

# Is there really another Brexit negotiation going on beh...

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Prof John Weeks, with whom I have been cooperating on the [Progressive Economy Forum](#), has published an article on Brexit on [Brave New Europe](#).

All of it is worth reading. His first two themes are that Remainers got it wrong to suggest the major gains from being in are economic: he suggests they are political.

Then he suggests that the negotiation we are seeing is a charade between Barnier, who wants to be President of Europe, and various Tory leadership contenders.

And third, he suggests that behind the scenes there is another quiet negotiation going on that aligns the interests of capital so that we will Remain. His suggestion is that the power of German manufacturing and the City of London will require it in the end. This is what he has to say on the issue:

*While the faux negotiators provide entertainment for the many, an agreement unfolds for the few out of the public eye. Two goals guide the behind the scenes negotiations. First, German manufacturing enjoys a massive trade surplus with Britain and aims to keep it (about £130 billion). Second, British banking capital, “the City”, seeks to maintain its status as Europe’s largest financial and money laundering centre.*

*As even casual observers know, no important EU policy achieves agreement without support of the German government, and most important ambitions of the German government become EU policy. Analogously, under the present UK government no Brexit arrangement is likely to be agreed or not agreed without the approval of the City. An agreement, nominally between the British government and the European Commission, will be reached incorporating those two goals. This will occur perhaps by the end of this calendar year but certainly before the Article 50 deadline of 29 March 2019.*

*While we mere mortals fret over the Barnier/Davis cave shadows, the Brexit deal gathers pace out of sight, carried on by the eponymously anonymous bureaucrats in London, Brussels and Berlin. This deal will have little to do with the illusory “soft” and “hard” clichÃ©s and much to do with the financial and industrial interests that*

*manipulate European politics.*

Is he right? Can it really be the case that the political process is so captured that a charade can be presented to the public whilst behind-the-scenes an entirely separate negotiation takes place? I am not entirely convinced. Equally, I think it's an interesting argument that is worth watching precisely because if true then we all might as well pack up and go home and I should spend my time doing something else.