



## Qui détient les clés de l'article 50 ?

*Simon Usherwood, University of Surrey*



To listen to British politicians, Brexit will be shaped by whatever the UK decides to do: just as soon as there is an agreement between the different bits of government, then the UK will simply make it happen.

Unfortunately, the reality of the situation is very different, as many British politicians and commentators will discover when Theresa May finally submits notification to begin Article 50 proceedings for the UK to leave the EU.

When member states agreed to introduce Article 50 with the Lisbon Treaty they did so to reassure countries like the UK that the EU was not a coercive system, but a cooperative one, with anyone free to leave should they so wish. However, it was also clear that leaving should not mean that those remaining should be compromised by this.

The result is that Article 50 puts most of the power in the hands of the EU27. Once notification has been made by the UK, the EU27 have to reach a broad agreement on what they offer to the UK as a deal, and the European Parliament has to agree as well. Given the very diverse interests across the continent, the UK will find it very hard indeed to shape the outcome.

This has two important consequences. The first is that the UK is trying to do as much as possible before notification, precisely because that is when it has most influence. However, it has been hampered by the UK's lack of clarity over its objectives.

The second consequence is that the EU risks getting the outcome they least prefer: a rejection of their offer by the UK at the end of it all, a 'hard Brexit', if they don't take enough account of British interests. European leaders might do well to remember this as they try to find a text that works for them.

