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Connecting Cities via Distributed Physical Activity
Playing Soccer over a Distance

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Abstract. Breakout for Two is a networked shared place in which participants can play an exerting soccer-like game although being geographically apart, possibly facilitating a social bond between players who otherwise might never meet.

Breakout for Two
Physical games such as casual soccer are known to be social facilitators and 'ice-breakers'. They can support social exchange between players who have never met before, and otherwise maybe never meet, if networked to support players in different spaces to experience shared game-play as part of the urban environment. We envision games such as "Breakout for Two" in public places with socializing opportunity, allowing inhabitants to engage in social interaction with players from sister cities, where the game provides "something to do and to talk about".

Breakout for Two is a cross between soccer and the popular computer game "Breakout". The players, who can be miles apart from each other, both kick a ball against a local, physical wall. On each wall is a projection of the remote player, enabling the participants to interact with each other through a life-sized videoconference. For the players it feels like they are separated by a glass window, which splits the two parts of the field. They still hit the ball in the direction of the other player, but it comes back, bouncing off the wall. Eight semi-transparent blocks are overlaid on the video stream, which each player has to strike in order to score. These virtual blocks are connected over the network, meaning they are shared between the locations. If one of the two players strikes any of them once, they "crack". On the third hit, the block "breaks" and disappears. The player only receives a point if the block breaks. This scoring theme creates a challenging game because the players can watch what the other player is doing, waiting for her/him to hit a block for the second time, so they can then snatch the point by hitting it for the third and final time. However, the harder the player hits a block, the more it cracks, so a player can also choose to crack the blocks faster through really hard hits.

We believe the physical sporting game Breakout for Two can enrich the link between sister cities by providing a direct personal experience for the inhabitants, facilitating a sense of shared space and supporting social connectedness between the remote players.

Acknowledgments
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More information at http://exertioninterfaces.com

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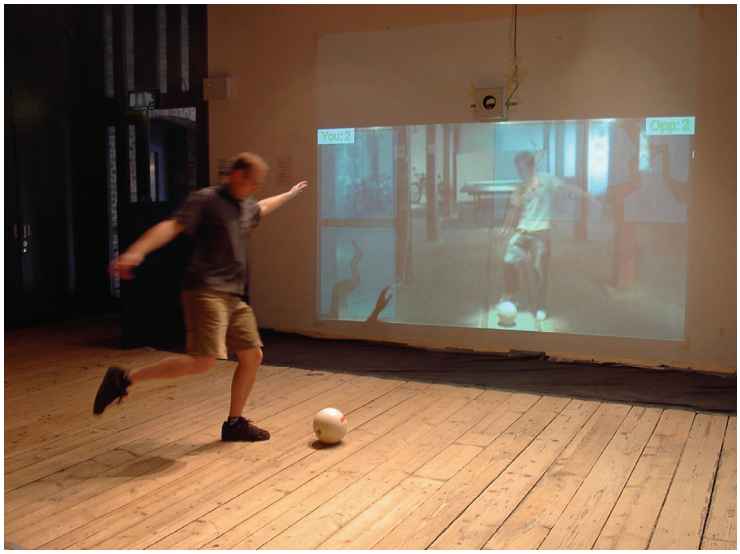

Fig. 1. Breakout for Two

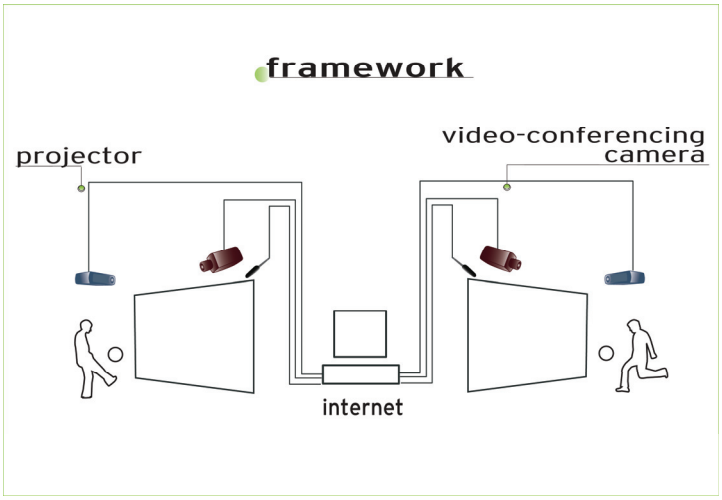

Fig. 2. Framework