First Steps in Distributed Tangible Technologies: A Virtual Tug of War

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What it is?

Distributed tangible technology as a new type of technology enables children in different physical locations to engage in physical interaction. A virtual tug of war game is an example of a distributed tangible technology that is played by groups of children pulling a rope from two separate locations.

How it has been done?

The project explores the challenges combining tangible user interfaces with distributed computing and distributed technologies to be overcome in future educational applications for children. Possible applications cover a number of over-lapping and connected themes: playing games with necessary physical elements, learning new skills, and sharing cultural experiences. A prototype of a distributed tic-tac-toe game has been developed by following the lessons learned from the tug of war project.

What next?

The virtual tug of war game as described is unlikely to be suitable for widespread deployment as a fully functioning distributed game because more robust hardware would be required if the game were to be reliably used. However, the lack of reliability, the unpredictability and the experimental nature of the game are essential elements that have made the game a success with children.