

***Globethics.net* Second International Conference**
Bangkok, Thailand September 22-26, 2005
Report

From September 22 to September 26, 2005, the *Globethics.net* second International Conference was held in Bangkok, Thailand. The event brought together 35 ethicists and scholars from related fields, which explored global and contextual aspects of the general theme *Responsible Leadership*. During the conference, particular aspects of this topic were discussed in five different sections, focusing respectively on the issues of *Political Leadership*, *Business Leadership*, *Religious Leadership*, *Family Leadership*, and *Media/Educational Leadership*. Along the lines of 6 invited keynote addresses and 20 papers submitted by the participants, elements of a global set of ethical principles for responsible behavior in leading positions were debated in the different sessions.

1. Participants

Participants in the *Globethics.net* conference were invited by the Secretariat and the Chairperson during May 2005. All the existing *Globethics.net* participating institutions (i.e. around 35) as well as 60 further institutions or individuals were originally contacted, following almost a 50%-50% ratio between male and female participants. The response was surprisingly good, proving the high interest in *Globethics.net*'s activities: 45 individuals or representatives from various institutions answered positively to the invitations and expressed their firm intention to attend the meeting. However, from July until the last days of the conference, the number of confirmed participants dropped to 35, due to various difficulties (for details about the participants see below, section 3.).

All participants in the conference, with a few exceptions contributed actively by submitting either a keynote address or a workshop paper on one of the six sectors.

2. Content

2.1 Starting Point: book on responsible leadership

The conference focussed on the issue of *Responsible Leadership*, taking as a starting point the 16 essays on that topic published in the first volume of the *Globethics.net series*.¹ This volume therefore was sent to all participants. The way and manner that the participants dealt with their assignments were varied: Some gave a comment or a clarification on one of the articles of their topic, whereas others elaborated an independent essay, for which the articles in the volume served merely as a basis.

This variety in methodology, positively speaking, led to a diversity in approaches and opinions that constitute one distinctive feature of the whole initiative of *Globethics.net*. However, the variety also led to the feeling of a certain disparity between different papers. This made it sometimes difficult to link them to each other during the discussions. Featuring this difficulty, the papers of the conference stayed well in a line with the chapters of the book that also gave sometimes rather divergent perspectives on the overall topic, both in terms of methodology and in terms of content. The ongoing and particular need for a debate about methodology in the worldwide ethical debate, a need that *Globethics.net* is convinced it is able to address very specifically, was confirmed by the experience of the conference.

2.2 Keynote addresses: from five continents

Six keynote addresses were prepared by six speakers from five different continents. Each of them served as a main input related to one of the six overall topics.

In the first keynote address, given by *Dr. Christopher Lind* (Toronto, Canada) on the issue of “Ethics of Leadership in Families or Leadership in Ethical Families”, the speaker addressed the topic against the backdrop of the Canadian discourse on family and values related to these social entities. This discourse is characterized by a controversial appreciation of both the meaning and the normative content of the word “family”. Is it reserved to the core biological family as many conservative movements tend to claim? Or should the notion be extended, in a more liberal way, to looser forms of societal organization, where no biological link between the family members is constitutive for the attribution of the term? Lind convincingly showed that the image of the Western family constituted by biological ties called “traditional family” is in fact

inspired more by the ideals of modern bourgeoisie, than by any tradition – whether biblical, ancient or even traditional in most parts of the world. Thus, he argued, the decisive criterion for distinguishing between ethical families and unethical families cannot be the biological link between the family members. The condemnation of many practices and social arrangements, for instance, by Christian conservatives, is therefore without a sufficient rationale. Rather, Lind argued, the distinctive mark of ethical families, and the guidelines for responsible family leadership, are found in requirements such as freedom, mutual consent, care and love. The model of an ethical family corresponds, he outlined, to a democratic family. Therefore, Lind concluded, the ethics of leadership in families corresponds to the ethics of leadership in all democratic institutions.

In the second keynote address, *Matthias Zeeb* (Hannover, Germany), a German economist, outlined one possible account of the relation between responsibility and legal obligation in the realm of business, and hence for business leaders. Given the limitations of the market and given the necessity of state regulation against its shortcomings, Zeeb argued for the necessity of business ethics, but probably also of economic ethics in general, to warrant the regulation of the “grey zone” in which the legal frame proves to be insufficient for a satisfying responsible behaviour in business. With regard to the precise criteria that constitute responsible business leadership, Zeeb suggested that these would have to be derived closely from alleged legal regulations but that they needed to be further developed.

The author of the third keynote address, *Prof. Dr. Emmanuel Asante* (Legon, Ghana), unfortunately could not be present himself at the conference since he was not granted an entry visa on time. In his presentation on educational leadership, he critically assessed the effect of western education models on the African culture, particularly African models of education and transmission of knowledge and values. He identified the western model of education, brought to Africa by the missionaries, as being driven by idealistic and realistic premises, believing, for instance, in enlightenment and objectivity. In contrast, traditional African education, Asante outlined, is inspired rather by a pragmatist philosophy of education, that highly values the preservation of cultural, social and spiritual excellences. The latter, Asante acknowledged, may rightly be called “education”, whereas he agreed with many other African thinkers that the western model is more adequately labelled as mere “schooling”. As As-

¹ See Stueckelberger, Christoph/Mugambi, Jesse N.K. (2005): *Responsible Leadership. Global Per-*

ante showed, the contemporary problem lies in the fact that although “schooling” remains the dominant educational paradigm in post-colonial Africa, the African culture still keeps being reluctant to conform with the underlying premises of this educational model. Hence, he argued, many African societies experience today a shift between the educational ideals and their social acceptance. This shift, according to Asante, plays a crucial role in the difficulties African societies face with facilitating authentic social change among traditional Africans. In his conclusions, Asante therefore called for a holistic educational paradigm, the basic principles of which would also indicate the criteria responsible educational leadership has to observe.

In his keynote address on religious leadership, *Nikolaos Dimitriadis* (Thessaloniki, Greece) drew upon the case of his country of origin, a country that has a clear majority church, with 97% of the inhabitants being Orthodox Christians. From this observation, Dimitriadis persuasively deduced the conclusion that responsible religious leadership in such majority situations requires to follow two basic principles: First, the majority should avoid giving the minority the impression of taking total control of all religious concerns, and second, the majority should prevent the feeling of manipulation among the minority. After having showed how this relates, in the case of Orthodox Greece, to the role a religious leader plays on different levels of society and in relation with the state, Dimitriadis concluded that even in a majority situation as clear as in Greece, responsible religious leadership requires critical engagement in ecumenical dialogue.

In the fifth keynote address, *Prof. Dr. Evangeline Anderson-Rajkumar* (Bangalore, India) addressed the topic of responsible media leadership in the context of India. Media are seen not only in the form of electronic or print media but also communication by the media of popular theatre etc. A key question is the participation and “ownership” of the population in the different media.

The last keynote address, presented by *Prof. Dr. Paulo Fernando Carneiro de Andrade* (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil) addressed the issue of responsible political leadership. He chose to focus on this topic from a distinct Christian perspective. Drawing upon a careful explanation of the notion of fundamentalism, a tendency that Andrade identified to be widespread in contemporary politics, he shows how responsible political leadership behaves, in a Christian perspective, as a non-fundamentalist orientation that acts according to the so-called “preferential option for the poor”, high-

spectives, Nairobi: Acton Press, June 2005.

lighted among others by Latin American Liberation Theology. This fundamental anti-oppressive stance in political leadership calls, as Andrade put it, for continuous political formation and critical assessment by all political leaders.

Although the six keynote addresses focussed on very dissimilar issues, they all shared the common feature that they outlined ethical criteria for responsible leadership in their realm, criteria that were sometimes questioned, sometimes disputed, and sometimes completed in the intense discussions that followed each presentation.

2.3 Workshops: development of ethical criteria

It was precisely the task of the workshops, held in four sessions during the conference, to further specify ethical criteria for responsible leadership through the discussion, in the workshop groups, of the papers submitted by the individual participants and through further examination of the keynote addresses. During preparation of the conference, careful attention was paid to the equal representation of all continents in each workshop group, in order to guarantee consideration for the global and contextual perspectives pointed to by participants from different regions. However, there were some limitations of this procedure as some participants were asked to work on assigned issues rather than on issues of their particular sphere of specialization. The case in point was the workshop group on media/educational leadership, where too disparate papers constituted an obstacle to fruitful discussions.

In the other workshop groups, particularly in those on religious leadership, business leadership, and political leadership, the debates both on papers and on the overall criteria for responsible leadership turned out to be animated and result oriented. Each workshop group was asked to present a sketch of principles for responsible leadership that it explored during its discussions. Most groups agreed on a fairly comprehensive list of criteria, which they held to be commonly acknowledged. The criteria put together by the workshop groups served as a starting point for the common document discussed in the conclusive plenary session of the conference (see the document on “elements of principles for responsible leadership” in section 4 below).

This document tries to outline ethical criteria for responsible leadership in the respective sectors, as they were explored and discussed by the participants. It is at the disposal of all participants in *Globethics.net* and designed for further development and deepening by online working procedures.

2.4 Publication: second volume on Responsible Leadership

Selected papers from the conference will be published in a revised version in the course of 2006, as a second volume in the *Globethics.net series*. The editors of this volume will be *Prof. Dr. Jesse N.K. Mugambi* (Nairobi, Kenya) and *Prof. Dr. Christoph Stueckelberger* (Zurich, Switzerland).

3. Globethics.net development

3.1 General development

The last session of the conference was dedicated to the discussion of perspectives of development for *Globethics.net*. On the one hand, the participants and the organizers evaluated the actual benefit *Globethics.net* can bring to institutions and individual researchers who engage in active participation in addition to the conference. The main result of this survey confirmed that the main activities envisaged by the *Globethics.net* staff answer to the most important needs of participants (see an overview of the results of this survey in the annex below).

3.2 Electronic working groups

On the other hand, this session of the conference was also used to engage in common research and working projects for the web-based activities of *Globethics.net*. The ideas for common activities cover a wide range of topics. For each activity at least four and up to ten persons showed interest. These working groups will now be active throughout the year and engage in web-based collaboration, supported by the *Globethics.net* secretariat. They will use different methodological approaches (e.g. a forum, discussions of individual texts, literature studies etc.), for which a particular space is available on the *Globethics.net* internet platform. Here, these working groups can carry out their project and try to achieve their objectives that were specified in Bangkok, according to the method they agreed upon. The eight areas of interest are:

- the ethics of alternative economic systems,
- gender ethics,
- fundamentalism/conservatism and ethics,
- the ethics of migration,

- the ethics of church-state relations,
- bioethics in a global context,
- the ethics of Christian-Muslim relations
- clergy ethics.

For a short outline of the projects, as well as of their objectives, please see <http://www.globethics.net/globethics/manage-memberships>. In addition to the precise working projects, the final session of the conference also addressed the issue of broadening the network and agreed upon perspectives for further activities after the conference.

4. Venue and organization

Globethics.net chose Bangkok, Thailand as the venue for the second international conference because of two reasons. First to increase the number of participating institutions and secondly to start focusing also on the inclusion of inter-religious perspectives in the ethical debate. The number of participants were originally 45-50, with 10 places allocated for participating institutions and individuals from Thailand. Unfortunately, as many institutions were having their examinations or were holding their own assemblies during the time of conference the attendance was quite minimal.

Globethics.net chose the Bangkok Christian Guest House as a venue. All participants highly appreciated this accommodation that was judged to be excellent. It is located very centrally in town and features good conference facilities. In particular, the staff graciously helped in diverse ways.

The ratio between men and women were of great concern. There were only 6 women out of 35 participants. Extra care needs to be taken to address this imbalance during the next conference. In addition, participation of young scholars is an important concern for the whole initiative. However, participation of young researchers was weak in the Bangkok meeting. As a consequence, *Globethics.net* decided to launch a Call for Papers for next years' conference and to link it with the publication of the conferences' outcomes, in order to make attendance to the meeting more attractive for these participants.

Many participants coming from African countries where the Thailand did not have consulates or embassies had numerous problems in applying for visas. Some had to go to other countries en route to Bangkok and stayed for 3-4 days in order to get their

visas. Others solicited the help of their foreign ministries but eventually had to give up. The secretariat spend a lot of time contacting the Thai Consulate in Switzerland, arranging hotels, changing air tickets, telephoning, faxing to get three Africans to Thailand. It would have been easier for the hosts to get visas for participants upon arrival but unfortunately the Thai Foreign Ministry and Immigration refused to grant us such a status.

Appendix 1: Final document

Globethics.net Elements for Responsible Leadership

September 2005

In today's globalized and interconnected world, most of the societies are challenged by a fast transition of structures and values. Therefore, also former models, guidelines and practices of leadership are changing. The call for ethical orientation for responsible leadership is widespread.

"Responsible Leadership – Global and Contextual Ethical Challenges" was the topic addressed at the International Globethics.net Conference, September 22-26 2005, in Bangkok/Thailand. The participants explored the following elements of principles for responsible leadership in five areas, namely the realms of: family, education, religion, business and politics. Together with the collection of essays presented at the conference to be published in 2006², the principles outlined in this paper represent the outcome of the Bangkok meeting. Globethics.net wishes to engage in discussion about this list of principles and therefore encourages contributions in terms of comments, additions, or alternative suggestions in the forum on the document to be found on the Globethics.net internet platform: www.globethics.net.

The participants, mostly ethicists, from 22 countries in five continents in the South and North shared concerns and issues of crisis in leadership in various fields and different social, political, economic and religious contexts. Five keynote speeches and 25 papers were discussed in workshops and showed common concerns such as poverty and wealth, war and violence, lopsided development, the speed of transformation and its effects on family, education, religion, media in the light of the impact of globalization on all spheres of life. The elements of principles for responsible leadership outlined below do not form a closed list but rather a suggestion for ongoing debate both among participants of the conference and a wider public interested in the topic.

1 Responsible Family Leadership

The overall criteria in family leadership is love understood as action.

Responsible family leadership includes:

- to respect the dignity, integrity and uniqueness of each person;
- to establish mutual trust [that upholds and affirms the other];
- to empower the others;
- to promote autonomy in the context of mutual dependence;
- to nurture, care and give life, seeking the wholeness of each member in their

² See the forthcoming volume on Responsible Leadership, edited by J.N.K Mugambi and C. Stückelberger, summer 2006.

spiritual, intellectual, physical and emotional dimensions.³

- to give space for differences and be open for mutual critique;
- to be mutually available for the other and willing to serve and sacrifice;
- to seek justice, peace and the common good;
- to promote participatory family management.

2 Responsible Educational Leadership

The impact of Globalisation and the current trends in development show how dominant knowledge systems and paradigms have proliferated, in many cases resulting in alienating the poor from their traditional and culturally shaped educational resources. Whereas "education" needs to be understood as a cultural process through which individuals are socialised to become responsible adults within the community and society, The dominant school systems often represent a type of "schooling" which can lead to cultural alienation.⁴ Holistic education is a tool to liberate and transform people to be better human beings.

Responsible educational leadership includes:

- first and above all to warrant access to education;
- to focus on learning and teaching values that help people to mutually affirm their own and other cultures, religions and traditions and also respect the whole of creation;
- to develop a critical way of thinking among ordinary people, educators and ethicists about the implications of being schooled in the dominant institution and value systems;
- to search for alternative paradigms and patterns of education;
- to prevent the market from considering education as a business tool;
- to conscientize people about the inter-linkages between the oppressive socio-political-economic structures in society and the existing paradigms of education;
- to ensure that education is structured within the national cultural and religious framework;
- to lobby and to network as ethicists and educationists with people's organisations and movements to design and implement a holistic pattern of education.

³ As an example for the presence of such concepts of inspiration for family leadership in particular cultures, this idea of wholeness is expressed in the Korean Word "Salim", which means "to make things alive" One workshop paper at the conference outlined this concept whose actuality is tangible in the fact that a whole conference of Korean theologians focussed on this issue recently. A responsible family leader, in these terms, cares for Salim, she/he therefore deserves to be called a "Salimist" (see the paper by Un Hey Kim in the forthcoming publication).

⁴ Taking the specific case of the use of Genetically Modified seeds in agriculture in Congo (see the chapter by Afumba Albert Wandja in the forthcoming publication), it was noted that the net results of research on these technologies, inspired particularly by northern concepts of investigation, are more profit oriented and do not consider the interests of the poor, nor the protection of the environment as being of primary importance.

3 Responsible Religious Leadership

Responsible religious leadership should take into account the particular contexts such as minority/majority situation of religions and of churches, the relation between religions and the State, the history of the religions, the democratization process of churches and religions, the demographic reality (variety of membership, manipulation of statistics for political or other reasons), the relationship between ideology and theology in a pluralistic context, the gender sensitivity. The following paragraph looks at the issue of religious leadership in a Christian perspective and therefore refers to the church as the institution in which religious life is organized.

Responsible religious leadership includes:

within the church

- to be committed and faithful to the spiritual tasks of a religious leader;
- to promote mutual respect of believers of other religions and other churches;
- to sensitize against the abuse of religion for ideological and other interests;
- to ensure the full and active participation of women, men and young people in all aspects of church and life;
- to give priority to the most vulnerable individuals and communities under their care;
- to ensure that in the training of personnel the focus lies on looking after the most vulnerable and the weakest;
- to fight all forms of corruption in religious institutions and society;
- to fight all forms of discrimination based on race and ethnicity in religion and society;
- to be open to continuing theological re-interpretation and hermeneutics in order to avoid ideological abuse of the respective scriptures;
- the openness to build bridges to between religions;
- transparency and accountability in the leading bodies;

in relation with the state and with the society

- to support legislation protecting religious rights within the state;
- to ensure mutual respect of religious and secular values;
- to support legislation against manipulation of society by quasi-religious cults;
- to encourage the state to recognize the particular contexts of religious histories;
- to promote participation of citizens in the political and social life of the nation;
- to encourage constructive involvement in civil society;
- to avoid the temptation to exploit the demographic status of their respective religions and denominations for political interests.

4 Responsible Business Leadership

The agents of business leadership are understood as the members of the management on different levels and the shareholders represented by board members (ex-

plore and enlarge). In the broader sense they include the politicians, consumers, economic associations etc. In general, the following paragraph speaks about the need to respect the core values of sustainability, justice, peace, participation, and human rights.

Responsible business leadership includes:

in general

- to equally weigh the needs and interests of the different stakeholders such as the employees, the shareholders, the state, the consumers and the nature and being accountable to them;
- to enter into competition in a transparent, fair and honest way;

economically

- to work for financial stability and at least maintain the value of the borrowed and invested capital;
- to resist actively all kind of corruption while respecting the national laws and international anti-corruption-conventions
- to look at a fair distribution and redistribution of the income of the company, but also of the national value added;
- to anticipate early enough and in a sound way restructuring processes where they are necessary in order to respond to changing situations;

socially

- to explore and respect the ethical values in the different contexts where business activities are done;
- to overcome double standards (in international activities) and implement the same ethical, social and environmental standards in the different countries and to demand the same commitment from the suppliers;
- to pay for raw material and primary goods above the costs of production;
- to offer multi-stakeholder dialogues in sensitive issues or fields of conflicts;
- to eradicate gender, ethnic, racial, religious, disabled and cultural discriminations in workplace;
- to support efforts for broader representation of women in leading positions;

politically

- to balance private and public interests;
- to be willing to fulfil the obligations towards the different stakeholders, especially the consumers (quality of products and transparency/truth of product information) and the state (paying taxes, respecting legal requirements);
- to be willing to strengthen laws and regulations where necessary in order to respect the values and achieve the ethical goals;

environmentally

- to respect sustainability as a long-term environmental, economic and social commitment;

- to have a sense of accountability to the different stakeholders including creation.

5 Responsible Political Leadership

Responsible Political Leadership is not solely a matter of individual virtues but is closely linked to the community and the responsibility of those who elect political leaders.

Responsible political leadership includes:
on the community/constituency level

- to empower people to become subjects and active citizens in organic union with the community;
- to act in solidarity with other life-affirming⁵ groups and movements that strive for recognition and political participation;
- to promote and facilitate the emergence of agencies among the people and from below;
- to promote transparency as a regular institutional process that allows checks and balances of leadership;
- to be aware of the danger of corruption and to actively fight it;
- to promote a participatory political setting which allows the emergence of young leaders;
- to be accountable, beyond the patterns of democracy by delegation, by a binding representation;
- to promote peace which presupposes the very careful use of the monopoly of organized violence and a commitment to eradicate the roots of non-peaceful states of affairs;
- to strengthen the autonomy of the social political reality which implies the promotion of freedom;

on the individual level of the leader

- to have a sense of and for spirituality which presupposes the acceptance the limitation and the decentralization of all political power;
- to be self-critical (especially in a Christian perspective where human finitude is acknowledged in a basic way);
- to foster the life-affirming aims that are expressed through the social movements;
- to keep promises;
- to network between groups and movements.

⁵ "Life-affirming" means also that there needs to be awareness of the danger of demagogical development of political powers, even if they emerge from social movements (e.g. the Nazi regime in Germany).

6 Responsible Media Leadership

The media has great potential to influence the ideologies, interests and priorities in life, of the people. The use and misuse of the media is directly linked with the quality of life enjoyed by individuals in a civil society. Consumers must be equipped with the ability and the perspective to understand and use the media critically in society.

Responsible Media Leadership includes:

- the interest to develop a critical holistic perspective to read, interpret and understand the media;
- to provide media education for people at all levels;
- to conscientize the public about the role of the media in shaping the lives of the people;
- to provide education, support and training to the journalists in the media to enhance their skills and their commitment to a journalism that specially takes the interests of the economically, socially, politically weaker one;
- to affirm the role and the significance of the whole range of media (including non-conventional media) for effective communication;
- the use of mass media to connect peoples, cultures, traditions and religions and affirm human communities;
- to use the computer mediated communication technologies such as the internet to promote “real”, rather than “virtual” human communities.

Appendix 2

Results of the survey among participants about their benefits from Globethics.net

The number indicates how often the corresponding priority was mentioned:

- Publications (in jointly edited books, in journals etc.)

1 (Highest priority)	2 (Medium priority)	3 (Low priority)
16	7	2

- Online-publications

1 (Highest priority)	2 (Medium priority)	3 (Low priority)
8	11	2

- Access to literature

1 (Highest priority)	2 (Medium priority)	3 (Low priority)
6	7	10

- IT-support

1 (Highest priority)	2 (Medium priority)	3 (Low priority)
4	6	10

- Network structure (= access to addresses, contacts, etc.)

1 (Highest priority)	2 (Medium priority)	3 (Low priority)
5	11	6

- Research dialogue

1 (Highest priority)	2 (Medium priority)	3 (Low priority)
14	5	2

- Forum/informal exchange

1 (Highest priority)	2 (Medium priority)	3 (Low priority)
9	6	6

- Participation in conferences

1 (Highest priority)	2 (Medium priority)	3 (Low priority)
12	7	2

- Visibility for your institution/you personally

1 (Highest priority)	2 (Medium priority)	3 (Low priority)
2	7	9

- International and intercultural knowledge

1 (Highest priority)	2 (Medium priority)	3 (Low priority)
11	10	3

- Agenda setting: Giving visibility and creating attention for your topics in other regions/continents

1 (Highest priority)	2 (Medium priority)	3 (Low priority)
4	7	10

- Others
 - e-learning (2)
 - facilitating exchange between (young) African ethicists (1)