**Project Title:** Art and Cultural Impact: Exploring Alternative Models for Creative Practices, Policy and Sustainability in Contemporary Urban Space.

**Supervisors:**  
Dr. Kirsten Forkert and Prof. Paul Long   
  
Cultural partner: Mohammed Ali MBE (Soul City Arts)

**Project description:**

Soul City Arts (SCA) is an intercultural, interfaith organization directed by award winning artist Mohammed Ali. SCA is based in the inner-city area of Sparkbrook, Birmingham, but is also connected to a global network of artists, organisations and commissioning bodies including the Ilm Arts Festival in Malaysia, of which Ali is currently the artistic director. SCA draws its inspiration from IMAN, a model established in Chicago and an organization with which Ali has worked on several occasions. Both organizations are driven by the values of service, compassion and social justice addressing issues around violence, poverty and urban-decay and doing so through cultivating the arts, engaging with a diversity beyond that of the traditional arts compass. In addressing new audiences, the work of Ali and SCA is supported by a range of funding sources beyond traditional funding organisations and institutions, suggesting models and networks outside of the purview of contemporary cultural policymaking and scholarship.

**The project will focus on the following research objectives:**

1. examine the role of arts and cultural spaces which exist outside the standard models of the UK creative sector, including emergent models for cultural funding.
2. examine the role of arts and cultural spaces in rejuvenating deprived neighbourhoods.
3. investigate the role of the arts and cultural spaces in responding to the challenges of an increasingly polarised society and diverse cultural values.

Drawing upon the established research expertise of Forkert and Long in cultural industries and policy, Soul City Arts proposes to work with a PhD researcher to examine and explore the nature of cultural intermediation and entrepreneurship, the impact of arts and cultural spaces that challenge conventional approaches and traditional arts spaces, cultural funding structures and the compass of the creative industries ecology. Embedded in BCUs new STEAMHouse facility in Digbeth, Birmingham, amongst creative professionals and organisations in the city and working with personnel at Soul City Arts the successful applicant will have opportunities to showcase their research project and develop meaningful networks and relationships in the cultural industries.