

The politics of rage; the quest for middle ground

 By [Dion Chang](#)

6 Jan 2020

By the end of 2019, the rising anger around the globe was palpable, as were the divisions that fuelled the rage. Whether they were political, economic, environmental or cultural, anger and dissatisfaction was omnipresent, and the merest spark ignited the flames of protest. That's the focus of Flux Trends' latest "The State We're In" report.



Dion Chang, founder of Flux Trends.

The annual Flux Trends release – *The State We're In* – is an overview of where the world is, and where it is going, using the acronym T.R.E.N.D.S to highlight six trend pillars. Each letter represents a key sector that will affect how we live, work

and play in the coming year. It's an executive summary of global dynamics and winds of change. The 2020 edition is titled '*The Politics of Rage: The Quest for Middle Ground*'.

Globally, differences in political ideology, economic inequality and personal standpoints are growing more extreme, and divisive. Twitter reflects both the rage and toxicity we live with. The hope of finding common ground has receded, so the quest for finding middle ground is what's needed. Middle ground is compromise; common ground is problem-solving.

Finding middle ground only addresses the symptoms of conflict, not its causes. It will only mask tensions, not resolve them: but we have to start somewhere. Middle ground points to an equitable solution. It won't be perfect and will be temporary, but it should quell the anger.

To paraphrase Taylor Swift: "*We need to calm down*"...

TECHNOLOGY: Global connectivity and the prospect of 5G

South African data network provider Rain launched 5G network in parts of Johannesburg and Tshwane last year. Now the company plans to launch the network in major metros in Johannesburg, Cape Town, Pretoria and Durban by the end of 2020.



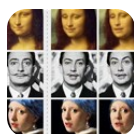
#AfricaCom: How to accelerate digital transformation to 5G the right way

Leigh Andrews 12 Nov 2019



In China, LinkSure has ambitious plans to provide free internet for the whole world. Dubbed the LinkSure Swarm Constellation System, the company plans to have their first 10 satellites to be in earth's orbit by the end of 2020.

While high-speed connectivity is a common goal, issues of privacy and the growing sophistication of deep fakes are making people wary of the personal data they trade off with companies.



Deepfake apps: Society's new enemy

Riana McArthur 29 Oct 2019



The middle ground: In San Francisco a proposal is underway to establish the "*Office of Emerging Technology*" to help the city monitor the next wave of devices and services spawned in Silicon Valley.

RETAIL & MARKETING: Sustainability – the new USP

Kudos to the eco warriors and diversity activists. In the last 18 months, their influence has mapped a new trajectory for retail brands – it's more inclusive as well as sustainable.



#SustainabilityMonth: The dangers of goodwashing and greenwashing

Leigh Andrews 13 Oct 2016



Not only are there new rules of engagement and communication, but transient ownership – which includes new circular economies and a booming rental market – are rapidly changing business models for many retailers, which in turn will also impact landlords, mall owners and property developers.

“ The ‘shop till you drop’ mantra is slowly evolving into a ‘rent or recycle it’ mindset. ”

Transient ownership has arrived.



#BizTrends2018: The new rules of retail

Lauren Hartzenberg 29 Jan 2018



The middle ground: The underground, in this case. The ripple effect of transient ownership can be found in Paris, where underground parking basements have been turned into urban mushroom farms because car ownership has declined so significantly, basement parking lots now stand empty.

ECONOMY: Caught in the political crossfire

While many countries, and multi-national companies, find themselves caught in the crossfire of Trump's trade war with China, the politics of rage are also starting to affect global business. A single tweet in support of the protesters in Hong Kong sparked international incidents, blurring business and politics.



Only leadership, ethics can help SA's economy now - corporate governance report

21 Nov 2019



Issues of sustainability are also changing the landscape of business as the focus shifts from a company's CSR (corporate social responsibility) policy to its ESG (environmental social governance) rating – ideally accompanied by a B Corporation listing. A blinkered focus on the bottom line and shareholder primacy is fast becoming detrimental to any future business model.

The middle ground: If data is now considered to be more valuable than oil, then there is a growing argument that companies mining our data should not only be paying us for it, but also that data itself (i.e.: the content we create) should be classified as labour. If that happens, a new profession – the personal data broker – is born.

How the thunderbolts of transformation impact the future of work





Carmen Murray 8 Feb 2018



NATURAL WORLD: Child activists and circular economies

The war on plastic has become, not only the epicenter for other sustainable issues, but also the rallying point for child activists.

“ *It's not just Greta Thunberg and her cohort of global Gen Z climate change activists, but an even younger demographic who are starting to challenge multinational companies on their continued use of plastic.* ”

Trading in plastic, in the form of reverse vending machines that reward the recycler with vouchers or public transport access, are spreading globally.



Plastic Atlas highlights scale of global plastic pollution crisis

7 Nov 2019



Circular economy models are sprouting and spreading rapidly. From looped systems for household cleaning products, to items of clothing that are deconstructed down to its fibers and reengineered into new fabrics, to systems eliminating food waste, global consumption patterns are shifting radically.

The middle ground: In an ironic twist of fate, the milkman (who delivers your daily supply of milk – in glass bottles) has made a comeback in the UK. Customers wanting to reduce their reliance on plastic are opting into this circular economy.

DIPLOMACY: The era of democratic deadlock

Writing in the *Financial Times*, Gideon Rachman tracked the pattern of impasses that many countries are reaching.

“ *Deadlock is caused by the fracturing of two-party systems, the polarisation of politics, with the re-emergence of the far-right and the far-left making compromise harder to achieve.* ”

This is becoming evident in countries like Spain, Germany, Israel and the UK.



#BizTrends2018: Identity crisis - the business of being WOKE

Dion Chang 8 Jan 2018



And while politicians engage in a political tug of war, civil protests are on the rise. At the close of 2019, the number of global hotspots where civil protests erupted were growing at an alarming rate.

Just like the Arab Spring in 2011, almost all the protests were triggered by something small, like the 20-cent tax for using WhatsApp in Lebanon. The common thread for all of the protests was non-delivery of services and economic inequality.



South Africa needs a fresh approach to its stubbornly high levels of inequality

Edward Webster 14 Dec 2017



Inequality will, in turn, be affected by geo-political dynamics as the rise in protectionism – in tandem with populist politics – points to the possible start of deglobalisation.

The middle ground: *The Financial Mail* reports that analysts are already talking about a move towards *regionalisation*, where the world splits into separate spheres of influence – e.g.: a US-led bloc and a China-led bloc.

SOCIO-CULTURAL: The Jokers and the ecosexuals

As civil protest spreads across the globe, pop culture is being incorporated into the narrative in the most unusual way.

After the release of the movie, *The Joker*, last year protesters in Beirut, Lebanon, Santiago, Chile, Catalonia and Hong Kong have been spotted wearing a Joker mask or painting their faces like The Joker.



Joker is less of a *tour de force* and more of tragic caricature

Natalie Le Clue 10 Oct 2019



The story of *The Joker* delves into the failures of neoliberal capitalism, and its unintended consequences: it is a mirror to what is happening in the world.

Aidan McGarry, lecturer in international politics at the University of Loughborough, explains the symbolism:

“ He is a symbol of oppressed, the downtrodden, the ignored, the abused. But the mask also carries a warning – basically, ignore me at your peril. I will strike back. ”

The middle ground: Ecosexuality is now a thing. Sustainability now has a “sexual identity” and the ecosexual community wants to show the Earth some love. Their manifesto?

“ We shamelessly hug trees, massage the earth with our feet, and talk erotically to plants. We are skinny dippers, sun worshippers, and stargazers. We make love with the Earth through our senses. We celebrate our e-spots. We are very dirty. ”

The ecosexuals have clearly calmed down and found a middle ground.



#BizTrends2019: The state we are in

Dion Chang, Khumo Theko 7 Jan 2019



*The full 2020 “State We’re In”, trend briefing will take place in February. Register for notifications and more trend snacks at www.fluxtrends.com.

ABOUT DION CHANG

Trend strategist, Dion Chang, is the founder of research trend specialists, Flux Trends. He is an innovator, creative thinker and walking ideas bank. He takes the unique view of "trends as business strategy". Flux Trends - specialises in understanding the consumer mindset and identifying unexpected business opportunities within shifting trends. For more trends as business strategy visit: www.fluxtrends.com

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