Twitter Thread by John Parkinson



John Parkinson
@profparkinson



Colleagues, we need to talk about the damage that endless zooming can do. Every day I see new opportunities to join in this or that online discussion or conference, and each invitation is becoming a burden 1/... #AcademicTwitter #AcademicChatter

For many of us, online conferencing is the main form of contact we have with others. But it's a stripped down form of contact which demands a particular focus and concentration. Colleagues tell me every day that it's more intense, and thus tiring, than IRL interaction 2/...

Communication is attenuated because many of the usual social and symbolic cues that tell us where we are, what our role is, how to interact and respond, are missing. This is especially awful if our interlocutors have their cameras switched off and we're talking into a void 3/...

But we also lose the rest and reset time between events. Instead of those precious minutes on a train to read, or a brisk walk between venues, even just a chat around the coffee pot, we are increasingly leaving one meeting to log on to another 4/...

We do so with no other backdrop than our own four walls, in one chair, glued to a screen, unable to reach out. Our symbolic and social worlds have shrunk. @PostEurope told me it's a form of torture, but that's literally true: a stress position we maintain for days 5/...

Some of us thrive in this world; a very large number of us do not. For those with small children this is having devastating effects on mental health; same goes for those living alone with little direct human contact; plenty of others are struggling. 6/...

We're in this position because we have generally tried to automate "business as usual", instead of rethinking how best to engage in an online world. But also because of our manic competitive environment, where we fail if we are not constantly sharing, hosting, promoting... 7/...

So, I have some requests, questions to ask before we propose yet another zoom meeting, yet another webinar...
(1) Do people really WANT it, or is it just you and me who think it's a good idea? Who haven't I heard from?
(2) Can it wait? is it really that important? 8/...

(3) How can we make it ok for colleagues to say "No, I can't, this is too much"?
(4)can this be handled asynchronously? Maybe a wiki or forum will allow you to gather reactions at people's convenience rather than forcing them in front of the camera 9/...

...and if it really IS important, wanted, and works best synchronously:
(5) how can we allow time out, time away, time to think, time to go for a walk, time to make a coffee, time to play with the kids, time to be more fully human than a zoom meeting allows 10/...

and no, that doesn't mean a jumping jacks break every 10 minutes! That means NO MEETING. Schedule down time around events. Let people come and go.)
There must be experts on this out there: would be glad to learn. 11/END.