al., 2000):

1. In the first case, creativity is related to the search for new uses and combinations of existing ingredients, processes, and techniques, or experimenting with existing, commonly accepted rules. From this form of creativity (that could be called a “weak form”) emerge new recipes that are the inventive assets in cooking and that lead to innovations (i.e., new dishes proposed in a menu to the consumers). This case corresponds to a large extent to the classical Schumpeterian linear model of innovation: a first step is the phase of creativity assimilated to the phase of searching (for new combinations), the second step is the phase of invention (of new recipes), and the following steps are devoted to the transfer of innovative ideas to the market (new dishes on the menu).
2. In the second case, the creative process contributes to go further in the exploration, to end up breaking the previous rules of cooking imposed by the dominant school (at this time the rules of the French Nouvelle Cuisine) and establishing new rules. In that

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case, a specific process of ideation has to be undertaken by the creative team: new rules have to be clearly enunciated (most of the time through a “manifesto”), new processes and techniques have to be invented, a new grammar of usage (or “code-book”) has to be completed and progressively adopted through a diffusion and institutionalization process (Rao et al., 2003) before being able to conceive new dishes and propose them (innovation) on the “market” (on the menu of the restaurant). In such a context, the ideation process (which corresponds to a “strong form” of creativity) and the innovation process are run in parallel with coupling and decoupling interactions. The creativity associated with the ideation process contributes to the realization of new innovative dishes, but in turn, from the day-to-day practices when serving new dishes in the restaurant, new ideas are permanently transferred to the ideation process to nurture the creative endeavour. There is no linear process of innovation, no given sequence of distinct phases, but continuous feedback loops between the creative and innovative processes. Ferran Adrià always strongly stated that all his activities were focused on this second case.

This article analyzes the last 30 years of the creative journey of elBulli – from being a beach bar to the best restaurant in the world – with the aim of disentangling Adrià’s creative process. This article focuses on the emergence of the “new *nouvelle cuisine*” (Lubow, 2003) that has represented a challenge to the French hegemony and its *nouvelle cuisine*. The article analyzes Adrià’s creative process by highlighting some of its most important characteristics. From this in-depth analysis of the processes of ideation and innovation followed by Adrià and his team at elBulli, our objective is also to highlight some consequences that could be useful for more classical contexts of technology management. Our view is that, if both scholars and practitioners were to recognize the increasing importance of creativity in management processes, they would tend to restrict their focus to the so-called “fuzzy front end” (Koen et al., 2001). This term refers to the activities that take place around an opportunity, idea, or concept prior to its transformation into a formal and well-structured project leading to an innovation. Although the fuzzy-front-end phase of the innovation process has been recognized as chaotic, unpredictable, and less structured in comparison to the new product and process development and commercialization phases (Crawford & Di Benedetto, 2008), scholars agree that it offers the greatest potential for improving firms’ innovative abilities (Verworn et al., 2008). However, despite the increas-

ing interest in the fuzzy front end, this concept still refers to a linear process of innovation, with an upstream phase (the fuzzy front end) sequentially followed by the other classical phases of the process of innovation (invention, prototyping, developing, marketing, etc.). Clearly, the example of elBulli is at odds with this view. It suggests that, in highly creative contexts, ideation and innovative processes can be run in parallel. The delicate coupling and decoupling between these two processes is made possible through new ways of combining creative and productive activities such as ambidexterity, as explained in the following sections.

The article is structured as follows. First, the history of elBulli highlights the phases of the creative evolution of Adrià. Second, we provide some clues to understand Adrià’s creative process, underlining the importance of coding and documenting as well as the combination of different frames of reference. In the third section, we explain the organizational ambidexterity at elBulli. Before concluding, we analyze the current projects of Adrià and his team (after the closing of the restaurant) to diffuse their creative process to other creative and organizational fields.

The History of elBulli: From a Beach Bar to the Best Restaurant in the World

Our work relies on a rich collection of publications on Ferran Adrià and elBulli. These references are not only from the academic literature (which includes significant contributions from Sylviya Svejenova, 2005, 2007, 2010; and from Rao & Giorgi, 2006) but also from Adrià and his team, who have published numerous books on the history and management of creativity at elBulli. In particular, Ferran Adrià, Juli Soler, and Albert Adrià published *A Day at elBulli* (2008). The book, which describes 24 hours in the life of elBulli in pictures, commentary, and recipes, also contains illuminating discussions on the notion of creativity, innovation, and management. In order to validate our hypotheses, the authors of this contribution also conducted seven days of investigation and interviews with chefs from elBulli at “Foundation Alicia” which is a research centre under the leadership of Ferran Adrià. This Catalan centre is devoted to technological innovation in cuisine, to the improvement of eating habits, and to the evaluation of food and gastronomic heritage. Table 1 summarizes the analysis of the chronological evolution of elBulli and, by extension, Adrià himself, from his initial learning of the dominant rules of the *nouvelle cuisine* to the development of his own style.

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Table 1. Chronology of the evolution of the creative process at elBulli

Time Periods	Creativity Phases	Creativity Rationale	Places and Organizational Settings
1983–1986	Adopting “old rules” (the rules of “nouvelle cuisine”)	Copy French cuisine recipes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> elBulli (1983: Adrià starts as chef; 2011: restaurant closes)
1987–1992	Adapting old rules	Recreate Spanish/Catalan cuisine based on French cuisine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> elBulli (new kitchen facilities)
1993–1999	Developing new rules: using scientific methods (molecular gastronomy), using new principles in gastronomy (deconstruction processes), etc.	Introduce other artistic disciplines in haute cuisine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> elBulli catering (1995–2009) The workshop in the aquarium (Barcelona, 1997)
2000–2006	Codifying new rules	Separate exploration (workshop) and exploitation (restaurant) Codification of new knowledge (new codebook)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> elBulliTaller (on Portaferrissa Street, Barcelona, since 2000) elBulliCarmen (facility to centralize all the activities that had no direct link with creativity) Science department in elBulliTaller (2003) Setting up of the Alicia Foundation (2004)
2007–2011	Diffusing new rules (through the writing of a manifesto and a series of books)	Exclusive focus on experimentation and research on creativity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Closing of elBulli restaurant
2011–2015	Creativity beyond gastronomy	Focus on creativity in general, as applicable to other disciplines beyond cuisine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> elBulli Foundation (elBulliLab, elBulli1846, Bullipedia)

In 1961, Dr. Hans Schilling, a German, and his Czech wife Marketa, decided to open a restaurant in a piece of land they had purchased, overlooking a charming Mediterranean cove in Catalonia’s north coast. Initially, it was a beach bar that soon became a popular meeting point for bathers and scuba divers. The name “elBulli” came from the French bulldogs the Schillings owned. After building a kitchen and a dining area, the first restaurant was opened in 1964. The restaurant won its first Michelin star in 1976 while under French chef Jean-Louis Neichel, who followed the French *nouvelle cuisine* trend.

In the summer of 1983, Ferran Adrià completed a training period at elBulli. That training was the first contact

Adrià had with the world of *haute cuisine* and the experience changed his life personally and professionally (elBulli, 2011). In 1984, he joined elBulli, first as co-chef and later he became the restaurant’s only chef. In the first years at elBulli, Adrià and other members of the restaurant regularly visited French restaurants as customers to get inspiration. Through the social contacts gained in those gastronomic trips to France, Adrià had the opportunity to undertake in-service traineeships in prestigious French restaurants. Later in elBulli, Adrià started to adapt and recreate traditional Catalan and Spanish recipes with a new haute cuisine approach. In 1987, a visit to Nice radically changed Adrià’s approach to cuisine when Chef Jacques Maximin told him that “creativity means not copying”. This simple sentence

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had a strong impact in Adrià, who decided to start focusing on creativity and on finding his own identity.

From then on, Adrià has been dedicated to the development of a new concept of cuisine, driven by methodical and profound introspection. Such a perspective drastically changed the organization at elBulli. First, the team of chefs at elBulli began an intense period of exploration. For the first time in gastronomy, an in-depth analysis of the connections between science (in particular chemistry) and cooking was systematically realized. This exploration led to the invention of many new processes (e.g., spherification, foaming) that were successfully tested and used in the elBulli kitchen. Also, Adrià and his team explored new relationships between artistic disciplines and cooking to find inspiration and offer unique experiences to customers (e.g., using deconstruction principles from architecture to invent new ways of presenting dishes, as described later in this article). Second, this emphasis on exploration led to a major change in the way the restaurant was managed: from 1987 onwards, the restaurant would close for five months (that later became six months) to dedicate time to creativity and research. These two drastic changes are detailed in the following sections.

Bridging Together Science and Cooking at elBulli: Clues to the Deconstruction of Ferran Adrià's Creative Process

Adrià considers that “to create is not something mystical, an illumination that comes from the sky. It is simply a job. A job that is similar to the industrial design, but much more fragile” (Fancelli, 2011). Adrià also highlighted that creativity should not be considered as a classical first step in a linear process of innovation. Creativity is a permanent process of building ideas that is conducted in parallel with the process of innovation that consists of offering new gastronomic experiences to consumers. On the one hand, creative ideas permanently fuel the offering of new menus, recipes, and ways of serving clientele, while on the other hand, micro-creative ideas are constantly emerging from the day-to-day restaurant activities and practices, and they contribute to and nurture the creative process. Adrià faces the creativity process in a very methodological, precise, and collective approach, by gathering, analyzing, synthesizing, contrasting, and mixing ideas and concepts to create new ones. From 1987 onwards, Adrià began a deliberate process of culinary exploration. His idea was that cooking and science go naturally together. Cooks acted as chemists when they discovered through trial

and error that we could use tools, heat, and fermentation to transform natural foodstuffs into safer, more nutritious, and more interesting foods. As the knowledge of food chemistry grew, a number of scientists, including Justin Liebig and Louis Pasteur, came to write about cooking and food preparation. Such a perspective explains, for instance, why Adrià actively participated in scientific biannual workshops on molecular gastronomy at Erice, Italy, which became the source of inspiration of some of his culinary discoveries. For example, there is famous spherification process, which forms spheres through the controlled gelification of a liquid that is submerged in a bath – this process led to the discovery of new dishes such as asparagus taking the shape and texture of eggs. This emphasis on the continuous exploration of the relationships between science and cooking led to two main activities that shaped the creative processes at elBulli: i) coding and documenting, and ii) combining frames of reference.

1. Coding and documenting

This willingness to bridge science and cooking explains why Adrià started his creative approach by gathering and classifying the knowledge of: all ingredients used in cooking, the main reactions and techniques used in the kitchen, and the scientific explanations of how and why some ingredients produce certain reactions. This intense effort of classification helped him and his team to discover the potential of a wide range of products that can be used in a diversity of preparations. He published a very detailed lexicon – *Léxico Científico Gastronómico* (2006) – that defines the chemical material and processes that are the basis of cooking. This lexicon was at the origin of the ambitious project Bullipedia, recently launched by the elBulli foundation. Besides this fundamental lexicon, Adrià wrote several books to explain his creative processes.

Gastronomy has been a field where new developments have always been codified in the form of recipes and cookbooks. Writing and authoring new recipes has a high importance for chefs. First, it ensures them the authorship of the novelty, what is specially crucial in a field where the intellectual property system is based on social norms and not on legal intellectual property rights (e.g., grants, patents, copyrights) (Fauchart & von Hippel, 2008). Acknowledged authorship reinforces the chefs' prestige among peers and public. Second, recipes represent codified knowledge that can be easily transferred geographically, increasing the chef's international influence. This aspect is particularly critical in haute cuisine, where scalability is a limitation due to

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the fact that the number of people that can actually enjoy the recipe in the chef's restaurant is low. By codifying recipes, innovative products can be reproduced elsewhere by amateurs but also by peer chefs. This replicability and potential reinterpretation at a distance allows the reinforcement and diffusion of the new and emerging gastronomic movement. Before codification, the diffusion of the new recipes and techniques is done through the situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991) that takes place in the kitchen in a master-pupil relationship. In this sense, it is usual for first-class restaurants to employ (often at no cost) a large number of trainee cooks.

In 1993, Adrià and his team published their first book *elBulli: The Taste of the Mediterranean*. The book represented the start of the development of their theory and concentrated on the analysis of their gastronomic style. In the case of elBulli, the codification has gone further by, not only documenting their original recipes (1846 so far) but also theorizing on the creative process. Adrià's creative process is based on a detailed observation and meticulous compilation and synthesis of his environment and experiences while travelling and visiting prestigious restaurants around the world (Svejenova et al., 2005). The books published by Adrià and his close partners (2002, 2003, 2004) are a comprehensive internal analysis of their gastronomic, organizational, and value-related dimensions. In 1999, the elBulli team initiated a cataloguing and classification work that led to the first part of the elBulli General Catalogue. In 2006, elBulli published a 23-point codebook, representing the synthesis of the team cognitive work. The same year, Ferran Adrià and Chefs Heston Blumenthal and Thomas Keller, together with writer Harold McGee, published a statement that summarized the fundamentals of the "new cookery" (Adrià et al., 2006).

2. Combining frames of references

Once the efforts of classifying and codifying scientific knowledge on cooking were undertaken, Adrià used different techniques to enhance creativity. One he used frequently is to combine different concepts to come up with a new one. As he explains: "What I do - and it's something that's useful - is to type a series of lists into the computer: base ingredients, garnishes, cooking methods, temperatures, textures, vinaigrettes, aromatic herbs and spices, flavors ranging from sweet to sour, etc. Then I combine these variables because they help me to think and, above all, to discover that these really aren't immovable categories" (Adrià, quoted in Svejenova et al., 2005). This approach resonates with the point

of view of Koestler, who considered that a creative act is the result of the clash between "two self-consistent but habitually incompatible frames of reference" (Koestler, 1964). As an example, the famous "foam of potato" resulted from the clash between the concept of "foam" and the knowledge on potatoes. There were no recipes using foams to deal with potatoes. Adrià tried to bridge this gap by inventing a new culinary process (through a gas-conditioning siphon using cartridges) to open a new field of culinary recipes.

However, soon people started identifying him as a molecular gastronomy scientist, which Adrià strongly and vehemently denied. For him, research in chemistry is just one component out of many sources of inspiration in his quest to change the rules of cooking. Artistic influences are also important: Adrià's approach to creativity is strongly based on capturing and integrating other's artistic disciplines into gastronomy. For instance, in the summer of 1991, Adrià spent a winter in the workshop of the Catalan sculptor Xavier Medina Campeny. For the first time, Adrià could develop his creativity without the need to serve tables at the restaurant (elBulli, 2011). By tapping into different art forms, Adrià has been able to revolutionize his own. He also found inspiration from architecture. For instance, deconstructivism, which is a movement of postmodern architecture that began in the late 1980s, influenced some of elBulli most famous dishes. A notable example is the "deconstructed tortilla":

"To understand how it works, let's look at what he does with a classic dish of his native land, tortilla española - Spanish omelette. First, he reduces the old-fashioned tortilla to its three component parts: eggs, potatoes and onions. Then he cooks each separately. The finished product, the deconstructed outcome, is one-part potato foam (food-foaming is another technique Adrià has given the world), one-part onion purée, one-part egg-white sabayon. One isolated component is served on top of the other in layers, and topped with crumbs of deep-fried potatoes. The dish, minuscule, comes inside a sherry glass. Adrià, with the playful irony that exists in practically everything he does, names this dish... tortilla española." (Carlin, 2006)

Also, one cannot reduce Adrià's influences to the domains of science and art alone. He paid immense attention to the day-to-day reactions and emotions of customers tasting the new dishes, which were patiently elaborated, and this explains why he finally defined his movement as "techno-emotional gastronomy". Adrià

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thus never considered that his team at elBulli was following a linear process of innovation initiated by a preliminary phase of research. There was constant feedback between the ideation process and the innovative process. He was continuously coupling and decoupling the two distinct processes.

Managing Creativity at elBulli: Building an Ambidextrous Organization

The separation between the activities focusing on exploration and exploitation has been a basic organizational pillar at elBulli. The decoupling between exploration and exploitation was not only implemented in space but also in time. To sustain his commitment to creativity – and for lesser-known economic reasons – Adrià decided that, from 1987 onwards, the restaurant would close for five months during the winter (which later became 6 months in 1994) to dedicate time to creativity and research. So, in the winter time, Adrià and his team of chefs used to explore, create, and dream up the menu for the following season, in the elBulliTaller (“taller” meaning “workshop” in Catalan) – a place conveniently located just a two-minute walk away from the famous La Boqueria market in Barcelona. Since the launch of elBulliTaller in 2000, two distinct teams were formed: one team in elBulliTaller dedicated to research and experimentation to create new recipes and another at elBulli restaurant reproducing those recipes (Svejenova et al., 2007).

This remarkable form of organization creates “contextual ambidexterity” (O’Reilly & Tushman, 2008; Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004; etc.) that enables and encourages all individuals to decide for themselves how to allocate their time between activities aimed at alignment (oriented towards the exploitation) and those aimed at adaptability (oriented toward exploration). In comparison, *organizational ambidexterity* can be defined as an organization’s ability to balance exploration and exploitation in order to be creative and adaptable. This term, which was first coined by Duncan (1976), has been highlighted by a famous article by March (1991). In his article, March emphasized that, on one hand, organizations that focus solely on exploration face the risk of wasting resources on ideas that may not prove useful or may never be developed. On the other hand, organizations that focus only on exploitation may accept status quo performance and products and may fail to reach optimal levels of success. Therefore, *contextual ambidexterity* expresses the capacity to simultaneously achieve alignment and adaptability at a business-unit level. The origin of struc-

tural ambidexterity can be traced to arguments that a company must innovate to ensure long-term success and should consider a dual structure, one to initiate and another to develop innovation as a way to achieve its objectives.

Considering the diversification of activities, a new organizational branch called elBulliCarmen was created in 2001 to deal with all the activities that do not have a direct link to creativity. In this way, having different organizations, the team avoided interferences with the creative work run at elBulliTaller. Also, to reinforce the priority given to exploration, Adrià decided in 1998 to serve only dinner, which allowed the team to undertake more exploration activities during the daytime.

Applying elBulli’s Creativity to Other Fields

One main innovation of elBulli has been to integrate different art forms into *haute cuisine*. Adrià has been inspired by diverse sources as sculpture, painting, and design. In parallel, the exploration developed in elBulli workshop has also served as a source of creativity to be applied in other artistic fields. For instance, in the early 2000s, elBulli started to work with top designers to develop new concepts of utensils for preparing and serving food. elBulli has also collaborated with scientists to research physical and chemical processes. Those projects were later transferred to the Alicia Foundation, a collaborative project that has a scientific, gastronomic, social, and cultural role to research food processes, health, and gastronomy. In 2004, the social interest also pushed the elBulli team to start the Fast Good project in collaboration with a major Spanish hotel chain to provide healthy quality food at a low cost.

elBulli has also supplied consulting services on creativity, mainly in the hospitality sector. For instance, a consultant project with a hotel’s restaurant near Seville was extended to the whole hotel (now elBullihotel), aiming to transfer the experience of a 3-hour dinner to a 24-hour hotel stay (elBulli, 2011). Since 1999, elBulli has signed agreements with major consumer brands to apply their expertise to the food industry. Collaborations with other companies also aim to extend the concept of gastronomy to a holistic experience. For instance, elBulli, together with Cirque du Soleil, will soon launch a project in Ibiza to “to explore what happens when food, music, and art collide” (Cirque du Soleil, 2015). All these collaborations beyond the world of haute cuisine show how Adrià and his team have been able to apply their creativity developed in gastronomy to develop new business.

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Closing of the Restaurant and the Future of elBulli

Despite its worldwide reputation and the fact that the restaurant, which could accommodate 8,000 diners a season, received more than two million requests, Adrià voluntarily closed the restaurant in July 2011. Some invoked financial reasons. Indeed the restaurant was regularly losing money. “For example, from a strictly financial perspective, choosing to close elBulli for lunch — which Adrià decided to do in 2001, just as the restaurant’s popularity was soaring — cost him and his partner an estimated €1 million a year” (Borden, 2015). However, for Adrià and his team, the reason for closing at lunch was not financial – the aim was clearly to increase the time spent during the day for exploration, and the lost time for exploitation was an accepted side effect. Nonetheless, there could have been ways to improve the situation. For instance, considering the waiting list of millions of people, Adrià could have increased the price of the meals to balance the budget – the average cost of a meal was €250, far less than some of the other best restaurants of the world. Also, reducing the number of employees could have been another solution (of April 2008, the restaurant employed 42 chefs). All these financial considerations were not for Adrià a major issue. Despite the fact that the restaurant was not profitable, it served to increase Adrià’s international reputation and allowed him to develop “by-product activities” that made their business model sustainable. Those activities (such as conferences, books, and revenues from elBulli’s catering division) brought in up to €400,000 a year, and revenues from V.I.P. fundraising dinners earned about €3.5 million. The reasons for closing the restaurant were more related to the search for new creative frontiers beyond the daily life of serving tables rather than for purely economic reasons. According to his brother Albert: “We had to kill the beast. After so many years, there was a fear of the passion dying” (Collins, 2013). Ferran Adrià’s priority has always been creativity beyond profitability. As he used to say: “Don’t look for success, look for happiness”.

The closing of the restaurant in 2011 and the announcement of the launch of elBulli Foundation have initiated a new phase by enlarging the research on creativity to other areas beyond gastronomy. Adrià is working with talents of different disciplines; the goal is no longer to define the rules of a new movement in gastronomy, but to write the manifesto of what could be unique experience offered to customers by mixing different artistic and scientific approaches from many domains, including gastronomy. The concept of the foundation is still

under construction, but several projects have already started. The former restaurant facilities will host the elBulli1846 project, which will be a space where a team will work for six months a year on creativity applied to gastronomy. Another project is elBulliLab, a space that centralizes different projects around creativity based on a methodology to decode creative processes that can be applied to gastronomy as well as other creative disciplines.

Conclusion

From a beach bar to a “laboratory of innovation”, the history of elBulli is the story of an institutional entrepreneur that succeeded in developing an individual business model based on creativity (Svejenova et al., 2007; Svejenova et al., 2010). elBulli as a restaurant was not a profitable business, but its success was based on being a creative powerhouse where new codes of *haute cuisine* were developed. The influence of Ferran Adrià and his team has gone beyond the world of gastronomy and has allowed them to develop profitable projects based on elBulli’s reputation. The capacity for creativity at elBulli was far more important than the restaurant itself. Proof lies in the closing the restaurant, which did not represent the end of creativity, but rather the opposite. The elBulliFoundation represents a new venture that focuses on fostering and researching creativity and innovation in a wider spectrum of fields. In contrast to other star chefs that have decided to capitalize on their prestige by opening several restaurants around the world (e.g., Joël Robuchon, Alain Ducasse, or Pierre Gagnaire) or by becoming TV celebrities (e.g., Gordon Ramsay or Jamie Oliver), Ferran Adrià and his team decided to diversify and apply their knowledge and creative capacity to other fields.

The elBulli case illustrates how creativity can be put at the heart of a business. In the case of elBulli, creativity is not only the source of innovation to develop successful products and services, but it is the main goal of the organization. Adrià and his team have succeeded in developing their creative skills and internal processes to the point of revolutionizing *haute cuisine* and influence other fields.

Although ideas are mostly black boxes in innovation theories, the elaboration of the elBulli case in this article demonstrates that idea management is a long, complex, and highly strategic and specific process that requires investments of time, resources, and effort. The analysis of Adrià’s creative process presented in this article provides some conclusions related to the manage-

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ment of creativity and innovation in organizations. They can be summarized in five points. First, in contrast with a linear conception of the innovation process with an initial chaotic ideation phase (i.e., a fuzzy front end) followed by a controlled stage-gate process, the case shows that, in highly creative contexts, ideation and innovation processes are intertwined and intimately linked in a continuous process of coupling and decoupling. Second, the case illustrates the importance of organizational ambidexterity, where activities of exploration and exploitation feed each other, ensuring the present as well as the future competitiveness of the organization. Third, a creative endeavour is not the result of luck or randomness; it is an intentional process of deep analysis of the phenomena involved (e.g., in the case of elBulli, to understand the scientific principles in cooking) and the internal creative process (e.g., Adrià's extensive coding and documenting). Fourth, creativity can be enhanced by actively searching for combinations of different knowledge bases. Integrating external knowledge and practices (from other fields and industries) can potentially lead to new and unexpected innovative outcomes. Finally, the case shows how creativity can be present in all the activities of a company, to the point of becoming the core of the company and its main purpose.

To a large extent, we consider that the lessons learned from this extremely creative organization could be useful to understand the evolution of the management of innovation in a context of growing need for creativity.

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