

Media Awareness: A Forgotten Dimension in Mission?

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"I should have known something about Matrix before going out to South America as a missionary. It was difficult for me to relate meaningfully to the young people I worked among without knowing anything about films and popular culture."

I will never forget these words from an experienced missionary at a Scandinavian apologetic conference some years ago, where my wife and I had spoken on engaging popular culture missiologically.

It seems to me that media awareness is a forgotten dimension in Christian mission. I would like to highlight three issues related to this key challenge:

- Traditional mission work has often contributed to the "modernization" of various cultural contexts. This includes introducing modern technology. And wherever technology goes, the modern media follows, of course. But have we been equally concerned with equipping each other globally to relate missiologically to the news and entertainment media?

- The various media cultures consist of complex combinations of local, global and glocal media institutions and messages. There is an urgent need for contextualized educational material on engaging the media critically and creatively to be used by local churches, youth ministries, and Christian families. Maybe Cape Town could be a natural and strategic occasion for introducing such material?

- The new digital media and the related social networking provides a unique opportunity for engaging the media together in mission. Within media and popular culture there are significant points of contact and points of tension with the biblical worldview to be identified and explored. We need each others' insights, perspectives and critiques to discover these multidimensional aspects of our various media contexts.

The biblical Gospel of Jesus Christ is wonderfully relevant also to the media cultures of today. Hopefully media awareness will not remain a forgotten dimension in our mission strategies, policies and activities!