

Consumption- vs. Production-Based Emission Policies

Michael Jakob^{a,b}, Jan Steckel^{a,b,c}, Ottmar Edenhofer^{a,b,c}

(a) Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research PO Box 601203, 14412 Potsdam, Germany

(b) Mercator Research Institute on Global Commons and Climate Change (MCC), Torgauer Str. 12-15, 10829 Berlin

(c) Technical University of Berlin, Department "Economics of Climate Change", Strasse des 17.Juni 145, 10623 Berlin

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Abstract

Emission leakage could potentially undermine the effectiveness of unilateral climate policies. Significant emission transfers from developing to developed countries in the form of emissions embodied in trade have been interpreted as an indication of such leakage. In order to reduce leakage and provide an appropriate picture of countries' responsibility for global emissions, it has been proposed to attribute emissions on the basis of consumption instead of production. However, as one unit of imported emissions cannot generally be equated with a corresponding increase of emissions released to the atmosphere, putting a price on an externality equal to its social costs (e.g. by means of consumption-based emission pricing) is not optimal for emissions embodied in imports. Hence, we mandate considering a broad scope of trade measures to reduce leakage, in particular focusing on a few highly traded emission-intensive industries and exploiting the potential of export taxes to alleviate distributional concerns and political resistance. Finally, we argue that the optimal policy portfolio to address leakage may contain not only trade measures but also some form free allocation of emission permits as well as sectoral approaches.

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34 **1. Introduction**

35 Climate change constitutes a global problem: every unit of long-lived greenhouse gas (GHG)
36 emissions will result in an identical rise of atmospheric concentrations and subsequently global
37 warming, regardless of where it is generated. As a consequence, it is frequently asserted that global
38 externalities, such as greenhouse gas emissions, require global regulation in order to be effectively
39 addressed. The most salient example of this perspective can be seen in ‘Durban Action Platform’
40 established at the 18th Conference of the Parties (COP18) of the United Nations Framework
41 Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 2011, which calls for a global climate treaty to be
42 adopted by the year 2015.

43 However, such a global agreement seems rather unlikely to emerge in the near future. Therefore,
44 greenhouse gas emissions are currently regulated in a ‘fragmented climate regime’, in which
45 individual countries or regions pursue unilateral, largely uncoordinated efforts to reduce their
46 emissions (Hof et al. 2009). Perhaps the most prominent is the European Union’s emissions trading
47 scheme (EU ETS), which puts a cap on CO₂ emissions generated by energy-intensive industries, such
48 as the power sector or manufacturing, covering about 40% of EU emissions (Ellerman et al. 2010).
49 More recently, Australia has introduced a tax on CO₂ emissions (Jotzo 2012) and several developing
50 countries, including China, Mexico and South Korea, have implemented or announced their own
51 climate policies (Townshend et al. 2013).

52 While these developments may seem to be promising steps to reduce global emissions, an often
53 voiced concern is that in the absence of a global regulation, emission reductions in one region may
54 increase emissions in regions with less strict (or no) climate policies (van Asselt and Brewer 2010).
55 This process – referred to as leakage – could offset at least some part of the emission reductions
56 achieved by climate policy (Section 2). A related concern is that countries that have committed to
57 reducing their emissions can meet their obligations by importing carbon-intensive goods and services
58 from countries with laxer climate policies without actually reducing global emissions (Peters and
59 Hertwich 2008b). Recent studies have demonstrated substantial and rapidly increasing emissions
60 associated with emissions generated in the production of goods and services exported from
61 developing (non-Annex I) to developed (Annex I) countries (Davis and Caldeira 2010, Caldera and
62 Davis 2011, Peters et al. 2011). This has been interpreted as evidence of ‘outsourcing’ of emissions
63 from developed to developing countries (Pan et al. 2008) (Section 3).

64 As a consequence, it has been suggested to shift the attribution of emissions from the current system
65 of territorial accounting, under which countries are regarded as responsible for emissions generated
66 within their national boundaries (so-called production-based accounting) towards emissions
67 associated with their consumption activities (so-called consumption-based accounting) (Peters and
68 Hertwich 2008b). By attributing emissions to final consumers, it is argued, a more appropriate picture
69 of responsibility is obtained by tracking a country’s actual ‘carbon footprint’ (Peters et al. 2009).
70 Furthermore, as consumption-based regulation of emissions reduces the incentive to import carbon-
71 intensive goods and services, it is seen as an appropriate way to reduce or even eliminate carbon
72 leakage (Pan et al. 2008). Consumption-based emissions regulation could be implemented by
73 domestic emission pricing (i.e. a carbon tax or emission trading system) combined with full border
74 tax adjustment (BTA), which charges the domestic carbon price on emissions associated with the
75 production of imported goods and services while reimbursing this price for goods produced
76 domestically but exported to other countries (Ismer and Neuhoff 2007). Thus, by ‘leveling the carbon

77 playing field' (Houser et al. 2008), the efficiency of domestic emission regulations is expected to
78 improve (Fischer and Fox 2011).

79 This overview paper provides a review of the literature on production- and consumption-based
80 approaches to regulate greenhouse gas emissions. We argue that the prominent assertion that
81 consumption-based attribution of emissions provides a more accurate account of responsibility for
82 global emissions and necessarily reduces emission leakage does not take into account the general
83 equilibrium implications that determine global patterns of consumption and production and hence
84 emissions (Section 4). In particular, we emphasize that the correct attribution of global emissions to
85 individual countries is more complex than what can be captured in either production- or
86 consumption-based accounts, such that none of these two accounting schemes can provide a full
87 picture of responsibility for emissions. We also highlight that there is no compelling reason to levy an
88 identical price on domestic and imported emissions, as would be the case under consumption-based
89 emission regulation, as avoiding the import of one unit of emissions is not equivalent to avoiding the
90 release of one unit of emissions to the atmosphere. Besides these insights from trade theory, we also
91 discuss the strategic dimension of measures aiming to regulate emissions embodied in imports
92 (Section 5) and their practical implementation (Section 6). Finally, we provide an overview of
93 alternative policies that have been proposed to reduce leakage (Section 7).

94 Our analysis provides the following main conclusions: First, neither production- nor consumption-
95 based pricing of emissions are optimal policies from a social welfare point of view. Second, while
96 consumption-based pricing of emissions can potentially reduce carbon leakage, it will not necessarily
97 do so. Third, trade policy can play an important role in reducing carbon leakage, but its actual
98 implementation can be expected to be fraught with serious practical problems, such as insufficient
99 knowledge of relevant effects and parameters and transaction costs. Fourth, trade policy does not
100 only constitute an economic instrument to influence trade partners to reduce their emissions, but
101 also entails a strategic component that has to be taken into account in policy design. Fifth, the
102 optimal policy portfolio to address leakage may contain not only trade measures but also some form
103 of free allocation of emission permits (such as grandfathering or output-based rebates) and linking of
104 emissions trading systems or expanded use of the CDM.

105 These findings suggest that while consumption-based accounts of greenhouse gas emissions are a
106 valuable complement to conventional production-based approaches as a diagnostic tool, their
107 prominent position in the current debate on how to reduce carbon leakage may be overstated.
108 Instead of focusing on consumption-based pricing of emissions and full border tax adjustment, a
109 broader scope of trade policies to reduce leakage, in particular focusing on few highly traded
110 emission-intensive industries and exploiting the potential of export taxes to alleviate distributional
111 concerns and political resistance, should be considered.

112 This paper proceeds as follows: Section 2 reviews the theory, empirical evidence and numerical
113 estimates of carbon leakage. Section 3 provides an overview of the literature on shifting from a
114 production- towards a consumption-centered perspective on emissions. Section 4 evaluates different
115 approaches to put a price on emissions from a trade-theoretical perspective and Section 5 analyses
116 trade measure from a game theoretical perspective, in which these policies are applied as strategic
117 rather than economic instruments. Section 6 discusses issues related to their practical
118 implementation and Section 7 provides of a brief overview of alternative policies to address carbon
119 leakage. Section 8 concludes.

120 **2. Climate Policy in Fragmented Regimes**

121 In the absence of a global agreement to mitigate climate change, several countries or regions have
 122 implemented or announced unilateral climate measures. In the political arena, the concern that such
 123 unilateral emission reductions could – to at least some extent – be offset by increasing emissions
 124 elsewhere is frequently used as an argument against such policies (Branger and Quirion 2013). The
 125 literature on unilateral climate policies has demonstrated three mechanisms through which such
 126 leakage could occur, summarized in Table 1.

127 The first channel of emission leakage is commonly referred to as ‘energy-market leakage’ or ‘supply-
 128 side leakage’. As adoption of climate policy (or strengthening of existing policies) in one part of the
 129 world translates into decreased demand for fossil fuels, the latter’s world market prices can be
 130 expected to decline (Edenhofer and Kalkuhl 2011). These lower prices, in turn, will result in increased
 131 consumption of fossil fuels in other countries or regions and hence raise emissions, offsetting some
 132 of the reductions achieved in the country implementing the policy (Sinn 2008). Second, climate policy
 133 increases the relative domestic price of energy- and emission-intensive goods in the country or
 134 region implementing the policy, which will lead to increased demand for imports of these products
 135 from the world market (Markusen 1975). As a consequence – unless they have imposed a
 136 quantitative ceiling on their emission – production of these goods in other countries rises, resulting
 137 in additional emissions (Siebert 1979). This mechanism, which also includes the relocation of
 138 industries emphasized in the ‘pollution haven’ literature (Taylor 2005, Branger and Quirion 2013), is
 139 frequently termed ‘specialization leakage’ (Jakob et al. 2013). Finally, the third channel of emission
 140 leakage is free-riding on the provision of the global public good of emission reductions, i.e. ‘free-rider
 141 leakage’. As it is well known from the public good literature, voluntary provision of a public good
 142 commonly is counteracted by decreased provision by other actors (Samuelson 1954). That is, in a
 143 strategic setting in which countries decide upon their emissions based on mitigation costs and
 144 avoided climate impacts, a reaction to unilateral emission reductions by one country or region can be
 145 expected to increase others’ emissions (Carraro and Siniscalco 1993, Barrett 1994).

146

Channel of Leakage	Economic Mechanism	Related Articles
Energy market leakage	Reduced demand for fossil fuels in one region reduces world market price and encourages consumption in other regions.	Sinn (2008), Edenhofer and Kalkuhl (2011)
Specialization leakage	Higher price of emission-intensive goods in one region encourages imports from other regions.	Markusen (1975), Siebert (1979)
Free-riding	Increased contribution of the public good ‘mitigation’ by one region encourages free-riding in other regions.	Carraro and Siniscalco (1993), Barrett (1994)

147 **Table 1: An overview of the channels of leakage, the economic mechanisms driving them, and related literature.**

148

149 Quantitative estimates of how global GHG emissions could react to regional regulatory changes
 150 mostly rely on numerical modeling. Even though for most industries energy accounts for only a small
 151 fraction of total costs, such that leakage could be expected to be a rather minor concern (Hourcade
 152 et al. 2008), computable general equilibrium (CGE) models suggest that leakage could seriously

153 undermine unilateral climate policies by offsetting up to 50% of domestic emission reductions (Felder
154 and Rutherford 1993, Babiker and Rutherford 2005, Elliott et al. 2010). One possible explanation for
155 this observation is that not industry relocation but the energy market channel accounts for the
156 largest share of emission leakage (Böhringer et al. 2010, Burniaux et al. 2010, Fischer and Fox 2012a).

157 In a recent model comparison of 12 CGE models Böhringer et al. (2012c) find rather moderate
158 leakage rates between 5% and 19%, with a mean value of 12%. However, these figures are to some
159 extent sensitive to the employed model structure and assumptions. For instance, leakage rates
160 increase by about one third if not only energy-related, but also process-related greenhouse gas
161 emissions are taken into account (Bednar-Friedl et al. 2012), and by about one half if a trade model
162 with heterogenous firms is employed (Balistreri and Rutherford 2012). The highest estimate of
163 leakage rates in the literature is obtained by Babiker (2005), who uses an oligopolistic model with
164 increasing returns to scale production technologies. For some parameter values, he finds leakage
165 rates as high as 130%, i.e. unilateral climate policy would then even increase global emissions. On the
166 other hand, leakage rates can be significantly lower if technology spill-overs to non-participating
167 regions are taken into account (Bosetti et al. 2008, Golombek and Hoel 2004, Maria and van der Werf
168 2008). Some recent contributions have demonstrated that leakage can even become negative, either
169 due to a fuel switch in countries carrying out climate policies which decreases the global price of
170 natural gas and thus incentivizes substitution away from coal towards less carbon-intensive natural
171 gas in third countries (Bauer et al. 2013, Curras et al. 2013), or due to higher demand for capital in
172 the countries performing abatement, which lowers capital supply in third countries and reduces their
173 output and emissions (Carbone 2013, Winchester and Rausch 2013). Further, different assumptions
174 on which countries are members of the climate coalition and the ambition of their reduction efforts
175 result in different leakage rates. For instance, Boeters and Bollen (2012) show that leakage rates are
176 the lower the larger the coalition of countries carrying out to emission reductions.¹

177 Recently, a number of empirical studies have examined location of energy intensive industries,
178 finding that such industries are indeed more prevalent in regions that are more abundantly endowed
179 with energy resources (Michielsen 2013) or feature lower energy prices (Gerlagh and Mathys 2011).
180 This lends support to the hypothesis that higher energy prices due climate policy could result in some
181 relocation of these industries (Sato and Dechezleprêtre 2013). On the sectoral level, a number of
182 case studies have assessed the impact of carbon pricing in the EU ETS on particular industries. In a
183 review of this literature, Zhang (2012) concludes that “[a]nalysis of cement, iron and steel, aluminium
184 and refinery sectors does not reveal carbon leakage for these trade-exposed carbon intensive sectors
185 during the first phase of the EU-ETS” (p.41).²

186 Other empirical studies take a different perspective, asking in how far increased trade – in contrast to
187 climate polices – has contributed to a geographical shift of polluting industries (e.g. Grossman and
188 Krueger 1993, Antweiler et al. 2001, Levinson 2010). In the context of climate policy, this approach
189 has recently been taken up in the analysis of ‘weak carbon leakage’ which – in contrast to ‘strong

¹ Note that models also differ in their sectoral aggregation. While these differences matter crucially for leakage rates on the sectoral level, their role on the macro-economic level is significantly less important (Alexeeva-Talebi et al. 2012, Fischer and Fox 2012, Kuik and Hofkes 2010).

² However, the author concedes that “the insights from such analyses are of limited value for the future, because the EU ETS will become a much stricter scheme with a rising share of auctioning on the one hand and a decreasing yearly amount of the overall allowances to be handed out to industries on the other hand [...]” (p.41).

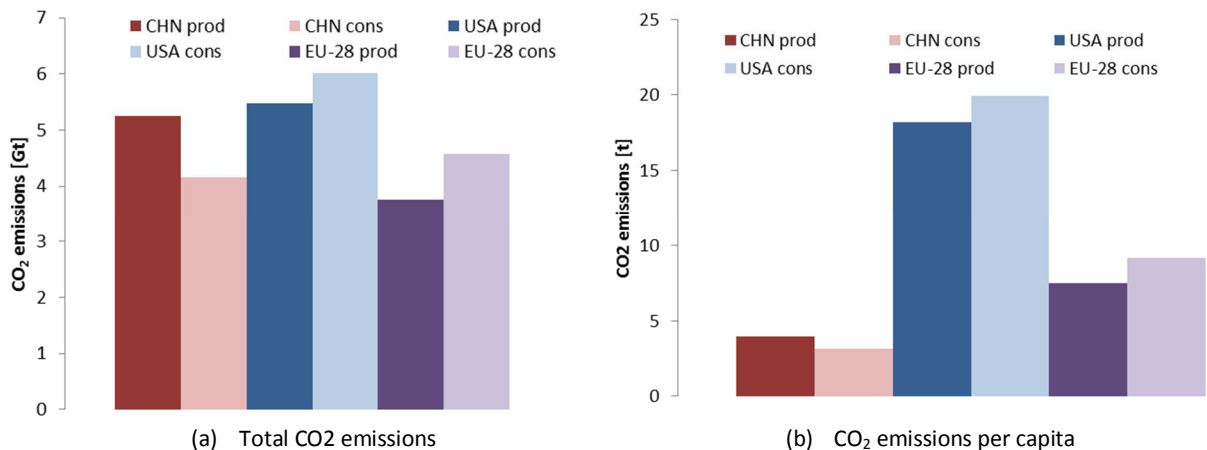
190 leakage' –denotes increases of emissions in third countries for reasons unrelated to climate policy
 191 (Davis and Caldeira 2010, Peters and Hertwich 2008b, Peters et al. 2011). The implications of this line
 192 of research will be discussed in the following section.

193 **3. Production- and Consumption-Based Climate Policies**

194 The UNFCCC attributes GHG emissions to countries based on geographic origin, i.e. on where these
 195 emissions are released (production-based accounting). Alternatively, it has been proposed to put
 196 more emphasis on emissions related to a country's consumption activities (consumption-based
 197 accounting), in order to attribute emission to consumers based on their 'carbon-footprint' (Peters et
 198 al. 2009). Consumption-based emissions can be calculated from production-based emissions by
 199 subtracting emissions generated for exports and adding emissions generated abroad to produce
 200 imports. The difference between emissions embodied in import and exports – commonly labeled as
 201 'net emissions embodied in trade' (NEET) – can be estimated by combining data on trade flows with
 202 multi-regional input/output tables that provide information on the carbon-intensity of imports and
 203 exports and are also able to quantify trade flows in intermediate goods (see Peters et al. 2012 for a
 204 review).

205 Applying these methods for the year 2004 reveals that approximately one fifth of global emissions
 206 are traded, embodied in goods and services (Davis and Caldeira 2010, Peters et al. 2012). Annex I
 207 countries typically are net importers of emissions, with the US (0.7 GtCO₂/a) , Japan (0.3 GtCO₂/a)
 208 and the UK (0.25 GtCO₂/a) as the top net importers of emissions (Davis and Caldeira 2010). On the
 209 other hand, non-Annex I countries typically 'export' emissions, with China being the single most
 210 important exporter (Davis and Caldeira 2010, Peters et al. 2012). Differences between national
 211 consumption- and production-based emissions can be significant: Emissions in the US increase by
 212 10.9% when accounting for them on the consumption-based instead of the territorial level, while
 213 those of China would decrease by 26.4% (Peters et al. 2012). A very similar picture emerges from
 214 Figure 1, which displays consumption- and production-based emissions for the US, the EU28 and
 215 China for the year 2008. Considering the growth of emission transfers, Peters et al. (2011) find that
 216 net carbon transfers from developing (non-Annex I) to developed (Annex I) countries have increased
 217 four-fold between 1990 (0.4 GtCO₂) and 2008 (1.6 GtCO₂). In the same period, CO₂ emissions
 218 embodied in traded goods increased from 4.3 GtCO₂ (20% of global emissions) to 7.8 GtCO₂ (26% of
 219 global emissions).

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223

224 **Figure 1: Production- and consumption-based CO₂ emissions for China, the US, and the EU28. Panel (a) displays national**
225 **emissions, panel (b) per-capita emissions. Calculated using the method described by Lenzen (2001) based on GTAP8 data**
226 **(Narayanan 2012).**

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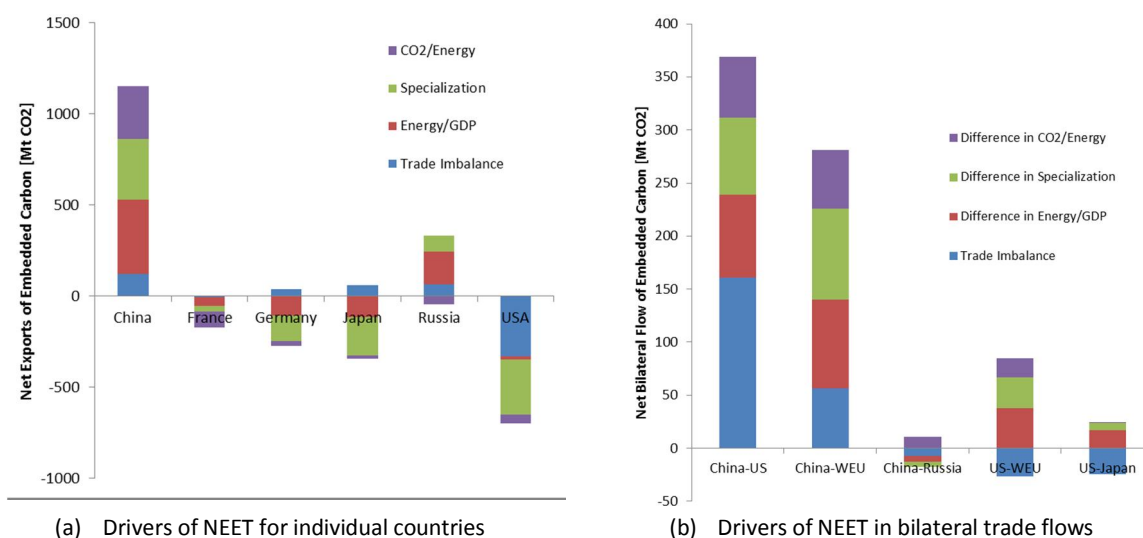
228 Given this sizable extent of NEET, indicating the substantial fragmentation of production-patterns
229 and supply chains in the global economy (Davis et al. 2011), there is a wide-spread concern that
230 regional climate policies might be rendered ineffective by ‘outsourcing’ of emissions and that this
231 process might undermine international climate negotiations (Peters and Hertwich 2008a). In
232 particular, the observed increase of NEET has frequently been interpreted as a sign that an increasing
233 amount of emissions are moving beyond the bounds of regulation, resulting in ‘weak carbon
234 leakage’. In the literature two definitions of weak carbon leakage are used interchangeably (e.g.
235 Peters and Hertwich 2008a, Davis and Caldeira 2010): first, increases of emissions in third countries
236 due to reasons unrelated to climate policy. Second, an increase of emissions embodied in traded
237 goods. As we will argue below, these two definitions are in general not equivalent, such that
238 attributing emissions in a manner that could be employed as a basis for policy making is more
239 complex than what can be derived from emission accounts.

240

241 Following the interpretation that increases in NEET can directly be interpreted as causal for
242 increasing emissions in third countries, Shui and Harriss (2006) conclude that US-China trade has
243 increased global emissions by about 720 million tons. In a similar vein, Aichele and Felbermayr (2012)
244 observe that during the first commitment period of the Kyoto protocol, signatories’ NEET increased
245 by more than the reduction of their domestic (production-based) emissions, concluding that the
246 Protocol has had no effect on reducing global emissions. As a consequence, various policy proposals
247 have been brought forth to regulate emissions on a consumption instead of a production basis. It is
248 argued that such schemes could reduce or even eliminate carbon leakage (Peters and Hertwich
249 2008a, Pan et al. 2008) and result in a more equitable distribution of responsibilities to reduce
250 emissions (Pan et al. 2008, Weber et al. 2008) by lowering developing countries’ reduction
251 commitments (Peters and Hertwich 2008a and 2008b, Pan et al. 2008, Shui and Harriss 2006), which
252 would make the latter’s participation in an international climate agreement more likely (Peters and
253 Hertwich 2008a and 2008b, Pan et al. 2008, Weber et al. 2008). Some authors have also argued in
254 favor of consumption-based accounting in order to allow consumers in developed countries to more
255 actively control for their emissions, in line with the ‘carbon footprint’ on the personal level (Peters et
256 al. 2009). These recommendations from the academic community have been picked up by the UK
257 House of Commons (2011) proposing that the UK should employ consumption-based accounting in
258 parallel to production based accounting in order to “acknowledge our responsibility”.

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261

262 **Figure 2: NEET for individual countries (a) and bilateral trade flows (b), decomposed into (i) carbon intensity of energy**
 263 **production, (ii) energy intensity of GDP, (iii) trade specialization, and (iv) trade balance. For instance, 45% of the**
 264 **observed imbalances in carbon trade between the US and China can be attributed to China's current account surplus,**
 265 **while trade specialization accounts for only about 20%. Adopted from Jakob and Marschinski (2013).**

266

267 However, the interpretation that NEET can be regarded as an indication of direct increases in global
 268 emissions – and hence as a measure of the importer's responsibility – has recently been questioned
 269 by some authors. Using a decomposition (shown in Figure 2), Jakob and Marschinski (2013)
 270 demonstrate that a country can be a net exporter of embodied emissions for several reasons: first,
 271 because of a relatively high carbon intensity of energy production. Second, due to relatively a high
 272 energy intensity of GDP (i.e. the amount of energy employed to produce one unit of GDP). Third, due
 273 to trade specialization in carbon-intensive products. Fourth, because of a current account surplus.
 274 From this observation they argue that an understanding of how these factors drive imbalances in
 275 carbon trade is required in order to attribute changes in global emissions to individual countries or
 276 regions. The trade-theoretic rationale behind this assertion will be considered in the following
 277 section.

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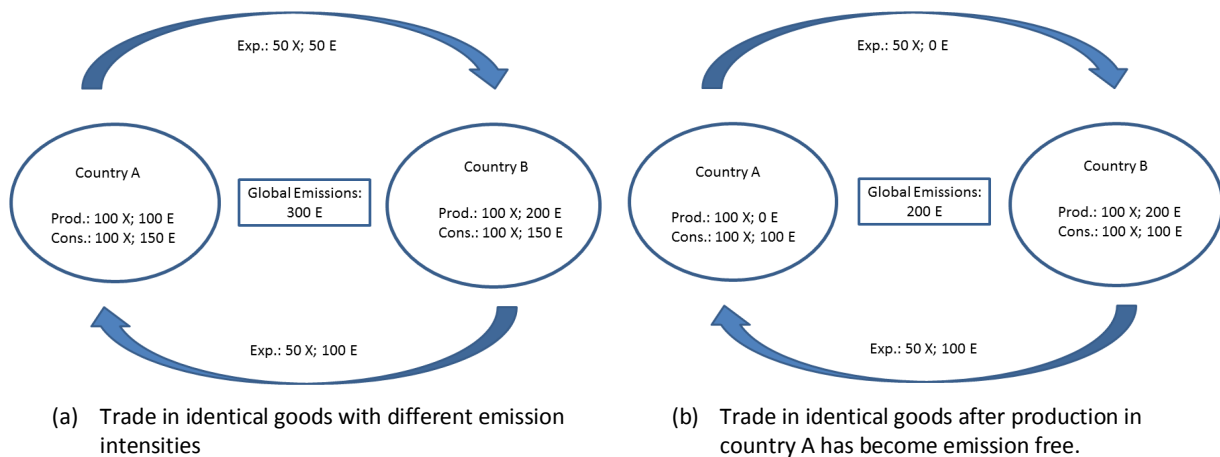
280 4. Emissions Pricing From a Trade-Theory Perspective

281 Jakob and Marschinski (2013) argue that the effect of trade on emissions can only be evaluated in
 282 the light of counterfactuals, i.e. by asking what trade partners' emissions would be in the absence of
 283 trade. This perspective emphasizes that in order to assess the impact of trade on global emissions, it
 284 is not sufficient to compute emissions generated for the production of traded goods. Instead, in
 285 order to attribute emissions one has to take into account general equilibrium effects determining the
 286 shifts of production and consumption patterns as a response to a change in a country's emission
 287 trade balance.

288 A simple example, displayed in Figure 3a, illustrates this line of reasoning. Consider two countries A
 289 and B, each producing 100 units of an identical good X and exporting half of their production to the
 290 other country (this corresponds e.g. to a trade in varieties model à la Krugman 1979 or a reciprocal
 291 dumping model à la Brander and Krugman 1983). Let both countries be identical on all accounts
 292 except their emission intensity (i.e. the amount of emissions E generated to produce one unit of X),

293 which we assume to be twice as high in country B than in A (and normalized to one on A). Then,
 294 country A would be found to be a net importer of 50 units of E from country B, putting its
 295 consumption-based emission account at 150 units of E (i.e. 100 units of domestically produced E,
 296 plus 50 units of NEET). However, A's imports of X from B cannot be said to be the causal factor for an
 297 increase in global emissions. If A were to withdraw from trade, its consumption-based emissions
 298 would decline from 150 to 100 units, but B's emissions – and hence global emissions – would remain
 299 entirely unaffected. Further, suppose country A were to introduce a new technology that would
 300 permit it to produce good X free of emissions, as shown in Figure 3b. Then, A's production-based
 301 emission account would drop by 100 units (from 100 to 0), but its consumption-based account by
 302 only 50 (from 150 to 100). This can be explained by the fact that A's NEET have increased by 50 units,
 303 namely from 50 to 100, due to a reduction of its exported emissions. From the observation of
 304 increased NEET in A, one could be tempted to conclude that the emission reduction in A has partly
 305 been offset by leakage and only resulted in a decrease of global emissions by 50 units. Yet, such a
 306 conclusion would clearly be mistaken, as the reduction of emissions in A has not increased territorial
 307 emissions in B, and resulted in an actual reduction of global emissions of 100 units (from 300 to 200
 308 units).

309



310

311 **Figure 3: Differences between consumption-based emissions and global emissions for the case of two countries A and B**
 312 **producing a single identical good X. Countries are assumed to be identical in all aspects except their emission intensity.**

313

314 These thought experiments can also be extended towards more practical examples: for instance,
 315 under a consumption-based approach to regulate emissions the EU could employ dirty technologies
 316 to produce exports without affecting its emission account. Conversely, if China were to introduce an
 317 ambitious policy to reduce the emission intensity of production, the consumption-based emissions of
 318 the US would decline significantly due to a reduction of emissions embodied in imports from China.
 319 In both cases, consumption-based accounts do not provide a direct link between a country's actions
 320 and changes in global emissions that could be employed to assess this country's responsibility for
 321 emissions. This is confirmed by the finding that despite being substantial net exporters of emissions,
 322 China's as well India's emissions would hardly change if these countries were to withdraw from
 323 international trade and instead meet their consumption entirely by domestic production (Peters et
 324 al. 2007, Dietzenbacher and Mukhopadhyay 2007). That is, even though substantial amounts of

325 emissions are generated to produce exports, imports save a comparable amount of emissions that
326 would arise if these countries were to produce the imported goods domestically, such that trade
327 cannot be regarded as a major driving factor of rising emissions in these countries.³

328 Efficient regulation of emissions requires that the latter are attributed in a way such that changes in
329 emission accounts directly correspond to changes in global emissions. In this case, the socially
330 optimal outcome can be obtained by putting a price on emissions equal to their social costs (Pigou
331 1920). Under a global regime, production- and consumption-based pricing of emissions would result
332 in identical outcomes (Steckel et al. 2010). In a fragmented regime, in which only some actors have
333 polices that put a price on emissions in place, consumption-based pricing of emissions is equivalent
334 to a production-based policy combined with a full border tax adjustment, which charges the
335 domestic price on emissions associated with the production of imported goods and services while
336 reimbursing this price for goods produced domestically but exported to other countries (Elliot et al.
337 2010, Monjon and Quirion 2010). As highlighted by Markusen (1975), such measures to tax imports
338 or exports, respectively, cannot directly put a price on emissions in other countries, but can only
339 indirectly affect foreign producers or consumers by influencing world market prices. The optimal
340 policy to regulate trans-boundary emissions can then be obtained by a combination of production-
341 based emission pricing and a tariff on imported goods (Hoel 1994 and 1996, Golombek et al. 1995).
342 Extending Markusen's (1975) model, Jakob et al. (2013) demonstrate that the effect of a change in
343 one country's imports on its trade partners' emissions arise from the interaction of three factors:
344 first, the reaction of world market price to increased or decreased import demand. Second, the
345 reaction of foreign producers to a change in the world market price by shifting their production
346 between exported and domestically consumed goods. Third, the emission intensity of exports
347 relative to the emission intensity of production for the domestic market. This demonstrates that the
348 correct attribution of emissions is more complex than what can be derived from either production-
349 or consumption-based accounts. It also implies that in general the intuition that the Pigouvian rule of
350 putting a price equal to its social costs on an externality cannot be applied to emissions embodied in
351 trade in a straightforward manner (Yonezawa et al. 2012), such that full BTA – and hence
352 consumption-based pricing of emissions – does not constitute an optimal policy (Jakob et al. 2013,
353 Tsakiris et al. 2012, Yonezawa et al. 2012). The basic intuition behind this result is that avoiding the
354 import of one unit of emissions is not equivalent to avoiding the release of one unit of emissions to
355 the atmosphere. Instead, reducing imports of emissions will go hand in hand with general
356 equilibrium changes in production- and consumption-patterns that have to be included in the
357 computation of the applied tariff. This finding also refutes the – on first glance plausible – idea that a
358 policy that 'extends the perimeter of emission pricing' by subjecting a larger quantity of emissions to
359 a price signal, i.e. by means of consumption based emission pricing, necessarily reduces carbon
360 leakage. Such a policy would indeed eliminate one distortion, namely the differences in carbon prices
361 between the country applying the policy and the exported goods of the country against which the
362 policy is applied. However, it also creates a new distortion by introducing a wedge between the
363 carbon price for the latter country's exports and the one for goods produced for the domestic

³ This is a more general result of the fact that the factor content of trade – i.e. the amount of production factor employed to produce imports and exports, respectively – cannot be applied to assess counterfactual situations (Leamer 1980, Trefler 1995). That is, observing the amount of a production factor embodied in trade does not allow evaluating how exporters' production structure and hence their emissions would be in the absence of trade.

364 market. The overall effect of these two effects can be a decrease as well as an increase in carbon
365 leakage (Jakob et al. 2013).⁴

366 Several studies have numerically assessed the effects of BTA on leakage. Kuik and Hofkes (2010)
367 show that full BTA might considerably reduce leakage in the iron and steel industry, but only achieve
368 a modest reduction of the overall leakage rate. A recent comparison of 12 CGE models finds that BTA
369 would decrease leakage rates from on average 12 to 8% (Böhringer et al. 2012c). However, one
370 paper in this comparison exercise also highlights that among the policies analyzed, full BTA is not the
371 most cost-efficient way to reduce leakage (Böhringer et al. 2012b). These results reaffirm that full
372 BTA – and hence consumption-based emission pricing – does not constitute an optimal policy to
373 address emission leakage. However, they also show that in a fragmented climate regime some form
374 of trade measures are required to achieve cost-efficient mitigation. As highlighted by Jakob et al.
375 (2013), the socially optimal tariff would imply strong informational requirements on elasticities of
376 substitution in production and consumption as well as emission intensities of economic sectors even
377 in a highly stylized model. For this reason, it seems reasonable to extend the scope of analyzed
378 policies and consider a broad variety of trade measures that could be put into practice. For instance,
379 putting a tariff on imports of a few selected heavily traded emission-intensive products (such as
380 aluminum, steel, cement, or certain chemicals; see Monjon and Quirion 2010) can be expected to
381 reduce carbon leakage, as they are unlikely to be replaced by the production of goods with a higher
382 carbon-intensity abroad. Finally, trade measures might not only help to alleviate leakage through
383 their effect on relative prices, but might also have strategic repercussions on other countries’
384 environmental policies. This aspect will be discussed in the following section.

385

386 **5. Trade Measures as Strategic Instruments**

387 As has been demonstrated above, trade measures, including BTA, may have only a limited potential
388 to reduce emission leakage, in particular as they cannot effectively address leakage occurring
389 through the energy market channel (Weitzel et al. 2012; see also Section 2). Yet, it can be argued
390 that trade measures do not only have an economic impact on global patterns of production and
391 consumption by affecting relative prices, but also entail a strategic component (Helm et al. 2012).
392 From this perspective, a tariff can be regarded as a threat to punish other countries without (or with
393 less stringent) climate policies, inducing them to implement climate policies of their own (or
394 strengthen already existing policies). For the case of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that
395 Deplete the Ozone Layer, some authors have identified trade sanctions as an important tool to
396 induce participation (Benedick 1998). For the case of climate policy, Winchester et al. (2011)
397 conclude that BTA is “a costly method to reduce leakage, but may be an effective coercion strategy”
398 (p.20). In order to pose such an incentive, trade measures must fulfill two conditions: first, they must
399 impose sufficiently high costs on the country against which they are employed to make it worthwhile
400 to incur additional mitigation costs in order to escape the punishment (Barrett 2011); second, they
401 must benefit the country imposing the tariff, such that the threat is credible (Kalbekken and Hovi
402 2007).

⁴ As shown by Jakob et al. (2013), the possibility that border measures could also increase leakage had been overlooked by previous studies, which either assume that countries are fully or that there is only one polluting sector (e.g. Markusen 1975, Copeland 1996, Elliot et al. 2010).

403 In a game theoretic model, in which countries decide to either join a coalition that sets abatement
404 levels in a way to maximize its members' joint payoff, or remain outside the coalition and perform
405 abatement at their business-as-usual level, Barrett (1997) shows that trade sanctions accompanied
406 by a minimum participation clause to coordinate government behavior can contribute to achieving
407 universal participation in the agreement and the socially optimal level of abatement. In a similar vein,
408 using a calibrated multi-regional inter-temporal growth model, Lessmann et al. (2009) find a
409 significant potential for trade sanctions to participate in a climate coalition with a tariff rate of 1.5%
410 to 4% on imports from non-participating countries being sufficient to induce full participation.⁵
411 Finally, Weitzel et al. (2012) use a CGE model to analyze how different schemes to put a price on
412 emissions embodied in imports pose incentives to join the climate coalition. From their policy
413 baseline, in which only Annex-I countries are assumed to adopt climate policies, they find that with
414 full BTA, energy exporters would prefer being in the coalition, while significantly higher import tariffs
415 would be required to make participation attractive for China and an aggregate of other middle
416 income countries.

417 However, the above models do not allow for the possibility that countries against which tariffs are
418 employed impose countermeasures (i.e. 'retaliate'). Tsakiris et al. (2010) employ a model of two
419 large open economies that can set each of two policy instruments under consideration – a price on
420 emissions and a tariff on imports – either cooperatively (such that their joint welfare is maximized) or
421 non-cooperatively (in which case each country independently aims at maximizing its welfare). They
422 find that regardless of whether they cooperate on emission taxes or not, countries will opt for free
423 trade if they cooperate on tariffs, but implement tariffs if the latter are chosen non-cooperatively.
424 Keen and Kotsogiannis (2011) demonstrate that in a setting in which transfer payments are restricted
425 the globally Pareto-optimal policy consists in applying different carbon prices in different countries in
426 combination with import tariffs. The intuition behind this result is that poor countries benefit more
427 than rich ones from lower mitigation burdens arising from lower carbon prices, and tariffs can be
428 used as an imperfect substitute for transfer payments in order to shift revenues between countries.

429 To sum up, from a strategic perspective countries may employ trade measures as a complement to
430 their environmental policies in order to influence other countries' behavior. In reality, the tariffs
431 available to policy-makers may be restricted by either international trade agreements in order to
432 prevent that they are applied as a protectionist tool to further the interests of specific industries
433 (Baldwin and Evenett 2009). Moreover, practical considerations, such as availability of relevant
434 information or ease of applicability also need to be taken into account. For this reason, the following
435 section focuses on the practical implementation of such trade measures.

436

437 **6. Implementing Trade Measures to Address Carbon Leakage**

438 Perhaps the most heavily discussed issue regarding the actual implementation of trade measures to
439 accompany environmental policies is compatibility with international trade law. As has been pointed

⁵ Note that in Barrett (1997) and Lessmann et al. (2009) the tariff is independent of the carbon content of imported goods but only depends on whether a country participates in the coalition. It hence should be regarded as a trade sanction rather than a carbon tariff or border tax adjustment (see Section 4). A similar perspective is provided by Turunen-Red and Woodland (2004), who emphasize the role of tariff reform as an incentive to compensate countries for the costs of environmental policy reform.

440 out in Section 4, moving from a production- towards a consumption-based system of emission pricing
441 can be achieved by means of full BTA, in which the domestic emission price is levied on emissions
442 'embodied' in imports (i.e. emissions that were generated directly or indirectly for the production of
443 the imported goods or services), while for exported products domestic firms are reimbursed costs
444 paid to cover emissions prices (e.g. an emissions tax or the costs of tradable permits). In general,
445 countries' leeway to regulate trade is closely limited by the World Trade Organization (WTO).
446 However, Art XX of the General Agreement of Trade and Tariffs (GATT) permits exceptions from this
447 general principle if they are undertaken for the "conservation of exhaustible natural resources if such
448 measures are made effective in conjunction with restrictions on domestic production or
449 consumption" and "[s]ubject to the requirement that such measures are not applied in a manner
450 which would constitute a means of arbitrary or unjustifiable discrimination between countries where
451 the same conditions prevail, or a disguised restriction on international trade" (GATT 1947, see Perez
452 2005). Another possibility to justify putting a price on emissions embodied in imports is the provision
453 of GATT Article II:2(a), which permits to impose "a charge equivalent to an internal tax [...] in respect
454 of the like domestic product or in respect of an article from which the imported product has been
455 manufactured or produced in whole or in part" (GATT 1947, see also Pauwelyn 2007).⁶

456 Against this background, it has been pointed out that – even though WTO legality is eventually only
457 established in the form of case law once a Panel to settle a concrete dispute has reached a decision –
458 there indeed seem to be ways to impose BTA without violating the stipulations of the GATT
459 (Bhagwati and Mavroidis 2011). In any case, this requires that measures are adopted in a way that
460 does not discriminate against importers, either in favor of domestic firms, or in favor of firms from a
461 third country. Ismer and Neuhoff (2007) argue that the so-called 'best-available technology'
462 approach, which calculates emission contents assuming that the country against which BTA is applied
463 uses environmental standards and production technologies equivalent to those required within the
464 area in which the BTA is applied, would stand the highest chance to be regarded as non-
465 discriminatory. Yet, BTA might be politically contentious, as countries against which such measures
466 are applied might not acquiesce to them but instead seek retaliation by raising their own tariffs or
467 technical barriers to trade (Bhagwati and Mavroidis 2011, see also Section 5). Furthermore, it seems
468 likely that countries against which BTA is applied could challenge free allocation of emission permits–
469 which is common practice in e.g. the EU – as giving an unfair competitive advantage to domestic
470 firms (de Cendra 2006).

471 An additional reason why BTA might face severe political opposition stems from the adverse effects
472 they might have for people living in poor countries. For instance, Mattoo et al. (2009) estimate that if
473 high income countries were to cut their carbon emissions by 17% by 2020 relative to their 2005 level,
474 China manufacturing exports would decline by about 21%, and those of India by about 16%. In a
475 similar vein, Böhringer et al. (2012b) show that BTA would reduce carbon leakage and increase cost
476 efficiency, but also shift the costs of emission reduction towards countries that do not participate in
477 the climate coalition, such that equity concerns might mandate against putting this policy into
478 practice. Arguably, equity concerns as well as political resistance could be alleviated by opting for a
479 jointly agreed system of export taxes. While export taxes (in the exporting country) are equivalent to
480 import tariffs (in the importing country) in terms of their effect on relative prices, and hence on
481 leakage, the crucial difference is which country receives the associated revenues. An export tax might

⁶ Such adjustments are common practice e.g. value-added taxes that are levied on imported products once they enter the importer's national territory.

482 be politically less contentious, as its revenues accrue to the exporter instead of the importer, which
483 would entail fewer negative effects for developing countries (compared to BTA).⁷

484 Finally, consumption-based policies could involve significant transaction costs related to information
485 and monitoring (Dröge et al. 2009) and be subject to major uncertainties regarding the emission
486 content of traded goods (Sato 2013). Especially if BTA is applied on a basis that estimates emissions
487 embodied in traded product on the process-level, it might be a major challenge to obtain up-to-date
488 information on individual products' emission contents (WTO-UNEP 2009). In addition, such a system
489 could rather easily be undermined by 'creative accounting': for instance, foreign firms that generate
490 electricity for their production of goods and services (i.e. auto-producers) could claim that they
491 employ the relatively clean (e.g. hydro) part of their electricity portfolio for producing exports, while
492 the relatively dirty part (e.g. coal) is used for the domestic market. Dealing with such claims on a
493 case-by-case basis would involve considerable administrative costs and might not even effectively
494 address leakage (as e.g. the firm might split into two distinct legal units, one only using clean, the
495 other one only emission-intensive energy, without altering country-wide or global emissions).
496 Applying the 'best-available technology' approach discussed above, on the other hand, would not
497 only obliterate such incentives to game the system (Ismer and Neuhoff 2007), but would also reduce
498 foreign firms' incentives to switch to cleaner technologies. Complexity could be reduced by applying
499 BTA only in selected emission-intensive sectors that are heavily traded and hence at the greatest risk
500 of carbon leakage (Monjon and Quirion 2010).

501

502 **7. Alternative Policies**

503 Given that consumption-based emission policies are in general not socially optimal to address
504 leakage and in view of the considerable practical problems related to their practical implementation,
505 several alternatives to increase the efficiency of unilateral emissions reduction policies have been
506 proposed. These are summarized in Table 2 below.

507 First, one straightforward solution consists in awarding emission permits free of charge to emission-
508 intensive, trade-exposed industries. Through 'grandfathering', i.e. allocation of emission permits in
509 proportion to past emissions (Clò 2010). Even though the regulated firms are still affected by the
510 emission price, they will have an incentive to remain in business if their potential losses are covered
511 (Demailly and Quirion 2009). Further, if future emission permits are assigned by grandfathering using
512 today's emissions as a basis, firms will have fewer incentives to reduce their production in order to
513 receive more of these permits at a later date (Weitzman 1980). Consequently, if the respective
514 industries are less directly affected by a price on emissions, there is less incentive to increase imports
515 in these sectors, such that carbon leakage is reduced (Demailly and Quirion 2006). However, this also
516 reduces these industries' incentive to reduce their emissions, such that more abatement has to be
517 performed in other sectors, where it may come at a higher cost. That is, free allocation of emission
518 permits for these industries can reduce the negative side effects of the regulation (i.e. leakage), but

⁷ The perhaps most prominent example of measures to restrict exports is the voluntary export restraints implemented by Japanese car manufacturers in the 1980s to protect the US car industry from import surges. More recently, China has introduced a tax on exports of energy intensive industries, which can be expected to reduce Chinese emissions to at least some extent (Wang and Voituriez 2009).

519 will also at the same time to some extent undermine the objective for which the regulation was
520 introduced in the first place (i.e. achieving cost-efficient emission reductions).

521 Second, output-based rebates (OBRs) constitute a further means to distribute emission permits to
522 firms free of charge. Under such a rebate, the allocation given to a firm would be calculated by
523 multiplying the expected output of a given product with an industry- or sector-specific benchmark. In
524 contrast to an allocation exclusively derived from historical values (such as grandfathering), which
525 poses an incentive to reduce production and results in increased demand for imports and hence
526 leakage, OBRs only incentivize a switch to cleaner technologies (Quirion 2009). Therefore, OBRs
527 would likely be more effective in tackling leakage than free allocation of emission permits based on
528 past emissions. However, with OBRs the price signal for emission-intensive products is not fully
529 passed through to final consumers, such that the incentive to change consumption patterns towards
530 less emission-intensive products is reduced. This effect could raise the economic costs of achieving a
531 certain level of emission reductions above those of grandfathering (Quirion 2009). Comparing OBRs
532 to BTA, Fischer and Fox (2012a) point out that no unambiguous conclusion can be drawn regarding
533 the question which policy is preferable in terms of welfare or reducing leakage. Rather, the total
534 effect of both policies depends on the interplay between creating additional domestic emissions
535 versus avoiding emissions abroad (which, in turn, depends on the specific parameters of the model).

536 Third, instead of extending emission prices to exports from countries that have no (or less stringent)
537 emission regulations in place, pricing could be extended to certain key sectors of this country's
538 economy. One example is the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), which allows creating tradable
539 emission permits by abating emissions in e.g. the power sector or industry in countries that do not
540 have reduction commitments under the UNFCCC (i.e. non-Annex-I countries). As it puts a price on
541 emissions arising from emission-intensive sectors, Kallbekken (2007) argues that the CDM will
542 contribute towards leveling the carbon playing field and hence reduce leakage. Rosendahl and Strand
543 (2011), however, argue that by reducing emissions from sectors that are covered by the CDM but
544 increasing emissions from sectors which are not included, the CDM may in fact increase leakage.⁸
545 Beyond CDM, 'sectoral approaches' that limit emissions in some parts of an economy can be
546 employed to equalize emission prices across countries by allowing emission permits issued for the
547 respective sector to be traded within existing schemes, such as the EU ETS (Meckling and Chung
548 2009). Such sectoral linking of emissions trading systems has the potential to reduce as well as to
549 increase leakage, depending on which sectors are covered and on their relative emission intensities
550 (Marschinski et al. 2012). The above considerations reiterate and expand a finding that has been
551 central for the discussion on BTA in Section 4: extending emission prices to certain parts of an
552 economy (be it to activities covered by the CDM, a sectoral approach, or BTA on exported products)
553 removes one distortion (the original difference between the emission price between the now
554 covered activities in both countries), but at the same time creates a new one (the difference
555 between the emission prices between the sector that is covered by the policy and the one that is
556 not). Hence, emissions from activities covered by CDM, BTA, or a sectoral agreement will decline,
557 while emissions from unregulated activities can be expected to increase. The net effect can be a
558 decrease, but also a net increase in leakage.

⁸ Note that Kallbekken (2007) as well as Rosendahl and Strand (2011) abstract from further problems related to the CDM, such as additionality or monitoring and verification (see e.g. Schneider 2009, Wara 2007).

Measure	Description	Related articles
'Grandfathering' of emission permits	Reduces leakage in sectors profiting from the free allocation, but also reduces incentive to lower emissions.	Demailly and Quirion (2006 and 2008), Clò (2010)
Output-based rebates	Provides incentive to lower emission intensity of production, but not its volume.	Quirion (2009), Fischer and Fox (2012a)
Linking and expanded CDM	Puts price on emissions in certain sectors, but may increase emissions in other sectors.	Kallbekken (2007), Rosendahl and Strand (2011), Marschinski et al. (2012)

Table 2: Overview of alternative measures to address carbon leakage.

559

560

561 Finally, it is also conceivable that simply accepting that leakage occurs and compensating the
562 increase of emissions abroad by stricter domestic emission regulation could be a more cost-efficient
563 way to achieve a desired amount of global emission reductions than using BTA. Indeed, some studies
564 find that BTA increases the global costs of achieving a certain level of emission reductions, even if
565 abatement policies are implemented in only a subset of countries (e.g. Annex-I countries)
566 (Winchester et al. 2011). However, as outlined in Section 4, from a purely self-interested perspective,
567 the optimal policy to regulate emissions contains an import tariff. For this reason, trade measures
568 could still be desirable for individual countries or regions, as it shifts part of the costs of emission
569 reductions to others (Böhringer et al. 2012b).

570 In summary, a variety of alternative policies to consumption-based regulation could help to reduce
571 emission leakage. These policies need to be evaluated in a second-best setting that also takes into
572 account their revenue raising effect and the possibility to lower distorting taxes on e.g. labor or
573 capital (Fischer and Fox 2012b). Against this background, the optimal policy portfolio may consist of a
574 mix of trade measures in combination with free allocation of permits by means of grandfathering or
575 output-based rebates, and further efforts to extend emissions pricing via linking of emission trading
576 systems or the CDM.

577

578 8. Conclusions

579 This article has argued that emission leakage could potentially undermine the effectiveness of
580 unilateral climate policies. In particular, the findings of several recent studies that significant
581 emission transfers from developing to developed countries have been interpreted as an indication of
582 leakage. Hence, it has been suggested that regulating emissions on the basis of consumption instead
583 of production could reduce emission leakage and provide a more appropriate picture of countries'
584 responsibility for global emissions. However, as we have shown, in general one unit of imported
585 emissions cannot be equated with a corresponding increase of emissions released to the
586 atmosphere. Rather, one has to take into account general equilibrium effects that determine how
587 global patterns of production and consumption change as a response to an additional marginal
588 import of one unit of emissions (i.e. by not only considering the emissions content of exports, but
589 also the emissions replaced by imports). Thus, there is no one-to-one link between changes in a given
590 country's consumption-based emission account and global emissions. That is, production and
591 consumption-based emission accounts represent accounting devices, neither of which can directly be
592 employed to assign responsibilities for emissions.

593 Likewise, for the design of appropriate policies to address carbon leakage, the Pigouvian prescription
594 of putting a price equal to its social costs on an externality (e.g. by means of full BTA) cannot be
595 applied to emissions embodied in imports, as avoiding one unit of imported emissions is not
596 equivalent of preventing the release of one unit of emissions to the atmosphere. This also means
597 that the idea of 'extending the perimeter of regulation' by subjecting a larger amount of emissions to
598 a price signal does not necessarily result in less leakage. Such a policy levels the carbon playing field
599 between the economy applying such a policy and its trade partner's exported products. However, it
600 also creates an additional distortion between the emission price on the trade partner's exported and
601 its non-exported products. The result can be a decrease but also an increase in leakage. Numerical
602 analyses suggest that full BTA would indeed – at least moderately – reduce leakage. Yet, there is a
603 broad variety of policies that reduce leakage which may be preferable to BTA from a social welfare
604 perspective. For this reason, future research should examine a broad portfolio of trade policies. In
605 particular, a tariff on imports of highly traded emission-intensive industries, such as steel, aluminum
606 and certain chemicals, is likely to reduce leakage (as this production is unlikely to be replaced by
607 more emission-intensive one in the other country) and would be relatively easy to implement and
608 administer. As trade measures also have to be compatible with international trade regulations (e.g.
609 WTO law) and may entail strategic effects (e.g. retaliation), it seems advisable to aim at mutually
610 agreed upon measures. One salient example are export taxes, which have the same effect as import
611 tariffs with regard to leakage, but which permit the exporter to appropriate the revenues, which
612 could ease distributional concerns and alleviate political resistance.

613 Finally, in addition to trade measures, the literature has identified alternative policies to address
614 emission leakage. These include free allocation of emission permits through e.g. grandfathering or
615 output-based rebates, as well as linking of emissions trading systems or the expanded use of the
616 CDM. Arguably, the relative performance of these measures in a second-best setting will be highly
617 context specific, and it seems unlikely that one measure will be superior in any situation and on all
618 accounts. Rather, the optimal policy can be expected to consist of a mix of these policies.

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