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INTERCULTURAL INTERNET: TRUST PERFORMING STRATEGIES

WEBSITE SOCIAL NETWORK AS AN INTERACTION-EXCHANGE SYSTEM¹

The most distinctive feature of *interaction-exchange systems* is fundamental for the practice of exchange², regulated and coordinated by values common for its users. Actions of system's members are meaningful, culturally and socially negotiated, and are realized on the basis of language and visual representations. Values regulating actions within operations of exchange are respected or even accepted by acting actors. Yet, they can be openly negotiated within a communicative practice, in situations, in which the fundamental practice finds itself in the conflicting, crisis course. Thus, communicative practice in *interaction-exchange systems* is functionally submitted to the fundamental practice of exchange, and the last mentioned serves as the functional (but not the only one) context for communicative practice. If the fundamental practice of exchange comprises subjective-rational actions of system's users, their analysis conducted in the context of cultural studies will reconstruct values, on which social actors orientate their actions. It will also reveal users' knowl-

¹ I described a particular example of *interaction-exchange systems*: Allegro website, and its fundamental arrangement in the essays: M. Kosińska, "How can commercial Website become a social network site? Social and cultural negotiations of trust, reciprocity and honesty values in web 2.0", forthcoming, and M. Kosińska, "Kulturowy wymiar portalu Allegro i jego tekstualna kwalifikacja", forthcoming. Work is often the subject of exchange in a CouchSurfing group: Rural Couchsurfing, aggregating owners of farms in rural areas. CS users can be hosted for a long time in return on help in the farm.

² The basis for analysis of *interaction-exchange systems* is defining of its fundamental practice of exchange. It derives the notion of social practice from the socio-regulative conception of culture of Jerzy Kmita, in which the basic practice is the practice of production, exchange and consumption. Among various Internet environments I distinguish those which operate basically through the practice of exchange between users. I include to this category, among others: Allegro, eBay.com, CouchSurfing.com., HospitalityClub.com.

edge, allowing them for the realization of values relevant for their actions.³ So, communicative practice in *interaction-exchange systems* comprises open negotiations of values regulating practice of exchange and various possible ways of their realization. It also includes trials of justifying these values by placing them in the wider context of the social consciousness of relevant community. This function of *interaction-exchange systems'* communicative practice becomes the most problematic if we consider such systems as multicultural, thus potentially operating through the values from various local communities and so, from different cultural contexts.

The interaction-exchange arrangement of systems so described underlies the indispensable connection of a fundamental for the practice of exchange and communicative practice, treating them as mutually coordinating each other. It also allows for analysis concluding about social actors' knowledge (understood as cultural knowledge). Yet, such analysis has to take into consideration that these systems operate on the edge of online (WWW) and offline spheres, what additionally complicates the relation between action and communication. The last mentioned relation can be explained by an online/offline architecture of *interaction-exchange systems*. This theoretical attitude enables to treat such websites not necessarily as hospitality systems (but rather considering hospitality as one of the values, only possibly regulating the practice of exchange), and so, to avoid theoretical problems resulting from this attitude.

Perspective of hospitality systems was a basic context for Jennie Germann Molz and her description of websites: CouchSurfing.com., HospitalityClub.org., Servas International, and GlobalFreeloaders.com. Jennie Germann Molz describes mentioned-above websites as hospitality communities, controlling their boundaries by operating through difference. Such mechanism serves the cosmopolitan disposition of these communities to delimit themselves by "openness toward difference" and in consequence, to create "a bounded community of »like minded« but diverse individuals".⁴ Communities centered around category of hospitality preserve their fundamental value through specifying what definition of hospitality excludes. Thus they operate through the differences: guest – parasite, guest – enemy.⁵ Establishing so their meaningful boundaries, they alleviate external and internal risk: differentiate community from everything that it is not, and preserve their members internally through the negative, symbolic specification of operations violating the principal value.

³ See: J. Kmita, *O kulturze symbolicznej*, Centralny Ośrodek Metodyki Upowszechniania Kultury, Warszawa 1982, s. 41.

⁴ J. Germann Molz, „Cosmopolitans in the Couch: Mobile Hospitality and the Internet”, in: J. Germann Molz, S. Gibson (eds.), *Mobilizing Hospitality. The Ethics of Social Relations in a Mobile World*, Ashgate, 2007, p. 66.

⁵ J. Germann Molz, „Cosmopolitans in the Couch: Mobile Hospitality and the Internet”, op. cit., p. 67.

The basic social practice in CouchSurfing system is, according to Germann Molz, governed by “an economy of hospitality” and fulfilled in terms of reciprocity. J. Germann Molz refers to the É. Benveniste’s analysis of hospitality⁶ describing its etymological meanings (*hospes, hostis, potis*) as denoting a reciprocal exchange, thus always involving obligation of repayment for benefited kindness. She contrasts this meaning of hospitality with J. Derrida’s notion of absolute hospitality (in which it is unconditional, open to the difference, and it is full acceptance of risk)⁷ and with utopian conceptions of virtual communities understood as democratic and all-inclusive.⁸ Operating through reciprocal exchange, hospitality communities aren’t therefore, in J. Germann Molz analysis, unconditionally open for risk and difference. They treat reciprocal economy of hospitality as a social pact binding morally participants in social solidarity, but the balance of this exchange is constantly threatened with trust abusing operations, and so, with imbalance of participation in exchange practice. Managing a hospitable system to minimize the threat of risk is indeed filtering the difference “in order to allow the community to internalize the »right« kind of difference while excluding the »wrong« kind of difference”.⁹ Thus community of hospitality becomes an exclusive club of middle-class citizens, intently preserving its boundaries from those who haven’t got financial or political possibilities to travel and host. A cosmopolitan desire for openness meets empirical exclusion of enemies and parasites: representatives of difference “that is not easily consumed over a glass of wine or a late conversation in someone’s living room”.¹⁰

Jacques Derrida’s notion of absolute hospitality (a point of reference for virtual hospitality systems in analysis J. Germann Holz), is however only a one side of insoluble antinomy between the *Law* of unlimited hospitality and always conditional *laws* of normative duties binding hospitably acting hosts and guests. The absolute *Law* of hospitality giving to the new arrival all “without asking a name, or compensation, or the fulfillment or even the smallest condition”¹¹ is always complemented by particular, conditional *laws* “marking limits, powers, rights, and duties consisted in challenging and transgressing the *Law* of hospitality”.¹² J. Derrida’s antinomy of hospitality so highlights

⁶ E. Benveniste, *Indo-European Language and Society*, Faber and Faber: London, 1973.

⁷ J. Derrida, “Step of Hospitality/No Hospitality”, in: A. Dufourmantelle, J. Derrida: *Of Hospitality. Anne Duffourmantelle invites Jacques Derrida to respond*, Stanford University Press, Stanford California 2002.

⁸ Specially online virtual communities described by Howard Rheingold in *The Virtual Community: finding connections in a computerized world*, Secker & Warburg 1994.

⁹ J. Germann Molz, „Cosmopolitans in the Couch: Mobile Hospitality and the Internet”, op. cit., p. 75.

¹⁰ J. Germann Molz, „Cosmopolitans in the Couch: Mobile Hospitality and the Internet”, op. cit., p. 78.

¹¹ J. Derrida, “Step of Hospitality/No Hospitality”, op. cit., p. 77.

¹² J. Derrida, “Step of Hospitality/No Hospitality”, op. cit., p. 77.

a tension between collective values regulating social actors' interactions, and particular, local achievements of acting *here and now* social subjects. It highlights the interrelation of local and global level of interactions.

Considering the type of virtual communities to which CouchSurfing website belongs to, I will replace the Benveniste's "economy of hospitality" with the practice of exchange as fundamental for these social environments, and so, I will highlight basic rules by which exchange between users operates. This theoretical decision will problematize the relation between the value of hospitality and a practice of exchange and will not treat them as necessarily bound up. Treating the value of hospitality as only a probable condition of a practice of exchange I will reveal various, multicultural ways of understanding its meaning, of negotiating this in a communicative practice lightening the practice of exchange, and I will ask about conditions, under which the system of exchange becomes a system of intercultural communication.

COUCHSURFING SYSTEM AS ONLINE/OFFLINE SYSTEM

Interaction-exchange systems are online/offline systems. This characteristic highlights their basically reversible character: spaces and dynamics of social actors' everyday lives stimulate their actions conducted within a website environment, and reversely, actions fulfilled within an Internet environment will always have consequences in actors' "real lives". This fundamental rule determines a set of users' most basic obligations: all validity claims raised in social actors' interactions in the online/offline system (to the truth, to the rightness, and to the truthfulness of utterance)¹³ need to be satisfied. This obligation resulting from *interaction-exchange systems'* reversible online/offline structure constitutes even more basic commitment than analyzed by J. Ger-mann Molz social pact of hospitality. It is the very first condition that needs to be satisfied, if social actor wants to play his role in the system. The slightest infringement of truth, truthfulness and rightness claims in the course of interactions will have "real" consequences. Actor's overall attitude enacted through a number of communicative acts mentioned above validity claims, is verified in a "real" course of meetings with hosts and guests, what can result in unmasking actor's declarations as not truthful, not right and not true. Thus online/offline reversible arrangement of *interaction-exchange systems* implies their other characteristics as *check on systems*: actors' actions conducted online and offline refer to each other, prove each other, and can be checked on in every moment by their immediate comparison to be verified

¹³ J. Habermas, *Teoria działania komunikacyjnego. Racjonalność działania a racjonalność społeczna*, vol. 1, trans. A. M. Kaniowski, PWN, Warszawa 1999.

as closely coordinated and worth of trust. The very basic level of determination of potential risk in the system, of adequate, fundamental strategies of alleviating risk, and so, of strategies inspiring trust, starts here. Typical for *interaction-exchange systems* security procedures, e.g.: reputation system, verification process, list of user's friends, mechanism of vouching and the CS Ambassadors community, fulfill the most fundamental system's efforts to verify it's members as persons declaring true (verified offline) information about themselves.

Verification process involves a financial contribution to the system in the course of which an identity of a future member becomes confirmed. Financial operation via credit card certifies user's personal data. This mechanism is supportive to explicitly expressed mission of CouchSurfing as a non-profit organization. Every act of a new member's verification becomes thus an act of donation. Reputation system is based on a mechanism of comments/references left by users for each other as a testimony of jointly conducted operation (specifics of this operation is determined by a practice elementary for particular *interaction-exchange system*¹⁴). It determines participants of exchange practice as reliable/unreliable, worth/unworthy of trust, and thus, is the foundation of possible future estimations of potential risk involved in particular operations planned in the system. Reputation system is completed by lists of friends on users' profiles: an amount of friends, the personal types they represent, the character of these friendships (always specified), aids the process of verification through the social context: it highlights participant's engagement in social relations. The mechanism of vouching develops the web of the most trustworthy CS participants: they are determined as utmost trustworthy (vouched for) by users who had been already vouched for by three other members of the system. A trusted member of a system can vouch only for users whom he had met in offline course. Many members of this web are CouchSurfing Ambassadors, who are not only the most reliable participants, but also the most committed: involved in and organizing many events and activities in CS groups and communities.¹⁵

Certifying online information by physical verification, system's security procedures try to lighten users' attempts to confirm other actors' actions and characteristics, as, above all, true and truthful. And reversely: users' efforts

¹⁴ Reputation system is characteristic of *interaction-exchange systems* of all kinds, also of systems in which the fundamental practice of exchange refers to the trade operations between consumers: for example on eBay and Allegro. Although subject of exchange in hospitality systems and in trade operations systems is different, in both cases regulation of "proper" exchange operations between users is administered by reputation system.

¹⁵ The community of CS Ambassadors is based on a hierarchical order and involves six types of Ambassadors: Nomadic, City, Family, Country, Global, and Alumni. Each following type means at the same time the next step in gaining competences and experience: http://www.couchsurfing.org/amb_levels.html#Nomadic_Ambassadors.

complement system's procedures, which are not meant to satisfy all the system's requirements for minimizing possible risk. CS members are so instructed to estimate potential risk and thus aid system's mechanisms:

Individual judgment is the most important safety measure! All of CouchSurfing's safety features and all of the information available on member profiles are designed to help members make educated decisions about who they'd like to interact with. By reading messages carefully, looking at profiles thoroughly, reading references, and communicating clearly about guidelines and expectations, individual CouchSurfers can interact according to their own personal comfort level¹⁶.

Not satisfying the requirements inscribed in security procedures, not proving oneself as referring to true and being truthful can be treated as a lack of fundamental effort made to become a member of a system, so being worth of the very basic trust.

If you want to improve your chances, complete your profile - give your name, occupation, education, etc. You say nothing about your friend who should also complete a profile and have a photo. This would improve your responses by showing that you are not lazy or thoughtless.

There are just two details which would help u. First of all, since u already have some friends, it would be better if they left a reference to you, to help people to understand how u deal with others. Two, u are saying u are gonna come with some friend, it is not a problem itself, but better u explain what kind of people they are, and whether they have a profile on cs, too. Most people do not have problems in hosting more than one person, but they feel usually bad with the idea of "outsiders". Hope u will enjoy your trip.¹⁷

However, an effort of being equal to the safety requirements is, at the same time, users' strategy of coping with online/offline reversible arrangement of *interaction-exchange system*. This specific of websites of exchange is well recognized by its members and acknowledged as problematic. Thus, a researcher deals with social environment already interpreted by its participants, and with their everyday efforts to confirm website data with offline arrangements. At this very fundamental level of interactions and interpretations, system's participants deal with common efforts of satisfying claims to the truth, and these attempts, to the high degree, result from online/offline arrangement of *interaction-exchange systems*. On this basis participants try to manage their role in the system, thus to create the *persona* interpreted by other users as acting (truly) in conformity with dynamics of their everyday life and satisfying (truthfully) system's obligations.¹⁸ This demands the fundamental user's competence of maintaining constant equilibrium between online and offline dynamics.

¹⁶ <http://www.couchsurfing.org/safety.html>.

¹⁷ Responses for a request for couch posted on discussion group by user with incomplete profile and attempting to travel with a friend not being a participant of CouchSurfing.

¹⁸ I introduce the notion of *persona* to describe the meaningful, online agent created by users to conduct his action in the online course.

Please have a completed profile and show who you are and what you like in life. I never host people without any info. CS is more than finding a quick sleeping place. And that means not just some basic info with 1 or 2 pics. There must be some chemistry between you and me and your profile is the only frame of reference that i have. So, NO HOSTING IF YOU DON'T HAVE ANY INFO ABOUT WHO YOU ARE ON YOUR PROFILE!!!!

(...) just because you join Couchsurfing, doesn't mean you have to let just anyone who filled out a CS profile stay with you. You obviously need to feel you can generally trust your guest to respect your boundaries and your property.¹⁹

CLAIMS TO THE TRUTH

Participation in *interaction-exchange systems* is inseparably bound with overall dimension of users' everyday life. The structure, dynamics, obligations and character of everyday life determine a kind of a role that one takes in the system, a set of commitments towards community and a rate of satisfying them. From the other side, being involved in community of exchange means to meet its obligations and to "fit" them to the possibilities resulting from off-line, everyday life. Thus, membership in system of exchange does not impose on its subjects necessities which are impossible to fulfill. It rather demands conscious, constant control between what *I can* (what is possible) and what *I could* (what is my valuable contribution to the system). These two modalities have to be perpetually proving (not just once proved) in system's symbolic (linguistic and iconic) environment, if user's *persona* is to be acknowledged by other members as coherent, so serious and reliable. Thus members of hospitality community often describe their everyday life in the very detail and refer these descriptions to specifications of their role in the system. They try to certify themselves as saying truth about their lives (satisfying the claim to the truth) and being committed to the community as far as it is possible (meeting the claim to the truthfulness) at the same time. The coherence binding these two attitudes is the most fundamental feature of reliable and trustworthy user's *persona*. Trying to satisfy the claim to the truth, thus to specify what one *can* offer to the system of exchange, users apply strategies of description which are organized, first of all, around three criteria: the rate of exchange, the character of exchange and the quality of exchange.

Meeting the first criterion, users try to describe their style of life, occupation, and the pace of life resulting from these. If they determine their accessibility (accessibility of their couches) as constant, every interruption in this (caused by a travel, being busy, having quests, etc.) has to be recorded by them on their profiles not to mistake other users looking for a couch. It has to

¹⁹ Statements from CouchSurfing users' profiles describing the most willingly hosted by people.

be also explained. Description: "couch unavailable" without giving a reason is unacceptable. It would result in incoherent description of a member, and thus giving an impression that the user doesn't say something (truly) and doesn't feel obliged enough to explain himself (truthfully).²⁰

There is a strong feedback loop between the rate of user's everyday life and the rate of his participation in the system of hospitable exchange. Both, cyclical and linear dimensions of time are present in users' descriptions.²¹ Cyclical rate of time, determining repeating occurrences on a day, week, weekend, month, year basis, sets an accessibility of user in a system of exchange. Specifies how often one can open his house for other couchsurfers and how often he will possibly be a guest. A rhythm of a day (often described in a detail) is the basis of users' declarations of how much time they spend in, and outside their homes, and how much time, (if at all), they will be able to spend with their guests. The cyclical dimension of time also states an axis on which one's possibilities of traveling (having vacation) is determined. In that case it defines users as couches seekers. In a cyclical scale of time CS members usually travel one or two times a year, during their holidays. However, the linear scale of time shows travelling as a "huge project": planned for a long time, awaited, often being "a great adventure" or even "a journey of life". It also refers to young couchsurfers, taking a year off after their graduation and looking for new experiences during their long trip. The linear scale of time interrupts cyclical arrangements and demands different than usual, everyday ways of time managing, and thus, modifies a rate of participation in exchange system.

However, the visibly pulsating pace of users' everyday lives (in cyclical and linear scale) meets the rate of community of exchange. This scale of time functions above the variety of individual time arrangements and it is governed by a requirement of reciprocity, so the balance between taking and giving. Having a year off after graduation and travelling during this time means being constantly a guest, so a long-term taking from the system. Having a farm in a central France ("in the middle of nowhere") with huge amount of domestic animals renders impossible to travel, implies being constantly a host, so a long-term giving to the system. These "givings and takings" have to be somehow compensated. Satisfying the demand of compensation always occurs on two levels.

²⁰ Marcel Mauss describing refusal of exchange in archaic societies accentuates that the act of refusal is equal to declaring a war, see: M. Mauss, *The gift: the form and reason for exchange in archaic societies*, trans. W. D. Halls, 1979. Refusal of being a host is always explained in detail on CouchSurfing users' profiles. The most popular explanations are: living in one flat with a landlord, removal, living with flat mates, not having a couch for guests, being in travel (in that case users often make publicly available their phone number to contact with them in an "emergency" situations).

²¹ See: P. Sztompka, *Zaufanie. Fundament społeczeństwa*, Znak, Kraków 2007, s. 32.

The first one is a local level of meeting with some particular CS user, in a role of host or in a role of guest. The most basic, fundamental reciprocity has to occur *here and now*, during the hospitable exchange. It takes a form of being grateful for being hosted, of bringing a bottle of wine to the dinner, of washing dishes after a meal, of giving a gift from mother's country. These most local forms of reciprocal exchange are scrupulously documented in references which users leave for each other after their meetings.

The second form of compensation is more general and occurs in the global scale. Users usually cannot reciprocate for their visit (being a guest) with having their host as a guest. This type of one-to-one exchange occurs very seldom. Thus, users exchange locally, *here and now* with some particular others, but at the same time an exchange runs always between user and the whole community: with undefined strangers. This establishes a global context for local interactions of exchange and imposes a set of conditions to satisfy in general (far beyond *here and now* interactions). Members of community of exchange understand this global form of compensation in many different ways, in their own terms, but these particular attempts to reciprocate to the whole community meet a general rule: *one can take as much as one gives*. Thus young couchsurfers before or after their "one year journey of life" host as much CS users as it is possible (these mode of exchange often take a form of organizing a *base*, in which during one night a dozen or so of travelers can be guests). Owners of a farm "in the beautiful middle of nowhere", constant hosts not being able to travel, expect their guests to stay for more than only one night, to transform usual CS exchange (often accidental) in a real meeting between thinking similar people. Giving a lot, they expect to take back only valuable experiences.

THE QUALITY AND CHARACTER OF EXCHANGE

Being a member of *interaction-exchange system* demands competence of skilful managing of two levels of interactions: global and local. A compromise between these two dimensions of exchange can be reached through the communicative practice: in communicative actions users determine their rate of exchange, document their past, local exchanges, equivalence reached *there and then*, and they specify all possible, future equivalences. Thus, they describe their role in the system; anticipate future exchange practices by specifying what actually they *want* and *can* share with yet unknown others. In this context information about the character of exchange and the quality of exchange becomes an indispensable coordinator of users' acts.

The most elementary descriptions of a quality of exchange comprise information about conditions offered by users to their guest: they specify where exactly a couchsurfer will spend his night, if he will share his room with someone else, if he will sleep on the couch, or on the floor in his sleeping bag. He

is informed at what time he will have to get up in the morning, and if he will have to submit to some host's specific rules. These descriptions coordinate the most elementary kind of exchange with one and only exchanged subject: couch. Yet, members of CS community are perfectly aware, that couch is definitely not the only one good to be exchanged. CS user seeking for a particular partner to exchange with, specifies a character of this practice, so determines *what* exactly he wants to exchange.²²

A. Subjects of exchange declared by users on their profiles

Subject of exchange		
Couches	Good experience	Knowledge
Places	Personal Recommendations	Experience
Information	Travel tips	Cultural experiences
Help	Kindness	Tolerant attitude meals
Communication ideas	Politeness	Style of life trust
Debates	Mind's depth	Passion for life
Language skills	Philosophical inside in other cultures	Being a harming guest
Companionship	Inside in other positive vibes	Being a harming host
In travelling	Positive vibes	Being like an open Book
Meetings	What is important social skills	References
Honesty	Music	Skills
Work ¹		

Thus, an overall system of exchange is not homogeneous; it comprises at least a dozen or so various spheres,²³ which can be determined in regard to their character. Among others, the most distinctive two are: a usual couch exchange and exclusive exchange. These categories determine the specification of the most elementary and the most advanced types of exchange, and correspond with B. Malinowski's division of exchange system on *gimwali*, (interpreted as the basic form of a trade, common economical exchange of useful goods, "pure barter"²⁴) and *Kula*, (exclusive, "aristocratic" exchange,

²² He does so not only in a direct request in which he tests one's accessibility for a meeting, but also in his overall communicative attitude: his description on personal profile, in references left for and by him, in his activity in discussion groups. These all communicative tracks he leaves in a system, have to be coherent and enable an interpretation of his overall attitude. Thus, communicative practice becomes a source of interpretations for members of a community, and so, particular occurrences of this practice run on the basis of already conducted interpretations.

²³ Ch. Hann refers to the category „spheres of exchange” as appearing in the context of economy of anthropology, in works of B. Malinowski and R. Firth. According to these two, it is possible to distinguish separated spheres of exchange in every particular economical system, Ch. Hann, *Antropologia społeczna, (Social Anthropology)*, trans. S. Szymański, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Kraków 2008, p. 83.

²⁴ B. Malinowski, „Tribal Economics in the Triobriands”, in: *Argonauts of the Western Pacific. An Account of Native Enterprise and Adventure in the Archipelagoes of Melanesian New Guinea*, Taylor & Francis, London 2005, p. 190.

comprising “payments which are ceremonially offered [...] and re-paid later on. [...] based on permanent partnership, where a gift offered is always accepted, and after a time has to be re-paid by an equivalent counter-gift”).²⁵ In a CouchSurfing *interaction-exchange system* the most fundamental form of exchange is an usual couch exchange. It is usually conducted by persons planning their trip and attempting to *operate* it by couches placed in their route. Users exchanging in this way aren’t interested deeply in their hosts’ personal characteristics. Establishing a kind of personal relationship with a partner of exchange is not a purpose of their actions. Thus, usual exchange can run with anybody, or rather with a *harmless stranger*. Usual couch exchange is the subject of the most visible strategic attitude, and thus, a form of a pure barter. It is based on immediate equivalence reached *here and now* at the local level of interaction. In a global perspective, equivalence is achieved by an amount of being-a-host and being-a-guest exchanges, so by a quantity and not by a quality of exchange experiences. Usual couch exchange is recognized by the most privileged, trustworthy and reliable users as unworthy and parasitic, executed without any ceremonial and respect for other users.

I understand some couchsurfers are looking for a spontaneous experience of finding a bed for the night without interaction with the host. Those couchsurfers will find greater happiness elsewhere.²⁶

Members of community of exchange perfectly recognize conditions of exchange that have to be fulfilled if particular action is not to qualify as a pure *gimwali*:²⁷

(...) of course the best thing is to search and pick 2 or 3 possible hosts per city and write them a personal request - DONT cut and paste = ‘will be in your city/area’ is a bad look, state the name of where you are planning to visit. Make it like a personal to an individual request, not just something you have sent to dozens. Hosts like to know you have read their profile and think you would enjoy their company, etc.²⁸

The most advanced type of exchange, exclusive exchange, runs between the most privileged users who have already satisfied the condition of a properly high amount of being-a-host and being-a-guest exchanges. These users are usually vouched for, they have a lot of positive references, many friends, and very often they are active in particular discussion groups. They satisfied all *interaction-exchange system’s* requirements and their position in the com-

²⁵ B. Malinowski, „Tribal Economics in the Triobriands”, op. cit., p. 187.

²⁶ A statement from a CS user’s profile.

²⁷ As Malinowski argues, *gimwali* is a type of exchange very scrupulously differentiated by natives from ceremonial *Kula*. “When scornfully criticizing bad conduct in *Kula*, or an improper manner of giving gifts, a native will say that ‘it was done like a *gimwali*’”, B. Malinowski, „Tribal Economics in the Triobriands”, op. cit., p. 190.

²⁸ An advice given to the user by other users on the one of CS discussion groups of how to write requests for hosts.

munity is extraordinary. As in most cases a style of life of exchanging users is a coordinator of a practice of exchange, an exclusive exchange a style of life becomes definitely its subject. Users exchanging exclusively describe their lives as based on unusual experiences, professions, and interests. The practice anticipated by them is a *sharing* with some kind of surplus, wealth, comfort, the most often resulting from a conscious, exclusive style of life and a state of mind. Descriptions on profiles of exclusively exchanging users are very precise, determine in detail what is offered and what is expected. This kind of exchange cannot run with anybody, a partner of exchange is precisely determined, is the *most desirable other*. A course of meeting is perfectly planned, obligatorily comprises a point of *sharing experiences* and unusual prestige: so it becomes a "ceremonial" meeting. Similarly to *Kula* exchange, this practice is a manifestation of generosity, freedom and autonomy, and at the same time magnitude.²⁹ Users often do not specify for how long they are able to host their guest: one can stay as long as a good is a *chemistry* of the meeting.

Various types of character of exchange in CS show clearly visible instance of social subjects' individual perspectives in the *interaction-exchange system*. As online/offline system, CouchSurfing community is deeply rooted in a tissue of users' everyday lives, and thus, determined by its rhythm, needs, possibilities and, what is the most important, the pursuit of maximizing one's own benefit by its members. Thus, I will argue, that the basis of CouchSurfing *interaction-exchange system* is not assumed by participants an elementary perspective of coordination of actions (in the mode of Habermasian communicative action) in which social actors find themselves in a paradigm of intersubjective agreement and interpret cultural knowledge to coordinate their actions.³⁰ This perspective would be valid if one would accept as fundamental for analysis of CS system, mentioned at the beginning, and cited by J. Germann Molz, Benveniste's notion of hospitality, essentially denoting a reciprocal exchange, so equating hospitality and a practice of exchange. At this basis, J. Germann Molz points the economy of hospitality as the foundation of CS community, thus hospitality becomes the fundamental practice in this system. Yet, it seems useful to keep the notion of hospitality and a notion of exchange separately. The fundamental practice in *interaction-exchange system* is always a practice of exchange, and hospitality can be one of its coordinators (variously understood by social actors and thus negotiated in multicultural communicative practice). Taking this point of view, the Derrida's absolute notion of hospitality, the *Law* of hospitality, doesn't have to be, (and actually cannot), the principal and only one reference point for CS *interaction-exchange system's* analysis. A practice of exchange doesn't have to be, (and is not), necessarily

²⁹ M. Mauss, *The gift: the form and reason for exchange in archaic societies*, op. cit.

³⁰ J. Habermas, *Teoria działania komunikacyjnego. Racjonalność działania a racjonalność społeczna*, vol. I, op. cit., 152/3.

hospitable, it is also usually not entirely open for every kind of a difference. Reversely, instead of being open to the difference perspective of hospitality (realizing a model of ideal communicative situation) members of CS system assume a strategic perspective of pursuit of self-interest, of maximizing their benefit resulting from actions within an exchange practice.

This point of view inscribes itself in a long reception of M. Mauss' analysis of a gift exchange, undermining his assumption of ritual forms of exchange between social groups and pointing out its fundamental factor: the pursuit of maximizing one's own benefit. In a perspective as Christian Arnsperger's, one can meet argumentation that an immediate acceptance of nostalgic dimension of Mauss' writings, of his quest for an "atmosphere of gift" are marked with a blame of forgetting the gift-counter-gift scheme: "rivalry and the desire for power and humiliation".³¹ In this respect Arnsperger agrees with B. Karsenti, with his description of agonistic character of gift exchange,³² and reveals notions of interest and utility as underlying the character of exchange, when prestige becomes the object of utility. His reading of the Mauss' analysis results with the fundamental, stipulating from the sociological, philosophical and economic perspective question: if an essay about an institution of exchange in archaic societies describes (nostalgically) an ideal image "of what our society *ought to be like*" or it reveals "a phenomenology of unveiling which describes the way our society *in fact operates* without our being aware of it?"³³ Thus, the greatest difficulty with Mauss' description appears, when one tries

³¹ Among attempts to transform M. Mauss' conception of gift into a new paradigm in social sciences C. Arnsperger cites: J. Godbout, *L'esprit du don*, Paris: La Découverte, 1992, and A. Caillé, *Don, intérêt et désintéressement*, Paris: La Découverte, 1994, in: C. Arnsperger, "Gift-giving Practice and NonContextual Habitus: How (not) to be Fooled by Mauss", in: A. Vanderveelde (ed.), *Gifts and Interests*, Vol. 9 of *Morality and the Meaning of Life* series, Peeters Publishers, 2000, op. cit., p. 74.

³² "The disinterestedness and generosity displayed by the donator [...] are mixed with an aspect of ordering, of defiance towards the receiver, who is compelled to acknowledge the social superiority of his rival. In this sense generosity, far from being free and undetermined, is clearly geared to the desire to dominate the person to whom one gives and to impress on him a form of power. [...] What gift exchange expresses is a fight for prestige, an essentially symbolic combat in which what is at stake is the social positioning of the subject, his »rank«, as well as his recognition by those members of the group to whom this gesture is addressed. Thus, gift exchange appears as the crystallization of the agonistic relationships that link individuals together; it is, to borrow Marshall Sahlins' expression, the 'substitute of the war of all against all which for Hobbes characterized the State of Nature, and in this quality it represents the very condition of sociality. [...] Gift exchange therefore is an exchange, and introduces reciprocity, only to the extent that it is also and at the same time a form of combat. It represents symbolically the never-ending fight which perpetuates the social link in the very moment by which it endangers it", B. Karsenti, *Marcel Mauss: Le fait social total*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris 1994, p. 31-32, in: C. Arnsperger, "Gift-giving Practice and NonContextual Habitus: How (not) to be Fooled by Mauss", op. cit., p. 73.

³³ C. Arnsperger, "Gift-giving Practice and NonContextual Habitus: How (not) to be Fooled by Mauss", op. cit., p. 71.

to “disentangle the nostalgia for what once was and the factual description of what exists”.³⁴ If Mauss’ nostalgic “call of the gift” is not present in *interaction-exchange systems* as a moral precept, it plays a role of a reference point, of an ideal to pursuit, explicitly expressed in the system’s rules:

Our Vision describes our ideal future for the world.

We envision a world where everyone can explore and create meaningful connections with the people and places we encounter. Building meaningful connections across cultures enables us to respond to diversity with curiosity, appreciation and respect. The appreciation of diversity spreads tolerance and creates a global community.

Imagine a world where anyone, regardless of geography, culture, or economic means, has the opportunity to explore. The more we are able to explore, the more possibilities we have to experience different people and different cultures.

We all have a natural desire to connect with others. We form relationships relatively easily with people to whom we are similar, but envision a world where we have the opportunity to build meaningful connections with people who are very different.³⁵

The system’s mission is determined as to connect, to share, to exchange and to explore. The subjects of these operations are: cultural exchange, friendship, learning experience, hospitality, cultural understanding, cross-cultural encounters, activities and, what is the most important: meaningful connections. Thus, values understood as so universal that able to create a global community, meets an empirical, meaningful implementation in multicultural environment of system’s users, and coordinate their practices of exchange. What is negotiated between members of CS community is not universal, nostalgic presence of values, but their local, diverse justifications. In this point J. Derrida’s *Law* of hospitality meets particular, conditional *laws* being fulfilled in local interactions. It is also a point, in which one can ask about conditions under which system of exchange becomes a system of intercultural exchange, and when and how the last mentioned can become an intercultural communication. But before I answer these questions, I will try to specify the individual profit gained by members of *interaction-exchange system*.

THE PURSUIT OF THE BENEFIT IN INTERACTION-EXCHANGE SYSTEM

The benefit of particular members of exchange practice can be understood as creating comfortable, visible and honorable position in the system allowing for the best possible coordination of one’s own personal (resulting from

³⁴ C. Arnsperger, “Gift-giving Practice and NonContextual Habitus: How (not) to be Fooled by Mauss”, op. cit., p. 73.

³⁵ <http://www.couchsurfing.org/about.html>.

one's every day, offline life) interests with requirements of community of exchange. As it was mentioned before, membership in system of exchange doesn't impose on its subjects necessities which are impossible to fulfill. Thus, the constant control between what *I can* (what is possible) and what *I could* (what is my valuable contribution to the system) is indeed the pursuit of the most convenient way of being a member, a way which will not disturb the overall architecture of one's own life. So, CS users most willingly exchange with similarly thinking, living, travelling ones.³⁶ This can be possible only if system's actor is in the constant process of creating the best possible position in the system, so being a reliable user, with huge amount of positive references and friends, having a documentation of his immaculate history in the system and a great experience, being vouched for, or being an Ambassador. His actions are yet constantly constrained (moderated) by two factors: actions and perspectives of other users, and resulting from the practice, necessity of continuous exchange: keeping people and things in movement.

Assuming a strategic attitude, pursuit of one's own best position in the system, CS users, in the end, have to coordinate their actions with actions and decisions of other users, thus, they have to take into consideration, that finally their success is depended on *others* in the system. However, an online/offline arrangement of *interaction-exchange systems* implies many possibilities for users of being confronted (often) only with those, who seem not to disturb a success of one's own strategy. So, it is online/offline architecture of these systems which enables for dealing with chosen ones, or in the best case, with *the most desirable others*.

Members of the community of exchange (specially recognized by other users as the most reliable ones) determine in detail what kind of people they are, what type of persons they are willing to host, and who is not welcomed in their houses. Their profiles' descriptions often are not hospitable, but sharply determine boundaries of their homesteads. Describing in detail characteristics of their everyday lives, the rate of possible, future exchange resulting from this, specifying what is possible (thus satisfying the claim to the truth), users also admit what they could contribute over specified basic conditions and thus they satisfy the claim to the truthfulness.

Write your profile so that it shows a realistic representation of the man you are. Join the groups that have a relevance to you. Accept as guests those who you feel interested to

³⁶ As A. Szahaj describing J. Habermas' es interpretation of strategic action points out, values indicated in this type of action can have a "metaphysical" character, thus an utilitarian context is not the only valid in analysis of strategic type of action, see: A. Szahaj, *Krytyka, emancypacja, dialog. Jürgen Habermas w poszukiwaniu nowego paradygmatu teorii krytycznej*, Prace Kolegium Otryckiego, Warszawa 1990, p. 271. In the CS *interaction-exchange system* strategic perspective assumed by its members can refer to the pursuit of the best possible contacts with *the most desirable others*, and in the consequence, can result in valuable, not utilitarian communicative experiences.

meet. It will appear not sincere if you try to rewrite your profile in order to encourage single straight men to ask for a couch.

I believe people should really surf with people with the same interests; it is easier to spend the day with? Don't you agree?

I think the trick is to be honest about who you are and if someone does not want to stay with me because they do not agree with who I am; I would rather make that choice before arriving on my door step.

Suppose I am looking for a couch. I pick my location and dates and start reading profiles of folks in the area. I will try to find people which I can connect with and expand my experiences. If I see a person whose views are contrary to mine I do not send them a request.

Suppose I get a couch surf request. I read their request and look up their profile. If I see a person whose views are contrary to mine I decline the request.

If a person is not going to be comfortable being around me for whatever reason then they probably would not be willing to open up and share experiences etc... so why would I want them to host me or have them surf my place? This experiment is more about sharing than it is about free rooms. This community is full of folks who would be interested in me and whom I would be interested in getting to know (vs. just meet and say hi).³⁷

Realizing one's own strategy of pursuit the best possible benefit in the system, acting within the web of similarly thinking people is treated by CS users as the most natural, the most comfortable and the safest way of interact with others. The strategic rule thus seems to dominate over the hospitality value:

No smokers (that's different from: 'no smoking'). Two cats will move in soon (no, they can't be locked away while you're staying).

I won't reply if you ask for more than one person, if you ask for a date that is unavailable, or if you don't use my name (that's how my reply rate is not 100%). If your request doesn't give a single reason why you'd like to stay with me, rather than with any of the other hundreds of members in Berlin, I'm probably not interested. If staying for free is all you want, please skip me; that's not why I'm here.

If you don't understand my couch request rules, I don't want to host you, as you may not understand the house rules either, and cause difficulties. And if you send me a really annoying impersonal copy-and-paste request, which completely ignores what I just said, I might click the 'spam report' button³⁸.

³⁷ This statements posted on Queer CouchSurfers Discussion Group refer to the question if Queer couchsurfers should couchsurf with heterosexual people. The problem was diagnosed by participants as a problem with fulfillment obligation to the honesty, thus of saying truth, and being truthful. Satisfying these two validity claims is at the same time understood by CS system users as operating in online/offline course: there is no point to encourage people we don't want to meet, because every online decision will have its consequences in a real course. Thus one should so project his possible, future situations, to be able to face them offline. Thus, users give advice to other user how to be honest on his profile and what possible benefit honesty can bring.

³⁸ Statement from one of the CS profiles determining conditions of possible stay in the user's home. This example of an estimation of future possible exchange definitely refers to the exchange in which its subject is something more than a couch.

In a table B I present a specification of qualities assigned by users to the most and the least willingly hosted people. All of these qualities were explicitly determined on users' profiles.

B. Preferences about partners of exchange declared on CS users' profiles

Willingly hosted	Not willingly hosted
thinking outside the box"	dirty
positively thinking	smokers
creative people	vegetarians
clearly communicating	with children
understanding irony and sarcasm	with pets
adventurous people	sexually harassing
having life outside CS	stealing people
listening to the music the same as a host	gossip people
hetero	condescending people
queer	romanticizing
vegetarian	lazy momma's boys
meat lovers	despising everything heterosexual
fun people	desperate people
party people	"Volvo driving moms"
random people	hetero
introverts	queer
	introverts

The online/offline specifics of *interaction-exchange systems* makes history of actions of every user in the system written and accessible for everyone, thus the practice of exchange in the World Wide Web environment is, for the first time, *self-documenting* and *self-describing*, and so, giving for its members quite new and unusual interpretative possibilities. Every user has an access and ability to interpret and to evaluate actions and attitude of every other user, and on this basis, is able to make a decision (according to his own criteria) if he wants and can exchange with so *estimated other*. These common, everyday online/offline estimations run in a different course of time than face-to-face interactions, demanding immediate decisions and instantaneous coordination of one's own actions with actions of a partner of interaction. Online/offline estimations give possibilities to study the overall attitude of a member of community, his description on his profile, gallery of his pictures, references left for and by him, his activity in discussion groups, a history of his travels and hosting experiences. Belonging to an activity in chosen

discussion groups, being a part of integrative-differentiating communicative practice also helps to evaluate other members and to find the best partners for exchange.³⁹ All these estimating actions run in a time determined by the strategic perspective of the user and a rate of the community of exchange. Thus, user's strategic perspective and so planned actions are finally coordinated with actions of other users but possibilities resulting from online/offline specifics of CS system allow him to choose social actors to deal with, and to act in the web of already estimated others, chosen people, *the most desirable ones*.

Of course, dealing and exchanging only with *the most desirable others* is a privilege not possible to realize for many of CS system users. Community's members not having impressing history in the system, with little amount of fiends and references, or with negative references have to accept the necessity of usual couch exchange for some time just to rebuild their positive record in the system.

I understand you have troubles finding a host. Maybe just because you are 'willing to pay' and that is against YOU!

When you say you also 'want some company', and a girl on your profile is writing a neg ref about this, than it might be hard to find another couch. You don't have a lot of experiences and having a neg ref then, makes it hard for you

Explain what happened and make sure your request is very friendly, and personal.⁴⁰

The imperative of exchanging, so keeping people and things in a constant movement is then the most important, no matter with whom the exchange will run. The rebuilding of one's own reputation is at stake and this rule shows that being a member of a system of exchange is a constant achievement of trustworthy and reliable position in the system. It demands sometimes a departure from one's one strategic attitude to gain new competences, new experiences, and so, to improve one's own reputation. Thus, the history of particular users usually shows how the experiences of usual couch exchange and exclusive exchange intertwine. Constant pursuit of the best exchange with *the most desirable others* is often interrupted by a necessity of usual couch exchange. Users act *here and now*, in a local context, trying to build their good position in the system, but at the same time they seek for equivalence of their actions in the global context, in the future, where they place a pursuit of an ideal, exclusive exchange. Thus, a tension between a local and global is at the same time a tension between a barter *gimwali* exchange and "aristocratic" *Kula*.

³⁹ I do not determine users' reasons which decide about choosing some particular partners to exchange with. It depends finally on users' strategy, on character and the subject of exchange.

⁴⁰ Advice given by users to the member of CouchSurfing having a bad history in the system and a negative reference from the woman.

INTERACTION-EXCHANGE SYSTEM AS INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION SYSTEM?

Communicative practice in *interaction-exchange systems* defined as the beginning as a sphere lightening the course of fundamental practice of exchange, comprises open negotiations of values regulating practice of exchange and various possible ways of their realization. It also includes trials of justifying these values by placing them in the wider context of the social consciousness. As it was said before, this function becomes problematic if we consider systems with fundamental practice of exchange as multicultural systems.

Many open negotiations of values regulating the practice of exchange run in the situations, when the fundamental practice becomes somehow interrupted and operates in the crisis course. Then, communicative sphere "operates" conflicts between users, ambiguous situations, attempts of their improvement or repair. Thus, it fulfills a function of lightening of the fundamental practice in the system. It also plays a role of maintaining an information contact between members of community and integrative-differentiating function.

The most fundamental role of communicative sphere is a role of maintaining an information contact between members. In this course, communicative acts refer to the common actions undertaken by users, no matter if these are joint travels, common initiatives such as CouchSurfing members meetings or events, or sharing information about various cultural, social, and often political actions.

When practice of exchange runs in the problematic, crisis course, values coordinating fundamental practice are openly negotiated within a communicative sphere. These are: hospitality, openness, reliability, trust and honesty. Users do not put into question an existence of these values, nor the role they play as coordinators of the basic practice in the system. What is negotiated, are values' various meanings and ways of their realization. Thus, existence of common values is never threatened, or put into question. They are respected by diverse, multicultural community, and in this sense they are universal. Yet, members of the exchange community are aware of creating their community by their own by a constant application of common values (functioning as common point of reference in a global context), and the ways of their realization in the local, *here and now* exchange operations. What is negotiated then, are the ways of application of common values in the mode of *how to do this*: how to be a good, desirable guest, how to be the most reliable host. In this aspect, communicative practice serves as a coordinator of the basic exchange practice.

However, the most interesting, from the intercultural communication point of reference, seems to be the integrative-differentiating role of communicative practice. In this respect users integrate themselves in various sub-groups, centered around values chosen by them. They choose among already

estimated others those, who are similarly thinking ones, and this choice is, at the same time, the choice of the web of future partners of exchange. Thus, the integrative-differentiating role of communicative practice serves as a vehicle of pursuit of the *common ground* within a very diverse, multicultural crowd. The trust and reliability in the exchange system is so depended on (conditioned by) the establishment of a joint world vision between particular groups of people. Only the certainty that *the other* has generally the same as mine sketch of the world, sets in motion the possibility of trust and of common actions. Described by J. Germann Molz system's operations of excluding "the wrong kind of difference" can be seen as system's inner, diverse mechanism of integration and differentiation of its members. Thus, instead of one community of hospitality one meets many various local groups. Several universal values (variously understood by users) regulating the practice of exchange: hospitality, openness, reliability, trust, honesty, is far not enough to coordinate huge multicultural community. Integrative-differentiating function of communicative practice helps to find values sub-regulating local exchanges, to make them more individual, local, meaningful, close and, first of all, possible.

Analysis of various discussion groups on the CouchSurfing website reveals that the combinations of categories around which sub-groups assemble, refer to the most personal characteristics of CS users: being a lesbian/gay (Queer CouchSurfing Group), being a lonely woman (an Independent Woman Group), having a family (A Family Group). These are the groups of the highest amount of members and the most active ones. Information about the most personal arrangements is also crucial on CS users' profiles. Sexual preferences, not being involved and practicing any particular religion, or being devoted to some religious belief (e.g. *being an Irish catholic person, and practicing!*⁴¹) are the most common. Communicative practice conducted within these personal characteristics is focused on values regulating yet not only the practice of exchange, but wider moral code of living as a queer, catholic, lonely person, etc.

Personal characteristics of users reveal their fundamental attitudes (moral, social, referring to the style of life). They also highlight various combinations of values, bound within one personal attitude. Below I present a model of specification of values and directives derived from one of queer CouchSurfing user's description on his profile:

⁴¹ A statement from CS user's profile.

VALUES REGULATING BEING A GAY	DIRECTIVES
<p>LOVE+FREEDOM</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p>	<p>BEING IN A LONG-TERM MONOGAMOUS RELATIONSHIP →</p> <p>LACK OF INTEREST IN A MAIN QUEER SCENE →</p> <p>LACK OF INTEREST IN A "NIGHT LIFE" →</p> <p>LIVING "IN THE BACKGROUND"</p>
<p>PEACE</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p>	<p>NOT HARMING ANYONE →</p> <p>HAVING AN ECOLOGICAL POINT OF VIEW →</p> <p>PRODUCTION OF ECOLOGICAL FOOD →</p> <p>HAVING ANIMALS IN THE HOMEASTEAD</p>
<p>CREATIVITY</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p>	<p>BEING AN ARTIST →</p> <p>PRODUCTION OF FOOD BY ONESELF →</p> <p>CONSCIOUS, INDEPENDENT CREATION OF PERSONAL AND SOCIAL LIFE</p>
<p>HAPINNESS</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p>	<p>BEING A GAY →</p> <p>BEING IN LONG-TERM MONOGAMOUS RELATIONSHIP →</p> <p>BEING FREE →</p> <p>RESIGNATION FROM WEALTH →</p> <p>ABANDONING OF "WORKOHOLIC STYLE OF LIFE"</p>
<p>TOLERANCE</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p>	<p>NOT JUDGING ANYONE</p>
<p>OPENNESS</p>	<p>BEING CLOSE WITH PEOPLE →</p> <p>SHARING EXPERIENCES →</p> <p>BEING A MEMBER OF COUCHSURFING COMMUNITY</p>

The same values and directives can be derived from various personal characteristics, e. g. the directives realizing the first pair of values: love + freedom can be characteristic also for members of heterosexual orientation. The value of "peace" regulates as being a queer as being an Irish practicing catholic. Yet, the justifications of the same values and directives will be very diverse, and thus potentially generating a conflict among its representatives. CouchSurfing users do not enter into so open communicative situations. They also do not enter in communicative situations in which two, or more contrary values clash. Personal characteristics of members as the basis of *others'* estimation secure the "safe" course of exchange.

As it was mentioned above, values regulating local exchanges running in the diverse subgroups refer to the very personal, individual users' descriptions. This highlights another important characteristic of *interaction-exchange systems* as creating a very personal, intimate environment, which is at the same time the public sphere.⁴² What is individual, referred to the most fundamental arrangements of personal lives' enables communication in diverse, multicultural environment, specially if communicative practice is understood as regulating and coordinating fundamental practice of particular social actions. Thus, the cultural dimension of social action does not refer, in the first instance, to the ethnographic specifics of social groups.⁴³ Members of online/offline communities are interested, first of all, in communication regulating their possible, future, joint actions, thus what they will look for, is not diversity but the most fundamental (so personal) similarity.

Actions in the fundamental practice of *interaction-exchange systems* are culturally regulated (by particular values), and in this sense these systems are systems of cultural interactions. If one will understand an intercultural communication as an open communicative situation, in which two or more extremely different visions of the world clashes, such systems will not be systems of intercultural communication. Communicative practice is subordinated to the fundamental practice of exchange, thus it will operate on the basis of already estimated similarity of fundamental arrangements of the world just to make future action possible. Communicative practice so does not refer to the reconciling two or more opposite values, but runs on the ground of values already accepted as common, and so, its openness refers to the reconciliation of different justifications of commonly professed values. This is much safer and possible situation to deal with by actors in multicultural environment.

⁴² This feature is also characteristic for blogs websites, see: G. P. Landow, *Hypertext 3.0: critical theory and new media in an era of globalization*, The John Hopkins University Press 2006.

⁴³ Thus my analysis in this respect takes an essentially different course than in a research conducted by Daniell Miller and Don Slater, see: D. Miller, D. Slater, *The Internet. An Ethnographic Approach*, Oxford, Berg, New York 2001.

Members of CS *interaction-exchange system* undertake the negotiation course of various justifications of common values, and they do so in the diverse, differentiated subgroups. Thus, they undertake at the same time the possibility of fulfilling the third validity claim: to the rightness. In these communicative situations they create the condition for possible, intersubjective agreement, and so, for the safest, in users' terms, intercultural communication.⁴⁴ I do not state a foregone conclusion if multicultural communication in terms specified above indeed occurs. I will rather argue that very specific conditions making such communication possible are already created. Paradoxically, in integrative-differentiating communicative practice, members of exchange community separating themselves from what they could not agree created conditions for intercultural communication. If the last mentioned indeed occurs, it can't be understood differently, as only running in the narrow slits beyond dangerous horizon of rivaling values. Entering within this horizon would be a postponement of a real, possible, efficient action (thus the practice fundamental for the system) and finding oneself in an environment, in which social actors, instead of act, would occupy themselves with resolving conceptual problems. *Interaction-exchange systems* are not systems of this kind.

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⁴⁴ In this respect I will agree with a strategy undertaken by A. Zaporowski, when he argues, that multicultural communication is not the purpose of human actions but a possible realizable scenario, see: A. Zaporowski, *Czy komunikacja międzykulturowa jest możliwa? Strategia kulturoznawcza*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, Poznań 2006.

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