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Power and Legitimacy in Trade-Environmental Governance: The Contestation of CBAM and EUDR Within and Beyond Europe

Friday 5 June 2026 09:00 (1h 30m)

The European Union's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) and Regulation on Deforestation-Free Products (EUDR) are among the most contested policies to emerge from the European Green Deal (2020). While both seek to extend the EU's climate and environmental objectives beyond its borders –one by introducing due diligence obligations on importers, and the other by imposing a carbon price on imports –they have triggered intense political, legal, and normative contestation both within the EU and globally.

Theoretically, the panel advances new ways of understanding unilateralism as a dynamic and relational mode of governance, centred on expectations, discourse, and dissensus. By tracing how contestation unfolds both *within* and *beyond* Europe, i.e., across EU institutions, member states, industries, and trade partners, the papers seek to reconceptualise the EU's recent environmental-trade policies not as those of a singular "norm exporter," but as embedded in a dynamic web of interdependencies and resistance. Methodologically, the panel demonstrates the promise of Q-methodology and large language models (LLMs) for studying complex, multi-scalar governance processes and discursive dynamics. Normatively, the contributions highlight enduring challenges of fairness, inclusivity, and justice that define contemporary global politics.

In short, the panel asks whether International Studies is ready for a world in which global norms emerge not through multilateral consensus, but through polycentric and deeply contested governance. By treating the EU's trade–environmental policies as a laboratory of this transformation, the panel speaks directly to BISA 2025's call for new thinking, new directions.

Track Classification: International Political Economy Working Group