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**Datasheet for the decision
of 27 May 2009**

Case Number: T 0846/06 - 3.5.05

Application Number: 03102710.5

Publication Number: 1398917

IPC: H04L 12/28

Language of the proceedings: EN

Title of invention:

Managing associations of devices of networks connected to a bridge device, with an access point of a centralized wireless network, e.g. a Wireless LAN

Applicant:

Thomson Licensing

Headword:

WLAN Bridge device/THOMSON

Relevant legal provisions:

EPC Art. 52(1), 56, 84, 123(2)

Relevant legal provisions (EPC 1973):

EPC Art. 106, 107, 108

Keyword:

"Support by the description (yes - after amendment)"
"Inventive step (yes - after amendment)"

Decisions cited:

J 0010/07

Catchword:

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Case Number: T 0846/06 - 3.5.05

D E C I S I O N
of the Technical Board of Appeal 3.5.05
of 27 May 2009

Appellant: Thomson Licensing
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Representative: Berthier, Karine
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Decision under appeal: Decision of the Examining Division of the
European Patent Office posted 5 January 2006
refusing European application No. 03102710.5
pursuant to Article 97(1) EPC 1973.

Composition of the Board:

Chairman: D. H. Rees
Members: A. Ritzka
F. Blumer

Summary of Facts and Submissions

I. This appeal is against the decision of the examining division dispatched 5 January 2006, refusing European Patent Application No. 03 102 710.5 for the reason that claim 1 lacked novelty having regard to the disclosure of

D1: WO 02/08857 A.

II. Notice of appeal was submitted on 3 March 2006. The appeal fee was paid on the same day. The statement setting out the grounds of appeal was submitted on 13 April 2006.

The appellant requested that the decision under appeal be set aside and the examination procedure be resumed on the basis of claims 1 to 9 filed with the statement setting out the grounds of appeal. Further, an auxiliary request for oral proceedings was made.

III. The board issued an invitation to oral proceedings scheduled to take place on 27 May 2009 accompanied by a communication. In the communication the board presented objections under Articles 84 and 123(2) EPC with respect to claim 1. In particular, the term "association" did not appear to be used in its commonly known meaning of "action of combining together for a common purpose", as defined e.g. in the Oxford English Dictionary. Further, the board expressed the preliminary view that claim 1 did not appear to be novel having regard to the disclosure of D1, interpreting the term "association" in its commonly known meaning.

IV. With its letter of 27 April 2009, in reaction to the summons, the appellant filed claims 1 to 9 of a main and a subsidiary request. Further, it presented comments to the objections under Articles 84 and 123(2) EPC and arguments with respect to novelty and inventive step.

V. At the oral proceedings, which took place as scheduled on 27 May 2009, the appellant filed claims 1 to 9 of a main request replacing all of the requests on file and requested that the decision under appeal be set aside and a patent granted on the basis of the main request as filed during the oral proceedings before the board.

At the end of the hearing the board announced its decision.

VI. Claim 1 reads as follows:

"Device (203, 204, 205) for connecting a centralized wireless network (201) to at least one other network (207, 208), said device (203, 204, 205) being a wireless station compliant to the IEEE 802.11 or HiperLAN2 standards,
and further comprising:

a wireless interface for managing more than one MAC address for association with an access point (202) of said centralized wireless network (201); wherein said associations are as defined by the IEEE 802.11 or HiperLAN2 standards,

a bridge module for managing a plurality of ports for connecting to respective networks; and

a link management module (302) for managing associations of different MAC addresses corresponding to devices (209, 210, 211, 215) connected to said at least one other network (207, 208) with said access point (202) of said centralized wireless network (201) such that said devices connected to said at least one other network will appear as wireless stations to the access point (202)."

Reason for the Decision

1. *Admissibility*

The appeal complies with the provisions of Articles 106 to 108 EPC 1973, which are applicable according to J 10/07, point 1 (see Fact and Submissions point II above). Therefore it is admissible.

2. *Article 123(2) EPC*

The amendments of claim 1 are based on paragraphs [0019], [0021], [0022], [0023], [0024] and [0050]. They comply with the provisions of Article 123(2) EPC.

3. *Article 84 EPC*

Claim 1 was amended to include that the associations are as defined by the IEEE 802.11 or HiperLAN2 standards. Although in general it is preferred to specify characteristics by their technical features rather than by reference to a standard, in the present case, this definition, supported by the description as originally filed, is considered to be clear as it

limits the term to the meaning used by the skilled person in the field.

Moreover, claim 1 was amended to specify that the device is a wireless station compliant to the IEEE 802.11 or HiperLAN2 standards, further comprising a wireless interface for managing more than one MAC address for association with an access point of the centralized wireless network wherein the associations are as defined by the IEEE 802.11 or HiperLAN2 standards and a link management module for managing associations of different MAC addresses corresponding to devices connected to at least one other network to be connected with the access point of the centralized wireless network such that these devices of the different network will appear as wireless stations to the access point. These features disclosed in the description in paragraphs [0019] to [0023] are considered to be essential features of the invention.

Thus, claim 1 is supported by the description, complying with the provisions of Article 84 EPC.

4. *Novelty and inventive step*

D1 discloses a Bluetooth-enabled wireless bridge for providing an end-to-end wireless communication path between a Bluetooth-enabled device and an Internet-connected server, see page 4, lines 9 to 11.

Transmission of data between the Bluetooth-enabled device and the wireless bridge takes place over a Bluetooth connection, whereas data between the wireless bridge and the server is transmitted via a wireless LAN (see page 4, lines 11 to 18). Thus, the wireless bridge

represents a device for connecting a wireless network to at least one other network.

D1 discloses that the wireless bridge does self tests and initialises the Bluetooth, LAN and serial port interfaces, see page 11, lines 5 and 6. This implies that the wireless bridge comprises a bridge module for managing a plurality of ports for connecting to respective networks.

D1, page 11, lines 8 to 10 discloses that the bridge sets up a control connection with the server, and seven other connections for slaves, all of the connections being set up using TCP/IP. The wireless bridge, which always acts as a master (see page 10, line 26) advises the Internet-connected server of the Bluetooth address of the Bluetooth-enabled device and of the port number to which this address has been mapped. See page 11, lines 11 to 15.

Although this implies that the bridge device comprises a link management module, D1 fails to disclose that it manages associations as defined by the IEEE 802.11 or HiperLAN2 standards of different MAC addresses corresponding to devices of the at least one other network with the access point of the centralised wireless network such that said devices connected to said at least one other network will appear as wireless stations to the access point.

Thus, the subject-matter of claim 1 is novel.

D1 is the most relevant prior art document. In D1, a server of the wireless network keeps record of the

Bluetooth address of the Bluetooth enabled devices and the corresponding port number of the bridge device hosting them. The Bluetooth enabled device can only be addressed via the bridge device, which is a WLAN client connected to an access point of the WLAN.

Starting from D1, the problem underlying the subject-matter of claim 1 is to provide a further device for connecting a centralized wireless network to at least one other network simplifying the addressing of the devices of the at least one other network.

The device of claim 1 solves this problem by managing associations of different MAC addresses corresponding to devices connected to the at least one other network with the access point of the wireless network such that said devices connected to said at least one other network will appear as wireless stations to the access point. The link management module of the wireless device manages the association of different MAC addresses for the other devices, i.e. it is adapted to associate for itself using its own MAC address and for the other devices using different MAC addresses pretending to be a different device. Consequently the devices of the at least one other network appear as wireless devices to the access point, which can address them directly, i.e. without knowing the hosting wireless device. The connection of the devices of the at least one other network with the wireless device is thus transparent for the access point. This simplifies addressing of these devices. D1 neither suggests nor makes obvious such a solution. The subject-matter of claim 1 therefore involves an inventive step.

Dependent claims 2 to 9, which are directed to specific implementations, equally involve an inventive step.

Claims 1 to 9 comply with the provisions of Article 52(1) EPC.

Order

For these reasons it is decided that:

1. The decision under appeal is set aside.
2. The case is remitted to the department of first instance with the order to grant a patent on the basis of the Main Request (as filed during the oral proceedings) and a description and figures to be adapted thereto.

Registrar:

Chairman:

K. Götz

D. H. Rees