

The End of C

and a Dozen Other Trends for 2019

Marian Salzman

INTRODUCTION

Though forecasts look forward (it's there in the name, after all), making predictions means to be able to look back, forward and sideways. For this go-round, it seems that there's been an emphasis on "back." Never before have we seen so many trends that revisit topics from years gone by—the baker's dozen here each rework previous movements that have been bubbling up for ages. They go deeper, further and skew toward our brave and bold new world, but they nonetheless revisit some significant trends that we have been watching for quite some time.

We're seeing the countertrend of small and local as a safe space, an antidote to the long-held and growing trend of global orientation. And we're seeing trends that address questions like these:

- Decades of warning bells later, are we at last prepared to accept the realities and take action on the state of the planet?
- Will women get their due in this latest wave of post-post-feminist feminism?
- Will A.I. and virtual reality pervade our everyday, following more than a century of supposition?

This year's entire batch of trends necessitates that we look back to see where we've come from in order to get an idea of where we're going. They all hark back to thoughts, movements and trends from days past—some more than four decades ago. Read on for my baker's dozen of sightings.



The end of “C.”

Four big ones—civility, compromise, constraint and conversation—are fading fast. From [politics](#) to business leaders, the notions of character and decency are becoming relics. Today, a conversation is often reduced to a quick text, an urgent command (another C word—but one that’s growing) or an emotion conveyed with an emoticon. And make no mistake, there are emoticons for everything now. There’s even [World Emoji Day](#), and alternatives have popped up like GIFs and musical mentions to insert easily—check out the new app [GIFNote](#)—to humanize or soften the message. In recent months, Americans have mourned the deaths of two great statesmen, [Senator John McCain](#) and [President George H. W. Bush](#) (“41”), both lauded for their decency—read civility. In farewell messages to these men, political adversaries celebrated their civic contributions but especially their civilized ways: fairness, honesty and the ability to listen. The loss of these good men—i.e., civilized conversationalists—hurts more because what we are missing is their artful and civil mode of talking *with* us versus *at* us ...



It's never nice to fool Mother Nature.

Mother Nature has been getting angrier for years—and I've been sighting this trend in one form or another for decades. But today extreme weather is only getting more violent and, ultimately, devastating: [California burns](#) with multiple wildfires, including the deadliest in its history, the [arctic "browns"](#) at an unprecedented velocity, Asia is [pummeled](#) on [multiple fronts](#) and [greenhouse gas levels balloon](#) to their highest ever. [Warnings are dire](#) on the [economic impacts](#) this growing ecological disaster will have across the globe—with vulnerable supply chains from farmland to shipping ports affecting the livelihoods of millions. Less obvious potentialities abound, as well, including [languages lost](#) forever. Also on the rise: Our sense of powerlessness to right the ship. This generation of DIYers wants to solve societal problems but can't see the big picture; their solutions tend to the microlevel (plastic bottles, espresso machine pods, compost) and hyperlocal (we've been saying global is the new local for ages; we can now say the converse—local is the new global, because now everything touches). Watch the great debate that continues to this day on whether the evil focus lands on Mother Nature or human nature.



Red flags for the red planet.

Going to the moon seems so last century. A new frontier is—finally—seemingly within reach, and the Mars quake is rumbling. NASA has recently [landed a ship](#) there to study and map the planet's interior. Considering our rapidly depleting resources on our home planet, might Mars be a fresh source for the things we humans need to survive? [Not so fast](#), say some physicists and scientists, who worry that with any human contact will come contamination—and the possibility of [wiping out any microscopic life](#) native to Mars. Not surprisingly, the always controversial Elon Musk already has designs for [taking a trip there himself](#). With a full-blown refugee crisis ongoing here on earth, will we be seeing the uber-wealthy becoming willing planetary expats? Expect the practical—and ethical—debates to rage on as the privileged upper crust seek sanctuary from coming travail.



Breakdowns to the left, breakdowns to the right.

The breakdown of the United States of Europe is still in the works. After voting to take its leave from the E.U. almost two years ago, [Britain still can't agree](#) on how to make a graceful Brexit ([calls to take another vote](#) are getting louder). Other E.U. countries are weathering their own breakdowns. German Chancellor Angela Merkel is seeing her long [reign come to an end](#)—while for new French President Emmanuel Macron, the honeymoon is already over. Across the pond, with red versus blue angst so pervasive it's even [making its way into our bedrooms](#), there's very little “united” about the U.S. When does this disunity erupt into actual skirmishes or more? Could a 51st state (Southern Cali and southwestern Arizona) emerge, or will California, Arizona, New Mexico contemplate a merger with Mexico? This current (social) media environment rewards divisive behavior and promotes tribalism. The one thing that we all—left, right and center—may have in common is a constant feeling of embattlement.



China—up or down?

Watch the Chinese sail through the Suez Canal into Africa and build roads and infrastructure links across the ancient silk road from China through Eurasia, the Middle East and on to Europe. It's called the [Belt and Road initiative](#), hailed as modern history's most ambitious infrastructure development project. But some argue that China has reached a peak, and what's in store is [a giant's decline](#). Sheer volume doesn't always a winner make—for example, the explosion of [fintech firms](#) in China has been deemed risky. No one can deny, though, that "Crazy Rich Asians" mania (so-called from the title of this year's [groundbreaking comic film](#)) is here: China is having its [fashionista moment](#). What kinds of [over-the-top looks](#) will be served up for the global fashion plates, many of them fu'er dai (students paying full tuition at American, British and Australian universities)? But a caution, courtesy of Dolce & Gabbana, [under fire](#) for its ads depicting antiquated stereotypes. The [culminations](#): Ads were pulled, Chinese celebrities canceled their contracts, the brand shelved its Chinese fashion show. Which goes to show: This audience is happy to spend, but if a brand gets it wrong, one-seventh of the world's population may be mobilized against you.



Life on the (small) farm.

[Hydroponic](#) and [vertical farming](#) are bringing [agriculture to urban sites](#). Rough-hewn Detroit is cultivating urban farming—but so is sophisticated [Hong Kong](#), and in the U.K., [allotments are more popular](#) than ever—40-year waits are not uncommon. The survivalist movement has yielded a rise in home and subsistence farming. Coincidentally, a novel new study found that almost one-half of land used agriculturally across the globe [consists of small farms](#). And with pot legalization growing, more folks will harvest their own at home, whether hydroponic or old-school (that is, in a small patch of soil in the backyard). Ikea is partnering with designer Tom Dixon on a new collection to help [make “homes the new farmland.”](#) So watch the growth of next-generation appliances that bring hydroponics to the kitchen table (e.g., [Babylon Micro-Farms](#)). It’s the ultimate in retro-futurist and a nod back to indigenous people and what they farmed; [corn](#) will have a resurgence (health concerns aside) because it is considered hardy—beans, too. If mushrooms are affordable lux and cannabis a hipster mainstay, corn is tried and true.



Civil unions the most civilized.

After decades of something like a status quo, the state of the union of matrimony has [finally evolved](#) to better represent a greater swath of individuals. The [right for all to marry](#) has been won in many parts of the world (it may be under attack, but it stands), the average age of first-time marrieds is up and the [divorce rate is down](#). Marriage doesn't seem so obligatory now, and millennials and Gen Z are forgoing it in increasing numbers (they're also [having less sex](#); go figure). Socio-economic factors are working almost directly opposite as they have in the past—rather than those in the lower range marrying young, they are more often choosing not to marry at all. College graduates are more likely to wed than non-grads, but they're marrying later—and for life. What marriage signifies, how it's [arranged](#) (or not) and the benefits it confers will continue to change with the times. More significantly—many will realize remaining unmarried together may wed the best of both worlds. People are holding out for ways of being together that reflect who they are and what they want rather than what tradition demands.



Facing ageism but increasingly age proud.

An inevitable trend driven by demographics—it's the Yin and the Yang. First it was 40 is the new 20, then 60 is the new 40; now, who wouldn't agree that 80 is the new 60? Remember "The picture of Dorian Grey"? Now it's a portrait of a [generation](#) that refuses to go gently into that good night—living longer in reasonably good health. #BeBoldClaimOld is a mantra beginning to resonate at a time when Sharon Stone and Angela Bassett recently turned 60 (both posted [bikini pics](#) to [celebrate](#)), and Jane Fonda's still going strong at 81. As we [age healthier](#), it should follow that society recognizes that maturity equals wisdom, and the value of elder statesmen often far outweighs any downside. And yet, [ageism](#) is still rampant in [more workplaces than not](#). Multigenerational workforces (and [living situations](#)) will be the norm—as elders want to stay vital and active, and youngers will realize they have much to learn from their older colleagues. The seniors must either be paid not to work (a decent pension) or allowed to work as long as they want.



Women still bear the weight of the world.

From [all corners](#) of [the world](#), we pay lip service to the ever-increasing [powerful voice of women](#) that resonates when they protest, create and [nurture](#). And yet strong females face [backlash](#); the risk of being counted as too loud, [too opinionated](#) and even [too predatory](#). Still, they are increasingly demanding their fair share of what they've worked to create—and the respect they deserve. Watch these times descend into a battle over what that is—their fair share—and how to share it. The ad agency formerly known as J Walter Thompson finally settled a [landmark suit](#) by a courageous woman who wouldn't take discrimination sitting down (while conversely Google has been the subject of [numerous lawsuits](#) claiming it discriminates against men). Despite an overwhelming marketing call for “empowering women,” there are still efforts afoot to [silence them](#) or hold back information—such as when the U.S. [refused](#) to promote a breastfeeding initiative that would curb “misleading marketing of breast milk substitute.” Might such attempts to “protect” women from marketing messages or sponsored news (not to be confused with fake news) actually prevent them from learning about better options ... such as, say, alternatives to combustible cigarettes?



Leadership in flux.

What makes a good leader is a moving target—we want them to check all the boxes but are resentful if they're too polished. We talk about the importance of leadership skills, but there is mounting resentment of the “professional” leader—instead, the insurgent is considered “genuine” because he [shoots from the hip](#). [Emotional intelligence](#) is touted as a must-have. But then as women leaders emerge, so, too, does [bifurcation](#)—we want them to be effective leaders but also to act like ladies, [exuding traditionally “feminine” traits](#) (love of family, nurturing, warmth). Facebook’s Sheryl Sandberg is on the [chopping block](#), getting slammed—in part—for staying in and leaning in. But how can she get it right when the rules are being rewritten and overthrown? The [promoter personality](#) is resurging as voters say yes at the ballot to some “straight talkers.” It’s been a long time since we’ve seen such a preponderance of what could charitably be classified as promoters—or, if you’re feeling less charitable, labels like [bloviators](#), [narcissists](#) or [hucksters](#) would fit the bill. Conflicting ideologies will continue to clash but with more efforts to course correct on choosing—and standing by—leaders.



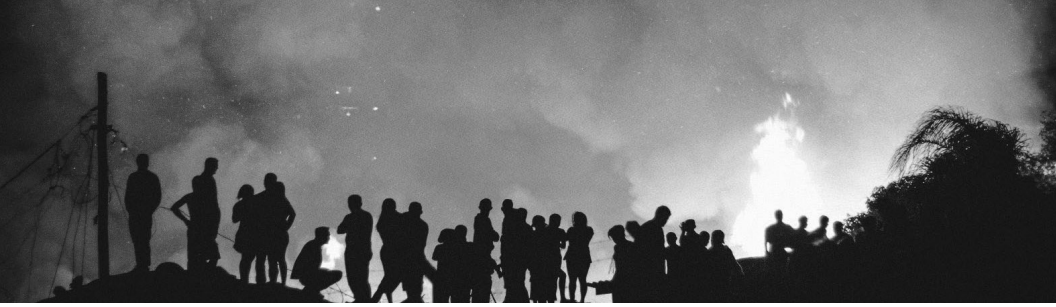
If smart is sexy, what does that make AI?

As it becomes exponentially more difficult for people to compete with tech, and almost every aspect of our lives seems poised to go on autopilot, we are taking a step back, [assessing](#) through a more pragmatic lens ... and expecting more accountability. Smart is sexy—that's a trend sighted more than 20 years ago, and it still holds—so AI is super sexy (and we're not just talking about sexbots). It's seductive, compelling, mysterious (still, after all these years), promising—and [scary](#). In a world that feels out of control, we simultaneously crave the order and logic that AI represents and fear the implications of fully embracing it. We will continue to explore the ethical ramifications, because we expect more and better from our superhuman friends—whether we “know” them as assistants/co-workers/[customer service reps](#)/household help/marketing data collectors/[video game avatars](#) ... or, increasingly, all of the above.



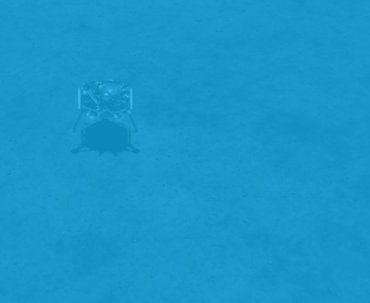
Reality meets virtuality.

That [real-virtual blur](#) we've been talking about for a decade or so is increasing—and increasingly important—as [clicks become bricks](#) for retailers. VR is [still developing](#): [Augmented \(mixed\) reality](#) is the latest and greatest; it enhances the real world for users. It's not yet a mature technology—but its uses are many and growing at an exhilarating pace. [Businesses](#) are leveraging it to help in training and virtual R&D, among other uses. Consumers are having fun with it—using [fitness apps](#) to inspire workouts, [style assistants](#) to advise on what to wear and more. Meanwhile, the Dubai Mall [debuted an amusement park](#) that combines augmented and virtual reality. VR and AR have the potential to serve a higher purpose, too—already fulfilling it in some arenas. It's been found helpful in treating returning soldiers suffering from PTSD and in [treating addiction](#); it allows people to experience what it's like [living with autism](#). Add saving the planet to that list—VR can take people to see firsthand the [ravages of climate change](#), and those who want to travel but are concerned about their carbon footprint can [visit far-flung locales](#) without worry. Look for virtual travel, particularly, to really take off.



The end is nigh—no, really.

In Q1 of 2018, the global [Doomsday Clock](#) was moved up to two minutes till midnight—the furthest it’s been advanced since the Cold War, in 1953. In Q3, writings were discovered by one of our most gravitas thinkers, Sir Isaac Newton, [predicting the world would end](#) in 2060. And for the biblically minded, [end-of-days predictions](#) seem to arrive on a daily basis. But whichever way we turn, we seem to be faced with an onslaught of end-of-the-world predictions coming faster and more furiously. (Nostradamus would feel right at home.) The message seems to resonate with everyday people—if the popularity of apocalyptic movies and television series is any indication ([it is](#)). A telling sign of these apocalyptic times: There’s [not too much dispute](#) on “are we” or “aren’t we” heading to Armageddon, but rather how the [message is being conveyed](#). Something like worry fatigue sets in; if we [feel like all is lost](#), why go out of our way to turn the tide? Expect retailers to take full advantage: “going out of business” sales could morph into “end of the world” extravaganzas—after all, stores need to clear shelves ahead of doomsday.



CONCLUSION

These days, it seems like the time it takes to converse (share) has become too much for the average Jane or Joe, who are content to text, tweet, like or criticize, condemn or—worst still—write off another human being and his or her point of view just because it's on the other side of the great chasm.

And in our increasingly instant-gratification-hungry world, a good, fruitful conversation isn't flashy enough; rather, it gradually explores; it doesn't provide the sugar rush of the performance of "conversation." That is, "conversation" as it's displayed in the public realm, where it's something more akin to point-scoring combat.

In years past, I predicted the deafening roar of the echo chambers, but today it's so darned real that I may have thousands of Facebook "friends," but I can name on a single hand those who don't share my progressive-ish viewpoints.

In short, the coming year will be a challenging one—but let's take some comfort in recognizing that we've gone through similar challenges in the past and we've come through them stronger.

This report, and the viewpoints contained within, are solely those of Marian Salzman and do not represent the viewpoints of Philip Morris International.

Marian Salzman

SVP Global Communications

Philip Morris International Management SA

Email: Marian.Salzman@pmi.com

Mobile: +16463611837