

# AEME Panel A2M 2025

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**Researching accessibility to the live music industry  
for audiences who are d/Deaf, disabled or  
neurodivergent**

# Overview

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The Association for Events Management Education (AEME) aims to advance events education within the UK and overseas.

**Your AEME Panel today are:**

Dr Anahita Malek - Buckinghamshire New University

Professor Gary Kerr – Atlantic Technological University

Dr Leon Davies – (representing) University of Sunderland

Adrian Bossey - Falmouth University

# Presentation 1

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- Dr Anahita Malek, Associate Professor of Creative industries
- Buckinghamshire New University



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# Summary of My Research Projects

- **PhD in Events Management and Marketing (2009 – 2012)**
  - **Overview:** Investigated conference attendees' motivation, satisfaction, and return intention.
- **Postdoctoral Research Project (2013 – 2015)**
  - **Overview:** Examined the impact of European Capital of Culture events on local communities, focusing on elderly, disabled, young artists, and disadvantaged neighbourhoods.
- **Researcher and Consultant (2014 – 2016)**
  - **Overview:** Conducted gender-related projects to evaluate career progress and glass ceiling issues for graduates in tourism and events sectors.
- **Head of Research Centre (2015-2016)**
  - **Overview:** Leading multiple projects related to art, culture, events, and tourism.
- **Research Active Academic (2016- present)**
  - **Overview:** Leading multiple projects related to sustainability, events, and tourism, inclusivity and social innovation strategies





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## Current Strategies

### Sensory-Friendly Environments

- Adjust Lighting and Sound and Provide Quiet Spaces

### Innovative Accessibility Features

- Incorporating technology enhances inclusivity and Social Stories

### Staff Training in Neurodiversity Awareness

- Common challenges, effective communication strategies and De-escalation Techniques

### Flexible Participation Options

- Include non-verbal or creative options like painting or crafting

### Community Engagement and Feedback

- Surveys and Focus Groups and Post-Event Feedback





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## Real-World Inspiration

### Sensory Activation Vehicle (SAV) at Times Square New Year's Eve

### Out of Body Pop, London's first neuro-inclusive music event series

### Glastonbury Festival's Sensory Areas & Deaf Zones

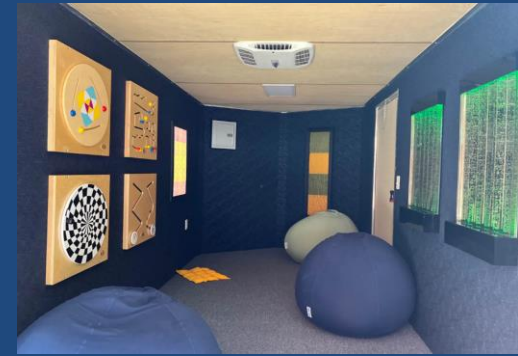
- The four rooms around the site have different textures, sounds and adjustable lighting, offering a safe space for anyone who feels overwhelmed and needs a break.

### Winter Classic ASL Broadcast for Deaf Fans

- Featured Deaf commentators providing real-time coverage of play-by-play and color commentary in ASL of the NHL Winter Classic.

### Sónar Festival's "Sónar+D" Neurodiverse-Friendly Event Spaces

- Partnered With Spectrum First To Claim First Safe Space For Neurodiverse Attendees





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## Advancing Inclusive Practices in Events

### Co-Design with Affected Communities

### Develop Inclusive Communication Tools

- Provide multi-sensory guides, tactile maps, and clear, simplified visual materials.

### Create a Culture of Inclusion

- Embed inclusive values into event branding, marketing, and team dynamics.

### Invest in Continuous Training

- Include lived experience insights and evolving best practices.

### Measure Impact

- Establish inclusivity KPIs and use data to drive improvements year-on-year.



# Presentation 2

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- Professor Gary Kerr, Research Assistant
- Atlantic Technological University



A photograph of an arcade machine. The central feature is a large, rectangular sign with a glowing blue neon outline that spells out the word "ARCADE" in a simple, sans-serif font. The sign is set against a dark, textured background. To the right of the sign, the side panel of the machine is visible, featuring a vibrant, cartoonish illustration of a red and yellow insect character with large eyes and antennae, standing on a blue, rocky surface. The machine's cabinet is dark, and the overall scene is lit with a warm, pinkish-red glow, suggesting an indoor arcade environment.

ARCADE

Researching accessibility to the live  
music industry for audiences who are  
d/Deaf, disabled and/or neurodivergent

Professor Gary Kerr

Atlantic Technological University, Sligo, Ireland

RESTRICTED

# What inspires me

SONIC BOTHY



RESTRICTED









# Authentic feedback



<b>Setting</b>	Tent in open park; hot temperature, noisy, flashing lights (an Arcade) – have relaxed times
<b>Activity</b>	Interactive; gaming; range of hands-on activities; activities for different levels
<b>Ability</b>	Focus on what the person CAN do rather than what they CANNOT do; Adapt to their skill level; Avoid pre-rehearsed intros
<b>Impairment</b>	Consider how a person's impairment might affect their participation in the activity, but their ability should be the main focus. Do not assume ability, but be guided by the participants

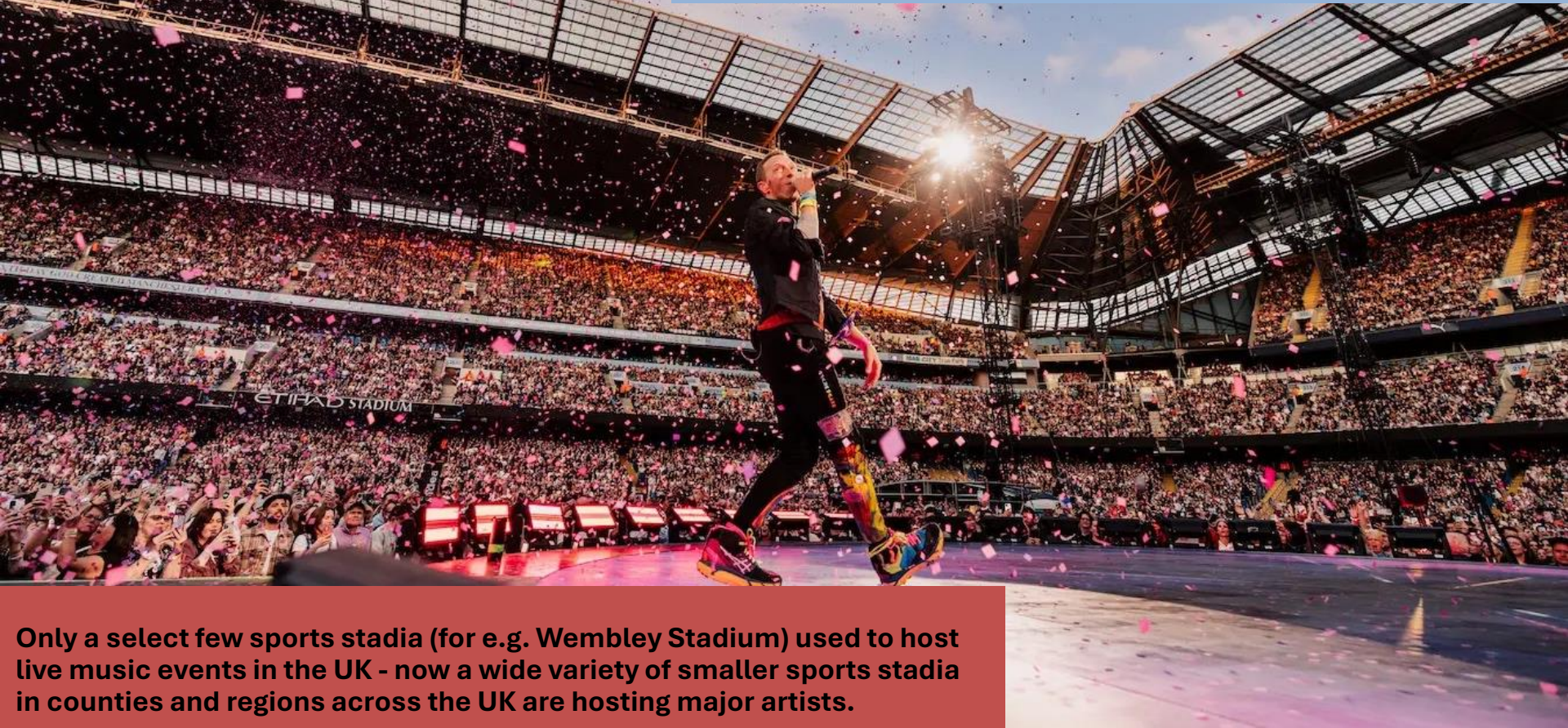
# Presentation 3

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- Dr Leon Davies, representing
- University of Sunderland

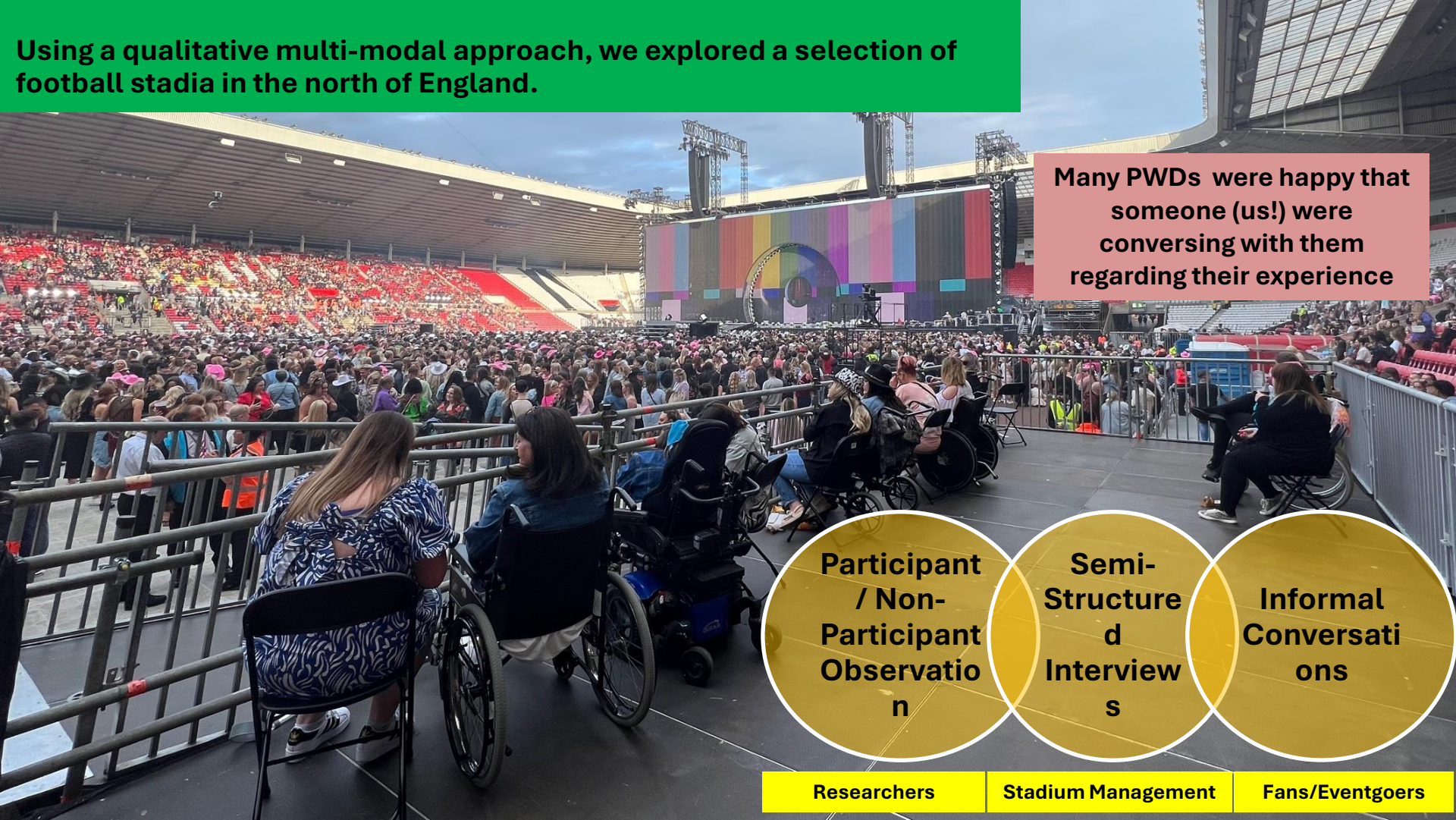


**Sports stadiums are often the chosen venue to host international, live music events due to their size, capacity and capability: however, they are not all purpose-built to accommodate events beyond relevant sport.**



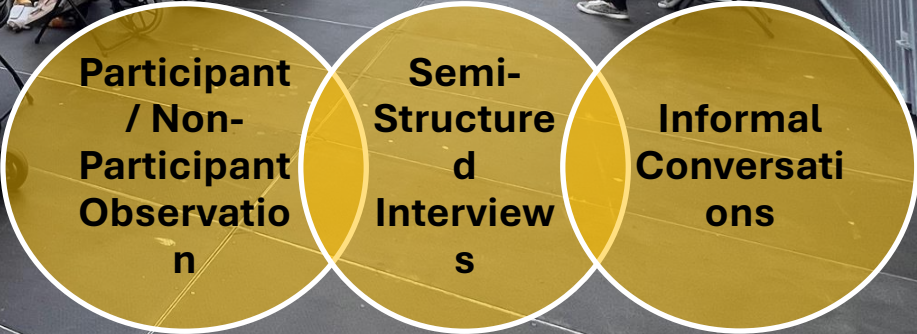
**Only a select few sports stadia (for e.g. Wembley Stadium) used to host live music events in the UK - now a wide variety of smaller sports stadia in counties and regions across the UK are hosting major artists.**





Using a qualitative multi-modal approach, we explored a selection of football stadia in the north of England.

Many PWDs were happy that someone (us!) were conversing with them regarding their experience



Researchers

Stadium Management

Fans/Eventgoers





**We have been analysing sports stadiums and how the live events teams within these adapt their accessible provisions for music events.**

**We have also explored the issues sports stadia face with these adaptations.**

**We found that there are inconsistencies between the different stadia in how they implement specific socially inclusive practices when hosting live music events.**



- Stories of PWDs and companions being left to own devices and incorrect information about wayfinding.

- Engagement with stadium event organisers and event promoters was vague or outdated in some stadia.

- Some accessible provisions not available or a misunderstanding of what was provided at certain stadia.

- Inconsistencies regarding chances to feed anything back to stadia event organisers



# Presentation 4

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- Adrian Bossey, Head of Subject
- Falmouth University



# Live Audience Accessibility & Augmentation ('LAAA') Project



Image: Attendees at LAAA Project using BEAT BLOCK haptic floor CREDIT Matt Jessop



IMAGE: Attendees at LAAA Project DEAF RAVE DJ Workshops CREDIT: Matt Jessop

# Live Audience Accessibility & Augmentation Festivals 2 Project



IMAGE: Audience at Deaf Rave Festival 2023  
— credit Adrian Bossey



IMAGE: Attendees at Boomtown Fair 2023  
Deaf Rave takeover — credit Adrian Bossey

# Live Audience Accessibility & Augmentation 2 BEATBLOCKS Project



IMAGE: National Star attendees on Beat Blocks floor at Cheltenham Jazz Festival – credit Sara Tink



IMAGE: Mother and child on haptic floor during DJ Countryman set at Tropical Pressure – credit Tropical Pressure



# On-going research

- **Music You Can Touch Project**
- **Potential Exhibition**
- **AND we're really open to other project suggestions....**

Special thanks to Dr Mandy Curtis & Dr Adam Jones from the University of Brighton Helen Worthington and all our lovely Falmouth University student research assistants



**University of Brighton**

**aeme**  
Association for Events  
Management Education



IMAGE: Collecting questionnaire responses at Meltdown during Les Amazones d'Afrique – credit Kirk Davies

# Discussion / Questions

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Researching accessibility to the live music industry for audiences who are d/Deaf, disabled or neurodivergent

