Daniel (Danny) Pye

PhD Researcher in Social Policy, School of Applied Social and Policy Sciences, Ulster University

pye-d@ulster.ac.uk | Belfast, Northern Ireland | ORCID: 0009-0008-0359-2669

LinkedIn | Ulster University research profile

RESEARCH PROFILE

Critical criminologist researching waste crime, illegal landfilling and the regulatory conditions that enable environmental offending. Doctoral research at Ulster University, funded by a Department for the Economy studentship, examines how illegal landfilling in Northern Ireland occurs and how it can be better detected, prevented and disrupted. Brings 14 years' investigative experience on corruption, organised crime and environmental crime across Asia, the Middle East and Latin America, with established expertise in open-source intelligence, corporate network analysis and geospatial methods.

Research interests: Green criminology; environmental and waste crime; corporate environmental crime; organised crime; environmental regulation and governance; regimes of permission; opportunity structures; nodal governance; environmental justice.

EDUCATION

PhD Social Policy, Ulster University Sept 2026 – present

School of Applied Social and Policy Sciences. Expected submission: August 2029.

- **Thesis:** Understanding and Disrupting Illegal Landfilling in Northern Ireland
- **Supervisors:** Dawid Stanczak; Kris Lasslett
- **Funding:** Department for the Economy (DfE) Postgraduate Researcher Scheme studentship
- **Planned methods:** Investigative ethnography; documentary and regulatory analysis; interviews; environmental and dumping data; ECOSINT; GIS

MA Transnational Organised Crime (Distinction), Staffordshire University 2016 – 2019

- **Dissertation:** Built and analysed a Neo4j graph database of Cambodia's elite, linking *okhnas* (honorific business tycoons), senior military officials, land holdings and company records.

NCTJ Diploma in Newspaper Journalism, Sheffield College 2009

BA (Hons) Politics and International Relations with a Year in Japan, University of Kent 2004 – 2008

Year abroad: Musashi University, Tokyo (East Asian Studies), 2006 – 2007.

RESEARCH METHODS AND TECHNICAL SKILLS

Qualitative	Semi-structured and elite interviewing; documentary and regulatory analysis; FOI/EIR requests; source development in high-risk settings
Quantitative and data	Python (pandas, NumPy); SQL; Excel; web scraping; dataset construction and cleaning; data visualisation
Network analysis	Graph databases (Neo4j, Cypher); corporate and beneficial-ownership mapping; elite and organised crime network analysis
Geospatial	QGIS; satellite imagery analysis and remote sensing; geolocation
Financial and corporate	Company registries and accounts; supply-chain tracing; financial flows linked to environmental crime
OSINT / ECOSINT	Open-source, social-media (SOCMINT) and environmental-crime (ECOSINT) intelligence; verification; digital security and risk assessment
Research management	Cross-border team leadership; editorial and research protocols; budget management; legal review and pre-publication risk

SELECTED INVESTIGATIONS AND IMPACT

Illegal cattle ranching and killings in the Arariboia Indigenous Territory, Brazil 2024
Mongabay · Investigations Editor: shaped, edited and published

- Year-long investigation using satellite imagery, spatial analysis, fieldwork and a purpose-built database. Revealed banned commercial cattle ranching inside the territory amid a pattern of killings of Guajajara people.
- Cited by Brazilian authorities in a federal operation (2025) that removed 1,000–2,000 head of illegal cattle.

Carbon, logging and mining concessions in the Democratic Republic of Congo 2022
Mongabay, with El País · Investigations Editor: commissioned, shaped, edited and published

- Revealed 15 logging concessions, covering millions of hectares, allegedly reassigned illegally in 2020 and converted to carbon credit projects without required consultation.
- Linked Chinese-owned firms in northern DRC to illegal Afrormosia logging and to military-protected mining polluting water with mercury.
- Fed into an EU legal review that informed suspension of the illegal titles; used by the DRC's official logging auditor and cited by CITES authorities.

***Fields of Gold*: commodities trading, money laundering and state capture in Moldova** 2020
Mongabay · Investigations Editor: commissioned, shaped, edited and published

- Used hundreds of unreported court records, emails and corporate data to show a near-US$1 billion commodities empire relied on money laundering, tax avoidance and state capture.
- Follow-up put a former US ambassador on the board of Moldova's dominant grain exporter under scrutiny over links to a sanctioned oligarch.

Hostile Takeover: The Corporate Empire of Cambodia's Ruling Family 2016
Global Witness · Role: Consultant investigator

- Data-led investigation using records scraped from the Cambodian Ministry of Commerce registry to map the business interests of Prime Minister Hun Sen's family.
- Linked family members to 114 private domestic companies with combined listed capital exceeding US$200 million, spanning most key sectors of the economy.
- Led the national news agenda, prompted a public response from the ruling family and stimulated national debate on inequality and state capture.

Investigative series: the Try Pheap Group and Cambodia's rosewood trade 2014 – 2015
The Phnom Penh Post · Role: Co-lead reporter, with May Titthara

- Two-year series, including *The Calculus of Logging* and *Where Logging's an Art*, using a leaked conservation report, licence data, interviews, high-risk fieldwork and a visit to Try Pheap's rosewood museum.
- Showed how a company linked to tycoon Try Pheap allegedly used a dam-reservoir clearing permit as cover to move more than 16,000 cubic metres of protected rosewood, against an estimated 1,000 cubic metres in the reservoir zone: timber worth an estimated US$300 million.
- Follow-up traced exports through leaked port data and secured an exclusive interview with the tycoon. 2015 SOPA Honourable Mention.

PROFESSIONAL RESEARCH AND INVESTIGATIVE EXPERIENCE

Investigations Editor, Mongabay May 2019 – July 2025

- Established and managed a global investigations desk. Designed a masterfile-based documentation system, editorial workflow, and protocols for risk assessment, security management and communications.

- Led cross-border reporting teams investigating nature crime, from commissioning through publication, promotion and legal defence. Negotiated pro bono legal support from the Vance Center for International Justice.
- Contributed supporting research and reporting to dozens of investigative projects. Outcomes include arrests, criminal prosecutions and contributions to policy change.
- Built partnerships with OCCRP, ICIJ, the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, Earthsight, Climate Whistleblowers, El País, the Guardian, the BBC, CNN and The New Humanitarian.

News Editor, Voice of America Khmer Service — Apr 2016 – Apr 2019

- Edited and fact-checked daily output. Shaped features and investigations with a distributed team across Phnom Penh and Washington, DC.

Consultant (Investigations), Global Witness — Oct 2015 – Oct 2017

- Investigated the illicit business holdings of Cambodia's ruling family through scraped corporate registry data. Lead output: *Hostile Takeover* (2016).

The Phnom Penh Post — Sept 2013 – Dec 2015

Deputy National News Editor (Jul – Dec 2015); Senior Reporter (Sept 2013 – Jul 2015)

- Used FOI and other methods to expose: illegal logging by the Try Pheap Group (see above); the reappointment of a police commander convicted of human trafficking; forced labour in a 'shadow' factory; collusion between the prime minister's bodyguard unit and a Chinese conglomerate; and the inactivity of the national Anti-Corruption Unit.

Reporter and Editor, Asia and the Middle East — 2011 – 2013

- Reporter/Editor, *The Irrawaddy* (Yangon, 2013); Copy Editor/International Editor, *The Jakarta Globe* (2011 – 2012); Correspondent, *The Daily and Sunday Telegraph* (Damascus, 2011); Associate Editor, *Syria Today* (Damascus, 2011).
- Freelance bylines: *Financial Times*, *Nikkei Asian Review*, Al Jazeera, the *Guardian* and *New Internationalist*.
- Reporting on communal violence in Myanmar, plantation-linked paramilitary violence in Sumatra, the Syrian uprising, the burning of Ban Mae Surin refugee camp (37 deaths) and suspicious transactions in the Myanmar jade trade.

AWARDS AND HONOURS

SOPA Honourable Mention, Excellence in Investigative Reporting (Group B) — 2015

Series on the Try Pheap logging empire, The Phnom Penh Post (with May Titthara).

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS AND EXTERNAL ROLES

Member, Board of Advisors, Chemical Trespass Initiative — Oct 2026 – present

Member, British Society of Criminology, Green Criminology Research Network — Current

LANGUAGES

English (native); **Irish** (beginner)

REFERENCES

Available on request.