What is claimed is:

1. A system, comprising:
    a sensor;
    an access terminal;
    a wireless communication network;
    a database; and
    a computer-based control unit coupled to the sensor, the access terminal, the wireless communication network, and the database, the control unit comprising a processor and a computer-readable storage medium, the computer-readable storage medium comprising instructions that cause the processor to:
        provide an access code to a first user, the access code being subsequently provided to a second user;
        receive an activation signal from the second user indicative of the second user's activation of the access code;
        as a result of receiving the activation signal, send a verification code to a portable electronic device of the first user;
        receive the verification code at an access terminal; and
        grant access to the predetermined service or area if the reception of the verification code at the access terminal meets one of several predetermined conditions.

2. The system of claim 1, wherein said predetermined condition requires that the access terminal receives the verification code within a limited validity time, wherein the activation signal is generated by the access terminal in response to the second user presenting the access code to the access terminal.

3. The system of claim 2, wherein the validity time is based on an expected time for providing the verification code to the access terminal after receipt by the portable electronic device.

4. The system of claim 2, wherein the validity time is based on an expected time for providing the verification code to the access terminal after receipt by the portable electronic device.

5. The system of claim 1, wherein said predetermined condition requires that the access terminal receives the verification code without having been involved in generating the activation signal.

6. The system of claim 5, wherein said predetermined condition further requires that the access terminal receives the verification code after another access terminal was involved in generating the activation signal in response to the second user presenting the access code.

7. The system of claim 1, wherein at least one of the access code and the verification code is displayed on the portable electronic device as an optical code.

8. The system of claim 1, further comprising generating the activation signal in response to the second user presenting the access code to the access terminal.

9. The system of claim 1, further comprising sending the access code to the portable electronic device based on a device identifier for the portable electronic device.

10. A method of controlling access to a predetermined service or area, comprising:

providing an access code to a first user, the access code being subsequently provided to a second user;
receiving an activation signal from the second user indicative of the second user's activation of the access code;
as a result of receiving the activation signal, sending a verification code to a portable electronic device of the first user;
receiving the verification code at an access terminal; and
granting access to the predetermined service or area if the reception of the verification code at the access terminal meets one of several predetermined conditions.

11. The method of claim 10, wherein the verification code is provided to the second user by the first user such that the second user is able to provide the verification code to the access terminal.

12. The method of claim 11, wherein one of the predetermined conditions is that the verification code is received by the access terminal within a predetermined time from when the verification code is sent to the first user.

13. The method of claim 10, wherein said one of several predetermined conditions relates to an allowed number of uses of the access code.