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Get ready to welcome the new normal: Paying to see the doctor and expulsion of foreign workers; Tyneside-born academic Paul Benneworth, who works in the Netherlands, on what we can expect to see as Brexit unfolds

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I've finally made it back home for the first time since the summer holidays. Our second child's fraught arrival rooted us to Holland for half a year, but a work meeting in Manchester provided the pretext for the much-longed for return.

It's also of course the first trip home since Theresa May has pushed the big red Brexit button. But with the exception of a stream of jingoist tabloid headlines from the gutter press, there's precious little appears to have changed.

St James' Park was mesmerising and it's fascinating to see the Science City tower blocks springing up on the Newcastle Brewery site. The pint of Jarl from the Durham Brewery tasted as fresh and tasty as ever and I'm looking forward to my habitual wander along the stunning Tyneside coast.

But I fear this serenity is a 'phoney war' before the 'shock and awe' of Brexit is unleashed upon us.

There's a Great Repeal Bill that's heading to Parliament and it's looking like being a Trojan Horse to unleash the wildest neoliberal fantasies of the hardest-line Tory fringe.

If we have to privatise the NHS to get a trade deal with America, then we'll be told we're 'taking back control'. Feeding our children with genetically-modified American meat is a patriotic liberation from Brussels' nannying interference.

The Tories' strategy was buoyed by George Osborne's successful austerity trick with bare-faced denials of obvious unwelcome truths. Disabled people were forced to work, unemployed people were starved to death, and we were told that it was the only way to save the country's finances.

The deeper Osborne cut, the more the UK bled, but no one called out the government on the terrible price of their false promises. We've forgotten what a peaceful life was like under Labour, and persuaded ourselves that we deserve falling pay, zero-hours contracts and the permanent stress of economic uncertainty.

Beware the patriotism peddled by scoundrels at home and abroad

That was the real success behind Osborne's austerity trick: making us poorer and persuading us to believe that it's all our fault. And we run the risk that this trick will be pulled on us all over again if we don't remember what life was like before Brexit started making it bad.

There's a lot of things going to happen that a decade ago would have seemed unacceptable and we're going to be told that this is normal, that this is fine. We're going to have our European Citizenship tom up, lose the protections that it brings, and told that we've been freed.

I remember when raw sewage was pumped out into Cullercoats Bay, and we're going to be told pretty soon that that's all normal again.

WATCH IN FULL: Theresa May's statement as she triggers Article 50 and Britain

We're going to be told that it's normal to have to pay to see the doctor, to expel foreign teachers and NHS workers, to have visas for city-breaks to Europe.

We've recently seen sabre-rattling threatening of our European allies and cash thrown at prestige projects like a new Royal Yacht and refurbishing Buck House. These are standard distraction strategies of authoritarian regimes as a smokescreen for the thousand small changes demanded by Brexit extremists.

Article 50 is reversible but only if there is popular realisation of the personal damage we will all suffer in leaving the EU.

Unless someone challenges this and says this is not fine, then the Brexit vandals will succeed in pulling off their massive con-trick.

We must challenge every concession that makes our lives worse and blames Brussels, rather than the government's intransigent extremism. We need to say with one voice that this is not fine and that it's not a price worth paying if we want to preserve the unique charms of our North East of England.

North East born **Paul Benneworth** is a senior researcher at the Center for Higher Education Policy Studies at the University of Twente in the Netherlands.

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