

Brexit has created a new political landscape

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I am looking forward to the euro elections. That is not something I expected to write, but it's true. After yesterday they will tell us more about the mood of the electorate in England, and we need to know.

There has been great deal written on the local election results, and a lot of nonsense said. I see only two trends.

The first is a backlash against austerity. Parties in office, but most especially the Tories in local government, who had no excuses to offer for the cuts they made, were going to suffer yesterday. This local dimension may explain a small part of Labour's failing and potentially a slightly bigger part of the Conservatives.

The second was very obviously Brexit. Maybe the Brexiteers did not vote on Thursday. We will have to find out. But the Remainers appear to have done so. And they punished the Tories not for mishandling Brexit, but for trying to do it at all. And much the same can be said for Labour.

The LibDem vote cannot be explained by anything but Brexit.

The Green vote can be. But I have little doubt at all that their strong pro-Remain position helped. I noticed councils where Green was directly replacing Labour in significant numbers as a result. Brexit was being rejected and a new left chosen in its place.

To pretend that Brexit has not created the new defining issue of our time is just naive: that is what it is. And with the two old main parties plus the Brexit party all chasing a minority of electors who want to leave the EU there is bound to be room for an upsurge in support for smaller Remain parties. And that is exactly what happened.

I suspect that come the euro elections this will be what we will see. And once people believe voting for small parties makes sense and delivers results - as it did yesterday - moulds can be broken. Because those smaller parties are actually offering the chance to vote for something whereas the main parties and Farage are all offering votes

against, and nothing in its place, the chance that change can be sustained is high. Negativity is deeply unappealing at the end of the day.

I have more hope. Not on Brexit itself: I remain near certain that will happen and most likely without a deal because of combined Labour and Tory intransigence. Instead my hope is for the chance that Brexit will ultimately be pivotal in creating a new political landscape. And we need it.