

EQUALITY, INEQUALITIES, DISCRIMINATIONS

INTERDISCIPLINARY DIALOGUE ATTEMPT OF LEGAL AND QUANTITATIVE KNOWLEDGE

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Equality is a rather mysterious notion and often surprises those who are contemptuous of easy divisions between theory and practice, knowledge and action, law and fact. A priori, equality is only a simple logical relationship, almost tautological, meaning identity or more precisely equivalence between two objects. However, in the reference to equality, social organisation seems to come together with production of knowledge. In this respect, paying comparative attention to the legal sciences and to the quantitative sciences is instructive. Law, economics, sociology, statistics, all these branches of knowledge, which at first sight do not readily lend themselves to comparison, have in common the reference to equality.

By proposing such a comparison through an interdisciplinary approach, this dossier will examine the way law and the quantitative social sciences envisage equality, inequalities and different forms of discrimination. It consists of eight articles written by colleagues, mainly lawyers, but also demographers, economists, practitioners and statisticians. It therefore gives us pause to reflect on the content attributed to these notions, on the way their reality is esta-

blished and constructed empirically and therefore, more generally on these forms of knowledge and how they are produced.

Does such an attempt to align legal and quantitative forms of knowledge not mean that we are succumbing to an optical illusion? What does a lawyer's equality have in common with that of a statistician? What can we learn from such a confrontation of forms of knowledge that are so far apart? Doubts arise first of all from the lexicons of these different branches of knowledge. Frequently referred to in scientific, normative and political discourse, the notions of inequality and discrimination are in fact highly polysemous. Should the variety of the lexicon and the meanings of these requirements for equality not raise doubts about the relevance of any attempt to reconcile them?

From the legal angle, it seemed to us necessary to show the meanings that equality takes on for legal knowledge by taking the step to one side that comparative law allows. And so a number of texts have been collected together. What they have in common is that they concern one of the branches of the law where the reference to equality has