

ABSTRACT THESIS: Democracy in the digital market: A textual analysis of the FCC's forum on net neutrality.

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In this project, I investigated the changing relationship between capitalism and Internet regulatory policy through by performing textual analysis of a sampling of the 3.7 million comments posted on the first and second rounds of the FCC's largest-ever public comment forum. I approach the Internet not simply as a technological advancement but as a power-laden source of information and platform for communication. As such, the way we discuss and regulate the Internet is a site of material struggle in which multiple institutions—the state, commerce, and the citizenry— have stakes. While current Internet regulatory policy has been structured to support and maintain the Internet as a productive market place and an important piece of the neoliberal project, I argue the pro- Net Neutrality comments work to cast a more democratic vision of the market place by affirming and subverting dominating neoliberal narratives and metaphors. My work is made possible through the work done by the Sunlight Foundation, who worked to organize the comments released by the FCC in a fashion that makes the size and scope of these comments more accessible to rhetorical analysis.