Abstract:

Inequality and instability, discrimination and disillusion are rampant across much of the world and environmental disaster lurches ever closer. Public life has been hollowed out – increasingly administered by private companies and in thrall to a blinkered market logic – while the dream of a digital nirvana appears to have turned into a cesspit of corporate blandness and global bickering. All areas of mediated activity seem captured by market logic and competition through ever-more commercialization, privatization and restructuring that has led to a growing loss of authority and legitimacy in the media in general. This paper will outline the new citizens’ and solidarity economies that are ethnographically emergent around the globe and translate them into new possibilities for media justice. It outlines the normative criteria for evaluating emancipatory possibilities, suggests what a politics of hope might look like and how the media can and must be part of it.

Bio:

Natalie Fenton is a Professor in Media and Communications at Goldsmiths, University of London. She is Co-Director of the Goldsmiths Leverhulme Media Research Centre and Co-Director of Goldsmiths Centre for the Study of Global Media and Democracy. Her most recent book is Digital, Political, Radical (2016). She is on the Board of Directors of the campaign group „Hacked Off“ and a founding member of the Media Reform Coalition. Natalie Fenton’s research is concerned to address one of the most complex and vital issues of our age – the role the media play in the formation of identities and democracies and why and how people seek to change the world for socially progressive ends. She begins from the standpoint that we still live in deeply unequal capitalist societies, driven by profit and competition operating on a global scale. From her standpoint, we also live in a media dominated world with many different ideas and identities in circulation at any one time. She argues that we need to understand the former to appreciate the latter – the relation between individual autonomy, freedom and rational action on the one hand and the social construction of identity and behaviour on the other.