Preface

My engagement with ACP-EU cooperation started as a narrow study on the legal scope of Article XXIV GATT in North-South regional trade agreements and has developed into a philosophical inquiry of the normative nature of ACP-EU relations, with law at the centre of its analysis. The transformative shift from preferential trade to reciprocity has been examined extensively in the literature of political science, international political economy and economics. While this body of scholarship is rich and diverse, ranging from the materialist focus of the rationalist theories to the normative approach of constructivism, I found the literature to be lacking in a critical perspective that conceives of regions as constituted through law. Analysing the regional agreements through a critical legal lens, and drawing insights from both the rationalist and constructivist schools of international political economy, this book offers a fresh perspective on the ACP-EU relationship.

When this project was in its most embryonic form, I was fortunate to secure generous funding from the Economic Social Research Council and the Worldwide University Network to carry out research on two separate field visits to South Africa. Not only am I grateful for the funding granted by the ESRC and WUN, but I am indebted to the Law Faculties at the University of Stellenbosch and the University of Cape Town for hosting me throughout my time in South Africa. In particular, I am eternally indebted to the kindness extended to me by Yolandi and her family. On these visits I was able to access texts that otherwise would have been difficult to obtain and meet with stakeholders in the Southern African region. I am particularly grateful to the Trade and Law Centre (tralac) in South Africa for their support to my research in 2010.

I have presented some of the ideas contained in this book in a variety of settings over the years. I would particularly like to extend my gratitude to my colleagues and friends in the GIFTA network. Through their constructive yet critical engagement with my work, I have been able to identify the conceptual gaps in the legal analysis and form better connections between the disciplines of law and political economy. I am especially thankful to Sangeeta Khorana, Maria Garcia and Jan Orbie for their support.

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