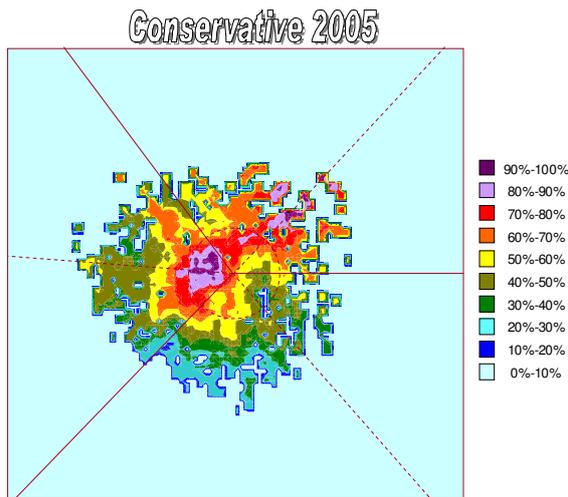




Tipping Point or Falling Down? Democracy and the British General Election 2010

The Conservative Party

As much a result of Tony Blair's success as of the efforts of successive leaders of the party to 'return to traditional values', in 2005 support for the Conservatives was focussed primarily in its traditional, aged heartland.



This values profile of supporters has little resonance with the rest of the electorate and is much more likely than average to fail to turn out to vote.

With heavy skews into Settler – after almost 30 years of decline in Settler values – the key heartland that all parties depend on for core votes is disappearing.

Even more disturbing for Tory strategists is the high concentration at the centre of the map among the 50% of the population that is least likely to vote for any Party.

The high concentration of support among Settlers means that the issues that drive them to support the Conservatives will be national security and law and order – perennial issues for the Tory Party and their faithful.

The problem is that these issues do not stimulate the same emotions in the broader culture. Any platform based on them is likely to elicit emotions best summarised by Party Chairman Tessa May at their conference when she acknowledged many people's impression of them as the 'nasty party'.

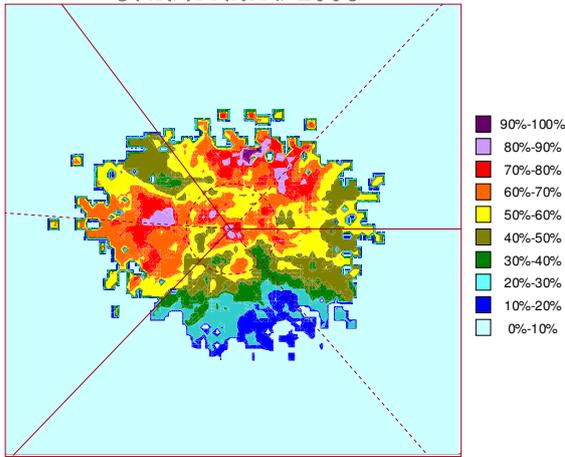
That impression would have been reinforced by many supporters who were highly concentrated at the outer boundary edges between the Settlers and the Prospectors. This is an area of values that is based on a deeply rooted sense that power is important and that one should take whatever measures necessary to achieve it. Power isn't something to be negotiated, it is something to seize and exercise.

Business is better at this type of orientation and behaviour, and by definition many people who identify themselves with business will identify themselves, in their heart, with the Conservative Party.

The continuous reshuffling of the Party leadership in the Blair years was a natural extension of this desire for power – by whatever means. The merry-go-round of William Hague, Michael Howard, Ian Duncan-Smith and David Cameron was a search not for a leader to represent the electorate, but for a winning formula to hold power once more. While this is a laudable desire for politicians and in business, it is not in the mainstream thinking of the British population – though there are pockets where it is more acceptable. So while the values of their heartland supporters needed to be listened to, Tory strategists also needed to find a way to connect to the wider electorate if they were to have any chance of carrying their core supporters back to power.



Conservative 2008



By 2008, the reshuffles have ended and a new face is in the media spotlight.

The Settler heartland has been retained – the traditional Shire Tories who had lost their favourites Ian Duncan-Smith and David Davis but maintained their allegiance to the party, which now had a media-friendly Blair-lite leader in opposition to the heavyweight Gordon Brown.

The battle lines are drawn and the fight for the crucial Prospector heartland is beginning.

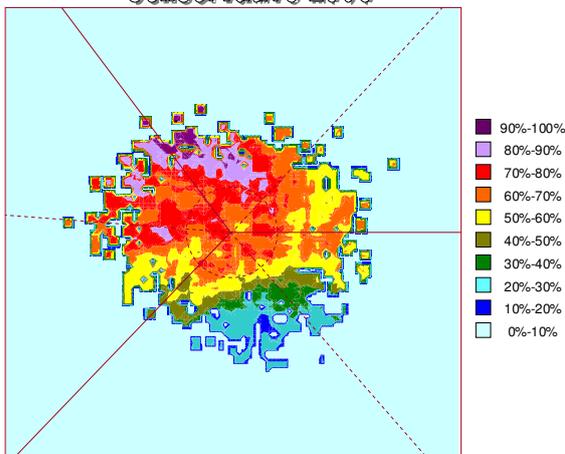
The ethical Pioneers are nonplussed by the whole direction the politics of personality is taking. The personality of Blair has been an issue but hasn't

broken along party lines for the most part - most Labour heart-landers loved him and the Conservative heartland had a respect for his stance on national defence and crime.

But among the Pioneers his appeal was limited. Though Cameron's Blair-lite appeal worked for the Prospectors and Settlers, very few people with Pioneer values supported the Party. He would need to do something to take these people with him.

Conservative party strategists made many efforts over the following year to make David Cameron more appealing to this values set. Rightly, the media was sceptical, but mildly hopeful, that the changing policies and strategies would work and the Conservatives would become a more positive force in British politics.

Conservative 2009



By 2009, the Crunch is in full bloom. The bankers have been bailed out and 'the end of boom and bust' is seen to be a hollow boast as worldwide economic systems totter on the brink.

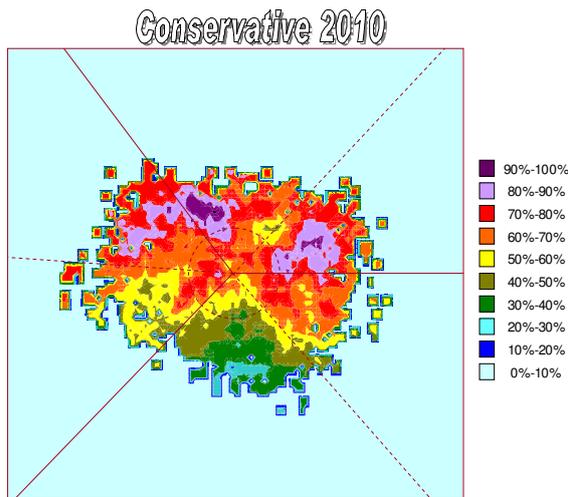
The Conservative heartland is now looking more and more representative of the general population with concentrations in all three Maslow Groups.

Interestingly, as the culture is retreating from the go-go optimism of the last 30 years, the Conservatives have maintained and increased their presence in the new area of growth – the overlap area between the Prospectors and the Settlers. This bodes well for them and paints a very different picture from 2005.



The 'Power Politics' position in the values set of the British population is being colonised by the opposition and not the government of the day – something seen in Blair's heyday. The Brown years have seen Labour relinquish this positioning to the Conservatives. This may be the deciding factor in the coming year.

With this heartland appeal, the Conservatives don't have to be as ethical or socially conscious in their campaign style as the other two main parties. Their heartland will not punish them as harshly for the sometimes unethical behaviour exhibited in the 'rough and tumble' of election year politics.



Election is in the air and positionings are firming up. The Conservatives have a heartland profile that covers most bases in all three Maslow Groups, except the leading edge Pioneers.

The core of their support lies in two distinct regions - one in the Prospector/Settler overlap, and the other firmly in the former heartland of the working class Tory vote that is disenchanted with the government as it stands.

With the cultural changes that have occurred over the last five years the Tory heartland has become more representative of the population than the Labour position – a vast change from 2005 when they were virtually unelectable, because of their desperation to satisfy the needs of their traditional core supporters.

The Blair years are but a fond memory in the minds of many of the electorate and hard times lie ahead. The Tory heartland knows that and wants a leader that tells them so. The fact that the job of the Queen's Loyal Opposition is precisely to counter the government's arguments makes the task of saying this very easy. Every time the government tries to make the burden appear less, it plays into the hands of Tory heartland supporters.

The Conservatives can run a very negative campaign – visions of a 'dirty campaign' arise when looking at this map – and use each and every misrepresentation and innuendo-laden remark to encourage their supporters to vote – the stuff of 'real' General Election campaigns. To be very clear about this – Labour cannot run the same type of campaign and expect to get their more Pioneer and up-market supporters out to vote.

What is sauce for the goose is not sauce for the gander.



A Context for the General Election 2010

If the General Election were held tomorrow, Conservative heartland supporters are much more likely to vote Conservative than are Labour heartland supporters to vote Labour.

- Whereas only about 2/3 of Labour heartland supporters would vote Labour back into power, 80% of Conservative heartland voters would vote the Party of their heart.

In the Labour Party section it was noted that only 59% of Labour heartland supporters would welcome (score 6 or 7 on a 7 point scale) a Labour overall majority.

- When looking at how the Conservative heartland would view a Conservative overall majority, this increases to over 73% - almost 3/4 of their most closely self-identified supporters.

The profile shows that heartland support is stronger in the 'power-oriented' regions of the map and less pronounced in the more 'libertarian' regions of the map allied with the Pioneers.

This combination of quantitative and qualitative factors demonstrates that the Labour core is much softer than the Conservative core. This could have a significant impact on both Labour and Conservative turnout on election day - after a hard, bruising campaign that just might turn very negative.

We have noted that only 14% of the population as a whole would welcome (6 and 7 on a 7 point scale) an overall Labour majority. The figure for the general population welcoming an overall Conservative majority is over 50% higher – but still only a miserable 22%.

This indicates that although the Conservative party is set to hold onto their core support - more than Labour is likely to hold onto theirs - and the population as a whole favours the Conservatives over Labour, the vast majority of people do not welcome either party.

This is not about another Party appearing to steal the thunder of the two major Parties. Rather it is a general dissatisfaction with both of them – 'a pox on both your houses!'. The minority parties have even less support for forming an overall majority.

This indicates a general malaise and a dislocation from the whole process of government and rule from Westminster. No matter who wins the next election, the overwhelming majority of the British population will not be happy with the victor.

As laid out previously in the Labour section, 11% of the population would welcome a hung Parliament, and Labour heartland voters are similarly inclined, with 10% of them welcoming this result.

The figure for the Conservative heartland is much smaller – less than 4% of them would welcome a hung Parliament.

A hung Parliament would cause despair (1 or 2 on a 7 point scale) to 33% of the British population and 39% among the Labour heartland, indicating a propensity among supporters of the minority Parties to be less despairing of a hung Parliament.

This impression is firmed up when Tory heartland supporters are found to be the most despairing of this result. 52% of Conservative heartland supporters would despair of a hung Parliament.



- Taking the two ends of this spectrum indicates the Conservative vote is more likely to come out on election day, especially if the media starts banging the drum about a hung Parliament. They will not be voting tactically – they will be voting for a Conservative overall majority.

There is little difference between the Maslow Groups in their propensity to feel one way or the other about a hung Parliament – though there is a tendency to despair as age increases. Older people want a government and an opposition, more so than young people. This is borne out in other research that shows the younger under 35s, especially, are more disengaged from Westminster politics than the population as a whole.