

Built-in normativity in tailoring identity: the case of the EU skills profile tool for integrating refugees

Merve Burnazoglu

To cite this article: Merve Burnazoglu (2019): Built-in normativity in tailoring identity: the case of the EU skills profile tool for integrating refugees, Journal of Economic Methodology, DOI: [10.1080/1350178X.2019.1680856](https://doi.org/10.1080/1350178X.2019.1680856)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1350178X.2019.1680856>



© 2019 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



Published online: 24 Oct 2019.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 430



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

Built-in normativity in tailoring identity: the case of the EU skills profile tool for integrating refugees

Merve Burnazoglu

Economics, Utrecht University School of Economics, Utrecht, Netherlands

ABSTRACT

In current European policy debates, identifying refugee skills is considered to be a significant precondition for matching refugees and jobs and thus for labor market integration. Refugees have diverse skills, and therefore, measures in policy making regarding the integration of refugees need to be flexible and tailor-made. This paper presents an analytical framework to investigate a tension between one-size-fits-all and tailor-made measures that was raised in a meeting of the European Economic and Social Committee in 2017. I investigate whether the EU Skills Profile Tool, which is said to be a powerful tool for making it easier to identify refugees' skills, would be of a tailor-made type model. Employing diverse accounts of economic models as epistemic mediators, I argue that a built-in normativity of the tool mediates between refugees and their representation, which limits the tailoring of the Tool and leads, nevertheless, to tailoring of refugees, which may also have normative implications in use.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 31 August 2018
Accepted 4 October 2019

KEYWORDS

Normativity; models as epistemic mediators; profile tool; skills identification; refugees' integration

1. Introduction

In current European policy debates, the socio-economic integration of refugees in the European Union is considered to be a complex and challenging desideratum which nevertheless is an attainable one in the long term. Policy makers often emphasize that acknowledging employment as a core part of socio-economic integration and taking measures to facilitate employment are very important to manage what is usually referred to as the 'refugee crisis'. Search and matching theory in labor economics defines employment as matching of open vacancies and jobseekers. Based on this theory, facilitating employment for refugees means facilitating their matching with jobs.

Identifying refugee skills and qualifications is a significant precondition for matching refugees and jobs. The EU Skills Profile Tool (hereafter 'the Tool') is one of the most recent tools created by the European Commission for making it easier to identify skills.¹ It is a part of the New Skills Agenda for Europe (European Commission, 2016) and similar to the 'competence cards' that had been introduced by Bertelsmann Stiftung in Germany.² It is composed of questions with the aim to create an overall profile of the individual refugees based on which refugees can match with jobs.

At a meeting on the integration of refugees, organized by the European Economic and Social Committee of the European Commission in 2017, experts and policy makers emphasized that 'one-size-fits-all' measures would not lead to adequate job matching for refugees.³ Rather, more flexible, customized, individualized, and tailor-made ways to identify skills and qualifications are needed:

CONTACT Merve Burnazoglu  m.burnazoglu@uu.nl

There is no one-size-fits-all solution for job matching of refugees and it is important to take into account the overall individual solution.... Support and trainings should be more customized and flexible, based on the needs of the target groups.... More flexible ways to recognize skills are necessary. (European Commission, 2017c, pp. 2-3)

In the meeting, the participants discussed the Tool as well; however, they did not inquire into whether it was of such a tailor-made type. They spoke positively about the Tool and agreed on its potential benefits in identifying refugee skills. It seems that participants assumed flexibility in the use of the Tool; moreover, the Tool itself was considered neutral by design with respect to its role in ‘tailoring’ refugees’ profiles.

This paper presents an analytical framework to investigate the tension between one-size-fits-all and tailor-made measures in policy making by focusing on this specific tool developed to facilitate the integration of refugees. In the second section, I use the search and matching theory from labor economics to analyze the problem of identifying refugees’ skills in job matching of refugees. By introducing the content and use of the EU Skills Profile Tool, and the motivation behind its design, I discuss how it is expected to facilitate this matching. In the third section, I investigate whether the Tool, which is said to be a powerful tool for making it easier to identify refugees’ skills and qualifications, is of a tailor-made type model. Through an analytical framework which employs diverse accounts of models as epistemic mediators, I argue that the Tool is a model that mediates between refugees and their representation. This mediating role involves a process which I call ‘tailoring’. It should be noted that tailoring occurs at two different stages, when the Tool is designed and when it is used. Tailoring in design, however, restricts the tailoring in use. This paper will focus on the normativity built into the design which leads to a normative character in the use of the Tool. This built-in normativity of the Tool may also have further normative implications such as strengthening social stratification by sorting refugees into certain profiles. Section 4 draws a few general conclusions and policy implications.

2. The EU Skills Profile Tool for integrating refugees

A wide array of evidence shows mismatches between jobs and refugees. Because people fleeing from their countries often do not have their diplomas, the EU faces the challenge of identifying the skills of newly arrived migrants. Therefore, member states of the European Union have offered a range of policy measures to help integrate refugees and asylum seekers into the labor market (European Commission, 2017a; OECD, 2016).

The below chart shows the main obstacles that prevent people from getting a job that corresponds with their qualifications.⁴ It presents three profiles with respect to the main reason of migration: refugees, migrants for family reunification, and migrants for employment or study.

Of the non-EU born who were either jobless or identified themselves as being overqualified for their current job, 40 percent indicated no such obstacles (European Commission, 2017a). The remaining 60 percent indicated they had encountered such obstacles. Figure 1 shows that 17 percent of refugees highlighted lack of recognition of their qualifications as the main obstacle. Skills identification is, therefore, a key component for the integration of refugees, and, in general, third-country nationals. Lack of host-country language skills is the main barrier after the category ‘other obstacles’, which supposedly represents unidentified barriers. This significant share of ‘other obstacles’ show that skills and rights of refugees are not the only indicators of the quality of a match between refugees and jobs.

Search-and-matching theory helps explain how job seekers match with open vacancies. The theory finds its origins in Gale and Shapley’s *Stable Marriage Theory* (1962), in which the authors show the mechanism for matching for marriage of women and men who have certain preferences over one another. As the example shows in Figure 2, agent-A prefers agent-D over E and F. The letters between brackets indicate the order of preference of characteristics. The same logic applies to all other agents. The dotted lines show potential matchings. Gale and

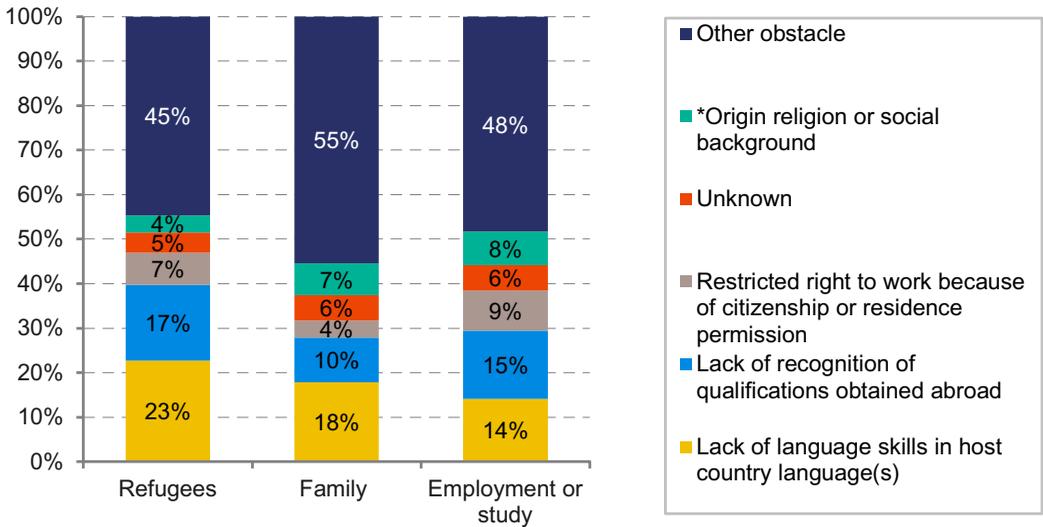
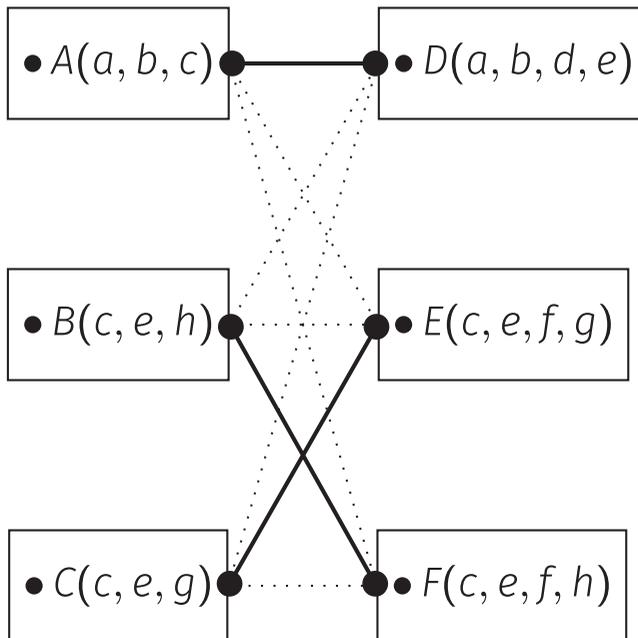


Figure 1. European Commission (2017a) estimates of obstacles to the labor market, based on EU LFS 2014 AHM.

Shapley prove that there is always a stable matching scenario. The thick lines show the stable matching scenario in this figure. Search and matching in labor economics is based on a similar idea: job seekers and employers' match is based on certain characteristics and preferences



$$M^* \{(A, D), (B, F), (C, E)\}$$

Figure 2. An example of the Gale-Shapley Matching.

over each other. Refugees' matching with jobs can be explained with a similar logic (e.g. Burnazoglu, 2017).

Search-and-matching theory helps us understand the role of skills in the process of matching refugees and jobs. Matching is in part based on the identification of the characteristics and preferences of agents, such as their age, gender, social skills, language skills, and education. If any of these characteristics or preferences are wrongly identified or simply ignored, the matching becomes subject to frictions or can lead to a mismatch.

Developing a skills profile proves necessary for mapping, assessing, and identifying skills and qualifications. Therefore, the European Commission adopted the New Skills Agenda for Europe in June 2016. This agenda aims at identifying skills at the EU level, including the skills of EU citizens. However, its most important aim is to integrate third-country nationals (European Commission, 2017b). Identifying skills is explicitly mentioned as the second of the three main goals (European Commission, 2016):

1. Improving the quality and relevance of skills formation (upskilling)
2. Making skills and qualifications more visible and comparable
3. Improving skills intelligence and information for better career choices

Labor-market participation is considered to be necessary for the integration of refugees into the European Union. For refugees to participate in the labor market, their skills need to be identified. These skills need to become 'visible' and 'comparable' for a good matching. Of course, this visibility and comparability should be understood from the European perspective. As refugees are expected to adjust to the European labor market, their identities and characteristics must be translated into local, European standards. The problem with this does not result only from the fact that refugees may not have their relevant documents with them because they may have fled a conflict; it also arises because of who they are and what kind of characteristics they have, that are often of a different nature than those of native Europeans, and if they are identified, it could be by different standards. Moreover, characteristics that are difficult to identify may remain invisible and therefore unknown.

The EU Skills Profile Tool is created in May 2017 as part of the New Skills Agenda for Europe (European Commission, 2016).⁵ As stated in the Tool manual, it 'makes it possible for third country nationals to present their skills, qualifications, and experiences in a way that is understood across the EU' (European Commission, 2017b, p. 4). It is composed of questions with the aim to create an overall profile of the individual refugees. The Tool consists of four main sections. The first section is *personal information*, which covers personal details and contact, and migration information. The second is *expectations*, which states refugees' goals such as language learning, taking integration courses, or finding a job. The third is *skill identification*, which summarizes language skills, education and training, literacy, numeracy, digital and professional skills, skills acquired outside the workplace, other skills such as working in teams or problem-solving skills, and drivers'-license information. The last section is *overall appraisal and recommended next steps*, that is the advisor's comments following the skills-identification exercise. The Tool is in the format of a questionnaire which can be used to profile anyone. What distinguishes it is the inclusion of migration details (e.g. when and from where the refugee migrated, and whether the refugee had permission to reside and/or work); expectations; very basic skills such as literacy, numeracy (e.g. percentages, geometry, and graphs), computer use, and 'skills outside job' (e.g. preparing food, taking care of elders); and the 'I'd like to' section, which gives refugees the opportunity of expressing their aims. The questions under the skills section show that it is more for profiling the low-skilled, though it is never explicitly stated.

Although the tool is an online tool and so anyone can access it, it is designed for professional advisors or other staff within refugee organizations. The main input comes from the refugees themselves, but advisors complete the form by acting as a sort of translator. Nonetheless, the tool is offered in refugees' own languages too in order for them to understand the questions and communicate their answers with the advisors. As stated in the tool manual, the tool

allows users to systematically identify and document the range of skills an individual may have acquired in different settings – including formal education, informal training, work experience and beyond, [and] helps organizations offering services to third country nationals to identify specific needs, such as language tuition, employment advice or further training and ultimately simplifies the process of matching jobseekers to vacancies. (European Commission, 2017b, pp. 4–6)

Recall the EU concern about one-size-fits-all measures that was expressed in the before mentioned meeting of the European Economic and Social Committee of the European Commission in 2017⁶: ‘There is no one-size-fits-all solution. ... It is important to take into account the overall individual solution (by tailor-made measures)’ (European Commission, 2017c, pp. 2–3). To understand why the EU favors tailor-made measures, we need to clarify what they mean by one-size-fits-all and tailor-made. The one-size-fits-all type measures to identify refugee skills imply standardization of refugee profiles. However, as the EU is concerned, refugees are diverse and have diverse skills. Therefore, measures to support them in their labor market matching, which is one of the key parts of integration broadly understood, needs flexibility rather than standardization. The measures should be flexible and tailorable in identifying skills and thus refugees’ profiles with respect to the differences of refugees.

The EU Skills Profile Tool is one of the measures for skills identification. But is it a tailor-made one? How does the EU Skills Profile Tool help to create new profiles for refugees: in one-size-fits-all ways or the tailor-made ones as the participants of the meeting favored?

3. Built-in normativity in tailoring identity

We can think of the EU Skills Profile Tool as an epistemic mediator that aims to mediate between refugees, and their profiles by identifying skills. The question of how the Tool mediates, in one-size-fits-all ways or the tailor-made ones, will be analyzed by drawing from the vast literature on models as epistemic mediators.

3.1. Models as epistemic mediators

Models have various roles and natures (Morgan, 2012; Morgan & Knuuttila, 2012). Morrison and Morgan (1999) and Morrison (1999) characterize models as mediators. They argue that models are constructed and function in different ways and help us learn about both theories and the real world. They see models as *autonomous agents* which function as *instruments of investigation*.⁷ The autonomy is based on partial independence from both theories and the world. Because of this autonomy, models can function as mediating tools between theories and the world. According to them, ‘What it means for a model to function autonomously is to function like a tool or instrument’ (1999, p. 11). But they emphasize that a tool of investigation involves some form of representation of either some aspect of the real world or of theories about the world. It is, they claim, this representational power of the model that carries the model’s role beyond an instrumental function to become a tool for mediation.

Modeling of refugee skills requires mediation between refugees and their skills profiles. We can compare a refugee, as any human being, with a cloud, with characteristics that cannot be identified and explained completely in well-defined formats.⁸ In line with this analogy, the EU Skills Profile Tool tries to mediate between a cloud and a well-defined format to identify those characteristics that may be useful in the job search. Below is a simple depiction of a relationship between this cloud and a well-defined format such as a compartmentalized square that is a representation, the profile, of refugees (Figure 3).

To match inexact profiles of refugees with the jobs, the EU Skills Profile Tool helps to mediate systematically. The Tool aims to be an epistemic mediator to have an autonomous character by being neither fully and explicitly based on a well-defined theory nor producing perfect representations of refugees. It benefits from theories of migration, integration, and labor markets, and aims to produce

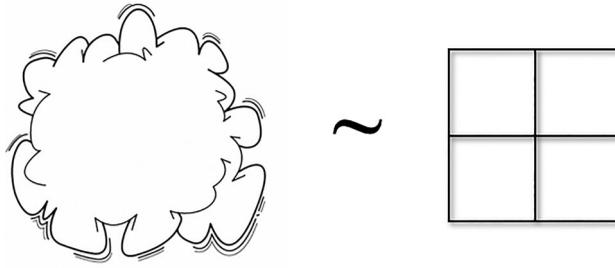


Figure 3. A simple depiction of a relationship between a cloud and a well-defined format.

simplified profiles for refugees by making their skills ‘visible and comparable’ for a labor market matching.

Aiming at producing simplified profiles rather than perfect representations is an important point. Representational power is often seen as a necessary requirement in modeling. However, models are not only built for representational purposes; representation is only one of their possible uses (Hédoin, 2012; Knuuttila, 2005; Morgan, 2012). Knuuttila (2005) argues that too much emphasis on the representational role of models limits their epistemic value. She proposes to think of models as *epistemic artifacts* that help us learn in other ways. The word ‘artifact’ implies that by including a variety of ingredients and being used in diverse ways, models are material, human-made, intentionally constructed, and the result of purposeful human activity (ibid). In their analysis of a parser as an epistemic artifact, Knuuttila and Voutilainen (2003) show that the tool has the epistemic value that comes from its instrumental success, which is not based on representational power. Hence, according to Knuuttila (2005), Morrison and Morgan’s account of models as mediators has the potential to release some pressure of the representationalist thinking on models. This is the particular epistemic mediators account that explains the Tool’s character.

Having proposed that the Tool has an epistemic mediator role, let me restate my main question in this paper: Is the EU Skills Profile Tool, understood as a mediator, a tailor-made type tool? Can it flexibly mediate between refugees and their skills profiles? The answer to this question depends on the functioning of the Tool in the process of mediation. The EU wants the Tool to function flexibly in that it should be able to get tailored with respect to refugees’ diverse characters and cases. Hence the EU aims at tailoring the Tool rather than the Tool tailoring refugees in a one-size-fits-all way. I suggest we analyze these processes of tailoring in mediation in detail to investigate what the Tool actually does.

3.2. Tailoring process in mediating skills

The EU Skills Profile Tool can be considered as a purposeful mediator between refugees and their profiles. In line with the cloud analogy, the Tool tries to turn a cloud into a well-defined format to identify those characteristics that may be useful in the job search. The Figure 4 gives the idea that the mediating processes involve ‘tailoring’ that is turning clouds into identifiable forms.⁹ It aims to reduce initially unknown refugees into parts with specific features. Then, a well-defined skills profile represents the refugees’ competence for work in order to facilitate their access to the labor market. The reduction into a specific predefined set of features is a key process. It not only is key for matching but can create trust because the resulting ‘profile’ is composed of well-identified pieces. In other words, the ‘profile’ of refugees results from tailoring them into an identity that meets European standards. In the figure below, the cloud is denoted by R (that is, refugees). M represents the mediating process. This mediating process is like a machine that tailors R to P, where P is a tailor-made profile that represents the refugees. Simply explained, input R goes in and output P goes out.

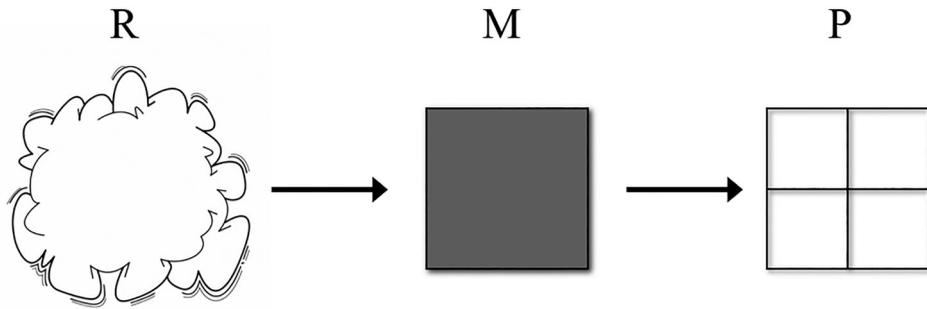


Figure 4. Mediating process that turns refugees into well-identified profiles.

This tailoring process functions in a similar way to the process of ‘packaging facts’ that Leonelli (2011) has introduced.¹⁰ She argues that facts about model organisms in biology are produced in laboratories without having well-defined destinations. However, once produced, they need to be able to travel across a multitude of research contexts and, therefore, be visible and accessible. The travel counts to be successful when the facts arrive and are re-used at their destination settings without being damaged or lost. To facilitate this travel, bioinformaticians use digital technologies to ‘package’ facts. She argues ‘the process of packaging small facts for dissemination bears remarkable similarities to the process of packaging of items to be dispatched through the mail’ (ibid, p. 331). Examining packaging strategies, she illustrates that ‘good packaging’ means being able to develop proper labels to the facts that would facilitate the adoption of them by users in different contexts. The facts need to be de-contextualized from their context of origin with proper and reliable labels to travel across time and space and arrive at destinations to be re-contextualized for use in new contexts.

The tailoring of the Tool is similar to packaging of facts. As stated in the New Skills Agenda for Europe (European Commission, 2016), the skills need to be visible and accessible to be able to match with job vacancies. The Tool decontextualizes refugees’ skills (R) by tailoring them. The skills need to be packaged as a profile (P) so that they can travel without the refugee or the administrator who did tailor the skills in the first place. It involves, similarly, putting labels about skills on the refugee profile; each compartment in the square in figures above can be thought as a place for a label. After refugees’ skills are decontextualized from their context of origin and packaged as profiles (P), they start traveling in the labor market to match with jobs, that is, be re-contextualized in a new setting.

However, the process of mediation involves purposeful human activities and constructions of profiles by making use of diverse ingredients. It does not engage only in matching things as they exist independently of each other in flexible ways but also in tailoring them in certain ways to be able to match them. Therefore, as will be shown, there is normativity involved in this tailoring process from the cloud to its well-identified profile. Normativity in this paper is defined as normative judgments in a broad sense. The judgments themselves do not have to aim to be normative, but any involvement of judgment in a policy tool necessarily leads to normativity in the implications.

3.3. Built-in normativity in tailoring

One should take human agency into account to understand models (Knuuttila & Voutilainen, 2003), as they are not only objects but combinations of objects and intended uses (Suárez, 1999). Boumans (1999) shows that justification is not independent of the model-building process but is actually built into the process of modeling and measuring. Applying this idea to the arguments in this paper, I suggest there is normativity is built into the Tool. That is to say, the normativity is built into the whole process of mediating between refugees and their profiles in ways that are mostly determined

Remember that the initial R was not identified by e but by (a, b, c) . This means that the characteristic on which P and the job matched is actually not a characteristic of the refugee. It was assigned. On the other hand, R included c , which could have been a proper basis of matching this refugee and the job if it had been well identified. An example is honesty. Honesty is not a characteristic included in the tool categories; therefore, the skills profile of the refugee does not include it.¹² However, it may be that it is the most important characteristic a job requires. If, then, honesty was identified and included in the profile, it could have been the basis on which the refugee and the employer matched.

The Tool is aimed to be used flexibly but not in the way of adding to or subtracting characters from refugees. In contrast, the aim was to tailor the Tool when the profile it produces would not fit the refugee. For this aim, after two years of its launch and tailoring the refugees in ways similar to the simple example, the Tool has been updated recently with a new feature of configuration. This configuration feature allows users to select sections to hide in the outcome profile. In the case of the Eritrean women in the Netherlands, the configuration feature is used to disable the digital skills section so that it does not appear as a blank section anymore as it did previously. This is a significant attempt to make the Tool more flexible as the EU aimed.

However, I suggest, even in the more flexible use of the Tool, there is still normativity built-in the design that restricts the use. Boumans (1999), arguing justification is built into the model-building process, shows how various ingredients can go into a model: theoretical notions, analogies, metaphors, mathematical concepts and techniques, stylized facts, empirical data, and policy views. He suggests models are constructed by fitting things from different sources together, in a manner similar to baking a cake without a recipe. Similarly, the Tool is constructed by fitting analogies, beliefs and perceptions about the 'ideal-type' refugee together. This construction is a tailor-made action; ingredients are normatively chosen, and the cake is baked without a particular recipe. Some ingredients that are built-in in the design of the Tool can be found in the words of Marianne Thyssen, the EC member in charge of employment, social affairs, skills, and labor mobility. At the launching of the Tool on June 20, 2017 she declared:

This tool ... is a practical IT tool that will help to identify and document the skills and qualifications of refugees and asylum seekers in Europe. It helps to define what they need. It can help to make their migration a success story. The key to that success is integration. If migrants are well integrated, they make the most of a successful and happy life. Integration is the only way to make the best use out of the diverse talents that migrants bring with them. Talents, which in the face of our ageing society, are very much needed in our economy and on our labor market. With the Skills Profile Tool we launch today, we want to give refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants the opportunity to show who they are and what skills they have in their pockets.¹³

Thyssen's words motivate for integration in two parts: first, from the refugees' perspective, to let them pursue a successful and happy life by making their migration a success story; second, from the perspective of host countries or Europe in general, to make the best use of the diverse talents migrants bring with them, which is, because of the ageing of society, very much needed in the economy and labor market. It is a belief of a win-win situation that incorporates into the Tool design. But to get to successful integration a few problems have to be solved, such as the identification of skills. Tools that can help identification, then, would create an opportunity for refugees, in Thyssen's words, 'to show who they are and what they have in their pockets'. This shows another ingredient in the Tool's design, namely, the European Union's commitment to the use of a search and matching approach that suggests a perception of refugees as 'pockets of skills' that need to be opened up and benefitted from.

At a more official launch of the Tool in the European Commission Thyssen said,

With the EU Skills Profile Tool, we can give refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants a human and professional face. It allows them to show who they are and what they can offer to our societies. This way, they can fully put their talents at the use of our labor markets by paving the way to a happy, a successful life.¹⁴

These words, once again, suggest that integration is what both refugees and receiving states seek. Her words presume that by default all refugees would want to integrate and all host societies

would want them to integrate. For this to happen, refugees need to show who they are and what they can offer, and host countries, or Europe seen as one overall entity, need to help them in this by offering measures such as the EU Skills Profile Tool. The metaphor of giving a ‘human and professional face’ to refugees implies they can be seen, identified, and understood by Europe. One can understand the task as transforming the unknown into a known format such that it can be identified and used in the labor-market matching. Integrating refugees is seen ‘as creating new EU citizens’ (European Commission, 2017c, p. 8) by giving them a familiar face.

Thyssen’s words do not openly imply that there exists an ideal type of a refugee. They do, however, enforce a specific perception of refugees by describing one scenario about their integration through labor markets rather than other possible ones. The analogies that are used in the Tool description propose a view of refugees like ‘pocket of skills’ that are seeking a happy life which would be possible if they integrated into the European labor market. For this integration to occur, the EU seems committed to the use of the search and matching theory. For matching to occur successfully, on the other hand, the skills need to be identified in ways that are designed in tools like the EU Skills Profile Tool. So one can see that there are, indeed, ingredients in the Tool design such as theories, beliefs, analogies, perceptions, policy views and politics, among other possible ones. When these ingredients are baked, in Boumans’ (1999) terms, it is not easy to identify them in the cake anymore.

The Tool sorts people in a certain way specific to the context with respect to an ‘ideal-type’ of a refugee in the European imagination, which comes from the ingredients in the design of the Tool. It gives an identity to an individual; however, it does so in a way that represents each individual in terms included in the Tool design. Hence the Tool homogenizes refugees and, therefore, is more of a one-size-fits-all type as the output from the Tool cannot be so different from how the Tool was designed. This homogenization is similar to one of the three steps that Daniel Breslau (2003) distinguishes in process that leads to representations used by policy tools. These steps are abstraction, by which we abstract phenomena from their real-life settings; homogenization, the act of translating abstractions into a comparable metric; and sedimentation, the process by which abstracted and homogenized phenomena become legitimized by becoming part of official statistics and discourse.

3.4. Policy tool as a systematic-sorting model

Having discussed the role of the tool in tailoring profiles, we now have to discuss the question: what happens if we consider the *effect* of the Tool at the macro level when used for profiling thousands of refugees by deducting *c* and adding *e* to their profiles? The model construction behind the policy tool not only produces a certain type of knowledge through classifications with built-in normativity, but also stratifies society by sorting phenomena in a specific way. The institutionalization of skills identification can lead to a standardization of what/who a refugee is, and which skills are to be identified. What results from this is a systematic sorting that is not neutral with respect to its construction neither to its application.¹⁵ Mensink (2012) shows that measurement design can create system dependency by measuring things in a way that cannot be changed afterward. The term ‘system dependency’ emphasizes the stickiness of measurements after their, in Breslau terms, sedimentation by becoming part of official statistics and discourse. Similarly, the systematic sorting that I suggest can lead to system dependency on the tool by assigning certain people to certain places in their work and thus their integration experiences, which is not easily modified afterward.

Morrison and Morgan (1999) have argued that if the representational power of models cannot be improved, this does not lower the value of models (1999, p. 28). Similarly, I suggest, policy tools can never perfectly represent and describe human beings; the value of the tool should not be limited to this representational power but should be considered in its mediating role. Nevertheless, given that profiling can lead to normative implications of a certain sorting, awareness of this mediation and tailoring should be an explicit target in the policy-tool design. As Boumans and Morgan (2001) and Boumans (2005) emphasize, one should not only consider which factors are absent (*ceteris*

absentibus), but also which can be ignored because of their small effects (*ceteris neglectis*) and which are present but unchanged (*ceteris paribus*) (see also Morgan & Knuuttila, 2012). I suggest that working with policy tools as epistemic mediators requires a commitment to constantly considering the absent, the small effect, and the present but constant. Because of its non-neutral nature, the Tool itself should become an object of research by taking systematic outputs into account.

4. Conclusion

In this paper, I presented an analytical framework to investigate the tension between one-size-fits-all and tailor-made measures in policy making concerning refugees' integration. One-size-fits-all measures may be necessary for standardization in that they provide the benefit of common standards by giving refugees a 'familiar face' based on which they can match with jobs. Nevertheless, tailor-made measures are important for flexibility as one-size-fits-all measures can lead to only one kind of profiling. Investigation of the EU Skills Profile Tool showed that tackling the identification problem involves mediating between the refugees and the representation of them. The question of how the Tool mediates, whether in one-size-fits-all ways or tailor-made ones, is analyzed in the processes of turning 'clouds' into identifiable forms. I called these processes 'tailoring' and argued that it occurs at two different stages, when the Tool is designed and when it is used. Tailoring in use, however, is not easily applicable in the presence of standardizing tools of a one-size-fits-all type. I argued, tools are not (necessarily) neutral. Their design can create system dependency and limit tailoring in the use of the tool as there is normativity that is already built in the tool design thus the tool categories cannot be changed much afterwards. Hence the Tool involves in tailoring refugees' skills, however, in a one-size-fits-all way as the output from the Tool cannot be so different from how the Tool was designed.

As for applying these results to policy making, one should not forget the tailoring process in the design. As tools may not be neutral, the face given to refugees is subject to the limits of the tool design. Data, and tools to create and organize data, will have increasing importance. Being aware of this lack of direct correspondence, and involvement of normativity in tailoring, one should keep an eye on the potentially 'false confidence of presumed omniscience' as Elinor Ostrom argues (1990, p. 168) – in this context, the false confidence of presumed flexibility in policy making.

Notes

1. Link to the tool: www.ec.europa.eu/migrantskills
2. Link to the competence cards: <https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/en/our-projects/careers-via-competences/project-news/immigration-counseling-for-adult-immigrants/>
3. The meeting was titled 'From Crisis Management to Everyday Practice: Lessons from the Integration of Refugees for Future Labour Market and Social Policies' and is jointly organized by the European Commission (EC) and the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), on November 6, 2017, in Brussels. The participants included the representatives from the EC, the EESC, the European Parliament, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the World Bank, and others from the public agencies and civil-society organizations from European countries. Several things were discussed for highlighting the most important measures: job matching and searching, fast-track integration, recognition of skills and qualifications, and so forth. The programme, presentations, and a report on the event can be found here: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1274&eventId=1259&furtherEvents=yes>.
4. The data used in the calculations cover 25 countries of the European Union. EC (2017) expressed low reliability for answer category of origin, religion and social background.
5. The reader can see the Tool via the following link: www.ec.europa.eu/migrantskills
6. The program, presentations, and a report of the event can be found here: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1274&eventId=1259&furtherEvents=yes>.
7. See also Rodrik, 2015 and Aydinonat (2018) for a recent investigative tool approach.
8. I got inspired by Sydenham's (1979) cloud in my expressing refugees as clouds. He draws a figure to explain the whole process of measurement that starts with a 'system under study' (depicted as a cloud), and modeling and measuring processes (depicted in well-defined forms such as square and rectangular). Boumans (2015)

investigates the role of human judgment in Sydenham's measurement system. My emphasis is on the system under study that is depicted as a cloud and its representation in well-defined formats in the modeling and measuring processes.

9. One can think of two types of tailoring when the word is used literally. The first type is when a tailor custom sews a dress only for the person who demands it, to their exact measures. The second type of tailoring is when a person buys a standard size dress and asks the tailor to adapt it to their measures. The latter is the type I am using in my analogy in this paper. Therefore, tailoring in the paper should be understood like shortening a dress to fit it to a person, not making one from scratch.
10. Leonelli's work is a part of the 'Travelling Facts Project'. For more about the project, see Howlett and Morgan (2011).
11. I am not claiming that the refugee is (a, b, c) but that a, b , and c , among others, are characteristics that can be found in the refugee. On the other hand, it is not $a + b + c$, that is to say, the characters of a, b , and c are not mutually exclusive. I would argue that the profile in the format of $a + b + d + e$ can fall short in terms of the aggregation problem in oppose to the (a, b, c, \dots) format which I suggested in this simple example.
12. The reader can think that honesty is not a realistic example. However, it is chosen by purpose to emphasize that personal characteristics that may be seen too intangible and manipulable to put on a CV are often times those that make a person differ from others and that have a significant influence in the quality of employment relationships.
13. <http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/video/player.cfm?ref=1140401>
14. The exact quotation can be found between 03:32 and 03:59 of the video in the link: <http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/video/player.cfm?sitelang=en&ref=1140409>
15. This section may raise questions about performativity. Performativity is a very relevant concept for one to see the real impact of the Tool in societies. This paper, however, focuses on the tool design and its mediating and tailoring processes from a methodological perspective. What happens after the utilization of the tool requires a separate empirical investigation and time to get empirical facts of this very recent tool.

Acknowledgments

An earlier version of the work was presented at the 4th International Conference: Economics and Philosophy on 27–29 June 2018, in Lyon; the Annual Conference of the European Association for Evolutionary Political Economy on 5–9 September 2018, in Nice; the Migration Policy Meeting of the Dutch Association for Migration Research and the Ministry of Justice and Security of the Netherlands on October 10, 2018, in Den Haag; the Ph.D. Seminars at the Erasmus Institute for Philosophy and Economics on 15 April 2019, in Rotterdam; and the 15th Conference of the International Network for Economic Method on 19–21 August 2019, in Helsinki. I would like to thank the participants of all these meetings for their attempts to think with me and for their fruitful comments. I am particularly grateful to Marcel Boumans whose comments and criticisms greatly helped to improve the paper. I am thankful to Osman Caglar Dede, Måns Abrahamson, Conrad Heilmann, and John B. Davis for their generous feedback, and to a researcher at the DG Employment of the European Commission for accepting to answer my questions and giving valuable insights about the current situation of the EU Skills Profile Tool, which made me refine my arguments significantly. I am thankful also to the two referees for their well-targeted and very insightful revision suggestions, Jan Venema for helping me to play with the 'cloud' idea and its depiction, and Harry David for editing assistance. Any remaining error is my own.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes on contributor

Merve Burnazoglu is a PhD candidate in Economics and a lecturer at the Philosophy, Politics and Economics Program at the Utrecht University School of Economics, Netherlands. Her research interests include philosophy and methodology of economics applied to migration and integration.

References

- Aydinonat, N. E. (2018). The diversity of models as a means to better explanations in economics. *Journal of Economic Methodology*, 25(3), 237–251.
- Boumans, M. (1999). Built-in-justification. In M. S. Morgan & M. Morrison (Eds.), *Models as mediators: Perspectives on natural and social science* (pp. 66–96). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Boumans, M. (2005). *How economists model the world into numbers*. New York: Routledge.

- Boumans, M. (2015). *Science outside the laboratory: Measurement in field science and economics*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Boumans, M., & Morgan, M. S. (2001). Ceteris paribus conditions: Materiality and the application of economic theories. *Journal of Economic Methodology*, 8(1), 11–26.
- Breslau, D. (2003). Economics invents the economy: Mathematics, statistics, and models in the work of Irving Fisher and Wesley Mitchell. *Theory and Society*, 32(3), 379–411.
- Burnazoglu, M. (2017). An identity-based matching theory approach to integration. *Forum for Social Economics*. doi:10.1080/07360932.2017.1406387
- European Commission. (2016). *New skills agenda for Europe*. Commission Communication COM(2016) 381 final, Brussels.
- European Commission. (2017a). *Employment and social developments in Europe 2016*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.
- European Commission. (2017b). *EU skills profile tool for third country nationals*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.
- European Commission. (2017c). *Report of the conference “from crisis management to everyday practice: Lessons from integration of refugees for future labour market and social policies”* held on 6 November 2017 in Brussels. Retrieved from <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=88&eventsId=1259&furtherEvents=yes>
- Gale, D., & Shapley, L. S. (1962). College admissions and the stability of marriage. *American Mathematical Monthly*, 69, 9–15.
- Hédoin, C. (2012). Models in economics are not (always) nomological machines: A pragmatic approach to economists' modeling practices. *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, 20(10), 424–459.
- Howlett, P., & Morgan, M. S. (2011). *How well do facts travel? The dissemination of reliable knowledge*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Knuuttila, T. (2005). Models, representation, and mediation. *Philosophy of Science*, 72, 1260–1271.
- Knuuttila, T., & Voutilainen, A. (2003). A parser as an epistemic artifact: A material view on models. *Philosophy of Science*, 70, 1484–1495.
- Leonelli, S. (2011). Packaging small facts for re-use: Databases in model organism biology. In P. Howlett & M. S. Morgan (Eds.), *How well do facts travel? The dissemination of reliable knowledge* (pp. 325–348). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mensink, J. (2012). *Poverty measures: From production to use*. PhD thesis, the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE).
- Morgan, S. M. (2012). *The world in the model*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Morgan, S. M., & Knuuttila, T. (2012). Models and modelling in economics. In U. Mäki (Ed.), *Handbook of the philosophy of economics (one volume in handbook of the philosophy of science)* (pp. 49–88). Oxford: Elsevier.
- Morrison, M. (1999). Models as autonomous agents. In M. S. Morgan & M. Morrison (Eds.), *Models as mediators: Perspectives on natural and social science* (pp. 66–96). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Morrison, M., & Morgan, S. M. (1999). Models as mediating instruments. In M. S. Morgan & M. Morrison (Eds.), *Models as mediators: Perspectives on Natural and social Science* (pp. 10–37). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- OECD. (2016). *Making integration work – refugees and others in need of international protection*. Paris: OECD Publishing.
- Ostrom, E. (1990). *Governing the commons: The evolution of institutions for collective action*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rodrik, D. (2015). *Economics rules: Why economics works, when it fails, and how to tell the difference*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Suárez, M. (1999). Theories, models, and representations. In L. Magnani, N. Nersessian, & P. Thagard (Eds.), *Model-based reasoning in scientific discovery* (pp. 75–83). New York: Kluwer.
- Sydenham, P. H. (1979). *Measuring instruments: Tools of knowledge and control*. Stevenage, UK; New York: Peregrinus in association with the Science Museum London.