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A Case of Restaurant Rankings
Christensen, Bo; Strandgaard, Jesper

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Bo T. Christensen & Jesper Strandgaard Pedersen

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Abstract

This paper is concerned with evaluative practices within the culinary field. The focus is on the evaluative practices performed by two restaurant ranking systems, respectively the Michelin Red Guide system handled by the French tire manufacturer Michelin and the San Pellegrino 'World's 50 Best Restaurant' list organized by the English based Restaurant Magazine. Both ranking systems evaluate and rate restaurants (judging their food, service, physical setting and so forth) but in different ways through different practices and means, and with somewhat different results.

Keywords

Gastronomy, Culinary field, Ranking systems, Evaluative practices

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INTRODUCTION

What constitutes a good meal and how do you evaluate a restaurant? This chapter is concerned with evaluative practices within the culinary field. The focus is on the evaluative practices performed by two restaurant ranking systems, respectively the Michelin Red Guide system handled by the French tire manufacturer Michelin and the San Pellegrino 'World's 50 Best Restaurant' list organized by the English based Restaurant Magazine. Both ranking systems evaluate and rate restaurants (judging their food, service, physical setting and so forth) but in different ways through different practices and means, and with somewhat different results (for other studies of external evaluative practices see the chapters by Csaba and by Mathieu). The Michelin guide system is a more than hundred-year old ranking system (established in 1900) and is based on a standardized system of fixed criteria. The evaluation is carried out by a group of trained inspectors, resulting in a judgement of the quality ('value for money') of the restaurant in question, awarding the restaurant star(s) or other symbols indicating its rated quality. The San Pellegrino 'World's 50 Best Restaurant' list is a ten-year old ranking system (established in 2002) and is based on no explicit criteria for the evaluation, but with alleged implicit criteria of 'novelty' and 'innovation'. The San Pellegrino list is based on an elaborate voting system performed by a group of international gastro-experts and resulting in a ranking list of restaurants. In order to compare the two ranking systems and study their effects on restaurants, we have situated our analysis around the acclaimed Danish gourmet restaurant NOMA to study how they experience the two ranking systems and their effects on NOMA.

would also like to thank Kirstine Zinck Pedersen for her excellent work on the media retrieval.

EVALUATIVE SYSTEMS AS INSTITUTIONALIZED PRACTICES

Many theories of creativity and art world change explain domain development through a theory of consensus building amongst gatekeepers holding constantly evolving standards (Becker, 1984; Csikszentmihalyi, 1988; Amabile, 1983). As will become evident, though, institutions' degree of 'change allowance' hinges to a large part on the institutional logic of consensus building through the application of standards, and how frequently standards are allowed to change.

Theories of institutions have differed in their claims as to how the institutions value and handle change. Whereas some theories hold claims to a view of institutions avoiding change through sanctions and penalties (Zuckerman, 1999; Zuckerman, Kim, Ukanwa, and von Ritter, 2003), other theories view institutions as flexible and capable of dealing with legitimate as well as illegitimate organizational change (e.g., Kraatz & Zajac, 1996) or undergo change and transformation through institutional entrepreneurship (e.g DiMaggio, 1988) institutional work (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006) or field level dynamics (e.g. Powell, 1991). In art world institutions, the same tension can be found. While some institutions have ways of keeping the maverick out, the very nature of art worlds (thriving on creativity, innovation and novelty) is to value change and the need to evolve over time, while sometimes giving birth to new art worlds (Becker, 1984). The tendency of institutions to resist change may thus vary, so as to suggest a continuum of change allowance or even change encouragement (from 'drift' to 'revolution') along which institutions can be placed. In this chapter we will analyze the internal logic and structure of two institutionalized, evaluative systems in cuisine that seemingly differ in their 'change allowance' character.

While there are many forms of evaluative systems in cuisine (e.g., Zagat, Gault-Millau, food critics and websites with consumer reviews and ratings), two of the most important ones are currently, the Michelin guide, and the San Pellegrino 'World's 50 best restaurants' list. Both the San Pellegrino Worlds 50 best list and the Michelin system aim at estimating quality and value amongst restaurants, and the resulting ratings have an enormous impact on the restaurants being rated in terms of bookings, publicity and reputation, which seem ever more central in what has been termed the 'Name Economy' (Moeran, 2003). These two systems can be said to be competing, in so far as they propose two different ways of estimating restaurant quality, hold different standards, and result in distinct evaluations. Whereas some evaluative systems value change, others deter from it, thus producing somewhat different points of departure for evaluating a restaurant. Furthermore, the two institutionalized evaluative practices also differ in their openness to changes in the evaluative system itself; in some systems it is acknowledged that standards and criteria change over time and context, whereas the internal logic of other systems suggest that the system should produce stable and reliable results across time and place. The claim to be made here is essentially that the institutional logic of evaluative systems, as seen in the internal organization and practice of the systems, can be said to lie along a continuum of 'change allowance'. In order to back up this claim, we will first present the study, and then introduce the gourmet restaurant NOMA, followed by a presentation of the two competing evaluative systems in the culinary field.

THE STUDY

Why these two evaluative systems (Michelin and San Pellegrino's Worlds 50 Best list) and why NOMA and New Nordic Cuisine? The reason for selecting Michelin and San Pellegrino was based on the media search, where these two systems came out as the two most referred to evaluative systems. Furthermore, New Nordic Cuisine we see as a fairly new phenomenon within the culinary field and thus, thought it would constitute an interesting and new case for the two systems to evaluate. NOMA is the front-runner and exemplar case of New Nordic Cuisine and was selected for this reason.

The material presented here is based on various sources and types of material. We have conducted interviews with key informants from the two rankings systems as well as from NOMA. Thus, we interviewed Lars Peder Hedberg, the academy chair for the Scandinavian region of the San Pellegrino Worlds 50 best list, and Jean-François Mesplède, former editor of the Michelin Red Guide in France. Being a former editor, Jean-François Mesplède does not represent the official voice and opinion of Michelin in the present interview. Furthermore, to examine the experience and impact of evaluation in the culinary field, we interviewed Claus Meyer (co-founder) and Peter Kreiner (managing director) at NOMA. The interviews were conducted from December 2010 to June 2011. All interviews lasted about an hour and were conducted following a semi-structured interview guide. The interviews were recorded and later transcribed. Finally, a two-hour meeting was held with a group of representatives from the Copenhagen based office of Nordic Council of Ministers, in order to get background information and their perspective on New Nordic Cuisine.

In addition to the interviews, archival material was gathered on NOMA and the two ranking systems. Some of this material was retrieved from their homepages and other Internet websites, including central documents (like the 'Manifesto'), and publications (like the Nordic Council of Ministers' program for New Nordic Food) whereas other material (like e.g. cook books) was gathered in hard copy form.

Finally a database media search on newspaper articles was also carried out to contextualize NOMA in relation to the developments with regard to 'New Nordic Cuisine' and to get an idea of the media impact on NOMA. The database search was carried out in Infomedia, which is the largest Danish database for search in full-text media with 1454 sources, which include nationwide dailies, regional dailies, local weeklies, professional and trade journals, magazines, news bureaus and web sources. Some searches were only performed on the four main dailies (Politiken, Berlingske, Jyllandsposten and Information) and one search was also exclusively on restaurant reviews. The search was conducted for the period 2000-2010 and a trunkated search was carried out (e.g. New* Nordic* Cuisine*). The Infomedia search was supplemented by a series of country and language specific Google searches. The specialized search on the four main Danish dailies (Politiken, Berlingske, Jyllandsposten and Information) provided 154 hits (articles), which were read and content analyzed with regard to identify themes, debates, controversies concerning New Nordic Cuisine and NOMA.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF NOMA

In December 2002, gastronomic entrepreneur Claus Meyer approached chef René Redzepi. He had been offered to operate a restaurant at the North Atlantic House, a former 18th century warehouse, which was being turned into a cultural centre for the

North Atlantic region and located in the Copenhagen harbour area. The building is situated by the Greenlandic Trading Square ('Grønlandske Handels Plads') at the North Atlantic Wharf ('Nordatlantens Brygge'), which since 1767 was a centre for trade to and from the Faroe Islands, Iceland and Greenland in the Danish capital. Meyer offered Redzepi to become chef and partner, along with himself and the entrepreneur Kristian Byrge, in this new venture. The restaurant came with one requirement and it was to reflect 'Nordicity', especially North Atlantic Cuisine. 'There was no alternative, given its location and the history of the building' (Skyum-Nielsen 2010:11). In this way this constraint on 'Nordicity' turned out to be an initiator for the culinary venture. As a consequence, in August 2003, in preparation for this venture, a trio consisting of the chefs René Redzepi and Mads Refslund together with gastronomic entrepreneur Claus Meyer, set out on a study tour of the North Atlantic – a seventeen-day mission to the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Iceland, to 'absorb gastronomic inspiration and meet possible suppliers of raw materials and décor for what was, as far as we know, the first restaurant with a modern, North Atlantic menu' (Skyum-Nielsen, 2010:11).

In November 2004, the founders of NOMA organized what came to be known as the New Nordic Cuisine Symposium. For the symposium they brought together a number of leading gastronomists and chefs from the Nordic countries in an attempt to extend the venture from being a local Danish invention to being a Nordic venture. During the two-day symposium the 12 participating chefs created, agreed upon and signed a 'Manifesto for the New Nordic Kitchen' (Source: Nordic foodlab, see appendix). Inspired by the Dogma95 film manifesto, according to Claus Meyer, the Manifesto was an attempt to define the New Nordic Kitchen in ten rules. Core values in the Manifesto associate the New Nordic Cuisine with 'purity', 'freshness' and 'simplicity', based on 'local, seasonal ingredients' ('Nordic terroir') and with a 'healthy, green and environmental friendly profile' (see also Moeran's chapter concerning Nordic values as reflected in the Ursula ceramics). The New Nordic Cuisine has been summarized the following way:

> "Whereas French cuisine has been acclaimed all over the world thanks to the hedonist qualities of the food and whereas the impressive quality of Spanish cuisine is its technical level, Nordic cuisine represents the dream of recreating a sort of link with nature once again" (Wolff 2011).

The gourmet restaurant NOMA opened in Copenhagen in November 2003, but was by no means seen as a success from the start up. Much of the Danish restaurant scene laughed at NOMA's gastronomic concept, providing it with nicknames like 'The Whale Belly', 'the Seal Humper', 'Restaurant Lard Thrasher', and 'The Golden Harpoon' (Skyum-Nielsen, 2010:11).

However, over the next few years NOMA would rise considerably in acclaim by external evaluative systems. Some were more appreciative than others. The San Pellegrino list of the worlds 50 best restaurants would eventually (2010) place NOMA at the top of their list, while the Michelin Red Guide has settled on awarding NOMA two Michelin stars. With the case of NOMA in mind, this chapter studies how these two evaluative systems are organized internally, and how they are perceived by the domain of cuisine, and what impact their evaluations have on the restaurants being rated.

TWO SYSTEMS OF EVALUATIVE PRACTICES

Internal organization of the San Pellegrino list

The San Pellegrino 'World's 50 Best Restaurants' list is organized by Restaurant Magazine, and was first awarded in 2002. The list is created from The World's 50 Best Restaurants Academy, a group of over 800 international leaders in the restaurant industry, selected for their expert opinion of the international restaurant scene. Over the years the Academy and rules have changed slightly, but in 2011 the Academy comprises 27 separate regions around the world. Each region has its own panel of 31 members including a chairperson. The panel is made up of food critics, chefs, restaurateurs, food journalists, and highly regarded 'gastronomes' with a high frequency of international travel, each of whom has seven votes to cast. Of the seven votes, at least three must be used to recognize restaurants outside of their region. At least 10 panelists from each region change each year.

The list is generated based on votes from the Academy according to the following rules: Voting is confidential, and panelists may vote for up to 4 restaurants within their region, and at least 3 votes must be cast outside their region. Voters must have eaten in the restaurants they nominate within the past 18 months (there is no way of checking this, however, and it of course does not mean that all 800 panelists eats at all top restaurants every year. Since the results remain confidential, it is unknown whether the no. 1 voted restaurant received 500 votes or 100 votes or even less). Voters are not permitted to vote for restaurants they own or have an interest in. Nominations must be made for the restaurant, not for the restaurateur or the chef. Panelists submit their 7 choices in order of preference (this information is used to decide on positions in the event of a tie). The restaurants are then ranked according to how many votes are cast upon them.

As such, it is not possible for a restaurant to be nominated to the list, or apply to be accepted on the list, and it also means that any restaurant in the world is eligible (unless closed at the time of the award). Every year in April, an award ceremony is held where the staffs of the top 50 restaurants are invited, and a countdown from 50th to 1st place ensues.

NOMA's history with the San Pellegrino list

In 2006, three years after opening, NOMA entered at number 33 on the list. The following year they were voted highest climber on the list to number 15. In 2008, they were ranked 10th, and jumped to number 3 in 2009. In 2010, they were voted the number 1 restaurant in the world, a position they maintained in the 2011 rankings.
This fast climb up the list to the top spot is quite unusual, but not unprecedented in the (short) history of the list. While the history of the list shows that the top spot for a number of years were dominated by restaurants like El Bulli (Spain) and the French Laundry (CA, US), the restaurant the Fat Duck (Bray, UK, run by Heston Blumenthal) entered the list in 2004 in the 1st runner-up position, and moved to the top position the following year. El Bulli maintained its position at the top of the list for a number of years, being number 2 in 2010, and has since closed down in order to reinvent itself (thus

not appearing on the 2011 list). The French Laundry has dropped down the list the past years to its current position of number 56 in 2011.

In ascribing causes to NOMA's fast rise to the top, managing director at NOMA, Peter Kreiner explains:

> "Luck has played a part. But I also think that we are hitting something typical of the times, and which is what is needed in gastronomy now. Of course there are several waves of gastronomy so to say, with one wave hitting after the other. But the natural and local, or what some would call the 'wild kitchen', that is what we stand for at NOMA. And that is what many others are looking towards at the moment. There is no questions that we are… today enjoying the attention of what you could call the substantial part of the food press and the food intelligentsia around the world who come here and think we have an interesting and different take on things."

Lars Peter Hedberg, who is academic chair for the Scandinavian region of the San Pellegrino list, explains it in these terms:

> "The two keywords: innovation and authenticity are the explanation for the fast rise at NOMA. I mean they were offering something dramatically different from what the Spanish restaurants have offered in the many years. I mean the Spanish have gone for … not the authentic but for the opposite … molecular cooking. I mean transgressing transforming, scientific but not natural. And then the Scandinavian…not only NOMA, but NOMA for sure most prominently … no, we want to show you what nature can offer. And on top of that we have a new nature to show you that haven't been showcased for many years. And it's just as interesting as the Mediterranean world or any other."

Formal and informal criteria

In the San Pellegrino system, there are no explicit criteria set beyond the above rules – it is the opinion and experience of the panelists that should lead them to vote for a particular restaurant, not fixed criteria. The absence of criteria has been discussed amongst the 32 academy chairs, as Hedberg states:

> "And they've said…we've been discussing this a lot in the academy, and we've had a big discussion about this. Why aren't they more specific about the criteria. And they said that, no that's our whole idea, we want every restaurant to be able to appear on the list. If it serves the best possible fish just taken out of the water and just put on the char grill…and very simple but perfect sauce to it, it should be possible for it to make the list. So they have an answer to that question. But I think that gives some of the strange effects that you see on the list; that everyone can have his own evaluation system, and uses of an evaluation system. And it gives err it's a very unstructured sort of approach. And that of course that has kept many of the three [Michelin] star restaurants out of this list".

The absence of formal criteria, however, does not preclude informal ones, Hedberg explains:

> "There is a sort of understanding among these 32 chairs that we should promote change, that we should promote evolution in the industry. And not promote historical performances like the Michelin is doing. So…I think that is very outspoken so that is it not only allowed to promote new phenomena coming up or new entries on the list - it's applauded when that happens. Because we want to get to the avant-garde of the industry. So I think that is a very good thing about it. It's a very trendy list."

Hedberg continues,

> "Stability and innovation are sort of err …they are a bit in controversy or conflict, right. I would prefer innovation over stability. And that is sort of the worlds 50 best culture. That is…what is the interesting new thing, that is what… Of course it has to be sustainable innovation, it cannot just be a flash in the pan, that's not the thing, but it must be able to stay innovative, or stay on it's own course at least for quite some time. But I mean sometimes you can stay too long on your course, like El Bulli".

What impact has San Pellegrino evaluations had on NOMA?

The managing director at NOMA, Peter Kreiner explains, that the impact of the San Pellegrino rankings has been extremely important for NOMA, and in the later years, the move to the top position on the list he would characterize as the single most important event amongst all the types of evaluation NOMA is constantly experiencing. The impact is not so much financially in terms of growing surplus: NOMA has maintained a rather small number of tables, and the growing demand thus does not correspond to more bookings, since the restaurant was completely booked even before reaching the number 1 spot. That being said, the move to the top ranking in 2010 had a huge impact on the exposure of NOMA, the vision of New Nordic Cuisine, and the booking attempts made at NOMA. The very next day after reaching the top ranking, NOMA had 100.000 online booking attempts in their booking system, an interest that has remained since then. The media coverage can be further quantified by looking at how many times NOMA has been mentioned in Danish newspapers. From 2003 until 2010, NOMA was mentioned in 5848 Danish newspaper articles. The year after NOMA opened, in 2004, 102 newspaper articles mentioned NOMA. The following years, the development was the following: in 2005: 128, 2006: 241, 2007: 381, 2008: 698, 2009 (when NOMA reached the 3rd position on the San Pellegrino list): 1024. And then in 2010, when NOMA reached the top position on the San Pellegrino list, the restaurant was mentioned 3259 times in Danish Newspaper articles – more than three times as many as the year before.

Perceptions of the San Pellegrino list

When glancing over the rankings of the San Pellegrino, what are the terms best describing the list? Besides its focus on innovation and authenticity, Hedberg also mentions volatility. The list change quite a lot from year to year, with over 150

restaurants having appeared on the list in the 10 years of its existence, and a history of rapid and substantial changes in the rankings. Part of the reason may be the rules of having to exchange 1/3 of the academy each year. Furthermore, it is kept secret how many votes each restaurant actually attract. In principle, the votes of the '800 academy' could distribute over 5000 restaurants around the globe, with very limited agreement, and few votes required for reaching the top. But as Hedberg states,

> "I think for the top 5 there is very substantial numbers behind that. Or maybe even the top 10. But then I think it gets more wobbly the further down you get. And on the 51-100 list, I think that anything could really happen."

When asked what kind of restaurants are positioned high on the San Pellegrino 'World's 50 Best Restaurants' list, Kreiner expresses, that he believes that restaurants that emphasize continuous development are rewarded. That is, restaurants that show novelty, want to move and reinvent themselves, and not stand still; together with restaurants that challenge the existing ways of doing things. Kreiner mentions that El Bulli, who four years in a row (before NOMA took over) held the number one ranking, is certainly not a conventional place to dine. A huge number of servings, combined with being challenged as a guest: on texture, on taste, on ingredients and so forth. While Kreiner believes many differences exist between El Bulli and NOMA, he also finds, that top positions are not held by classical luxury restaurants. The Fat Duck being another prime example of an innovative restaurant into molecular cooking.

Serving the academy

Since the San Pellegrino list is made from votes from the '800 Academy' gastronomes (of which 2/3rds are identifiable the following year), it is in principle possible to give these individuals special attention and Hedberg confirms that academy members receiving invitations to particular restaurants, is very common. And although most academy members would not respond to such invitations, they do have the effect of putting the restaurant on the map, creating awareness amongst a very large sample of restaurants that could potentially get your vote. Another way of handling the relation is to attempt to give academy members special treatment at the restaurant. Kreiner acknowledges that if NOMA knows that someone from the academy is in town, they would likely be attentive to that individual. But not in the sense of ensuring a table at the restaurant, since it is not possible to circumvent the booking procedure that way. But frequently these individuals are very focused on getting a table, and keep trying, and then in the end most of them will manage to get a table. If they are flexible, also with times and dates, then it is possible to get a table.

Internal organization of the Michelin Guide System

The Michelin Guide is a series of annual guidebooks published by the French tire manufacturer Michelin that has existed for more than 100 years. The oldest and best-known Michelin guide is the Red Guide. It is a European hotel and restaurant guide that provides a short description of the restaurants included in the guide and awards the Michelin stars and other types of evaluations of the restaurants.
The guide was first published by André Michelin in 1900, in the very early years of motoring, to help drivers find gasoline distributors, mechanics and tire dealers, together

with places for decent lodging, and places to eat well while touring France. Jean-Francois Mesplede, former editor of the Michelin guide in France, still emphasizes the importance of the link to the Michelin tire factories, in that they ensure complete financial independence from the restaurants, ensuring a serious and trustworthy evaluation. The target group is any person travelling on his/her Michelin tires, and not an elite group of people, which also explains why the guide has a heavy emphasis on 'value for money'. The guide was distributed for free from 1900 to 1920, when a charge was put on the guide. From 1926 the guide was further developed and began recognizing outstanding restaurants by marking their listings with a star. In the early 1930s the system of stars was expanded to a two and three star system to further be able to differentiate among the restaurants included in the guide. Over the years, the guide was extended to cover countries other than France and later on also to encompass guides for selected major cities worldwide. Today the Michelin guide collection is comprised of 25 guides covering 23 countries and more than 45.000 establishments, but the close link to the tire manufacturer is still evident in that the expansion of the Michelin guide closely follows market development for where Michelin tires are sold. As such, although the Michelin guide has developed a life of its own over the years, it remains a marketing tool for a tire manufacturer, according to Mesplede. This regional interest to tire markets probably explains why there is no Nordic Guidebook, and as such no chance for Danish restaurants outside Copenhagen or Fyn for getting any Michelin stars (Copenhagen and Fyn are listed as 'main cities of Europe', but the rest of Denmark is not included in the guidebooks).

The Michelin guide operates on a system based on anonymous, professionally trained inspectors, who are assigned the task of visiting restaurants and evaluate them on a range of criteria in order to make an impartial assessment of them. The evaluations are very much done according to fixed criteria, according to precise instructions, from highly trained inspectors frequently with experience from the cuisine field. The inspectors are required to work solely for the Michelin guide (with no other sources of income), and have to undergo intensive training for 3-6 months together with experienced inspectors. Michelin claims that its inspectors, for example, revisit all 4,000 reviewed restaurants in France every 18 months, and all starred restaurants several times a year. Michelin has approximately 100 inspectors worldwide.

Restaurants are ranked into 3 stars ('exceptional cuisine, worth a special journey'), 2 stars ('excellent cuisine, worth a detour') 1 star ('very good cuisine in its category'), or no stars. And since 1955, the guide has also listed restaurants offering 'good food at moderate prices', a feature now called 'Bib Gourmand' named after the company logo, the Michelin Man, also known as 'Bibendum'.

All restaurants found worthy to be included in the guide, regardless of their star- or Bib Gourmand-status, also receive a 'fork and spoon' designation, ranking from one fork and spoon ('a comfortable restaurant') to five forks and spoons ('a luxurious restaurant') in an attempt to reflect the overall comfort and quality of the restaurant.

Over the years various types of criticism has been raised in relation to the Michelin Guide system. This criticism has included that they play favorites and that some 3-star chefs were untouchable (e.g. Paul Bocuse and his Lyon restaurant l'Auberge du Pont de Collonges); that the inspectors are actually fewer in number than claimed by Michelin and that they therefore cannot visit restaurants every 18 months but rather with a frequency of 3.5 years (Rémy, 2004). Other types of criticism has been associated with

chefs having committed suicide after stars were taken away from the restaurant or that Michelin reviewed restaurants that were not yet open.

The inspector sits down, and…

The evaluation criteria are not public and this is, according to Mesplede, derived from the Michelin industrial logic of trade secrets, giving the Guide a somewhat mysterious and secretive feel. When an inspector visits an establishment, several things are evaluated and reported,
The first page of the report concerns the criteria for the 'fork and spoon' and the 'pavillion' are evaluated, such as the impression from the outside, phone service, receipt upon arrival, general impression of the place, quality of service, visits of kitchen/rooms etc. These criteria do not count towards the star ratings, however. On the second page of the report, an 'essai de table' (sample of the table) is filled out evaluating only the food (and also the wine, although it is sometimes evaluated on the first page, by ticking the 'grape' if the wine list is good). Each course - appetizer, main course, cheese, and dessert - receives its own rating from very bad, to bad, average or 1, 2 or 3 stars. As Mesplede explains,

> "Our only criteria are: The content of the course, the quality of the food, and the bill. Value for money is very important. It is not crystal glass that determines a star".

These criteria are the same from country to country, and decade to decade.
The star ratings are, however, not decided upon a single inspector visit. When an establishment changes 'star status', typically two or sometimes three (or even more, in the case of ratings of more than one star) different inspectors visit an establishment in order to ensure reliability. Mesplede explains,

> "It could be that the inspector on a given day is less receptive, which explains why we make repeat visits. The inspector of course has to argue why he thinks a restaurant is extraordinary. But it is clear that if you get a poor reception, you do not appreciate the food the same way. If it is a male inspector being serviced by a smiling female waiter with a breast-size of 95D, it is inevitable that it affects his impression. We would like to avoid these external factors, though".

From September each region holds two monthly meetings, involving the inspectors and the directors discussing each restaurant. Mesplede explains the procedure,

> "We have what is called a 'star session' during these meetings, which is when we go over the restaurants where a star modification could be made, that is if the restaurant deserves to keep its star, or whether another one should get one and so on. There may be some inspectors who are not in agreement about the particular restaurant, whether they should have a star or not. Then we discuss. If you get to a situation where we are unanimous, then there is usually no problem, but you can end up estimating that it is too early for a restaurant to get it's star and that it should wait until next year… But giving a star is always discussed, because if you've been at a restaurant and the first two courses were extraordinary but the

dessert was not as good, perhaps the crust was overbaked, but still good, then you'd evaluate 'really good' with an arrow pointing upwards. But if another inspector who has eaten there at another point in time and estimated it to 3 stars, then we won't punish the restaurant for one minor flaw on the day. No, there really has to have been a disaster if the restaurant is recommended for stars and it does not get it/them. That is why we have different inspectors, at different times, lunch and dinner, taking turns eating either a la carte or menu, visiting the place in order to get the full picture".

NOMA's history with the Michelin Guide

The Michelin guide (main cities of Europe) of 2004 was published in March, and did not include NOMA, which had recently opened in November 2003. However, in the next edition (March 2005), NOMA is included and awarded a single Michelin star. The following year, March 2006, NOMA maintains the one-star, and gets a 'rising star' label on top. Finally, in 2007, NOMA is awarded two Michelin stars, an evaluation they have maintained since then. The Michelin Guide system is very influential in today's culinary scene, and Kreiner acknowledges that both the early awarding of a single star, in 2005, and the shift to two stars, in 2007, did have a big impact on NOMA. However, since then, the question remains why NOMA has not yet been awarded three stars in the Michelin Guidebooks. This question has puzzled the Danish culinary scene, food critics, and even bookmakers, who all anticipated a shift to three stars in either 2010 or 2011. Since the criteria for evaluating restaurants in the Michelin Guidebooks are secret, nobody knows why NOMA is not yet a three-star restaurant. As Kreiner puts it,

> "What we know is that the Michelin Guidebook series operates from fixed criteria, and therefore NOMA must not be meeting some of these criteria".

Perceptions of the Michelin system

When characterizing the Guidebooks, Kreiner calls it 'classical' in its evaluation, emphasizing 'classical virtues'. He exemplifies, by saying that when looking around at three star restaurants worldwide, the impression is that they are rather classical, and luxury oriented, with thick cloths on the tables, perhaps thick carpets, and gold or silver utensils. However, it is also possible to find a few three star restaurants with simple and even spartan decorations, so perhaps the exceptions confirm the rule.
Even though reviewers are supposed to arrive anonymously, talk on the local culinary scene does ensure that frequently Copenhagen restaurants would know when a Michelin reviewer is in town (Skov, 2008). This, however, does not mean NOMA provides anything special for those occasions, other than being aware of his/her presence. Speculations on the restaurant scene about what constitutes the Michelin criteria abound. According to Kreiner, rumors claim that the Michelin Guidebook series includes criteria for context, such as tablecloth, waiter and door service, quality of utensils in their star ratings (although this has been denied by the Michelin system). However, Kreiner clearly states that NOMA is not in any way trying to develop the restaurant to become more in accordance with what rumors has it that the Michelin Guidebook might have a set of criteria for. For example, NOMA has no tablecloths, and that is not going to change. But Kreiner acknowledges that the nature of the criteria is subject to much speculation and

discussion amongst colleagues in the business, both in Denmark and internationally. The secrecy of the criteria seems to be a big part of the Michelin myth.

"Why does the world's best restaurant have 'only' 2 Michelin stars?"

When comparing the criteria based Michelin system to the voting system of San Pellegrino, it is interesting to note that the world's currently top ranked restaurant (according to San Pellegrino) only has two Michelin stars. Several Danish newspaper articles were devoted to this topic in 2011, following the surprise of NOMA not receiving a third star. Danish restaurant reviewer Søren Frank complained that the Michelin system with its decision had lost its credibility (Lohse, 2011), and top chef Bo Bech interpreted the lack of a third star as the French wanting to punish New Nordic Cuisine, and went on to call the Michelin and the San Pellegrino system the 'new arch enemies' on the culinary scene (Surrugue and Petersen, 2011). Kreiner diplomatically gives a statement to the press where he expresses that he is not disappointed for NOMA receiving two Michelin stars, but that he had hoped for a third star since it would have been a nice pad on the shoulder to the NOMA staff (Ritzau, 2011). Scandinavian region chair, Hedberg offers this interpretation,

> "It's the one million dollar question… I think they will get their 3 stars, but it will be when NOMA has passed its peak. Then they will be mature for a 3 star. Because it is just too trendy and to revolutionary and to different from what the Michelin usually promotes. And again, it would be sort of a defeat for them to say 'OK, Worlds 50 Best list were right, it is a three star, they are one of the best in the world', they have to keep NOMA back just for the sake of it… But they will get their 3 stars".

When asked if Mesplede has any idea what could be the reason why NOMA has not received a third star, the former editor of the French guide explains it this way,

> "… well, the inspectors have probably evaluated this as beautiful and interesting cooking, but which maybe lacks the 'spark' that can be found at other 3-star restaurants".

In general Mesplede is also very skeptical towards classifying a meal or a restaurant, for that matter, as 'the world's best', and has the following opinion about the San Pellegrino list,

> "It is like this list, San Pellegrino, how in the world could you classify the 50 best restaurants? …..They compare something which cannot be compared….. I think these lists are a 'fashion craze' and it is a magazine, who lives from making such lists, everybody earns money from this and I very much doubt the objectivity of the judgement."

When asked about the difference between criteria based and voting based evaluations, Kreiner exemplifies by saying that in 2007, a Danish newspaper (Børsen) had a criteria based food review scheme, with four criteria (food, wine, service, comfort). Here NOMA received top marks on food, wine and service, but not on comfort, thus putting NOMA below other Copenhagen restaurants (Troelso, 2007). Kreiner readily mentions

other examples of restaurants that do not fit 'typical' evaluation criteria of restaurants, but nonetheless pose high on the San Pellegrino list, for example Momofuku by David Chang. In some of these restaurants it is only possible to book a table online in a one-week window, where everybody is then trying to click their way to one of the few seats available; and if you are 15 minutes late, you lose our table. Such constraints put on the guests is a novelty in modern gastronomy, but hardly one you would appreciate if evaluating 'classical virtues'.

DISCUSSION

Although a century has passed since the first edition, the Michelin guide remains the dominant standard of restaurant evaluation. Until recently the internal organization of the Michelin system was black-boxed, making the foundation of restaurant ratings all but a mystery. However, with the current case study and other recent writings (Remy, 2004) some light has been shed on the ways the system seek to evaluate restaurants, which criteria are used, and how these criteria are translated into 'stars'.

The vision behind the ratings was to help travelers make dining decisions (Karpik, 2010) when driving around Europe on their Michelin tires. The link to the Michelin tire company is still evident in the funding for the guide, as well as in the Michelin guides being geographically restricted to countries where the Michelin tires are sold. Some indication of the (lack of) valuation of creativity and innovation in the guide is evident even in the early formulations of the purpose of the guide: "… to help vacationers have a *less risky, more practical* journey". The internal organization of restaurant rankings is basically a set of regionally employed (and highly trained) inspectors who visit restaurants anonymously, in order to make ratings along fixed criteria (food, context, service etc.). Innovation and creativity are not explicit criteria. A restaurant may receive multiple visits by different inspectors (in the case of restaurants that possibly deserve 3 stars, as many as 15 visits have been reported). For any particular restaurant, the inspectors may return multiple times, but on average should visit each restaurant at least once every two years. The inspector subsequently makes a report that is then used in yearly regional meetings held in order to establish which restaurants are to be given a number of Michelin stars. The translation from 'report' to number of stars takes place though group discussion and ultimately voting amongst the inspectors. As such, the system values consistency in quality dining, security for the individual traveler in making somewhat local dining decisions amongst the restaurants in the area, and reliability of ratings over time and inspectors. While acknowledging, that 'everyone can have a bad night', the system is set up to check for consistency in the level of performance of the restaurant.

Such a system, basically aiming for reliability, consistency, security for individual decision-making, and stability of ratings over time, seem not to leave much room for creativity and innovation. Indeed, creativity, change and innovation are not used as explicit criteria in the Michelin system. That does not, however, mean that innovation, change and creativity cannot have a positive influence on the restaurant ratings.

As has been shown in previous research, producing variation in the product range is valued positively in the Michelin system (Durand, Rao, Monin, 2007), but introducing more variation than competing restaurants in the product range across disciplinary boundaries (Durand, Rao, & Monin, 2007) or introducing cooking methods from other disciplines (Rao, Monin & Durand, 2004) were valued negatively. As such, although innovation is valued in the Michelin system in an absolute sense, only code-preserving

innovation (similar to 'drift', Becker, 1984) is valued in a relative sense (comparing to other restaurants).

In Michelin, standards and criteria remain constant over time, even though the translation from criteria ratings to stars is not a straightforward calculation. Indeed, the translation and weighing of the criteria seek to promote a holistic view of the restaurant across criteria, while also considering the cultural context. Nonetheless, by maintaining the same standards and criteria for restaurant ratings over time, the internal system logic is one of stability of standards and criteria over evolving trends. Code-violating innovation is punished in such a system.

The internal structure of the Michelin system thus corresponds to a system wary of innovation, albeit acknowledging innovation of the code-preserving kind. The internal system itself is build upon a notion of stable and fixed criteria across time in making the evaluations, thus assuming stable domain standards, and hence not a system looking to revitalize itself and shift criteria to the taste of the times. The resulting list of ratings and restaurants is rather slowly developing, given the need for consistency, stability and reliability. Although the guide is published every year, much of the content (up to 75%) remains constant. The clear focus is on what the Michelin guide considers the highest 'quality' in gastronomy over time, while not paying much attention to the fads and trends in cuisine.

The system seeks to gain its legitimacy in the industry in several ways. The ratings are always done anonymously by trained inspectors, who must have no interests in the restaurants that they rate. The Michelin system in that sense maintains a separation from the restaurant industry, and thus gets much of its credibility from this seeming disconnectedness and independence. Nonetheless, criticism has been voiced on how the fixed criteria seem to favor certain kinds of cuisine (notably French cuisine) and notions of what a high quality restaurant and a meal might be.

Turning to the San Pellegrino list, its ten-year history has been one of increased popularity and the list is now an important evaluative system (as evidenced, for example, in the impact on the publicity and bookings of NOMA upon reaching the top position). The voting system based on an academy of 800 well-travelled food enthusiasts, who vote for the restaurants they consider the 'best in the world', is thus consensus driven, and aimed at the avant-garde in the global 'field' of gastronomy.

Besides the claim to be rating the 'best' restaurants, there are no official criteria to apply in casting the votes. Informally, however, some academy members seem to share criteria such as 'innovation' and 'authenticity'. While the former criterion in itself encourages change, the latter can be seen as essentially demarking a conceptual change in gastronomy, away from molecular cooking (where innovation lies in novel cooking techniques, exemplified by the Spanish restaurant 'El Bulli') to the use of local and in-season ingredients (frequently foraged by the restaurant itself) that may be uncommon in cuisine, and prepared according to reinvented techniques borrowing inspiration from ancient, and perhaps forgotten, ways of making food.

While the San Pellegrino list does not hold change or innovation as formal criteria, they seem informal ones (at least for the moment). The does not mean, though, that 'innovation' and 'authenticity' will remain the criteria of choice for the academy. The system explicitly resists specific criteria, and furthermore exchanges one third of the academy members each year, ensuring a continuous shift of standards and criteria seeping into the system. The internal system logic seems to be not only to acknowledge and allow standard and criterion changes over time, but in fact to encourage them. The

resulting ranking is a list with a multitude of changes occurring each year (over 150 restaurants have appeared on the list in the past decade), and with multiple placement changes. Such an organization allows changes in the standards and criterions of the industry to be quickly mapped onto the list. A 'trendy' restaurant may enter and move up the list in a very short time span (as exemplified by NOMA). On the other hand, the voting rules also makes the list volatile in that entries of new academy members may cause multiple unexplainable shifts on the list from one year to the next. In essence the list appears to be quickly capturing the shifting trends of cuisine, perhaps at the expense of more stable and enduring values (if such exists).

The San Pellegrino system gains its legitimacy in gastronomy primarily through the selection of the long list of cuisine gatekeepers (individuals in high standing in the industry), as well as the 'democratic' and transparent voting system set up. The choice of explicitly abolishing fixed criteria in the casting of votes further underscores the aim to make a list that capture the consensual opinion of the global community, rather than the standards of any particular discipline. The list appears to be acknowledging and encouraging domain change. Such a system may capture non-durable innovations that quickly fade out (the 'flash in the pan'), but may also more easily and more quickly capture and acknowledge change that moves the domain of cuisine in novel directions, crossing boundaries, extending categories, and breaking rules. Basically, it results in a shortening of 'standard life-cycles', capturing fashions and trends in shorter temporal increments, while abolishing the hunt for timeless quality. Key features of the two ranking systems are compared in table 1. below.

Table 1. Two Ranking Systems: Guide Michelin versus San Pellegrino

	Michelin	San Pellegrino
Scope:	'Local guide'	Global ranking system
Age:	100 years old	10 years old
Model:	Evaluation standard	Voting system
	Trained inspectors	Global gastro 'experts'
	Fixed criteria	No (explicit) criteria
Target:	All kinds of 'quality'	Avant-garde
Logic:	Objectivity	Subjective experience
	Consistency and reliability	Novelty and innovation
	Tradition (modernity)	Post-modernity

It should be noted, though, that a system acknowledging shifting domain standards does not necessarily imply placing value on restaurant innovations. In principle, it is quite possible for a voting system to be conservative and stable, and to disregard innovation. Therefore, it is not a given that the San Pellegrino will maintain it's high turnover of restaurants on the list, that depends on whether or not 'restaurant innovation' remains an important informal criterion amongst the raters.

In conclusion, the internal logic and structure of the Michelin and San Pellegrino differ in their interpretations of how they seek 'consensus' through the application of 'standards'. Hedberg, the Scandinavian region chair explains,

> "So I would say volatility is a bit too high on the 'Worlds 50 best' list, whereas it's to low on the Michelin list. I mean some of the three star restaurants in France have been 3 star restaurant for 40 years, and should have been taken down to 2 or 1 or zero perhaps 15 years ago. So it's a very conservative and a very stagnant list."

While the Michelin system looks towards fixed criteria and consistent quality (gaining legitimacy through independence and anonymity), the San Pellegrino system encourages both restaurant innovation and shortened standard life cycles (gaining legitimacy through novelty and votes amongst a panel of gatekeepers). The Michelin evaluative system produces a rating of the single restaurant, whereas the San Pellegrino evaluative system produces a ranking list comparing and ranking the restaurants, thus nominating one as the 'best', providing high visibility and media interest aligning with the 'name economy' (Moeran, 2003) and contemporary society's quest for 'winners' through the endless series of 'competitions' in almost all aspects of life.

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Appendix

Manifesto for the New Nordic Kitchen

As Nordic chefs we find that the time has now come for us to create a New Nordic Kitchen, which in virtue of its good taste and special character compares favourable with the standard of the greatest kitchens of the world.

The aims of New Nordic Cuisine are:

1. To express the purity, freshness, simplicity and ethics we wish to associate with our region.

2. To reflect the changing of the seasons in the meals we make.

3. To base our cooking on ingredients and produce whose characteristics are particularly excellent in our climates, landscapes and waters.

4. To combine the demand for good taste with modern knowledge of health and well-being.

5. To promote Nordic products and the variety of Nordic producers – and to spread the word about their underlying cultures.

6. To promote animal welfare and a sound production process in our seas, on our farmland and in the wild.

7. To develop potentially new applications of traditional Nordic food products.

8. To combine the best in Nordic cookery and culinary traditions with impulses from abroad.

9. To combine local self-sufficiency with regional sharing of high-quality products.

10. To join forces with consumer representatives, other cooking craftsmen, agriculture, the fishing, food, retail and wholesale industries, researchers, teachers, politicians and authorities on this project for the benefit and advantage of everyone in the Nordic countries.