



Navigating National and Local Statecraft: Local Council 'Bankruptcy' in England Since 2018

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Local council finances in England made international headlines following a wave of 'bankruptcies' including Birmingham, Croydon, and Woking since 2018. Local councils going bust is a matter of vital national public interest for the UK economy, polity, and society. The 317 local councils in England spend over £130 billion of public money annually and provide more than 800 essential services to over 57 million people and directly employ over 1 million workers. Critically addressing this pressing issue of local governance, public services, and politics, the lecture examines this contemporary fiscal crisis of the local state in terms of the local statecraft of actors under particular conditions navigating constrained autonomy in the highly centralised governance and funding system in England. Local council capacity has been severely reduced and risks have multiplied under austerity since 2010. National government's imposition of austerity and the difficult questions of resource allocation following the 2008 crash compelled local councils into making savings and generating new income sources. National government failed to overhaul a funding system that intensifies local government's challenges and reduces their margins for error amidst greater risk. National not local government statecraft is failing properly to resource the vital and democratically accountable role of local councils for people and places.

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Pike's research interests, publications and research projects are focused on the geographical political economy of local, regional and urban development and policy. He has undertaken research projects for the OECD, UN-ILO, European Commission, UK Government and national, regional and local institutions. He is a Fellow of the Regional Studies Association and the UK's national Academy of Social Sciences.



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