

RESEARCH HISTORY

Marc van der Erve (socio-physicist)

Marc van der Erve (born 1947) is an independent investigator and has studied phenomena of organization and leadership for more than three decades. He was born and educated in the Netherlands and holds a BSc in Applied Physics cum laude and a PhD in Sociology from Tilburg University. During his 30-year career in business and consulting, he identified the need for a more fundamental perspective of how we perceive our world.



A secluded scientist, Dr van der Erve studies the emergence of phenomena of organization both in nature and society as well as the role of leaders in this process. His work culminates in 2008 when he identifies a new theory of organization, the *Emzine theory*, a theory that explains the *physics of organization* and why *reality actually is a manifestation of organization*. An eloquent speaker and developer of [Emzine Profiler](#) ^[1], the first iPhone App™ for leaders, Marc van der Erve is now regularly invited by leadership forums to elaborate on his findings.

Research

1986-1989

In his first book, *Dynamisch Ondernemen* (1986), Marc van der Erve identifies common organizational traits across various corporations. Companies should not be characterized simply as successes or failures but as changing phenomena that face common challenges in certain developmental circumstances. In a subsequent book, *The Power of Tomorrow's Management* (1989), he evaluates the link between the [logistics function](#), such as the S-shaped growth of corporate revenue, and consistently changing corporate challenges and solutions, a finding that inspires the research of [Theodore Modis](#), a colleague at [Digital Equipment Corporation](#), who particularly looks into the quantitative aspects of growth. One of the conclusions that stands out is that companies should distance themselves from historical processes and procedures near the end of the S-curve to redesign them from scratch. In 1990, [Michael Hammer](#) introduces [Business Process Re-engineering](#) which aims to do just that.

1994-1998

In 1993, Marc van der Erve earns a PHD at the University of Tilburg under the supervision of Prof Dr Jules van Dijk whom he later refers to as the “godfather of a dynamic view of society” in a contribution to the *Liber Amicorum* of the latter ^[2]. In a doctoral thesis and book, *Evolution Management* (1994), Marc van der Erve further evaluates the constantly changing social parameters of companies when they develop. He introduces the term *social elasticity* to describe a number of collectively changing behavioral dimensions, such as the cyclically growing and diminishing social forces of vision and culture. In *Resonant Corporations* (1998), Marc van der Erve reports the outcome of a broad leadership survey in which he puts the notion of *social elasticity* to the test. In this book, which earns an endorsement from Prof [Philip Kotler](#), Marc van der Erve confirms the anticipated evolution of leadership and organizational behavior as companies predictably develop in four primal stages of emergence. He also introduces [chaos theory](#)-related phenomena, such as [stochastic resonance](#), to explain these.

2001-2004

After several years of evaluating and coaching leaders, Marc van der Erve introduces four distinct *leadership comfort zones* or *leadership archetypes* first in *Holland Management Review* ^[3] and, subsequently, in *European Business Review* ^[4]. He earns a *Citation of Excellence* for the latter article. These *leadership comfort zones* or *leadership archetypes* correspond to the four universal stages of organizational emergence that he identified earlier. Each of the four primal stages is marked by a different rate of organizational growth.

1. When an organization is ready to re-invent itself, you need a [Transformer-type leader](#) who identifies a platform for future growth.
2. Once a platform for growth has been identified, you need a [Builder-type leader](#), who creates an organization that excels in identifying and nurturing product- and service-niches.
3. In case of proven success, an organization needs a [Grower-type leader](#) who optimizes and specializes an organization in order to improve its capacity to deal with volume, quality and costs.
4. When the environment changes and when pre-programmed behaviors prevent an organization from generating adequate responses, you need a [Confronter-type leader](#) who purifies an organization.

In other words, leadership is *not eternal* but *temporal*. What is more, organizations cannot be *built to last* but *only be grown to achieve*. Much later, based on research into the biochemistry of love, the American anthropologist, [Helen Fisher](#), independently arrives at remarkably parallel *personality types* in her book, *Why him? Why her?* (2009). In contrast to the findings of van der Erve, Fisher's taxonomy is not derived from an analysis of the four primal stages of organizational and societal emergence.

2007-2008

In rapid succession, Marc van der Erve publishes two new books in which he continues his search for a more fundamental explanation of the organizational phenomena and leadership types that he identified earlier. In 2007, in a 75,000-word logbook of research, *A New Dimension of Time*, he shows how the inclination of humans historically emerges from a fascination for both spatial and time-related phenomena, a fascination that is not distributed equally across humanity for good reasons. After a broad analysis of multiple forms of organization in nature and society, he identifies two interpretations of time when it comes to the *emergence of organization*: one linear (time as interval) and one cyclical (that is, not cyclical in the sense that the same organization will arise again but cyclical in that *emergence* might lead to *re-emergence* albeit in a different form and greatly depending on the environmental conditions). He borrows recent insights from chaos theory, such the notion of [itinerant attractors](#), to explain the crucial stages of *simultaneous interaction* at the heart of organizational emergence and, thus, at the heart of the other dimension of time. However, it takes another book to arrive at a *conclusive theory of organization*, the so-called *theory of Emzine*. In January of 2008, he writes the first two chapters and a white paper, *Explaining Auto-Emergence in Physics and Society* ^[5]. In Q3 of 2008, just before the US Presidential Elections, he publishes *A New Dimension of Time – The Ability to Predict*, a book specifically written for leaders. Nine months before the November elections, he predicts that [Barack Obama](#) will be the next president. He also illustrates why organizations cannot be built to last but only grown to achieve. In that he distinguishes himself from established thinkers on corporate excellence, such as Jim Collins ^[6], who initially suggested the opposite. Anchored in chaos theory and [thermodynamics](#), the insights in this book go straight to the behavioral guts of the miracle of organization to lay bare the determinants of success and demise in a way that is perhaps less spectacular yet in reach of business professionals.

2009-2010

Despite his occasional focus on theoretical and philosophical matters, Marc van der Erve kept a keen eye on the practical application of his findings. In the first three quarters of 2009, he develops *Emzine Profiler*, the first true iPhone App™ for leaders. This software application helps its users identify the most opportune leaders both in profit and non-profit organizations. The tactic behind the App is to outmaneuver the bias of the (leadership) establishment by reaching out to possible users throughout the leadership hierarchy. A summary video of the Emzine theory is included in the App ^[7]. In 2010, Marc van der Erve continues writing his novel, *The Emzine Trail*, about how the Emzine theory will have spread a decade from now.

The Emzine Theory

Emzine = *Existential Manifold Zine*, the hidden area where co-evolving behavior-pattern species “write” the manifold of organizations that we observe. When it comes to human forms of organization, the theory of Emzine involves the following research findings.

1. All forms of organization are ecosystems that consist of best reproducing “behavior-pattern species”. At one with the laws of thermodynamics, these species develop in at least four stages of emergence to minimize certain market- and human-inequalities as fast as the local circumstances allow.
2. Through past experiences, people develop comfort zones that correspond to a specific stage of organizational emergence. Locked in by neural networks that grow in the process, people revert to their comfort zone when push comes to shove.
3. Leaders perform best when they guide an organization to a stage that corresponds to their comfort zone. Leaders are in the way of the development of their organization when it is ready to advance to a stage beyond their comfort zone.
4. Each universal stage of organizational emergence has its own problems, solutions and leadership needs. You can predict the next stage including its characteristic problems, solutions and leadership needs when the current stage is known.

References

- [1] *Emzine Profiler* [Pre-launch Press Release](#) (2009)
- [2] *Resonance*, [Contribution to “Ondernemen in Wetenschap”, Liber Amicorum Prof Dr JJJ van Dijk \(2000\)](#)
- [3] *Governance Morgen*, [Holland Management Review, No. 90, 2003](#)
- [4] *Temporal Leadership*, [European Business Review, Vol. 16 No. 6, 2004](#)
- [5] *Explaining Auto-Emergence in Physics and Society*, [White Paper](#)
- [6] Stefan Stern, *From good to great to fatal complacency*, The Financial Times, June 4 2009
- [7] *Emzine Theory* - [Summary Video](#)

Further Reading

- Marc van der Erve, *Dynamisch Ondernemen*, Sijthof Pers (1986)
- Marc van der Erve, *The Power of Tomorrow's Management*, Butterworth-Heinemann (1989)
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- Marc van der Erve, *A New Dimension of Time*, Erve Research (2007)
- Marc van der Erve, *A New Leadership Ethos – The Ability to Predict*, Erve Research (2008/2009)

External Links

- [Website of Marc van der Erve](#)
- [Book Blog, A New Leadership Ethos](#)
- [Emzine Profiler Website](#)

Sources

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