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Daniel R. Fesenmaier: An Accidental, Colourful, and Quintessential Scholar

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Introduction

Dr. Daniel R. Fesenmaier is currently Professor and Director of the Eric Friedheim Tourism Institute in the Department of Tourism, Recreation and Sport Management at the University of Florida. In his 40-year academic career, his numerous publications—along with those of his students—have shaped the landscape of tourism research, especially in the areas of tourism and information technology.

Professor Fesenmaier has held positions in several academic institutions in North America. Many of his former Ph.D. students are now established scholars at institutions in North America, UK, Europe, and East Asia. His colourful personality, language, and hairstyle have contributed to his legendary status. His official curriculum vitae boasts a long list of achievements, including many journal articles, books, monographs, research awards, and membership in the International Academy of the Study of Tourism. However, when one of the authors interviewed him at a party in Vienna in November 2017, asking him about his contribution to tourism knowledge, he mumbled, “I don’t know.”

The authors have chosen to compose a portrait of Professor Fesenmaier because he has been talking about his retirement for some time. Thus, it might be the time to summarise his career and academic milestones. In addition, given many of his contemporary colleagues’ portraits in *Anatolia*, it seems fitting for him to receive the same recognition. As many scholars in the tourism community can attest, he is often misunderstood due to his direct interaction style and sharp-edged personality, so this portrait also presents an opportunity to provide a clearer picture of Professor Fesenmaier. Hereafter, Professor Fesenmaier will be shortened as Dr. Fez, as

his students and colleagues have called him.

For the purpose to present Dr. Fez in a more comprehensive and objective way, the two authors have interviewed 12 people. Among them, nine are his colleagues and past students, one is Dr. Fez himself, and the other two are authors themselves. Each interview was conducted according to a semi-structured script, including inquiries about his contributions to the academic community, his style as an advisor and collaborator, and anecdotes about him.

After reading through all the transcribed interviews, three adjectives come to mind: accidental (his own words), colourful (Dr. Iis Tussyadiah's), and quintessential (Dr. Pauline Sheldon's). We hope to illustrate these three aspects of his career and personality in the rest of this portrait.

Short biography

Dr. Fez was born and raised in Minneapolis, Minnesota. He started his college education with a major in forestry. However, after two years, he found his true interest and talent in mathematics and statistics. In his junior year at the University of Minnesota, he casually took a postgraduate biostatistics course and got an A. Afterward, he changed his focus to mathematical ecology and graduated in 1975 with a bachelor's degree in ecology and plant geography. With a passion to be an urban planner, he started a master's program in economic geography at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale.

In that program, he met his first important mentor, Dr. Stan Lieber, who guided him in learning advanced quantitative methods in demand estimation. Dr. Fez worked as a research assistant for Dr. Lieber for a project on forecasting recreation demand in Illinois. At the end of his master's program, he was recommended to join Professor Michael Goodchild's group to continue his Ph.D. study at the University of Western Ontario, Canada. Dr. Fez has attested that

his three-year Ph.D. journey with Professor Goodchild's group shaped his later philosophy and approach, including his views on research, training postgraduate students, and developing research group culture.

On the first day of the program, in the late 1970s, Professor Goodchild showed him how to program 3-D map objects, which Dr. Fez described as "the coolest thing in the world." During his three years of PhD study, Dr. Fez also collaborated with two other Ph.D. students in the group to publish 16 high-quality journal papers. In addition, he experienced the "Friday celebration culture" in his Ph.D. study group. "We went out every Friday late afternoon to talk and celebrate what we had done in the past week," said Fesenmaier. "We talked about ideas and trends, and I think this is a good way to produce the best Ph.D. students."

In 1980, Dr. Fez officially embarked on a journey as a scholar and teacher in higher education, which has lasted through four decades to the present. By observing his career path, two unique points stand out. First, during his career, Dr. Fez has worked for six institutions, including the University of Oklahoma, Texas A&M University, Indiana University, the University of Illinois, Temple University, and the University of Florida. He attested, "From a quality of life point of view, I wish I had been more stable. However, by moving around, you learn along with it. From a professional point of view, I had a fantastic life. I am glad I did that." Second, he held multiple positions at the University of Illinois and Temple University, where he spent more than a decade each. At the University of Illinois, in addition to a position in the Department of Leisure Studies, he served as an adjunct professor in the Department of Geography and Department of Advertising. At Temple University, beyond a position in the School of Tourism and Hospitality Management, he served as an adjunct professor in the Department of Management Information Systems at the Fox School of Business. He enjoyed

working on interdisciplinary projects and collaborations with scholars from other fields. His Ph.D. students were also encouraged and granted chances to take courses in other disciplines, and many participated in research projects in other fields.

Another highlight in his career was serving as a director for the National Laboratory for Tourism & eCommerce (NLTeC), which Dr. Fez established in 1995 at the University of Illinois. He created NLTeC for better collaboration with destination marketing organizations in Illinois and other states. The NLTeC turned out to be an innovation centre for experimenting with ideas in tourism and information science, eCommerce, and online marketing. He worked with his postgraduate students and hired programmers for government and industry projects, and he maintained a self-sustained lab. Meanwhile, he and his students explored research questions that contributed to the field theoretically and practically. The output of the lab included academic papers, consultancy reports, information systems, and computer applications. In the past two decades, a total of 23 Ph.D. students and 24 master's students graduated while working at NLTeC, and 150 projects were completed with a total of \$6.8 million in funding. He labelled the spirit of NLTeC, "Innovation, Creativity, & Fun". In 2004, NLTeC was moved to Temple University and is now housed at the University of Florida.

Dr. Fez and his academic accomplishments

During his 40-year scholarly career, Dr. Fez published one book, six edited books, three monographs, and 276 articles 132 of those in refereed journals. Many of his works have been widely cited. According to Google Scholar statistics, his research profile has logged 16,719 citations with an i10-index 173 as of January, 2018. The research work he and his students published substantially influenced research in tourism experience, travelers' online behavior, and the impact of information technology on tourism.

Along the way, Dr. Fez's research evolved to focus on three areas. Figure 1 highlights his seminal papers in the three areas along with his scholarship journey from 1980 to 2017. The first area is travel advertising and demand analysis, focusing on: (1) the nature of decision making in pleasure travel; (2) the nature and role of information used by travelers to guide trip-related decisions; and (3) the application of travel demand modeling in tourism planning. Influenced by the learning tracks in his master's and Ph.D. programs, he had a strong interest in conducting research quantitatively. In his first several years at Texas A&M University, he and his colleagues created an information system to profile visitors' information in Texas, called "TTRIP" (Texas Tourism & Recreation Information Program). His early research in the 1980s focused on measuring and modeling people's leisure behavior. For instance, a series of papers published by Dr. Fez and Dr. Lieber investigated people's recreation expenditure and provided important implications for recreation planning. Later, in the 1990s, his research interests turned to tourists and destination marketing. Working with scholars such as John Crompton and his colleague at Texas A&M, and his students, including Wesley Roehl, Jame Bigley, Christine Vogt, Kelly MacKay, Jiann-min Jeng, and Lan Xia, Dr. Fez investigated tourists' decision making, planning behavior, and use of travel information. As a result, he and his group made a substantial contribution to the understanding of tourist information consumption behavior and decision-making.

Dr. Fez's second research focus is tourism marketing and information technology. The four sub-areas are: (1) the use of Internet technology by travelers in the travel planning process; (2) the design of web-based systems for marketing tourism products; (3) emerging technologies for use in tourism marketing; (4) competitive strategies for marketing tourism destinations (including the branding of tourism destinations); and (5) market information systems. In the late

1990s, he observed the enormous potential of information technology and particularly the Internet on traveler behavior and the tourism industry. With Ulrike Gretzel and Yu-Lan Yuan, he published a paper that highlighted the challenges and changes the Internet created for destination marketing organizations (Gretzel, Yuan, & Fesenmaier, 2000). Since then, Dr. Fez and his students, such as Gretzel, Bing Pan, Yuan, Zheng Xiang, Yeong-Hyeon Hwang, Youcheng Wang, Florian Zach, Sangwon Park, and Dan Wang, developed several research streams. These include research on tourism recommendation systems, online travel communities, website design and destination marketing, travel planning on the Internet, search behavior for online travel information, Internet-mediated travel experience, and the impact of smartphones on travel. He and his group are prolific in this area, and their impact has grown quickly with the proliferation of researchers of information technology and tourism-related topics.

In recent years, Dr. Fez turned his research interest to experience design. This area includes: (1) mapping experiences in tourism and hospitality; (2) assessing the role of stories and communication in the tourist experience; (3) application of service dominant logic within the travel experience; and (4) identifying emerging metrics for modeling travel experiences. He attested that research efforts in the latter two areas, during past decades, laid a foundation for him to step into the area of experience design. Perceiving that information technology is becoming the invisible hands powering business processes and people's lives in different respects, he believes that what we do with IT platforms is most important. Working with his students, such as Jeongmi (Jamie) Kim, Yeongbae Choe, and Jason Stienmetz, he has started to focus on developing IT-based innovative methods to measure tourism experience from multiple dimensions.

Dr. Fez and academic communities

Dr. Fez has been actively involved in several academic communities, including the Tourism Education Futures Initiative (TEFI), International Federation for IT and Travel & Tourism (IFITT), and the Travel & Tourism Research Association (TTRA). In fact, he is a co-founder and the inspiration behind TEFI together with Pauline Sheldon.

TEFI was born in 2006 - 2007 as a result of discussions on the “seismic changes” taking place in higher education. At a meeting in Vienna in 2006, a few tourism educators and industry leaders recognized these industrial changes in terms of scale, diversity and the increasing impact of many divergent factors on the future of tourism and hospitality education. These new challenges called out for a new paradigm in tourism education, so TEFI was formed with the following initial mission: “TEFI seeks to provide vision, knowledge and a framework for tourism education programs to promote global citizenship and optimism for a better world.” TEFI now identifies itself as a new and inclusive tourism academy. It is a social movement comprised of people (educators, researchers, industry actors and community members), who seek to progress an alternative type of tourism that is sustainable and just, that delivers blended social, economic and environmental value, and that promotes vibrant flourishing communities.

Professor Dan Fesenmaier and Professor Pauline Sheldon from the University of Hawaii convened the first TEFI conference at Modul University, Vienna, in 2007 with Dr. Karl Woeber. Over the ensuing decade (2007-2017), TEFI gained momentum and held nine annual conferences in eight countries. The frameworks, guidelines, and white papers published by TEFI have substantially influenced the development of tourism and hospitality education programs in many countries (Sheldon, Fesenmaier, & Tribe, 2011). These days, as the tourism industry faces the challenges of self-service technology, robotics, and changing consumer values, the vision of early “TEFI-ites” is worthy of more appreciation.

IFITT is the leading global community encouraging knowledge and experience sharing for a group of practitioners and academics with a true passion for information and communications technology (ICT) in travel and tourism. Dr. Fez attended ENTER, the annual conference of this community, in the second year after its establishment in 1993. Over 20 years, he and his students contributed approximately 40 papers to ENTER conferences, and eight papers were ranked among the top-three best papers in specific years. He and his group brought a sociological perspective to understanding the mutual impact of IT and travelers, which is an important contribution to a community dominated by technology-oriented research streams. Dr. Fez worked in the ENTER program committee for 18 years. He was awarded the Hannes Werthner Tourism and Technology Lifetime Achievement Award and the 20 Years ENTER Paper Contribution Award by IFITT in 2013 in Innsbruck, Austria.

Besides TEFI and IFITT, Dr. Fez has been active in serving the Travel and Tourism Research Association (TTRA), a non-profit association dedicated to enhancing the quality, value, effectiveness and use of research in travel marketing, planning and development. He and his students have contributed over 30 papers to the annual TTRA conference since 1992. He also worked with the Journal of Travel Research, TTRA's affiliated journal, to publish a series of invited papers for tourism research foundations from 2012 to 2015. He was also awarded the International Travel and Tourism Research Association (TTRA) Lifetime Achievement Award in 2013.

Dr. Fez's other contributions to tourism studies include being the co-founding editor of Tourism Analysis, the past Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of Information Technology and Tourism, and Editor of the Foundations in Tourism Research Series in the Journal of Travel Research. Among his other achievements, he is a Fellow in the International Academy for the

Study of Tourism. He has also been honored by receiving the Michael D. Olsen Research Award from the University of Delaware (2010), and the Medal of Exceptional Scholarly Achievement (CPTHL, 2007).

Dr. Fez and his anecdotal stories

The 12 interviews conducted for this article revealed similar colours and hues of Dr. Fez's personality and character, but each revealed different aspects as well. The common keywords were many, such as "brilliant," "innovative," "creative," and "forward-thinking." In addition, many scholars remembered him with stories that reinforced the type of scholar and colleague he is.

Dr. Fez is described as innovative and creative, as always learning and pushing the frontier forward. He is always looking for the next new idea in understanding travel planning and decision-making, advertising, demand analysis, online marketing, and experience design. He is also a strong believer in making unique and meaningful contributions to the field, not being repetitive, and not publishing merely for the sake of publication.

Dr. Fez has a strong sense of responsibility as a scholar and educator. He has strongly influenced people around him to have a similar sense of obligation. This includes responsibility toward both graduate and undergraduate students and the younger generation; responsibility toward the tourism research community, and responsibility toward greater society. Thus, he strongly advocates emphasizing the greater good rather than petty personal gains.

Moreover, Dr. Fez is an atypical mentor and advisor in that he always blends work, study, and fun. When asked why he has the drive, energy, and motivation to push forward all the time, he simply said, "*It's fun.*" In the interviews about Dr. Fez, there were many stories told by his students, colleagues, and collaborators. The authors present here 10 anecdotal stories:

1. Friday afternoons, or whenever a paper is accepted, are fun times with Dr. Fez. Both authors vividly remembered his research group's happy hours in a pub or bar, whether these occurred in downtown Philadelphia, PA or Champaign, Illinois. Thanksgiving dinner is an annual tradition, with Dr. Fez hosting his entire research group at his home, whether he was living in Champaign, Philadelphia, or Gainesville, Florida.
2. Dr. Fez is a great conversationalist. He can have a conversation with anyone on any topic and make it interesting. Once he drove with Dr. Joe O'Leary from Champaign, Illinois to Montreal for an ENTER conference and he didn't stop talking during the all-night trip.
3. However, his comments and critiques during a conference presentation are always sharp, challenging, and to-the-point. The last thing he can stand is intellectual laziness.
4. Dr. Fez is an early riser: he goes to bed very early and usually arrives at the office prior to six o'clock every morning. Sunday morning is also his usual work time.
5. Dr. Fez read one book every week (or at least tries to do so).
6. Dr. Fez is very generous toward his students and friends. On one occasion, he gave his personal credit card to one of his PhD students to book hotels and transportation in Europe, so the student could have some personal fun time beyond the time spent at a conference. He also loaned his car to one of his visiting scholars during another conference.
7. From time to time, Dr. Fez can "*kick his graduate students' butts*" (Dr. Pauline Sheldon's words), too; interestingly, none of his past students mentioned this.
8. Dr. Fez may be the only person who could cross the European Union border from Switzerland to Italy without a passport. During one of his trips in Europe, he forgot his passport but somehow happened to have his driver's license stuck in his jean pocket. He charmed the border guard into letting him through. In a more unfortunate case, he was sent back on a return flight from San Paulo when he forgot he needed a visa to enter Brazil. Of course, he also missed his keynote speech.
9. Dr. Fez drinks Diet Coke at every meal, even at breakfast.
10. Dr. Fez drinks cognac, too — the expensive type — but only with good friends. He can drink cognac all night long but still manage to wake up to give an inspiring speech in the early morning.

Conclusion

Dr. Fez is an accidental tourism scholar who never intended to be a scholar at the beginning of his college career. He moved from forestry and ecology to geography, recreation, decision-making, tourism marketing, and ultimately to tourism and information technology. He is colourful in his personality, language, personal interaction, and hairstyle, though many misunderstand his direct and challenging communication style. He is also a quintessential scholar: he contributed much to the tourism academy and helped build the community of tourism research. The landscape of tourism research would have been different—and definitely a lot more boring—without him. As Dr. Fez famously proclaimed at several Ph.D. workshops in ENTER conferences: “*research is better than sex!*”. For him, research has never been about work; he is always having fun with his research and continues to do so, and he enjoys having creative people around him. Recently, he stopped talking about his upcoming retirement, so this portrait might be pre-mature. Perhaps he will continue to have new ideas and new plans every day and venture into a new territory of research. In his words, that would be “*fantastic!*”

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Figure 1. Professor Daniel Fesenmaier's three main research areas and important works