

## Resources and trans access to urban spaces: an ideal of justice diluted by discrimination in Paris and London

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### Abstract

The cities of the Global North are perceived as places of emancipation for minorities. Is this true for trans people? Trans communities in Paris and London make many urban resources available to trans people. Identified by the inhabitants, places where such resources exist become attractive. Charities and support groups develop them according to an ideal of justice: access to facilities and services from which members of this minority are excluded is both a practical way of mitigating the inequality of access to public spaces they experience, and a recognition of their status as human beings. However, according to the trans experiences I investigated, take-up of these resources within the trans population is very unequal, split along gender, class and race lines. These resources are also unequally distributed across the cities. This unequal distribution of metropolitan resources casts doubt on the objective of justice to which civil society entities and elected officials aspire.

**Keywords:** trans, public space, resource, city, spatial justice

### Résumé

Les métropoles occidentales sont des espaces perçus comme émancipateurs pour les minorités. Qu'en est-il du point de vue des personnes trans ? De nombreuses ressources urbaines sont mises à leur disposition par leurs communautés dans les métropoles de Paris et de Londres. Ces ressources, identifiées par les habitant·e·s, rendent ces territoires attractifs. Les associations et les collectifs les développent selon un idéal de justice : l'accès aux équipements et aux services dont sont privé·e·s les personnes trans est à la fois une forme de résolution matérielle de l'inégal accès aux espaces publics dont elles sont victimes, ainsi qu'une reconnaissance de leur statut d'être humain. Pourtant, au regard des expériences trans relevées sur le terrain, ces ressources sont inégalement réparties dans les espaces urbains et inéquitablement appropriées au sein de

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la population trans selon des critères de genre, de classe et de race. Cette inégale répartition des ressources métropolitaines remet en question la finalité de justice à laquelle se rattachent associations et élu-e-s.

**Mots-clés :** trans, espace public, ressource, ville, justice spatiale

Big cities are presented in the geographical literature as resource territories for minorities. The argument is that the presence of large numbers of people, which fosters interactions between diverse populations and at the same time allows a certain form of anonymity, facilitates the integration of marginalised populations. The city and its central public spaces allows marginalised groups to express a collective identity: migrants and so-called “illegal immigrants” find alternative forms of citizenship in the visibility that cities offer (Erdi Lelandais, 2013). Indeed, the *topos* of the emancipatory city in the life trajectories of young gay people is familiar: the possibilities that cities offer sexual minorities through a combination of anonymity and a form of minority visibility (Cattan and Leroy, 2010). By providing real access to material resources and public spaces that represent an idealised locus of social interaction, the city is perceived as a hospitable territory for minority populations.

Anglophone and Francophone geographers who have worked on the notion of spatial justice since the 1970s have mainly explored the idea of “equal access of all citizens to urban resources” (Gervais-Lambony and Dufaux, 2009, p. 7). Studies on justice thus explore the existence of a dialectic between structural inequalities—imbalances in resource distribution—and the contrasting representation or consideration of dominated populations in the media, political ideas, etc. The issue is both the “redistribution” of material resources and “recognition”: this dichotomy, conceptualised by Nancy Fraser (2011, p. 16-21), is adopted and tested in particular by Marianne Blidon (2011) through the prism of the homosexual experience in France. She shows that the quest for recognition by gay people in France involves above all the quest for a fair and equitable spatial distribution of and access to socially valued resources.

It is within this conceptual framework that I propose to explore how trans people use metropolitan resources, which is the outcome of a dialectic between unequal access to the resources and services of the territory and the quest—or need—for recognition of their “status of human being[s]” (Blidon, 2011). Urban resources are thus understood as all the material or nonmaterial elements that enable trans people to offset or reverse the injustices they suffer. Consistently with the conventional use of the term in geography, the resources employed to meet needs are created by the practices of individuals and their communities, and their scarcity or abundance are a source of tension (Géococonfluences, 2010). The marginal position of trans populations in France and in the United Kingdom is the cause of these needs. The transphobia of everyday life—precarious administrative status, difficulties of access to healthcare, family breakups and social isolation, employment difficulties (Beaubatie, 2017; Whittle, Turner, Al-Alami et al., 2007)—combine with a very violent anti-trans campaign conducted by the media and encouraged by the conservatives in power in both countries (Espineira and Thomas, 2014; Pearce Erikainen and Vincent, 2020). Against this background, we analyse the role of urban resources in the trans experience through the prism

of justice, both by studying the take-up of resources that meet the needs arising from this systemic insecurity and by considering the symbolic dimension of this recognition.

The purpose of this article is therefore to explore, in the light of trans experiences recorded in Paris and in London for my doctoral thesis, the emancipatory nature of the resources—whether community or noncommunity, material or nonmaterial—provided by the urban environment. I show that the resources offered to trans people by and in cities have the capacity to offset sharp discrimination in access to the spaces and services open to the public. These resources are of several kinds—administrative, medical, festive and social—and rely in particular on spaces, services and rights made available through mutual peer support. They are often negotiated by local authority representatives who share an ideal of justice with trans activists. However, I observed in the field that there are different degrees of take-up of these resources. Having shown how cities, as resource-spaces, contribute to redistribution and to the recognition of trans communities, I employ an intersectional analytical framework to qualify these results, showing how access to these resources is unequally shared along gender, class and race lines.

This article is founded on three complementary types of material collected for my thesis. First, I employ a method of ethnographic enquiry in which participants—a cohort of 31 people, 17 men, 10 women and 4 non-binary trans people from a wide variety of social backgrounds—maintain a log of their practices in public space. For three days, each of the 31 participants, 16 in Paris and 15 in London, noted down everything they did outside the home, their feelings on the moment and, on rereading, any comments on these records. In each case, before the log entries began, a biographical interview was conducted with each participant in order to record their life trajectories. We then analysed the contents of these logs together in a summing-up interview. I was able to use funding from my laboratory to pay the participants to complete the full protocol, which made it possible to work with a variety of people, some in particularly precarious circumstances, many of them absent from community spaces. However, my inability to speak Spanish and Portuguese prevented me from working with migrant participants, most of whom are of South American origin. In the next phase, I carried out participant observation of interactions between local authorities and trans rights groups in a number of meetings held to negotiate access to a service, in which I was introduced as a researcher by the Parisian groups. Because of my own closeness to the trans activist milieu, there was a certain sympathy between myself and the members of these groups. By contrast, I was very isolated in the fieldwork in London, which has been extensively studied and is difficult for young researchers to access (Bonté, 2021). Here I observed events and questioned activists informally, as a simple participant. Given this geopolitics of activist claims, it was by looking at how the participants in reality use public spaces on a day-to-day basis that I was able to compare the resources available in the city with actual use of those resources.

### **Cities identified as providing resources for trans people**

The participants who were not originally from the two capitals where I conducted my survey were unanimous on one question: their departure from their native regions is final and emancipatory. “This is like moving on,” asserts Daren, a 25-

year-old trans woman who works as a design engineer in a London laboratory. These moves to Paris or London are motivated by the identification of resources that meet the specific needs of trans people: first, a trans presence, which I describe as a “community”, because its material contributions rely on the solidarities and self-support characteristic of trans groups,<sup>1</sup> whether formally structured or not, and in addition the relative anonymity typical of city life (Simmel, 2013), which facilitates gender transition by reducing the social and emotional proximity to other users of urban space.

*Trans geographies that explore the inclusion of trans people in gay and lesbian spaces*

Geographical research on trans experiences, mainly focusing on urban contexts with just a few exceptions (e.g., Abelson, 2016), has explored the relations between trans communities and gay and lesbian neighbourhoods, which themselves have been extensively studied in the geography of sexualities. Petra Doan (2007) shows that the gendered and normative character of gay and lesbian community spaces, especially with regard to shopping facilities and residential clustering, excludes gender nonconforming people. She argues that in response to this exclusion from spatial concentration systems, trans communities develop other spaces that are discursive, more inclusive and less spatially anchored: online, occasional, itinerant events, etc., similar to the lesbian spatialities in Paris described by Nadine Cattan and Anne Clerval (2011). Although the notion has been questioned (Brown, 2012), Cha Prieur clearly showed the “homonormativity” of the LGBTI milieu in Paris and Montreal, where the reproduction of gender norms specific to gay and lesbian sociabilities excludes people who have escaped this binary. However, the constant reference to gender nonconformity in describing trans experiences has been criticised (Browne and Nash, 2010, p. 8). For example, other geographers draw on trans studies to explore other material dimensions of trans lives, in particular their specific healthcare and administrative needs. Kath Browne and Jason Lim (2010) contributed to this field with an in-depth case study of “the gay capital of the UK”, Brighton and Hove, exploring a “broad” experience of urban space. While trans residents share collective representations of a tolerant and welcoming city that helps to enhance their quality of life, the discriminations experienced in Brighton, notably great difficulty in accessing healthcare for gender transition, make their lives complex. And finally, drawing on a survey conducted with LGBTI people living in Toronto, Catherine Nash (2010) shows the existence of (self-)exclusion processes whereby trans people avoid activist circles, in particular feminist circles, after gender transition. Out of respect for feminist struggles or because of deliberate exclusion, changing gender often leads to the departure from activist circles frequented before transition. The gendered nature of community spaces is identified as a factor of exclusion because of the change in social gender group brought about by transition, rather than a mismatch with binary gender norms. This leads in particular to the exclusion of trans people from their original spaces of socialisation. In this context, the most recent studies criticise “a false dichotomy between space and subjectivity, in which space is passive and subjects are agents who control their world” (Crawford, 2015, p. 20, cited by Todd, 2021, p. 5). So the city’s influence on trans lives is rarely questioned. In all these works, the urban environment is considered as a vehicle of both resources and exclusion.

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1. This term is used by mutual support groups, notably drug users, to emphasise the peer-to-peer dimension of the help provided. Trans organisations use it to describe their activities, which rely primarily on mutual support.

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*Identified community resources, founded on making cities accessible*

Few of the participants in the survey came from the cities studied. Most had moved there from elsewhere. Of the 16 participants living in Greater London, only 6 were born and grew up there, and 5 of them currently live in a different part of the city from where they were born. Of the 16 in Île-de-France, only 3 had grown up in the Paris region. These recent moves to Paris and London coincide, as is the case for most of the geography of sexualities studies focusing on European cities, with a move associated with entering higher education or a first job (Blidon and Guérin-Pace, 2013). In the narratives of the participants in this survey, in addition to professional reasons, preliminary knowledge of the presence of an active and clearly identified community emerges as a decisive factor in the choice of destination. Visibility in the big cities was, for example, the motive behind his move to the city for Tobias, a trans and gay student, when he began higher education.

“I wasn’t specifically just looking at unis in London, I applied to a lot of places, but they were all quite big cities or at least large towns. [...] I particularly like being in London because it is where the big Pride parades are, they have the Trans Pride Parade... During freshers’ week at uni, I spent a lot of time in quite a few of the gay bars in Soho, which were all really accepting. [...] That’s why I chose London.” (Tobias, 20, student, Whitechapel, London, 2019)

So the gay and trans presence attracted Tobias to big cities, and to London in particular. He based these representations both on the Pride marches and on his experience of gay bars in the Soho District. Yet since his arrival in London, 18 months before the interview, Tobias had very rarely entered a LGBTI space: it was actually the visible marks of the community presence that were the motive for his move.

A survey of the resources available to trans people in Île-de-France and in Greater London reveals a contrasting geography. These resources, identified in interviews, on social media and during participant observations, are divided into four categories: administrative resources—change of civil status, mediation with government departments; medical and well-being resources—training for healthcare personnel, availability of lists of care staff trained in trans issues, free drop-in clinics, reserved swim sessions, sports clubs; social and hospitality resources—bars, restaurants, party scenes. And in addition, the question of sex work, which for certain women is an economic resource that often requires peer initiation. It is the combination of trans presence and of services (administrative, health, infrastructural, etc.), which makes these resources urban in nature: they are present in the city, but need to be made available. In Paris and in London, it is community organisation, whether through formal or informal structures, that makes this possible.

Not all of the participants in the survey use these resources, but they are nevertheless clearly identified: key community spaces such as La Mutinerie (a “bar for fun, culture and politics, [...] by and for women, dykes, bis, trans, queers”<sup>2</sup>) or the sports activities run by the Acceptess-T Association are invariably mentioned in the interviews. In London, a few clearly identified groups and sports clubs coexist in the centre of the city, but the tendency is for trans spaces and resources to be more dispersed. Almost all the participants mention the abundance of queer and trans spaces as an essential factor of their

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2. Taken from the [website of La Mutinerie](#), accessed on 23/09/2021.

quality of life in London, but they perceive these resources as precarious and scattered. Nonetheless, the survey participants who were not native Londoners all said that they had moved to the capital because of the trans presence.

The presence and identification of community resources provide access to spaces and services that are not easily accessible to trans people: generally “homonormative” LGBTI bars and clubs (Prieur, 2015a; 2015b), swimming pools and sports facilities where bodies are exposed to other people’s gaze (Phipps, 2021), healthcare facilities (Beaubatie, 2017), etc. In this respect, providing access to resources already present in the city is a key element of redistributive justice, typical of the strategies employed by the groups and organisations we studied.

### *Metropolitan resources as an ideal of justice*

The resources identified in both cities are mainly brought to the communities by trans rights organisations. These organisations, in the French case that I explored in greater depth, justify their activities in terms of ideals of justice. For Giovanna Rincon, president of the Acceptess-T Association, which is behind a large number of mutual support activities aimed at a wide variety of trans populations, access to public spaces and services is a condition of citizenship and of human status. Redistributive justice, presented as a necessary step towards recognition, is therefore a fundamental factor motivating the provision of resources by trans organisations.

“The major [argument] of [our] work, [is] to demonstrate how transphobia is crystallised in public services, and that these people who are citizens like any other should not be denied access to these services. That is how transphobia is internalised and normalised in people’s lives, and how, in public services and institutions, nobody sees it as a problem. [...] It is here that we began to demonstrate that our approach was about more than transphobia, that it was about including everyone, all the time, not leaving anyone outside society.” (Giovanna Rincon, President of the trans rights organisation Acceptess-T, 2019)

The issue of justice is at the heart of Giovanna Rincon’s speech, even if the word is never mentioned. Making public services and amenities available to trans people is linked to their status as citizens: she believes that a person who does not have access to spaces and resources that are open to the public is “[left] outside society” and is not treated as a “citizen like any other”. To become a citizen is to become a full member of society and this is how Acceptess-T tries to restore trans people’s status as human beings. This question of citizenship is all the more central to the Association in that the population at which its actions are mainly, though not exclusively, directed is trans migrants, in France primarily first-generation South American women, who live in circumstances of great insecurity, whether economic, administrative or health-related (Gonzalez, 2018). Giovanna Rincon seeks to “draw on the experience of these women” so that “everyone can benefit from it, in other words, to fight on a broad front [...] against all forms of transphobia”. She thus describes the activities of the organisation as a means to remedy the injustices caused by social and institutional transphobia.

Indeed, it is a debate about what constitutes justice that underlies the conflict between trans groups and the public authorities over the question of trans access to public swimming pools. While the trans rights organisations believe that the difficulties encountered by trans people in accessing these facilities is itself an injustice, the representatives of France’s local

authorities take the view that allowing a specific population category private access to a public facility would constitute a violation of equality. One elected official responsible for preventing discrimination in a mid-size French town thus refused to grant a private session to a local trans organisation. Having agreed to explain her actions, she described her thinking as follows: “A swimming pool is a public space, and reserving a public space exclusively for a particular population is problematic! Because it is our job to guarantee the possibility of encounter, diversity and pluralism in public space, not compartmentalisation.” This universalist concept of justice argues for access for all at all times. Aligned against it stands the reappropriation and redistribution of resources by and for trans people, which is perceived by trans organisations and groups as a justice of both redistribution and recognition: by regaining access to public services and facilities, the aim is to recover the status of human beings. However, a study of the relations of trans people to these resources reveals differing degrees of take-up based on criteria of class, gender and race.

### **Contrasting access to resources along class, gender and race lines**

In the Paris and London surveys, we observed a striking difference between the content of the biographical interviews conducted before the writing of the daily log, and the content of those logs. While the resources described above are extensively cited in the biographical interviews, in which I asked questions about the participants’ relations with trans communities, they are totally absent from the daily logs, with just one exception. In exploring the reasons for these absences, it became apparent that significant obstacles, combining factors of class, gender and race, were preventing trans access to community spaces.

#### *Socially situated milieux of activism and sociability*

The first difficulties that emerged were associated with the cost of access to party spaces. In Île-de-France, the low cost of transport seems to explain the relative ease of access to daytime resources: by way of comparison, a monthly travel pass on the whole Paris region transport network in 2021 cost €75.20 per month, as compared with £370.60 (approximately €429) in Greater London.<sup>3</sup> Some of the participants in Paris shared their financial difficulties in gaining access to highly centralised queer, gay and lesbian festive events. People living in the middle and outer suburbs would never think of going home after the last suburban train, since taxis are too expensive. However, the situation is tougher in Greater London. Residents complain about the cost of travel, which prevents them from accessing resources during the day, despite the fact that they are better distributed across the territory. The influence of economic insecurity on their access to resources is exacerbated by the state of the housing market in Île-de-France and in Greater London, which gives them only a small degree of leeway in their residential choices, a factor that further confines the poorest of them to peripheral and isolated areas. For some, like Harry who has worked a series of small jobs and is often without work for several weeks in succession, the cost of travel is

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3. Cost of a monthly Navigo travel card in 2021, source: iledefrance-mobilites.fr, accessed on 20/05/2021. Cost of a monthly travel card covering zones 1 to 9 of the Greater London network, source: tfl.gov.uk, accessed on 20/05/2021.

totally crippling. Yet he lives in Brixton, a fairly central district served by the underground rail network, not in the outskirts of London's huge metropolitan area.

“Milan: Why do you prefer [online groups] than going to an actual group?”

Harry: Come on man, it's like seven pounds to go from Brixton to anywhere in central London! Then seven pounds to come back, and you can add fifteen pounds for dinner and at least six for a drink... I'm not that rich man!” (Harry, age 38, insecure clerical jobs, Brixton, London, 2019)

Harry attends online groups because it would cost him too much in travel and food if he attended a physical group. This is particularly a problem in London, where there are few premises available to voluntary structures: some organisations require support groups to pay towards the cost of hiring the room, as happens with the London Friend Charity, while others are forced to hold of their meetings in commercial premises where the entry fee takes the form of consumption, as is the case with some events run by FTM London. Shortfalls in voluntary sector funding, the privatisation of the public transport system, which leads to crippling fares, and sharp sociospatial segregation, together significantly complicate access to community resources for those with the greatest needs, in particular the unemployed. However, other obstacles can be identified.

Some of the participants in the survey, who are aware of the existence of voluntary sector resources and have no particular problem travelling to them, have never or rarely used them. Yet they sometimes complain about their isolation from the trans—and more broadly the LGBTI—communities. One such is Ludo, an 18-year-old high school pupil, who has been isolated from other young people in his suburban town since transitioning. He wants to meet other trans people in Paris in order to feel less isolated. Rather than attending a group that specialises in preventing isolation among young LGBTI people, which he admits he knows about, he prefers to “hang out near Gare du Nord or near Châtelet” with strangers he has met on Facebook, “of all ages, from 15 to 60”. Intrigued and slightly concerned about these practices, I decided to talk to him about them informally after the interview.

“At the end of the interview, Ludo and I go back to Gare du Nord together. I chat a little with him about the people he meets through the Facebook group. [...] I try to understand why he has never been to a support group, though he is aware of them. [...] Ludo says that he is shy. He explains that he is ‘very intimidated’ by LGBT activists writing on social media. He is afraid of ‘saying something wrong’ or of ‘not saying the right thing’, of not having a coherent view on political issues or else ‘looking like a nobody’ to these activists.” (extract from field notebook, Paris, 25/08/2019)

Several participants, like Ludo, reported that they found it very hard to grasp the expectations of trans and queer groups in Paris, especially over political views. The fear of not knowing what position to take on a political issue is significant. Tom, for example, a cleaner in an employment agency, prefers to “go to a straight bar with [his] queer friends” rather than going to specifically trans places, even non-leisure places. Indeed, social media discussions “on the role of trans men in feminism”, which raise questions about the legitimacy of the presence of trans men in feminist spaces, make him think that he would be “uncomfortable”, or even “completely out of place” in a trans group (Tom, age 22, cleaner in an employment



agency, Rennes). In their thesis, Cha Prieur (2015b) extensively documented the class norms of queer milieux. Despite the promotion of a kind of “activist asceticism” in queer political spaces (living in squats, food recuperation, emphasis on sometimes distant working-class roots), the people who take part in Paris’s queer scene are mainly middle-class or at least well endowed with cultural capital (ibid., p. 165). The political ideas advanced in these circles, including anticapitalist ideas, paradoxically generate new social norms specific to the queer community, norms that are particularly discriminatory in terms of the possession of cultural capital. A set of purportedly subversive “*règles du savoir-vivre Trans Pédé Gouine*”—Trans Queer Dyke life rules—in reality legitimise the reproduction of class relations in queer spaces (ibid., p. 330). Among the participants in my survey, Ella clearly perceives at La Mutinerie, Paris’s ultimate queer and trans destination, frequently mentioned in the writings of Cha Prieur, the presence of “local codes” that make it an uncomfortable place to be. As a fan of electronic music, however, she is a regular at what she calls “underground” party venues.

“I hate la Mut’. I never feel good when I’m there. I’ve been two or three times, but I don’t like it, total discomfort every time. [...] It’s not enough that the place is queer [...], it’s also a place which, when you don’t know people, is extremely hostile and unpleasant, because you feel that there are codes that you’re supposed to follow, which are more than the basic codes of the trans/queer/dyke community, and really the codes of la Mut’.” (Ella, age 27, official in a political party, 18<sup>th</sup> arrondissement, Paris, 2019)

In addition to the importance of cultural capital in the experience of queer spaces, there is social capital: she sees a direct link between her unease at La Mutinerie and the fact of not knowing anyone there. The “codes of la Mut’” which she finds difficult to decipher make the place unwelcoming to her eyes. Working-class by origin, Ella defines herself as a “class transfuge”. While her fears did not stop her going to the venue, the feeling of being out of step with the social norms of the bar’s customers prevented her from going back. Social class thus seems to be a decisive factor in access to trans places, not just bars and clubs but also support groups, as the experiences of Ludo and Tom show. The possession of social and cultural capital is particularly discriminatory, notably because the radicalness of the debates among activists that play out on social media is intimidating to people who have never attended a support group. Looking further into the matter, one realises that questions of social class are closely linked with issues of gender, which are fundamental in trans experiences.

#### *Exclusion from community spaces at the interface between issues of gender, class and race*

Throughout the survey, there emerged between the lines of the interviews a number of contemporary debates about trans people originating in social or the mainstream media. In both France and the UK, there were discussions in the media and among activists about, on the one hand, the place of trans men in feminist spaces and, on the other hand, the place of trans women in all the spaces restricted to women (Morinom, 2013). These debates, which the survey participants had come across on social media, centre on the question of male socialisation: in both cases, the secondary male socialisation of trans men or the primary male socialisation of trans women is seen as a factor that potentially undermines their legitimacy—in the first case in activist circles, in the second case among women. This question generates multiple discussions that are not

the subject of this paper, but which interest us in terms of their influence on the access of trans people to community spaces and resources.

These debates affect the participants in different ways, depending on their social class. On the one hand, those best endowed with cultural and social capital—who are also the ones who are most subversive with respect to gender norms (Beaubatie, 2020)—are able to detach themselves from the debates, or even adjust to them: some reject “the gender binary and everything that goes with it” (Thelma, age 20, art student, Rennes), others reconcile themselves to “a more policed, bourgeois and silent masculinity” (Duran, age 24, student at a *grande école* [an elite institution of higher education], Paris). On the other hand, those with less cultural and social capital report obstacles in their access to these resource spaces. These obstacles take the form of difficulties in joining trans spaces, or even fears about doing so, which sometimes prompt them to abandon the idea of entering certain bars and clubs or support groups. When I asked Ella to say more about the discomfort she feels at La Mutinerie, her answer shows clearly how these gender-related issues are interwoven with class norms.

“The second time I went there, I was just starting to transition. [...] But even when you are perceived as a trans woman, [...] there is still all this debate about the role of male socialisation in the experience and lives of trans women. I did one of those things that happens [...], I knocked over some woman’s glass, and I felt really bad! [...] I thought, ‘[...] everybody’s going to think: that guy is manspreading, pushing people around, etc.’. [...] So, with these debates, even more in queer places than in a straight environment, you’re constantly checking on how much space you are taking up, because there are girls who will be thinking ‘ah, when it comes down to it, she’s a guy because she takes up so much space.’” (Ella, age 27, official in a political party, 18<sup>th</sup> arrondissement, Paris, 2019)

The “codes of la Mut” and, more generally, the social norms of queer bars and clubs, are highly gendered class norms. These include dexterity and discretion, distinctive features of gender which distinguish “acceptable” masculinities from other forms. This constant alertness to the aural and physical space occupied by their voices, bodies and gestures was shared by most of the trans women who took part in the survey, in all the public spaces where they spent time. Indeed, in most cases, taking up too much aural and physical space threatens the femininity of the protagonists: they are socially male practices that imperil the “passing” of trans women, that is their capacity to pass as cis in the gender they identify with (Beaubatie, 2019). However, the stress associated with appearing too masculine by talking too loudly or taking up too much room seems particularly acute in feminist spaces. Paradoxically, several trans women reported being more worried about passing in trans spaces than elsewhere: the fear of being taxed with male socialisation prevents them relaxing in these supposedly protected spaces. Ruth, for example, who regularly attends trans support groups in East London, admits to a degree of weariness about having to monitor her speech tone, even in specifically trans spaces where she ought to be able to express herself without worrying about passing.

“Sometimes I still feel on edge, even in those kinds of spaces. [...] Sometimes I do still feel like I have to watch myself around some trans men and non-binary people. [...] In my experience, it tends to be a very specific type of person who dominates those spaces, like, trans men or non-binary people who usually are like middle class, white, who have a similar kind of soft aesthetic and everything. [...] And when I relax, you know, I’m pretty loud. And I have a deep voice and I do take up a lot of

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space, which I think I have a right to in those kinds of spaces. But then I start to feel a little bit of transmisogyny, like I'm being looked at like I'm behaving like a man, you know, I'm looked at so weirdly, sort of objectified and fetishized but also disliked. And sometimes I find that 'soft aesthetic' quite hard to deal with because it's very passive. And it can be quite passive aggressive." (Ruth, age 23, waitress and sex worker, Tottenham, London, 2019)

Ruth has working-class roots, growing up in East London with alcoholic and violent parents. She explains that she learned very young the necessity of "taking up [her] space to confirm this fucking life". Her story shows how the socialisation linked with her social background differs from the gender norms typical of trans support groups, and hence highlights the highly situated aspects of these groups. The majority behavioural norms in these environments are, in her experience, driven by men and non-binary people, who indeed account for an average of three-quarters of participants in support groups in London, as I was able to see in 12 sessions of participant observation in different groups between October and December 2019. Beyond the factors that Ruth identifies herself—these people are white, from a middle-class background and share common values—this way of rejecting maleness by performing a "soft" masculinity (what she calls a "soft aesthetic") is known to be a tool of patriarchal domination employed by certain upper-class men. Since the values associated with masculinity and maleness vary between social milieux, some men distinguish themselves from a masculinity that is deemed archaic by adopting an androgynous appearance and attitude, thereby disarming the feminist critique of male domination (Beaubatie, 2020). Ruth seems to observe the same phenomenon among trans men and transmasculine people, who are also a majority of those who define themselves as non-binary (Beaubatie, 2017). This rejection of their own masculinity by upper-class white men, which is typical of the support groups that Ruth attends, places her in a particularly tricky situation: although these community spaces should allow her not to worry about passing, in fact, they paradoxically make her much more alert. Constantly monitoring her actions and words in this way is very tiring, and sometimes prompts Ruth to avoid trans community spaces.

These class and gender obstacles to access to trans spaces are common to all the trans women of working-class background who took part in the survey. The same experience of trans and feminist spaces is shared by the working-class men who participated in the survey, who are often uncomfortable with the masculinities emphasised there. This sometimes goes hand in hand with the experience of racism. Duran, for example, a Franco-Kurdish student in a Parisian *grande école*, confesses that he is "more comfortable in Saint-Denis or in towns like that, with their diversity, than [at his school] and in groups like [his school's feminist and queer organisation]". He explains that in those places he can express a "surlier" masculinity, "closer to [his] upbringing", which he thinks is "heavily frowned upon" in his school's feminist and LGBTI circles. The same is true of Ethan, a working-class black trans man living in East London. He makes fun of the "typically feminine" attitudes that he is supposed to adopt "in order to pass for a decent guy", having noticed, since he has presented as a man, a form of mistrust and sometimes aggressive attitudes directed at him, even in trans circles. Finally, other nonwhite participants experience a dual rejection: from trans spaces because of racism and from their original communities because of transphobia. Jamie, whose parents are of Pakistani origin, thus explains that they feel uncomfortable both in their university's LGBTI spaces and in Pakistani shops in London.

“When I’m wearing a bindi or any traditional outfit like a dress or whatever, I’m always hyper aware of others wherever I go. In my school there is an LGBT group but they will make comments on my outfit, I mean it’s not always bad comments but I never know if they are honest or just trying to make me special and different. [...] I sometimes go to Pakistanian shops but I feel afraid of being discovered as a hijra as we are pretty low on the social ladder. [...] Also I’m afraid that British Pakistanians reject non-western identities as a result of internalised racism or something. [...] Wherever I go there is something wrong about me.” (Jamie, age 25, student, Bethnal Green, London, 2019)

The combination of transphobia and other mechanisms of exclusion such as racism seems to exclude the people affected from all the resources made available by their respective communities. Jamie neither has full access to LGBTI resources, nor really to the resources provided by the Pakistani community in London. In fact, it is the combination of these two stigmas that exclude them from LGBTI spaces because of racism and from Pakistani spaces because of transphobia.

In these examples, it is the intersection between the minority position of the trans person and class, gender or race discrimination that generates a twofold exclusion: first from cities and their resources, as a trans person, and then from trans resources because of a masculinity that is excessively internalised (gender), too loud or too unsophisticated (class and race), or else because of a process of exoticisation (race). This dual exclusion prompts some people, like Ella, to choose the risk of spending time in non-protected spaces over the feeling of discomfort she experiences in community spaces, but pushes others, like Ludo or Ruth, to further isolate themselves. Intersectionality provides an analytical framework through which this phenomenon of dual exclusion can be understood. Trans bars and clubs and trans group spaces, which in fact account for a large proportion of the metropolitan resources created by and for trans people, thus appear highly situated in social relations of gender, class and race. A bourgeois normativity, founded simultaneously on possession of activist knowledge and gendered norms of sociability and behaviour, deeply embedded in a white and bourgeois *habitus*, restricts access to these resource spaces. In Paris, where the migrant trans population is more visible, festive spaces primarily intended for migrant women sex workers, like Acceptess-T’s monthly festival (*fiesta mensual*), coexist with trans spaces that are in principle intended for everyone: should this be interpreted as being caused by the excessive normativity of generalist trans spaces?

## Conclusion

Because of the access they offer to many useful resources throughout the transition process, cities are places that are prized by trans people. The spatial concentration of this population, a social and numerical minority, allows the construction of protected spaces and the provision of resources for group activities, leisure, culture, sports and healthcare. These resources make big cities attractive to trans people, who identify them as markers of potential tolerance. Moreover, they are seen by trans rights activists as stakeholders in redistributive justice, a condition of social recognition. However, the trans population differs in its take-up of these resources, suggesting that they are primarily enjoyed by people with the necessary means. These metropolitan resources seem to make cities attractive for all, but in reality do not appeal to everyone.

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