

European Union Property Law
From Fragments to a System

Eveline Ramaekers

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Ius Commune Europaeum

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

‘What is the topic of your doctoral dissertation?’

‘European Union property law.’

‘... Does that exist?’

‘That’s what I’m trying to find out.’

‘And you are dealing with the whole of property law? Isn’t that a bit too broad?’

During the four years I spent researching this thesis I was regularly asked these questions. Yes, it was a broad topic. And yes, it was possible to tackle it in four years. I undertook this research project, the aim of which was to establish the status quo of the EU’s *acquis* in the area of property law and to propose a framework for its further development, convinced that approaching the topic in its broadest sense was the best (and the only) way to get a complete picture of how much EU property law currently exists, where it is to be found, and whether or not it is developing in a consistent and coherent manner. I was fortunate to be able to build on substantial existing comparative research into the national property laws of the EU Member States, and on research into specific sub-areas of EU property law such as cross-border security rights on movable objects. Have I, by including all aspects of property law, been able to propose a complete system of property law to be developed at EU level? Far from it. There are so many decisions still to be made, so many gaps to fill in, so many bridges to be built. It would be impossible for one person to achieve all that in four years. But I do believe I have been able to provide a detailed overview of the existing EU property law and the fundamentals for its future development.

European Union property law does exist. It is still in its early stages but it is rapidly developing. It has been immensely exciting and fulfilling to be able to work on such a young area of law, where there is still so much to explore and develop. If, with this dissertation, I have been able to make even the most modest contribution to the development of this field I would be tremendously pleased.

During these four years I have had the pleasure to work with and be supported by some extraordinary people. At the ever-existing risk of overlooking

someone, I would like to thank a number of friends, family and colleagues. Let me start with my *Doktorvater*, Sjef van Erp. I thank him wholeheartedly for creating an academic environment in which cooperation, loyalty and warmth were key, and in which there was always room for even the most unusual ideas, and for Monday morning cake. I hope to remain a member of his *Doktorfamilie* for many years to come. I also want to thank Bram Akkermans who, with his lively and generous personality and his unrelenting questioning of my research has made me a better academic, and I have come to think of him as one of my dearest friends.

I am grateful for the friends and colleagues from Maastricht, Stellenbosch, Edinburgh, Leuven and many other places, who have made the past four years so memorable. I would like to name in particular my two paranymphs, Gary and Pim, and furthermore Anna, Willem, Tanja, Mariken, Nicole, Katharina, Jennifer, Dalindyebo, Nishara, Maartje, Ronia, Tristan, Wian, Ernst, Jill, Koen and many others.

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Last but not least, I want to express my deep-felt appreciation for the love and support of my wonderful fiancé, Rogier, who is always encouraging me to do and be better. Thank you for all the cups of tea, flowers, home-cooked dinners and many, many..... many hot chocolates.

Research for this study was concluded at the end of June 2012. Only minor alterations were made afterwards.

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