Twitter Thread by Kevin Ovenden



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The effort at anathematising @ALLIANCELGB by claiming that it "does not represent L, G or B people in no way shape or form" betrays a confusion that underpins a lot of the totalitarian moralism from some in this debate - and there is a debate. (1/14)

Beneath that is an overuse of the term "community" to the point where it means little and obscures a lot {banking, landlord and spying communities, anyone?}. The #LGB Alliance emerged precisely because a large number of people, including some Stonewall founders... (2/14)

tried to win an actually broader, more "representative" approach from that charity and not to lose focus upon the rights of same-sex attracted people. Stonewall refused, so an organisation was founded "representing" the spurned point of view and campaigning priorities. (3/14)

In none of this is there a claim to "represent" all or some proportion of LGB people. It is representing a *point of view* and commitment to specific charitable and political aims. It is Stonewall that is lazily claimed to be "the representative" of LGBT+ people qua LG... (4/14)

But even when SW did more align with more people and ostracised none, it was still a matter of political campaigning not representation of a community in the usual sense. There was no vote to appoint the "representatives". No structure of mass decision-making. (5/14)

A board won trust. But it was not a community as in the Anglican community, for example. Even there there are schisms and dissent from holding that the Synod on this or that question represents you or all Anglicans. True also of apparently absolutist Catholicism. (6/14)

It is not even like the Jewish community in Britain - a collection of actual communities with different models of communal life and ranges of both religiosity and politics. We are talking instead about groups of people with shared sexual orientation. (7/14)

The commonalities here are in the way those sexualities - gay and lesbian - have experienced overlapping discrimination and oppression leading to some shared interests in social and political change. Even then, there was not uniformity in identifying those interests. (8/14)

And there certainly was not when it came to pursuing them - how and even whether to - and what strategies and approaches to adopt. LGB Alliance represents a body of largely L, G or B people with broadly shared campaigning and (lower case p) political approaches and goals. (9/14)

There is nothing remotely wrong with that. It happens in other fields all the time. The anti-racist movements, the variegated women's movement with all its diversity and debates. What is wrong is saying that the only voice to be heard is that of Stonewall. (10/14)

That, and the wholly false claim that it represents LGBT+ people rather than a particular ideological view entailing positions that many of us find both radically unscientific and damaging to gay, lesbian and all sexual liberation and equality. (11/14)

That is why there is a debate and why the "no debate" mantra is totalitarian. It also reminds me of politicians of all stripes who say that their policy is representative because they have spoken to "the community leaders",
who're often self-appointed and unaccountable. (12/14)

We have seen over decades how that has often worked to suppress debate and dissent, and democracy itself. It's time to stop doing that. Some people must learn also that not agreeing with them is not violence, and that they don't have the power of excommunication. (13/14)

A coda: decades of struggle meant something akin to L&G "community infrastructure" was developed, echoing the women's movement. An issue now is people not pushing to create additional resources, but to dilute existing ones. Fight for more. Don't rob Peter to pay Paul. (14/14)