

# Introduction: The Construction of the Future of Platforms

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**Abstract:** The introduction of the special issue on the construction of the future of platforms provides the paradigmatic, conceptual and methodological framework for this special issue. Starting from a brief outline of the characteristics of the field of futures studies, the article supports the call to better embed in social and political theory, and frames the special issue, with its constructionist emphasis, as a contribution to this debate. In addition, the article provides an overview of the Delphi+ workshop method that was used, and describes the centralized data gathering process, into which all research articles of this special issue tap, to then produce their distinct analyses. This motivates the need to read this introduction alongside the five research articles that have been included in this special issue.

**Keywords:** Future; Futures Studies; Constructionism; Delphi method; Centralized Data Gathering; Platforms; Communication Technologies

## INTRODUCTION

Platforms, and from a broader perspective, communication technologies, tend to—at least in particular periods—evolve rapidly, and have claimed a significant place in the 21st century. But how these technologies are used and have become articulated with a variety of societal fields, has proven to be complex and contingent over time. This renders discussions about their future—evolutions and societal roles—both necessary and difficult. Here, we should keep in mind that these imaginaries of the future are firmly embedded in the present, and thus speak to and about both the future and the present (and even the past) in a variety of ways. In other words, by studying the future, we can also understand which hopes, anxieties, utopias and dystopias exist now, and how they

intersect with broader ideological projects. Simultaneously, these many distinct discourses are still about the future and provide perspectives on what might develop, be desirable, and to be avoided. There is a further layer of complexity. As these imaginings are performative, their elaboration might either prevent them from becoming reality or strengthen their chances of realization.

This special issue, about “The Construction of the Future of Platforms”, engages with this oscillation between present and future, in relation to platforms (and communication technologies). As there are numerous technological assemblages, fields in which they become activated and interact with, processes that take place within them, phenomena that are affiliated with them, and of future imaginings about all of these aspects, five thematic areas were selected—at the expense of many other options. For each of these thematic areas—algorithms and choice, surveillance and resistance, toxic debate and pluralistic values, destructive technologies and war, and gender in society—one research article has been produced and included in this special issue.

More details about each of these five research articles, and the transcript of the roundtable on the “Future, Democracy and Platforms” which follows, can be found at the end of the introduction. However, this introduction starts with a clarification of the relationship of this special issue with futures studies, and a description of the Delphi method that was central to our research. As the analyses of these future imaginings had a joint data gathering process, this introduction also spends ample time and space on explaining how the Delphi+ workshops and the scenario-writing project—which generated the data which was used by all five analyses—were organized. One of the implications of the centralization of the data gathering is that all five research articles need to be read alongside this introduction.

## FUTURES STUDIES

The academic field of futures studies is defined by Inayatullah (2012, p. 37) as “the systematic study of possible, probable and preferable futures including the worldviews and myths that underlie each future”. Over time, the field of futures studies has expanded but also changed its focus, moving “from predicting the future to mapping alternative futures to shaping desired futures” (Inayatullah, 2012, p. 37). These three components refer to three approaches—each with its own ontological assumption, which remain present in futures studies: (i) forecasting—to predict the most likely future; (ii) scenario-building—to explore alternative futures and (iii) backcasting—to assess the feasibility of a desired future. All three approaches are structured by one main limitation, which is often emphasized in futures studies publications. For example Glenn (2009) argues

that “[f]uturists do not know what will happen. They do not claim to prophesy. However, they do claim to know more about a range of possible and desirable futures and how these futures might evolve” (see also Robinson, 1988, p. 325). Nevertheless, futures studies relates to “thinking the unthinkable” (Kahn, 1962), with all the ontological problems that this encompasses.

In the first half of the 20th century, the word “futurist” was limited to either the circles of avantgarde artists (for instance, the Italian futurist movement of the early 20th century) or science fiction writers. However, the systematic study of the possible futures was developed as a set of methods and procedures in the 1950s and 1960s. As Seefried (2014, p. 2) writes, modern futures research (or futures studies) “grew out of dynamic developments in science and technology in a Techno-Scientific Age” after the Second World War and in the climate of the subsequent Cold War. There are a few earlier references, though, as the term “futurology”, which was a predecessor to futures studies, can be traced back to the 1940s. Then, the Ukrainian-born Jewish refugee Ossip K. Flechtheim, who fled Nazi Germany and was teaching at the University of Atlanta, used this concept “to refer to a science of predictive probability” (Butler, 2014, p. 513). A more detailed outline of these ideas was only presented later, in the German-language book *Futurologie*<sup>1</sup> (Flechtheim, 1970), on the basis of his earlier notes (Andersson, 2018, p. 45).

Within the logic of the Cold War, futures studies also became highly politicized. Some, as Andersson (2018, p. 46) argues, saw futures studies as a method to create a ‘Third Way’ between the Eastern and Western bloc, as “[...] the instrument for the creation of a new kind of global human socialism, a pacifist, democratic, and ecological Marxism the logical conclusion of which was a democratic world federation as the opposite of the Bolshevik world state” (Andersson, 2018, p. 46). But for other scholars, futures studies was deeply connected to military R&D decisions, such as demonstrated by the work of the USA-based Project RAND. This also impacted on the agenda of futures studies itself, as Helmer-Hirschberg’s summary of the 1960s attitude towards possible futures in one of RAND’s long-range forecasting reports shows:

The decade of the Sixties has brought with it an important change in the intellectual climate throughout many parts of the world, evidenced by a new attitude toward the future that has become apparent in public and private planning agencies as well as in the research community. The effect has been to extend customary planning horizons into a more distant future and to replace haphazard intuitive gambles, as a basis for planning, by sober and

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1 The title was translated in English as History and Futurology.

craftsmanlike analysis of the opportunities the future has to offer (Helmer-Hirschberg, 1967, p. 1).

In the early 1970s, futures studies underwent further structural changes and the field “abandoned large-scale and quantitative-based concepts of steering the future, developing instead a pragmatic and human-centred approach to thinking about and planning the future” (Seefried, 2014, p. 10). Moreover, in the 1970s and 1980s, futures studies started to gain popularity in the business sphere and turned the field’s attention to the development of post-industrial societies and economies (Son, 2015). The book *Future Shock* (Toffler, 1970) introduced futurists and futurism to a broader public, which was an ambitious agenda. Toffler (1978, p. x), for instance, wrote that futures studies could help to develop “new, alternative images of the future — visionary explorations of the possible, systematic investigation of the probable, and moral evaluation of the preferable”. It was followed by the 1972 collection of essays entitled *Futurists*, which included Flechtheim’s work, but also contributions of Theodore Gordon, RAND’s methodologist, engineer and futurist, media scholar Marshall McLuhan and science fiction writers such as Arthur C. Clarke.

After futures studies’ neoliberal turn in the 1990s (see Son, 2015), which strengthened the connections between futures studies and the corporate world, the former focused more on strategic planning for organizational innovation. Only more recently, futures studies has been increasingly occupied with broader societal issues, including sustainability and climate change (Brozović, 2023; Kristóf, & Nováky, 2023), in response to the contemporary environmental challenges. Also the processes connected with platformization, algorithms, machine learning and AI development (Das et al., 2024; Díaz-Domínguez, 2020), representing today’s techno-social paradigm shift, started to feature on the contemporary agenda of futures studies.

Apart from these changes related to the agenda of futures studies, the more methodological and paradigmatic discussions have also continued to enrich futures studies. One element here is the enlargement of the scope of futures studies, in dialogue with different imaginaries. For instance, Harrison (2023, p. 1877) stresses fiction’s potential “to interrogate how digital culture shapes subjectivity while simultaneously offering an alternative articulation of identity”. Here it is important to stress that science fiction and futures studies have a close interrelationship, as Butler (2014, p. 518) writes: “SF, like futures studies, imagines possible, probable, improbable, and preferable (as well as impossible) worlds”. On a similar plane, van Lente and Peters (2022, p. 7) emphasize the importance of using more artistic approaches to engage with futures studies, with the latter producing imaginaries which—according to their words—“tend to lack imagination, urgency and consequences for action”. They argue that the

future “merits to be an aesthetic experience” (Lente & Peters, 2022, p. 8; see also Bell, 2007; Motti, 2023). A second element targets the expert, and their privileged position in the context of speaking about the future. Here, we can find pleas to use more (qualitative) participatory methodologies in futures studies, as there is “the pressing need to involve people in conversations about [for instance] algorithmic developments that may affect them in the future” (Das et al., 2024, p. 5).

We have also seen more critical theoretical projects becoming activated in futures studies, as this field has been characterized by a rather eclectic approach towards theory, in combination towards more administrative approaches to research. Attempts to move beyond these restrictions have resulted in different “emerging socio-theoretical pathways for critical futures studies” (Ahlqvist & Rhisiart, 2015, p. 98). Ahlqvist and Rhisiart distinguish three of these approaches, which are grounded in (1) social constructivism and constructionism, together with science and technology studies (STS), (2) Hegelianist and Marxist approaches, and (3) Cultural studies-oriented approaches (combined with what they term “cultural political economy”). In particular the first approach allows emphasizing the contingency of imaginaries about the future, where different ideological projects engage in socio-political struggles how to think the future. These ideological projects not only aim to achieve hegemony in how the future is perceived, but also how it will be materially constructed. This brings us to, for instance, the work of Tutton (2017) who argues for the need to see the future as “entanglements of matter and meaning” and writes that:

“Every materialized future leaves traces that cannot be undone [...], these traces can become path dependencies that ‘lock in’ certain options and become irreversible because resources used in one way cannot be used again. Each future followed is another future not taken” (Tutton, 2017, p. 487).

## THE DELPHI METHOD IN FUTURES STUDIES

One of the frequently used methods in futures studies is the Delphi method, which is a method for future scenario-building and forecasting with a long history. To illustrate: Gordon<sup>2</sup> (2009, pp. 1-2) relates this method to the work of RAND in the early 1960s (for instance, with the *Report on a Long-Range Forecasting Study* by Gordon and Helmer-Hirschberg from 1964<sup>3</sup>). Developed in the early stages of the Cold War, in order to “forecast the impact of technology on warfare”

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.millennium-project.org/publications-2/futures-research-methodology-version-3-0/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.rand.org/pubs/papers/P2982.html>

(San-Jose & Retolaza, 2016, p. 3), Delphi's consolidation started with the RAND projects, which were established to predict the "probability, frequency and intensity of possible enemy attacks" (San-Jose & Retolaza, 2016, p. 3). Think tanks such as RAND "provided the methods and techniques for the military and strategic planning of US administrations" (Seefried, 2014, p. 3; see also Amadae, 2003). Later, the Delphi method moved to other fields and was employed by various actors including corporate and industry planners.

As a result of this popularity, the Delphi method – as a technique that offers a "systematic means of synthesizing the judgments of experts" (Gordon, 2009, p. 11) – is now used across various academic disciplines and fields. Despite its limitations and biases, such as the "desirability bias" or the "bandwagon effect" (Winkler & Moser, 2016, p. 63), the Delphi method is often used in futures studies, but also in other fields (Poli, 2018). Landeta (2006, p. 468) defines the Delphi method as "a method of structuring communication between a group of people who can provide valuable contributions to resolve a complex problem". As Gordon (2009, p. 4) writes, the Delphi method is grounded in a "controlled debate", which allows to establish consensus among experts, through a series of iterations. There are many variations of this method, for instance, about how these iterations are organized, but a number of characteristics are more transversal. The core principle is that expert-participants can discuss the responses of others and the work of the group as a whole, which also implies that they can alter their own positions during the process.

Still, many variations exist, which also includes more simplified and less-time intensive versions of the Delphi method. For instance, Pan et al. (1996) describe adjusted (and time-compressed) workshops, and label them mini-Delphis. It is these more compressed versions that we have used in the project that this special issue reports on. What we preferred to call 'Delphi+' workshops consisted of face-to-face scenario-building workshops lasting 3.5 hours, which will be described in greater detail in the next section of this introduction.

## **THE DELPHI+ WORKSHOPS AND THEIR PARTICIPANTS**

The Delphi+ workshops were organized within the framework of the Horizon 2020 research project EUMEPLAT, which ran from 2021 until 2024. EUMEPLAT was concerned with the intersection of platformization and Europeanization, and also contained a futures studies component (which was part of EUMEPLAT's work package 5). In this component, the original project design of EUMEPLAT mentioned five themes, which structured the work of five teams (or task forces, as they were called). These themes were algorithms and choice, surveillance and resistance, toxic debate and pluralistic values, destructive technologies and

war,<sup>4</sup> and gender in society. Even though these themes were very openly defined, and not used to block discussions from shifting elsewhere, they did provide five focal points, that also structured the contributions of this special issue (to which we will return later).

**Table 1. The EUMEPLAT Delphi+ workshops**

Number	Date	Location + Code	Participants
1	5 July 2022	Malmö, Sweden M	Science fiction writers and foresight researchers, experts on science communication or philosophy of science, and specialists in digital marketing and applied predictive models (6 participants)
2	4 October 2022	Sofia, Bulgaria Si	A theatre artist, a Roma activist, a journalist, and a former representative of the Bulgarian government in the field of culture (6 participants)
3	13 April 2023	Rome, Italy R	Expertise ranging from cultural relations, bioethics and AI to political science and the futures of electronic music (7 participants)
4	23 June 2023	Sofia, Bulgaria Sii	A film maker and producer, a TikTok influencer, journalists, media studies professors, and chatbot and new media experts (10 participants)

In order to provide data for these five analyses, the data gathering phase was centralized, by organizing four Delphi+ workshops<sup>5</sup> in three European cities—one each in Malmö and Rome, and two in Sofia—with in total 29 participants (see Table 1 for an overview, and see Carpentier & Hroch, 2023 for more detail on the participants and the workshop process). These Delphi+ workshop participants were selected, from a variety of societal fields, on the basis of their affinity with, and knowledge about, the themes and on the basis of their imaginative capacities. We organized these Delphi+ workshops to match the scheduling and locations where the EUMEPLAT consortium (or some of its work packages) had their meetings. This enabled us to select participants on the basis of their proximity to these meeting locations and ensure regional diversity (not restricting us to one country, but also including the neighbouring countries). The local EUMEPLAT consortium meeting hosts assisted with the recruitment of the participants. This recruitment process was supported by a series of participant profiles (which were used as illustration and not as quota). The last column of Table 1 provides the overview of the different types of participants, who were all considered experts, without expertise being restricted to academia. This

<sup>4</sup> War was added at a later stage, to integrate better the deteriorating global political situation, and in particular the second stage of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which started in 2022.

<sup>5</sup> First, a pilot Delphi+ workshop was organized in Prague, on 5 May 2022. These data were not used.



resulted in a mixture of academic experts, artists and writers, journalists and media producers, and business consultants.

Obtaining the participants' informed consent was a critical part of the Delphi+ workshop process. According to Gallagher et al. (2010, p. 471), informed consent is central to the ethical practice in social research: "For consent to be considered truly informed, participants must understand the nature, purpose and likely consequences of a research project". An exploration of guidelines for informed consent in the context of focus groups—a method close to our Delphi+ workshops—throws up Hennink (2014) who argues that focus group participants should be provided with several key aspects, namely:

sufficient, relevant, and accurate information about the study, in a comprehensible format [...] [and informed not only about, authors words] any potential risks or benefits from participation, and how data will be used and safeguarded [...] [but also, authors words] that if they participate in the study they do not have to answer any questions if they prefer not to, and that they are free to leave the discussion at any time (Hennink, 2014, p. 46).

The key principle of informed consent is that "participation is voluntary and not coerced" (Hennink, 2014, p. 46).

The method of obtaining informed content varies considerably, depending on the research subjects and methodologies, and all methods have their own ethical implications (see Critical Methodologies Collective, 2021; Sixtensson, 2022). In the case of the Delphi+ workshops, we chose a more conversational model of ensuring informed consent, which used audio recordings to register the permission, a method inspired by Lie and Witteveen's (2017) approach. First, we asked participants for permission to record (which allowed us to capture the consent discussion); then we discussed and asked permission to use the collected data (see below) for academic research and for academic publications; finally, the participants were briefed about the procedures of anonymization and confidentiality (Hennink, 2014, p. 123), and their right to leave the workshop and to revoke their consent was also discussed.

Each of the four Delphi+ workshops had the same two stages. In stage one, the participants were divided into three subgroups, and they were then invited (after an introduction) to develop in each subgroup three future scenarios in relation to the five EUMEPLAT themes mentioned before (resulting in a total of 15 scenarios per subgroup, if time allowed). In stage two, which was a plenary stage, the developed scenarios were then ranked, using a dimension of likelihood-unlikelihood. In this stage, the participants also further explained (a selection of) these scenarios, providing more information about their articulation.



The Delphi+ workshop process was coordinated by one main moderator, and three subgroup moderators. One of the authors of this introduction acted as the main moderator and the second author as one of the subgroup moderators. The other two subgroup moderators were selected in consultation with the local consortium meeting host, and trained by the author-subgroup moderator. The introduction (by the moderators) of each discussion theme was minimal (around three sentences), and no (further) thematic restrictions were imposed, resulting in, for instance, a broad definition of communication platforms.

The plenary discussions and the subgroup discussions were all audio-recorded, while also photography was used to document the process. Each scenario was registered on a 'scenario card' (SC), which was the size of an A5 page with two open spaces, a small one for a title and a larger one for a short description of the scenario. During the scenario development phases of the Delphi+ workshops, the subgroup moderators did not engage in the content of the discussions but did ensure that the SCs were filled out, in some cases helping the participants. With each Delphi+ workshop, we attempted to create an environment, in which speakers could express themselves freely, with respect for the diversity of opinions and positions. Here, we were inspired by the notion of safe spaces (Deller, 2019, p. 222)—or rather safer spaces, as no environment can ever be completely safe for everyone. This also means that we strove for balanced power relations between moderators and participants, which turned out to be difficult. For example, one host-subgroup moderator took an overly dominant position, while another host-subgroup moderator did not get sufficiently involved, which in both instances triggered intervention from the main moderator. In general, our goal was to create "participant structures" that enabled collaborative knowledge building, where "the group activity is structured so that responsibility for learning is shared, expertise is distributed, and building on each other's ideas is the norm" (Hmelo-Silver & Barrows, 2008, p. 49).

This process resulted in several datasets of distinct formats, such as the audio-recordings of plenary and subgroup discussions, the SCs, and the photographs of the workshop process. After the workshops had ended the datasets were stored on the intranet of the EUMEPLAT project's webspace and made available to the five teams in order to perform the five analyses, on which this special issue reports.

## THE ESSAYS

The Delphi+ output, as primary data material, was supplemented by 34 future scenario essays (FSE), that were written by the EUMEPLAT researchers, whom we asked to engage in diary writing via the project's internal, i.e., not public, blogging platform. We instructed them to document their ideas connected to the future of the European media landscape, together with the processes of platformization and Europeanization, that start with relevant (maieutic) questions ("what if"). A total of 22 researchers participated in the diary project from January to October 2022, which resulted in 80 received blog posts containing semi-developed future scenarios, reflections of the present, notes on relevant literature or sketches of recommendations. In the second stage, we asked researchers to submit future scenario essays with a maximum of two pages each on one of the five themes. These scenario essays were stored on the intranet of the project's website. Each essay was required to focus on one scenario using "what if" as a starting point, and work with the notion of the future on a scale of twenty to thirty years. Maieutic questioning is not the only educational method with origins in ancient Greece—and particularly Socrates—but also one of the premises of science fiction writing. Maieutic questioning enables sci-fi writers to start a dialogue with the future and envision a scenario for society that differs from the current state, for better or worse.

The future scenario writing project thus added an autoethnographic element (Ellis et al., 2010) to our research, with the aim to partly free ourselves from traditional academic rituals (Spry, 2001), and enrich established research practices. Autoethnography as an approach to research and writing "seeks to describe and systematically analyze (*graphy*) personal experience (*auto*) in order to understand cultural experience (*ethno*)" (Ellis et al., 2010, emphasis in original) and autoethnographers engage in self-reflection to "identify and interrogate the intersections between self and social life" (Adams et al., 2022, p. 3). Autoethnography helps researchers to "foreground particular and subjective knowledge" and "illustrate sensemaking processes" (Adams et al., 2022, p. 4), which is particularly helpful when working with a notion as abstract as the future. Similarly, like autobiographical literature, good autoethnography is evocative and employs tropes from storytelling with characters and scenes (Ellis et al., 2010).

## THE FIVE THEMES AND ARTICLES

The five themes—algorithms and choice, surveillance and resistance, toxic debate and pluralistic values, destructive technologies and war, and gender in society—also decided on the focus of the five research articles of this special issue. Each article analysed how the experts (both participants in the Delphi+ workshops and authors of the essays) offered a series of constructions of the future. Even though the entire project is embedded in futures studies, the emphasis on the *construction* of the future also structurally connects with theoretical frameworks which are still far beyond the boundaries of futures studies (e.g., social constructionism), despite the pleas to open up new “socio-theoretical pathways for critical futures studies” (Ahlqvist & Rhisiart, 2015, p. 98).

One of the consequences of this emphasis on the construction of the future is that the scenarios (and scenario clusters) are not seen as disconnected from each other. They are part of the same ideological space, in which all these scenarios engage, strengthen and compete with each other in discursive-material struggles. Moreover, the constructionist grounding also allows the understanding that these scenarios are part of broader assemblages, structured, for instance, by utopian and dystopian discourses, technological-determinist and determined-technologies discourses, and discourses of empowerment and disempowerment.

Methodologically, all five research articles use the Delphi+ workshop and essay data (see Table 2 for the codes used), but analyse these data through the lenses of their particular themes. This also implies that while the data gathering methods were centralized, the data analysis methods were distinct for each of the five studies. At the same time, there are methodological-analytical similarities, such as a gentle preference for qualitative analyses (without excluding quantitative analyses) and excursions into narratology.

The first research article, by Doudaki et al., is entitled “Techno-pessimistic and Techno-optimistic Visions of Surveillance and Resistance in Europe”. The article’s starting point is the discussion on, and concerns about, how online spaces allow for the surveillance of citizens (e.g., by states and companies), but also how these surveillance activities are—completely or partially—contested and resisted. The dimension that is seen to cut through these scenarios is techno-optimism versus techno-pessimism, which produces a set of contrasting visions on both surveillance and resistance to surveillance.

“Futures of Algorithms and Choices” is the second research article, and was written by Hroch et al. The article focusses on how algorithms intersect with structure and agency, allowing for a detour into structuration theory. This analysis is structured through four actors: (i) platform users, (ii) platform corporations, (iii) algorithms and (iv) institutions, which supported the identification of 10 scenarios, ranging from algorithmic tribalism to algorithmic regulation.

**Table 2. Terms and their codes (abbreviations and acronyms) common across all five of the special issue's research articles**

Location of Delphi+ Workshop	Code	Theme	Code	Sources of Text Data	Code
Sofia 1	Si	Destructive Tech and War	dt&w	Scenario Cards Produced by Delphi+ Workshops	SC
Malmö	M	Surveillance & Resistance	s&r	Format of Citation	SC[theme code] number
Rome	R	Gender & Gender Equality	g&ge	Future Scenario Essays Produced by Project Researchers	FSE
Sofia 2	Sii	Algorithms & Choices	a&c	Format of Citation	FSE[theme code]number
		Toxic Debates	txd		

The third research article, “Transforming Toxic Debates Towards European Futures”, by Üzelgün et al., engages with the concept of toxicity, and its materializations in the online realm. This article focusses on the future of online discussions, and to what degree these futures will be characterized by antagonism or will turn out to be offering spaces of understanding and dialogue. The analysis results in the identification of three myths that structure these future imaginaries: technological disruption, societal fragmentation and digital enlightenment.

“Imaginations of the Future of Conflict and Communication Technologies” is the fourth research article, written by Carpentier and Miconi. This article starts from a discussion on (the differences between) armed, grey zone and democratic conflict, in order to discuss six future imaginaries in relation to conflict and communication technology. Four of these imaginaries are negative: the power take-over, the intensification of armed conflict, the intensification of democratic conflict, and the harm inflicted on the environment and society in general. The two positive scenarios are the protective role of supranational organizations and the cultural change.

The fifth research article was written by Lagrange et al., and is entitled “The Future of Gender and Gender Equality Online”. This article focuses on foreseeable consequences of social media on gender (in)equality in Europe, and identifies three recurring themes situated on a continuum from utopian to dystopian perspectives, articulated with how social media can be safe or unsafe spaces. The three themes were (1) gender over time and space: fluidity, (un)certainly, and change; (2) doing gender: embodiment and representation of gender; and (3) gender and collectivity: resilience, activism, and solidarity.

The last text included in this special issue is the (edited) transcription of a roundtable debate, entitled “Future, Democracy and Platforms”, which was organized at the EUMEPLAT project meeting at Charles University in Prague, on 15 January 2024, in collaboration with the MeDeMAP project. This roundtable highlights the importance of protecting a democratic future, but also serves as a warning that democracy in society, as well as in the field of communication technologies, is not set in stone, but can easily be lost and thus needs active and permanent protection.

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