



# SSID\_EXQUIS

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When considering the now widespread and familiar interventionist tactics of wireless data capture, either by script-kiddie hobbyists or a government adversary, *SSID\_exquis* intervenes right at the moment of capture itself and alters the access modes of the usually read-only environment in the commonly known WiFi part of the 802.11 radio spectrum. Positioned as a performative and participatory work in public contexts, the project blurb reads as follows:

*SSID\_Exquis* is a gamified exercise in collaborative poetry, manifested in WiFi. Its participants can publicly broadcast wireless network names, or SSIDs, by contributing to a collectively assembled list. From this list a series of wireless LAN beacon frames is generated which are transmitted periodically to announce their presence in the surrounding 802.11 radio spectrum. In a continuous fashion the resulting flood of publicly accessible wireless networks is logged, constituting timestamped cadavres exquis.

Beyond the obvious reference to the Surrealist writing technique (which was later popularised through its adaptation to drawing and collage) cadavres exquis, technically the project functions as a captive portal which presents its users with a webpage containing info about the work and some HTML form fields allowing for the contribution functionality. Whereas a captive portal would normally be used to constrain a user's movement on the network (or in the case of malicious use; capturing sensitive data from an unsuspecting user), in *SSID\_Exquis* the aim is to make a WiFi radio spectrum writable by allowing each participant to have their say in form of beacon frames.

From an anthropological perspective, *SSID\_Exquis* builds upon the popularisation of niche-tech subculture surrounding topics related to "hacking", penetration testing and wireless network auditing – a post-Snowden collage of sorts. The project is structured around an "infusion" (using a native scripting language that can tie various available software components together) built on the so-called WiFi Pineapple MarkV device, a hard- and

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software platform which has a dedicated following via the HAK5 Youtube channel and forums. In essence the platform is a cleverly put together mashup of very hackable WiFi radio chips, and a browser-based interface which allows for in-depth modification of its configs.

Ironically, *SSID\_Exquis* subverts an earlier project built on this platform; dubbed *Occupineapple*, it was originally intended for protesters trying to get their word out via a sequence of broadcasted SSIDs – a technique dubbed “beacon flooding”.

