

***'We Shall Overcome'***  
**Servant-Leadership Symposium**

Wednesday 26 May 2021, 10:00:-12:15 hrs  
Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

Cross-cultural communities are here to stay. Now, more than ever, a leader's capacity to both direct the organization and its diverse members, while at the same time work in their service, is required. This servant-leadership capacity is being recognized as a vital capacity for making your organization culture proof and create a community broad sense of belonging. Though highly relevant today, servant-leadership is not new. Its principle is embedded in a way of life, which has been recognized and expounded upon in all parts of the world throughout history, and across all cultures.

This online symposium *'We Shall Overcome'* is the 20<sup>th</sup> symposium in an annual series. The lustrum symposium is a meeting place for students and professionals to strengthen the cross-cultural link between theory, business and societal issues. The world is changing rapidly. The 24/7 organization calls for a compassionate leader, a leader who is a community builder, an active listener, a mentor who is able to reconcile high-tech versus high-touch. How to be a mentor, steward or motivator for your employees, your citizens, your mentees, or your customers across cultures? Renowned keynote speakers will highlight the state-of-the-art in cross-cultural research. After the plenary keynotes, parallel workshops will allow interactive discussion and networking opportunities.

Why this year's theme *'We Shall Overcome'*? We are proud that Rev. Martin Luther King jr. received an honorary doctorate degree in Social Sciences in 1965 at our Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. He was honoured for his outstanding service in his fight for social justice and human rights. King's servant-leadership style in times of crisis is more relevant in communities worldwide than ever before. King's message urges us to learn from his wisdom through VU education and research today. VU's mission is about personal and societal engagement. SERVUS is one of the advocates in this mission.

The roaring twenties only just begun. The Covid-19 crisis affects us all, no matter your job, education, the colour of your skin, your age, gender or societal status. At the same time this pandemic makes social inequality and the cultural gap more transparent. Health, social and economic fabric and life safety are at stake in particular among underprivileged and vulnerable citizens worldwide. During this symposium we will highlight research projects in King's spirit of social justice, non-violence, and human rights.

The Covid-19 pandemic presents human organizations with a series of dilemmas. More often these dilemmas touch on social justice and human rights issues. Thus, for example, how does society cope with issues ranging from individual accountability versus group solidarity, and short term health results versus long-term economic growth? It is our strong conviction that the dilemmas caused by Covid-19 are shared amongst all human beings. But, the reconciliation approaches are culturally defined. We believe that reconciliation, rather than choosing between two desired states, leads to more sustainable results in fighting this evil virus. This symposium will highlight our cross-cultural research findings. How do different nationalities behaviourally cope with dilemmas created by the COVID-19 crisis?

We are delighted this symposium brings together cutting-edge thinkers and practitioners across disciplines and communities. The event will include case studies, keynote presentations and a dialogue to shed light on the gentle art of serving and leading, and how inspiring (online) leaders can bridge the gap between cultures and the (under)privileged members in society, to unlock their potential. Cross-cultural awareness where every human being counts. Or, in the words of Dr. Martin Luther King jr.: “Everybody can be great ..because anybody can serve”.

We look forward to meeting you at this special lustrum event. On behalf of the organising team,

prof. dr. Fons Trompenaars & dr. Sylvia van de Bunt

Chairpersons of this symposium and SERVUS co-directors

*Special thanks to the VU Foundation, Nova School of Business and Economics, UMass Amherst Isenberg School of Management, THT Consulting and VU School of Business and Economics for empowering this event!*



**Program overview**

- 10:00 Welcome by **Sylvia van de Bunt**, Associate Professor SBE-VU
- 10:05 Opening Keynote, by **Mzamo Mangaliso**, Associate Professor Isenberg School of Management, University of Massachusetts-Amherst, MA
- 10:25 *All Lives Matter*, by **Fons Trompenaars**, Professor Cross-Cultural Management SBE-VU
- 10:45 *Developing Servant-Leaders: What do we do well, and what can we do better?*, by **Svetlana Khapova**, Professor of Organizational Behavior, and Head of Management & Organization Department SBE-VU
- 10:55 Transfer to parallel workshops
- 11:15 Workshop I: *Dilemma Reconciliation in times of Covid 19 crisis*, by **Fons Trompenaars**. Zoom host: Juliette van der Leest
- 11:15 Workshop II: *Understanding virtual teams across cultures*, by **Theresa Sigillito Hollema**, consultant, trainer and author in cultural diversity and leading virtually. Zoom host: Alicia Schoendorff Ocampo
- 11:15 Workshop III: *'servant-leadership in times of crisis; dr. King's approach revisited*, by **Milton de Sousa**, Associate Professor Adjunct at Nova SBE, Portugal. Zoom host: Natalia Bustillo Beruguillia
- 11:15 Workshop IV: *Multiracial dialogue through legacy of Dr. King*, by **Mzamo Mangaliso**, Zoom host: Sanaz Kateb
- 12:15 Closure and Farewell
- Information and registration: [servusdesk@gmail.com](mailto:servusdesk@gmail.com)

*Special thanks to the VU Foundation, Nova School of Business and Economics, UMass Amherst Isenberg School of Management, THT Consulting and VU School of Business and Economics for empowering this event!*

