



Jana Shostak discusses her project "Nowak / Nowaczka / Nowacy" with the renowned Polish linguist, Professor Jan Miodek, in his television program *Słownik polsko@polski*, April 2017, image courtesy of Jana Shostak

Title

Jana Shostak's Tactical Entry into the Public Debate on Refugees

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Abstract

The mass influx of refugees to Europe in 2015/2016 created the opportunity for a meaningful and rational debate in Poland concerning the presence of the representatives of other ethnic groups, cultures, and religions in the country. Yet, that chance was wasted as the dominant, strategic position in public discourse was seized by politically motivated anti-refugee rhetoric based on fearmongering and hate speech. The crisis of public debate since 2015 compels a question about other forms of art's social engagement in public discourse.

An example of such engagement is Jana Shostak's project "Nowak / Nowaczka / Nowacy" (2017–), which consists of an attempt to replace the word "refugee" in common usage with the word "nowak," a common noun that happens to be the homonym of the most popular surname in Poland, "Nowak." Toward this end, the artist has consistently used it in interviews and promoted it on social media, seeking to build a community of users of the word "nowak" in order to give it independent life.

The text situates Shostak's project in the field of "tactical media," as defined by David Garcia and Geert Lovink, as well as Joanne Richardson, and in the context of the concept of "communication guerrilla" by the autonome a.f.r.i.k.a. gruppe

collective. I also examine "Nowak" through the prism of selected terms from Stephen Wright's "Toward a Lexicon of Usership". These references serve to highlight the distinctly tactical (as understood by Michel de Certeau) character of Shostak's project as a subversive intervention in public debate. I discuss the mechanism of that intervention in relation to Foucault's concept of discourse and its inherent potential of resistance, as well as in the light of the framing of Islamophobia and xenophobia as a discursive practice, put forward by Monika Bobako in her book "Islamofobia jako technologia władzy".

In the spirit of tactical media and communication guerrilla, Shostak taps into the potential of resistance offered by discourse, using it as a weapon against xenophobia in public debate. Since an unbiased, rational, and empathetic debate is not currently possible at the strategic political and social level, tactical engagement appears as one of the few tools of resistance still available, and a way to prepare the ground for potential strategic shifts in the future.

Poland is an ethnically homogeneous country with a growing, yet still limited, migrant population. The unprecedented influx of refugees and asylum seekers to Europe in 2015 deeply affected the social imagination and brought to prominence the dividing line between "us" – Poles by ethnicity and citizenship – and "them" – migrants, in this case refugees seeking shelter in the EU. The current government's staunch refusal to participate in the EU's European Solidarity relocation scheme meant that the refugee population in Poland did not increase by any significant measure and continued to maintain a very limited presence in the country.¹ Refugees therefore existed primarily as a phantasm in the public imagination.

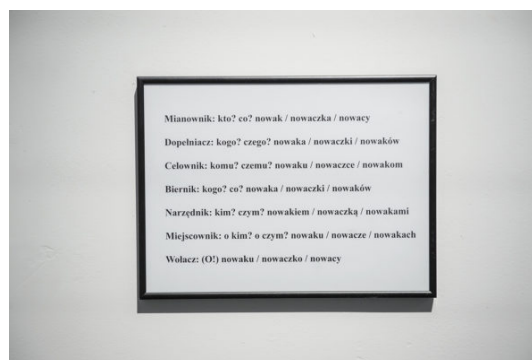
The same crisis turned out to be a wasted opportunity for a mature debate concerning the challenges faced by Poland as a host country. Instead, fearmongering, fake news, and hate speech used against refugees became important pillars of the victorious 2015 election campaign of the right-wing Law and Justice party.² This set the tone of the debate and effectively spread anti-refugee attitudes in society, as public opinion surveys have clearly shown.³ The absent refugee was easy for political propaganda to portray as a terrorist or invader coming to live at the expense of Poles, reproduce in large numbers, and impose foreign culture and religion. With the right-wing populist government in power and support for accepting refugees at a record low, we found ourselves in the situation where anti-refugee stances held a hegemonic and politically strategic position – their political activation was at the discretion of the populist right and served its needs of consolidating and expanding its electorate.⁴

It was then hardly surprising that xenophobic and Islamophobic propaganda in the Polish public debate resulted in "an explosion of xenophobic slogans and discourses, which were brought from the margins of the public sphere to its very center."⁵ Not only did they enter the political debate, but also the media landscape, as shown by Jakub Majmurek with examples of right-wing magazine covers portraying a refugee "invasion" of Poland.⁶ This situation also led to a significant increase in everyday, xenophobically motivated violence, both symbolic – such as the banner "Pray for Islamic

Holocaust,” illegally yet prominently installed in Poznań,⁷ and physical – as shown by a marked rise in the number of attacks on foreigners on the streets of Polish cities.⁸

Engagement with these conditions was crucial not only because the genuine need to help refugees existed. Another stake was the problematization of the nationalistic and isolationistic policy and rhetoric of the government (focused on the purity of ethnos, culture, and religion), which was unsustainable in the long run as it marginalized the country and left it blind to the challenges of globalization (such as the forecasted – and necessary – influx of migrant workers).⁹ The refugee question therefore called for a renegotiation of the conditions and divisions in Polish society; it was an opportunity for the renewal of the Polish community, which struggles with accepting otherness.¹⁰

This situation compels a question about the modes of engagement which contemporary art with a social edge may adopt in order to enter and influence the public debate on refugees. In response to the hegemonic and strategic position of anti-refugee discourse therein, I propose to examine a tactical mode of engagement, as exemplified by Jana Shostak's project *Nowak / Nowaczka / Nowacy*, developed since 2017 as a reaction to the spread of xenophobic attitudes in Poland in the aftermath of the European “refugee crisis.” Shostak advocated replacing the Polish word “uchodźca” [refugee] with “nowak” [newman], which happens to be a homonym of the second most popular Polish surname, in order to counter the negative connotations around the former. I discuss this project in the context of the field of “tactical media,” as theorized by David Garcia and Geert Lovink, and Joanne Richardson, as well as the concept of “guerrilla communication” by the autonome a.f.r.i.k.a. gruppe. I also situate *Nowacy* within the frame of selected concepts from Stephen Wright's *Toward a Lexicon of Usership*. Through these frameworks I show the distinctly tactical character of Shostak's project, drawing on the differentiation between strategy and tactic as theorized by Michel de Certeau. To shed more light on the discursive dimension of Shostak's tactical work, I refer to Michel Foucault's understanding of discourse and the possibilities of resistance that it offers.



Presentation of the project “Nowak / Nowaczka / Nowacy” at the exhibition “Attention! Border”, Labirynt Gallery in Lublin, 2017, photo by Wojciech Pacewicz, courtesy of

Nowak / Nowaczka / Nowacy

Jana Shostak (b. 1993) is a Polish-Belarusian artist whose practice revolves around notions of the “efficiency of art,” “hack[ing] the systems,” and using “system errors within the social space,” alongside the intention to “broaden and share art activities through mass media”¹¹ – as her artistic statement reads. She has garnered wide attention, including from outside the art world, by intervening in social and media spaces. One such intervention took place in 2016 during the mass religious gathering World Youth Day in Kraków. Created unofficially and without the consent of the organizers, her project *Who Is Your Pope?* (with Maria Olbrychtowicz) consisted of replacing one of the event’s banners in the Main Market Square with a self-made banner featuring Pope Francis. This was a response to the conspicuous absence of the current pope from the WYD promotional framing, despite him being the meeting’s most important guest, which may have been an implicit sign of the dissonance between the openness that Pope Francis has sought to manifest and the more conservative and orthodox attitudes prevailing among Polish Catholics. As the artists were dressed in World Youth Day volunteer uniforms, they faced no obstacles in their action, while their banner remained in place for the entire event as the organizers could not risk the possible controversy that removing it might have stirred.¹²



Maria Olbrychtowicz, Jana Shostak, “Who Is Your Pope?”, 2016, photo by Jana Shostak

In 2017, the xenophobic and anti-refugee atmosphere of the public debate in Poland compelled Shostak to intervene in public discourse with her project *Nowak / Nowaczka / Nowacy*. This ongoing initiative attempts to replace the Polish word “uchodźca” (refugee) with the newly coined common noun “nowak,”¹³ which translates as “newman/newcomer.” At the same time, it is a homonym of an extremely popular Polish surname, Nowak. It thus enacts an operation whereby “refugees,” a term that acquired a pejorative tone as the result of widespread political and media propaganda, are referred to by a noun that bears distinctively Polish connotations. The word itself

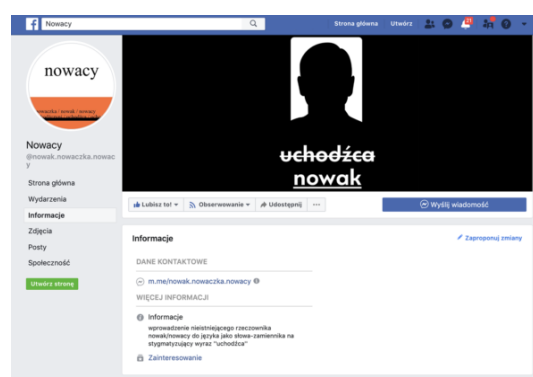
came as the result of a brainstorming session initiated by Shostak during an informal meeting for migrants and Poles, and was therefore the product of a joint effort that, importantly, involved refugees themselves.¹⁴



The word "Nowacy" came as the result of a brainstorming session initiated by Jana Shostak with poets, linguists, artists and Esperantists of different nationalities in March 2017, image courtesy of Jana Shostak

On a more practical level, the Polish word "uchodźca" is very difficult to pronounce for non-Polish speakers, which, as the artist remarks, "creates an absurd situation where *nowacy* find it problematic to pronounce the word that refers to them. [...] Yet – she continues – the most important thing was that I received signals from *nowacy* with whom I was in touch that they found the word 'uchodźca' stigmatizing and would prefer a different word that would emanate a new, positive energy."¹⁵

Far from a mere conceptual operation on linguistic tissue, the new word became the object of Shostak's intensive efforts to introduce it into circulation. Towards this end, she promoted it actively on social media, consistently used it in press interviews, and sought celebrity endorsement to tap into the media attention and symbolic capital that this offered. The artist wants to build a community of users of the word "nowak" and thus give it an independent life. She attempts to spread the noun as widely as possible, since this can enable its recognition by the Polish Language Council and entry into the official Polish dictionary.¹⁶



Facebook page of Jana Shostak's project "Nowak / Nowaczka / Nowacy"

A tactical intervention

Considering the admission into the public debate that Shostak implemented through the linguistic operation in *Nowacy* and the channels she uses to spread the newly coined word beyond the realm of art, I propose to interpret her initiative in the light of “tactical media,” a term introduced by David Garcia and Geert Lovink in their seminal text *The ABC of Tactical Media*, published in 1997. The authors characterize tactical media as “media of crisis, criticism and opposition,” thus indicating their subversive impact on flows of ideas and information in order to resist the dominant forces that shape them.¹⁷ According to Joanne Richardson, the rebellious charge of tactical media found its most prominent iterations in such practices as: “billboard pirating by Adbusters, plagiarized websites by the Italian hackers 0100101110101101.org, ®TMark’s mock websites for G.W. Bush and the World Trade Organization, and (as the Yes Men) their impersonations of WTO representatives to deliver messages that don’t challenge the WTO’s position but over-identify with it to the point of absurdity.”¹⁸

A fundamental concept for tactical media – as Garcia and Lovink write – is the distinction between “strategy” and “tactic” drawn by Michel de Certeau in his book *The Practice of Everyday Life* from 1980. De Certeau contrasts these two terms by stating that strategy is a “calculation (or manipulation) of power relationships that becomes possible as soon as a subject with will and power (a business, an army, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated. It postulates a place that can be delimited as its own and serve as the base from which relations with an exteriority composed of targets and threats [...] can be managed.”¹⁹ Tactic, in turn “is a calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus. [...] The space of a tactic is the space of the other. Thus it must play on and with a terrain imposed on it and organized by the law of a foreign power. [...] It is a maneuver [...] within enemy territory.”²⁰

Certeau’s conceptualization – which distinguishes between strategic operations on an own territory and tactical “maneuvers” to which those deprived of their own “locus” need to resort for subversive ends – informs the understanding of tactical media and their modes of operation in the dominant social and media landscape. For, as Garcia and Lovink write: “Awareness of this tactical/strategic dichotomy helped us to name a class of producers of who seem uniquely aware of the value of these temporary reversals in the flow of power. And rather than resisting these rebellions do everything in their power to amplify them. And indeed make the creation of spaces, channels and platforms for these reversals central to their practice. We dubbed their (our) work tactical media.”²¹

In the light of the above strategy/tactic differentiation, of seminal importance for the practices of tactical media, Shostak, with *Nowacy*, can be seen to occupy a distinctly tactical position. She intervened in the field of political, social, and media discourse dominated by right-wing anti-refugee

propaganda unleashed for political goals. Importantly, this rhetoric was spread by institutions that enjoyed access to broad-reaching and powerful channels of communication, and tapped into the immense mainstream media attention that is offered to political elites and decision-makers (including state-owned media controlled by government representatives). All this considered, the political forces with an anti-refugee agenda developed an immense “territory” (to use de Certeau’s term) of their own, from which to exert a major influence on the public debate.

In turn, Shostak’s position in public discourse was obviously incomparably weaker. She could not rely on her own media outlets, and attracted much smaller mainstream media attention. This left her to operate on the territory that belonged to strategic actors. Therefore, in order to promote her initiative with a view to influencing the public debate, she needed to resort to a tactical action on the “enemy’s” territory, as de Certeau would have it. This can be seen particularly clearly in the choice of communication channels she relied on, such as social media.

Another common thread that Shostak’s work shares with approaches and practices labelled as tactical media is the activist, anti-establishment, and resistance-oriented motivation that underpins *Nowacy*. Just as Shostak operates tactically in a discursive and communication environment, tactical media practitioners such as those listed by Richardson seek entry to communication and media channels with a view to disrupting strategic narratives and thus confronting the hegemonic powers that promulgate them, be they international corporations, powerful politicians, or global economic organizations. Therefore, both Shostak and tactical media operate with the goal of “reversing the flow of power,” in line with Garcia and Lovink’s proposal.

An aspect of Shostak’s project that may be seen to differentiate it from tactical media practices is that the word “nowak” was put into use via an initiative with the long-term goal of influencing attitudes towards refugees in Poland. Meanwhile, tactical media projects usually tend to adopt the form of “makeshift, temporary infiltrations from the inside through actions of thefts, hijacks, tricks and pranks,”²² although they might still be considered part of broader pursuits, for instance of undermining corporate power. What is more, although tactical media act in a rather ephemeral spirit, while Shostak pursues a more-systematic effort toward a clearly specified goal, both ultimately appear to rely on similar tactics of intervention in public communication and discourse.

Communication guerrilla

Nowacy can also be approached from the perspective of another concept from the tactical media circuit: “communication guerrilla,” as coined and theorized by the autonome a.f.r.i.k.a. gruppe collective.²³ The group discusses this concept in detail in the text *What Is Communication Guerrilla?*, which I consider a very useful basis from which to look at Shostak’s work and the

mechanism it relies on.

The collective's statement begins by questioning the power of spreading information and rational argument, underpinned by "years of distributing leaflets and brochures about all kinds of disgraces, of organizing informative talks and publishing texts." As they write: "Traditional radical politics strongly rely on the persuasive power of the rational argument. The confidence that the simple presentation of information represents an effective form of political action is almost unshakeable. Critical content and the unimpeded spread of 'truth' are supposed to be sufficient to tear up the network of manipulating messages, with which the media influence the consciousness of the masses."²⁴ These words strongly correspond with the Polish situation, where hopes for a rational and unbiased debate concerning the admission of refugees have been shattered by the politically motivated hijacking of public discourse.

Realizing the shortcomings of such an approach, autonome postulate a more "militant political position" and "direct action in the space of social communication." That position, however, is "different from other militant positions (stone meets shop window)" in that "[communication guerrilla] doesn't aim to destroy the codes and signs of power and control, but to distort and disfigure their meanings as a means of counteracting the omnipotent prattling of power. Communication guerrillas do not intend to occupy, interrupt or destroy the dominant channels of communication, but to detourn and subvert the messages transported."²⁵

This vision of intervention in public discourse and channels of communication corresponds closely to the idea behind the linguistic operation in Shostak's project, which also relies on "detourning" the popular surname Nowak, profiting from its distinctly Polish connotations, in order to subvert anti-refugee messages conveyed through channels of public communication. Bringing her initiative even closer to the approach proposed by autonome is the group's framing of communication guerrilla as "an incessant exploration of the jungle of communication processes, of the devoured and unclear paths of senders, codes and recipients," pursued by looking "not just at what's being said, but [focusing] on how it is being said."²⁶ Such focus informs Shostak's attempt to convert a typically Polish surname into a common noun that designates someone from outside the national community, and thus to confront negative connotations and attitudes around such individuals.

Lastly, with *Nowacy*, Shostak does indeed create one of "those short and shimmering moments of confusion and distortion," described by autonome, "moments which tell us that everything could be completely different: a fragmented utopia as a seed of change."²⁷

Tactical usership

Another perspective I would like to evoke in the analysis of Shostak's project is Stephen Wright's reflection on "usership" in his book *Toward a Lexicon of Usership* from 2013. Akin to tactical media theorists and practitioners referred to earlier in this text, Wright also draws on de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life*²⁸ to formulate a vision of artistic practice based on a specific mode of engagement with reality beyond art. I will now turn to two concepts from Wright's lexicon, and use them as a prism through which to view *Nowacy*.

The first is "loopholes," which Wright describes as "the quintessence of usership-instantiated tactics since they offer ways into systems without physically damaging them." Used most commonly in the legal context, "a loophole in a law [...] often contravenes the intent of the law without technically breaking it." While Shostak's project is far removed from such a context, it still relies on an idea that appears very close to the intended meaning of Wright's "loopholes," namely "ambiguities in a system which can be used to circumvent its implied or explicitly stated intent."²⁹ Shostak makes use of the subversive entry point afforded by exactly such a connotational and denotational ambiguity, which emerges between the surname Nowak and its homonym "nowak."

Another term featured in Wright's lexicon that illustrates the workings of the project *Nowacy* is "repurposing," which, the author explains, "captures both usership's paradoxical idleness (no need to add anything new) and its transformative dynamic (putting the given to new purposes)."³⁰ Shostak did not have to invent the surname Nowak – with all its connotations and denotation – as it already existed. All that was left to do was to "repurpose" it as a common noun and put it into use according to the artist's intentions.

I believe that the three conceptual frameworks outlined above – tactical media, guerrilla communication, and Stephen Wright's reflection on usership – shed light on Shostak's project as a subversive operation whose essence consists of developing a tactical entry point into public discourse.

A tactical operation against anti-refugee discourse

As previously stated, Shostak's project *Nowacy* seeks to tactically effect a desired change in social attitudes towards refugees and migrants through an operation on language and discourse. I would now like to elucidate the discursive dimension of Shostak's initiative in order to illustrate the workings of discourse that her project relies on. For this purpose, I refer to some aspects of the understanding of discourse in the writings of Michel Foucault. This perspective seems particularly relevant since Foucault understands discourse as a system of "practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak,"³¹ and therefore, as Sara Mills comments, "In this sense, a discourse is something which produces something else [...], rather than something which exists

in and of itself and which can be analysed in isolation.”³² In other words, in this view, discourse does not merely describe but shapes reality, although – to quote Mills again – “Foucault does not deny the existence of the real; on the contrary, he asserts that what we perceive to be significant and how we interpret objects and events and set them within systems of meaning is dependent on discursive structures.”³³

Foucault's perspective is therefore a vital reference point that clarifies the relation between the marked increase in anti-refugee stances in Polish society and the xenophobic discourse mobilized by right-wing political forces and media. For, from this perspective, the biased public discourse on the EU's refugee relocation scheme and the admission of asylum seekers was largely responsible for framing them in the collective imagination as Others, with whom Poles could never co-exist.

The reference to discourse as seen by Foucault, and its role in shaping the public perception of refugees, resonates with Monika Bobako's understanding of Islamophobia (and, by extension, xenophobia) as a “system of meanings that are constituted by mechanisms of producing the Muslim Other,” and therefore as a “social relation”³⁴ that is largely configured through discursive means. Foucault's perspective is addressed by Bobako in her analysis as a reference point from which to view Islamophobic discourse as “a form of social practice, and therefore something that, while being an expression of anti-Muslim attitudes coded in words, arguments, and representations, is also a manner of structuring social reality.”³⁵ Although Bobako concentrates primarily on Islamophobia, I consider her arguments vital to this discussion on a more general level. As the author argues, the spreading of xenophobic attitudes in Poland was largely made possible by the generalizing association of asylum seekers with Muslims in the collective imagination, while anti-refugee propaganda principally followed Islamophobic tropes. Bobako remarks that in many situations Islamophobia “permeates and overlaps” with “other forms of xenophobia or racism,”³⁶ which can be seen in various forms of anti-migrant hatred.

The nature of discourse as a force that actively shapes social reality is fundamental for Shostak's project, which seeks to tap into this agency to influence social attitudes. This attempt can be explained with reference to yet another aspect of discourse indicated by Foucault, for whom it is related to hegemony, but also to resistance, as can be seen in *The History of Sexuality*. Foucault writes: “Discourses are not once and for all subservient to power or raised up against it, any more than silences are. We must make allowance for the complex and unstable process whereby discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling-block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy. Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it.”³⁷ Thus, the possibility of a “reverse” discourse arises, which relies on the

same vocabulary and categories, albeit rotated by 180 degrees, because “there can exist different and even contradictory discourses within the same strategy; they can, on the contrary, circulate without changing their form from one strategy to another, opposing strategy.”³⁸

In Shostak's case, the production of this “reverse” discourse does not consist of changing the connotations around the word “refugee,” but instead proposing to abandon the word altogether and tactically reverse the connotations around the surname Nowak and the word “nowak.” She reverses discourse as if *à rebours* – not by developing positive connotations around a pejoratively perceived word, but by tapping into the positive connotations of another word and shifting its meaning. The surname Nowak (strongly associated with members of the national community) is turned into a common noun, while the artist addresses the meaning contained in its etymology: “newman, newcomer.” Thus, a game is played out between the exclusionary and inclusionary meanings that the surname/noun contains. This game serves to show that, as the artist says, “everyone comes from somewhere, everyone is a newcomer,”³⁹ including Shostak herself, an artist born to a family of Polish origin in Belarus, and therefore a citizen of that country residing in Poland.

Such a tactic responds to Bobako's call for “revealing hidden similarities between members of the national community and Others”⁴⁰ as a way of countering xenophobic attitudes. In this light, the purpose of the conflating procedure on the surname/noun “Nowak”/“nowak” is to bring refugees closer to the national community. Although the artist chose the word as a specific replacement for “refugee,” and her project is a direct response to the mobilization of anti-refugee stances in political contexts, its underlying message might – and should – be extended to other migrant groups in Poland, such as the expanding Ukrainian population, whose residence in the country is seldom on a refugee or asylum-seeking basis, but who nevertheless risk exposure to xenophobia. In the spirit of tactical media and communication guerrilla, Shostak attempts to tap into the resistance potential of discourse, to use it as a weapon against xenophobic discourse itself, and thus reverse “the flow of power,”⁴¹ as Garcia and Lovink would have it.

The limitations and significance of Shostak's tactical operation

The major “us and them” divide between Poles and refugees/migrants has been mobilized even more in recent years by right-wing propaganda for contingent political goals. The existence of this divide and the intensification of anti-refugee attitudes and discourse render it difficult for asylum seekers to seek help in Poland and for refugees to organize their lives in the country. Shostak critically addresses this divide at the level of language and discourse aiming to affect the public debate, hijacked by propaganda. Her tactical operation based on inclusionary and exclusionary connotations of words creates a “stumbling-block”⁴² – as Foucault would have it – in public

discourse, which seeks to make it more difficult to spread anti-refugee propaganda.

A certain limitation that can be distinguished with regard to Shostak's project concerns its sole focus on "how [things are] being said,"⁴³ – to quote autonome a.f.r.i.k.a. gruppe's communication guerrilla manifesto. As the artist introduces a shift in the operation of discourse and language with regard to refugees and migrants, she omits the actual relational and interactional circumstances in which this proposed change might operate and which it is supposed to affect. In other words, the project primarily concerns how refugees are referred to among members of the Polish community, while failing to directly facilitate situations of communication and interaction between Poles and newcomers. The former, however, is relevant to refugees themselves, as a community whose life in the host country is largely determined by attitudes towards them among the broader society.

Such a profile of *Nowacy* posits the project as a tool with a specific discourse- and public debate-oriented use, rather than an all-embracing intervention toward improving the situation of refugees and asylum seekers in Poland. Shostak's approach should therefore be seen as part of an organic combination formed with other avenues of action, whose goal consists of addressing the essential sphere of relations and interactions, and which operate in a tactical manner on a territory that *Nowacy* does not directly address. Excellent examples of such initiatives can be found in the field of activism, such as the Refugees Welcome project and the Kuchnia Konfliktu restaurant in Warsaw, among many others. While the former repurposes the mechanism of a housing rental network to adjust it to the needs of refugees, the latter approaches in a similar way the business entity model for the purpose of the inclusion of refugees into professional and social life. Both effectively foster interactions with the Polish community. Having witnessed the apparent failure of pro-refugee initiatives at the strategic level of political and social action, I would argue for the importance of such – seemingly irrelevant, small-scale – tactical engagement as a prototype of social action in a variety of fields: interactional, social, and professional, but also discursive.

Given the strategic dominance of right-wing anti-refugee politics and the overall contamination of discourse by xenophobic propaganda, tactic appears to be of the few modes of resistance still available. Its significance may also extend into the future, in which the strategic political configuration could potentially become more open. Yet, openness cannot be decreed from the top down, and broad state-level policies will not succeed without work on the micro-scale of everyday encounters and language. The refugee question confronted the country with a challenge that deserves an unbiased, mature, and empathetic debate which might usher in a renegotiation and renewal of the Polish community. Its current impossibility at the political and social level leaves it up to tactical engagement to prepare the ground for potential strategic shifts in the future.

1. The total number of individuals granted international protection in the country (refugee status

- and subsidiary protection) reached 7,000 in 2017; data by the Polish Office for Foreigners. ↵
2. Monika Bobako, *Islamofobia jako technologia władzy. Studium z antropologii politycznej* (Kraków: Universitas, 2017), 18. ↵
 3. Bearing testimony to the effectiveness of anti-refugee propaganda in the Polish political, social, and media landscape are the results of a poll conducted by the Polish Centre for Public Opinion Research (CBOS). In the survey from mid-2015, 72% of respondents declared their support for accepting asylum seekers, while 21% were against it: "Komunikat z badań CBOS 81/2015," CBOS, June 2015, https://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2015/K_081_15.PDF (accessed June 10, 2019). A poll conducted just nine months later revealed a decline in the number of respondents in favor of allowing asylum seekers into the country to 39%, while the number of those who believed that Poland should accept no refugees rose to a staggering 57%: "Komunikat z badań CBOS 24/2016," CBOS, February 2016, https://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2016/K_024_16.PDF (accessed June 10, 2019). ↵
 4. Bobako, *Islamofobia*, 18. ↵
 5. Bobako, *Islamofobia*, 361. ↵
 6. Jakub Majmurek, "Bez islamistów coś poczniemy teraz?," *Krytyka Polityczna* 43 (Autumn 2015), 151. ↵
 7. Bobako, *Islamofobia*, 9. ↵
 8. Bobako, *Islamofobia*, 9; Szymon Bujalski, "Polska walczy z obcymi. Rośnie liczba ataków rasistowskich i ksenofobicznych," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, September 16, 2016, <https://wiadomosci.onet.pl/kraj/gw-polska-walczy-z-obcymi-rasizm-nie-jest-juz-u-nas-wstydlivy/17c7mp>. ↵
 9. Maciej Duszczak, "Solidarność to za mało," *Krytyka Polityczna* 43 (Autumn 2015), 159. ↵
 10. Adam Leszczyński, "Poles don't want immigrants. They don't understand them, don't like them'," *The Guardian*, July 2, 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jul/02/pires-do-not-want-immigrants-they-dont-understand-them-dont-like-them>. ↵
 11. Jana Shostak, "Portfolio," https://issuu.com/dzmuhawec/docs/jana_shostak_portfolio (accessed June 10, 2019). ↵
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 13. Feminine form: "nowaczka," plural form: "nowacy." ↵
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