

Radical impediments: The ideological underpinnings of lacking infrastructure affecting trans+ communities in contemporary UK

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Background

- Significant scenario of digital divides affecting people with non-normative identities
- Digital poverty as access or lack thereof for trans+ communities
- History of trans usage of the Internet and its predecessors
- Scenario of polarisation and inequality in UK politics
- Non-aligned, “radical” youth groups, including LGBTQ+ politics at the forefront

Transmission: a brief history + ontology of online usage

- How do trans people use the Internet?
 - Epistemic, communicative, materialistic, and leisureful?
- Compare analogue and pre-Internet modes
 - Zines and community publications, scholarly articles, bulletin board systems, hotlines (Dame-Griff, 2023; Dmytryk, 2024)
- How does that manifest now?
 - Transitioning from Web 1.0's personal websites (Dame, 2016) and forums (Webster, 2019) to Web 2.0 as the "platform" age of videos and social media (Haimson, 2025)

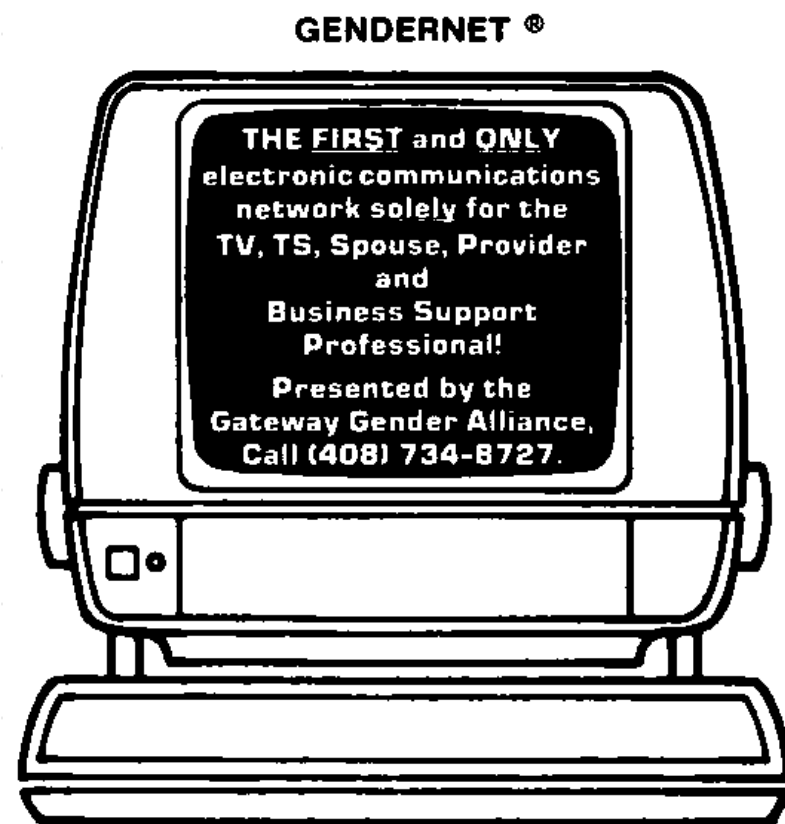


Photo from Dame-Griff (2023, p. 37)

Platform age hang-ups: new divides + exclusions

- Platform age walled-gardens (Lerner et al., 2020; Thylstrup et al., 2024)
- The "algorithm" as silencing on social media (Bronstein, 2020; Haimson et al., 2021)
 - Resistance: self-censoring (Calhoun & Fawcett, 2023)
- Online hate (Walker, 2023) and ostracisation (Heartscape, 2015; Cavar, 2025)





Access amongst dialectical possibilities: transgender digital poverty

- As relating to poverty in the broadest sense of the term
 - "The inability to interact with the online world fully, when where and how an individual needs to" (Digital Poverty Alliance, n. d.)
- Capabilities-only framing on digital inequalities → materialistic fusion (Yates et al., 2023)
 - Cisheteronormative assumptions: "urban households with children" (p. 3)
 - Transgender as fragile positions in wage-labour (Irving 2008; 2015; O'Brien, 2021; Parker, 2024)
- Compulsory computing: labour, state, healthcare (Allmann & Blank, 2021)
- How separable are circumstantial and structural determinants? (Ruiu & Ragnedda, 2024)
 - e.g., healthcare and wider sociopolitical constructions of transgender identity...

Genevieve's PhD: "What does digital poverty look like for transgender people in Wales?"

The project

- Existing mechanisms: broad (but underdeveloped) WG policy base, provision by 3rd sector organisations
- Aim: produce an evidence base for organisations to get funding
- Why? To support trans people in using technology in the way they see fit!

Empirical research

- Phase 1a + 1b
 - Semi-structured interviews
 - Trans adults (18+) living in Wales
 - Collecting experiences and evaluating determinants
- Phase 2
 - Focus groups with stakeholders
 - Sector-based strategies, difficulties, responses



Digital poverty vs. political consequences on queer communities

- Digitally-connected queer belonging has long inspired a reflection on forms of negotiation of non-normative identities in scenarios of crises (Probyn, 2013)
- Queer belonging being associated to arrivals, migration (e.g., D'Angelo, 2020)
- Unbelonging as a possibility against violence or the possibility of fleeing (Garvey, 2011; Parker, 2011; Sólveigar-Guðmundsdóttir, 2018)
- Politics of backlash regarding trans issues (Haq, 2025)

Radical transfeminism is a collective political praxis and critique developing in the tenuously United Kingdom and Europe, centering transfeminine bodies that are or find themselves precariously employed, poor, overworked, and pathologized—bodies of color and various shades of white; migrant bodies; dis/abled bodies; and/or “working” bodies. Radical transfeminism is oriented around forms of care and support, and through working together, over and across material precarity. (Raha, 2017: 637)

Trans+ political participation and the importance of "skills"

- Further developments in Africa and Asia regarding oppression and repression of queer communities (Bauer, 2023; El Chamaa, 2023; Arystanbek, 2024)
- The ongoing genocide in Gaza met with profound disbelief and anxiety within the queer community, complicity among LGBTQIA+ people in the West? (Marsawa & Akkad, 2024; Graham-Harrison, 2024).
- Calls to negotiate new spatio-temporalities with the view of restoring movement and hope (Talburdt & Matus, 2014).

Do you speak and connect with your neighbors and people you meet out and about? Do you, or people you know have big platforms? Are you in a group that meets regularly that you think you could get to endorse a campaign or join actions?

Do you have even 2 hrs a week you could use to contribute towards a group? Do you have specific skills like art, media/comms, research, speaking to people, cycling, cooking, sewing, self-defense, event organizing, stealing, sound engineering, computer engineering, building/carpentry, climbing, drumming, grounding practices, public speaking, emergency mental health, first aid?

Do you speak multiple languages? Do you get into Internet deep dives? Are you good under high stress situations? Do you have access to venues that could be used for public events or a regular meeting location? Can you drive/have a vehicle? Do you have access to a sound system? Are you good at raising funds or writing grant applications?

Are you a raging bitch that could cuss out a CEO?

Queers for Palestine
Instagram, 2024

Trans repertoires in digital environments: The case of video streaming (Levy, 2024)

- Constant zoom in and zoom out of discussions
- Exchanges of priorities in and out of the Anglosphere
- Possibility of epistemological exchange seen in words chosen, adopted, or rejected
- Growing communicative power across borders

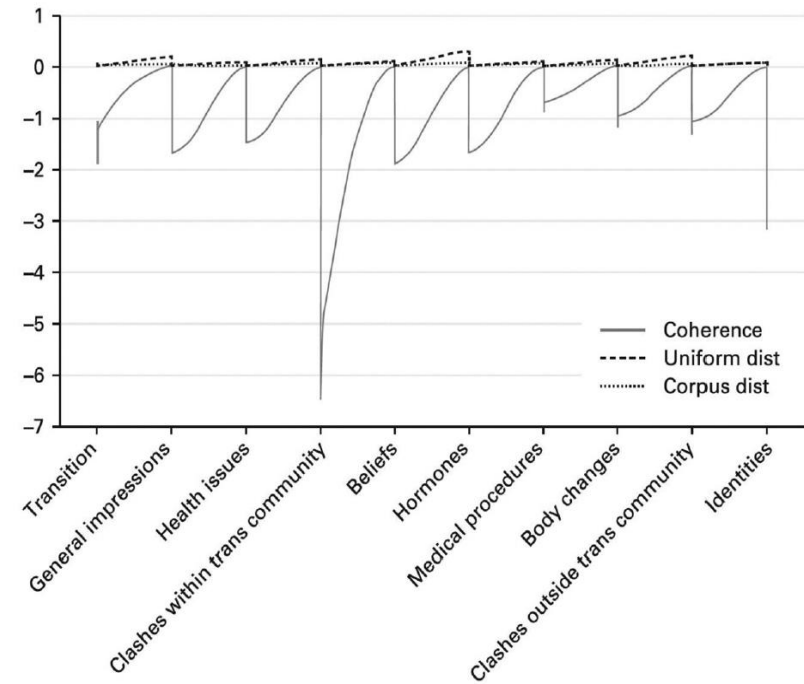


Figure 3. The relationship between topics and coherence, uniform distribution, and corpus distribution.

Study conducted with 5 widely-followed trans creators' channels on YouTube based in the UK, Spain, Brazil, Taiwan and Russia (n=101.897)

Recent research with Queers for Palestine

- Repositioning, relocating, resisting, broadly conceived, come as bywords for this seeking of fresh spatial or political alternatives
- Digital poverty/exclusion as conditioning spaces of struggle towards liberation within society, academia, activism, or social media
- The presence/absence of Internet or digital resources as a factor in organising activism
- The adoption of new spatio-temporalities based on group membership but also online feedback (Talburt & Maltus, 2014)

If you know anyone involved in any organizing group, whatever it may be, ask them if they can pursue a connection for you with groups you're interested in. Sometimes you may start with groups more accessible to you.

In the meantime, many of you are already organizing in your own ways. Keep building community. Keep having these conversations in all the spaces you're in. Keep redistributing resources and fostering a cultural of collective care.

Lets make sure yesterday is a part of a truly liberated future on not just a marker in history.



Towards radical impediments?

- Reclaiming of the "radical" as a historical front for trans struggle and a device for hope
- Digital poverty as access (or lack thereof) to the Internet, amongst dialectical "radical" (+ve/-ve) forms
- Governments targeting trans communities by monopolising the debate on informing vulnerable trans people
- The growing participation of trans+ individuals in wider movements and achieving power and self-actualisation
- "Radical impediments" as an ongoing state or calculated efforts to silence a generation



Questions for the audience

- What do you think of the division of technologies as epistemic, communicative, materialistic, and leisureful?
- How might we balance the need to build technologies of liberation with technocritical critique on the left?
- How could we work together to focus on assessing current divides and identifying new impediments?
- How could we empower trans+ expression online and offline at the local level?

Bibliography, slides, and contact details



<https://mun-tonsi.net/tvce-2025>

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