



AALBORG UNIVERSITY
STUDENT REPORT

Software 7 - Bicycles and the Internet of Things

P7 Project by sw707e14

3-9-2014 to 19-12-2014

Participants:

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Abstract:

The bicycle share system in Aalborg is generally subpar compared to other similar systems. To improve it would provide a better experience for the users.

Other systems, such as the Gobike in Copenhagen, uses GPS tracking, routing, and other generally useful features. To create a website and a supporting system, which allows for tracking, booking, and other such features, would improve the existing system.

To resolve this we develop a booking and administration website for Aalborg Bicykel, and software for simulating stations and bicycles. We made a booking solution for the users of the system, and for the administrators we created pages to provide overview of the system on a whole.

The website ended up having many features supporting the use and administration of the system.

Foreword

This report was made at Aalborg University in the first semester of the Software Candidate study by the group sw707e14. The report was made as a part of the P7 project in the period 3-9-2014 to 19-12-2014. We discussed the current system with Aalborg Kommune, whose co-operation was helpful. The project was supervised by Hua Lu, whose supervision was much appreciated.

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1 Introduction

In the current time of Danish politics, a heavy focus has been put on better health [1]. Additionally, a great focus has been placed on climate change, and how to tackle this [2]. A part of a solution to this is getting more people to use bicycles for transportation especially in urban areas. This limits CO₂ pollution due to people not driving in cars and increase health of people due to exercising when bicycling. A way to make people bicycle more are bicycle sharing systems [3], which appear in several cities [4–7].

The bicycle sharing system that we focus on is Aalborg Bicykel. It is a system where several bicycle stations are placed around the city of Aalborg, and when you need a bicycle, you travel to one of those stations and retrieve a bicycle. Then when you are finished using the bicycle you deliver it back to one of the stations. However, some immediate problems are associated with the currently active system.

One of the problems with the system is that bicycles can easily get lost and there is no way to locate missing bicycles, other than user reports. Additionally, for a user to know if some bicycle is available, he has to travel from station to station until he finds an available bicycle. Furthermore, if a user wants to be more certain that he can retrieve a bicycle in the near future, there is no way to ensure this other than retrieving a bicycle ahead of time.

These are some of the central issues that is sought to be resolved with the developed system described in the following chapters. In the developed system, we take other existing bicycle sharing systems into account [4–6]. On the basis of this, a booking and status system is developed for the users, and a tracking and statistics system is developed for Aalborg Kommune.

Some of the technical challenges we encounter are communication between different parts of the system, which we achieve with SOAP and TCP, how to synchronise state across these different parts, which we address with well considered rules. Additionally, we discuss how to design the system to reach a good usability standard, where we prioritise simple solutions over advanced solutions and in addition to this utilise usability tests.

Chapter 2 documents the analysis, resulting in a problem definition as well as a specification of the requirements and target audience. Chapter 3 documents suggested solutions, where solutions to different problems in the problem domain are suggested. Chapter 4 documents technologies, where different technologies and concepts used for this project are discussed. Chapter 5 documents design, where the design of the system is discussed. Chapter 6 documents the implementation, where the implementation of the designed system is explained. Chapter 7 documents tests, which includes Unit and usability tests. Chapter 8 documents the discussion of decisions about the overall system and why they were made. The developed system is compared to other existing systems. Additionally, further development options are documented. Chapter 9 concludes the project, where the hypothesis is verified according to the questions asked in the problem definition.

2 Analysis

This chapter includes analysis of the current system already in place in Aalborg, other existing systems, the problem definition, general requirements, and the target audience for the system.

2.1 Current System

Aalborg Bicykel is a bicycle system where people in Aalborg are able to borrow bicycles to travel around the city. The system was started in September 2008 as part of the CIVITAS ARCHIMEDES project, which focuses on making bicycles more widely used [8]. The bicycles can be found in stations located around the city of Aalborg, for exact placement of the bicycles see Figure 2.1. As can be seen, the bicycles are mostly located in the center of Aalborg.

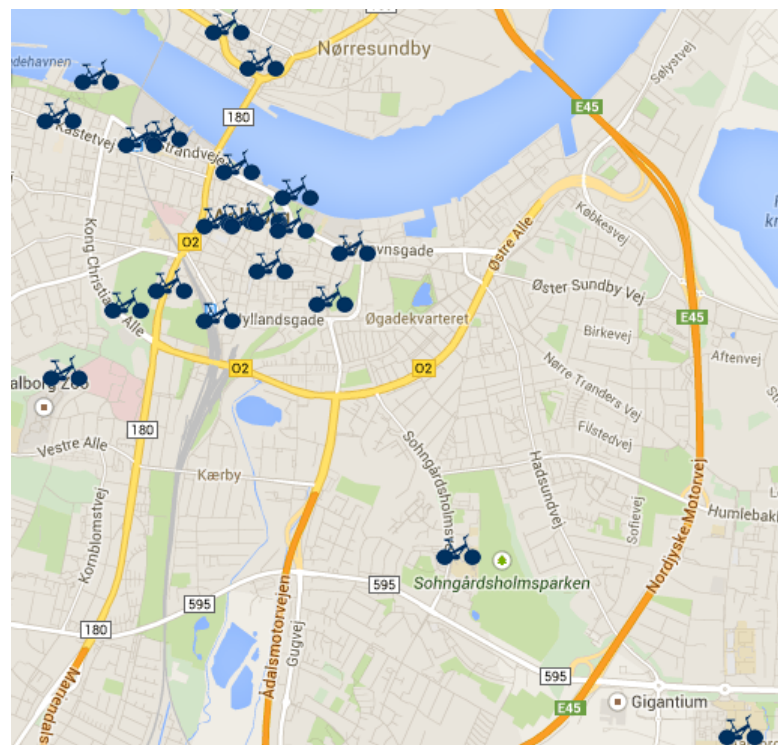


Figure 2.1: Bicycle locations [9].

In 2009, 135 bicycles was placed in Aalborg, and in 2012 this number had been increased to 200 bicycles [8]. In order to borrow a bicycle, you need to go to one of the bicycle stations, deposit 20 DKK to unlock the bicycle, then return it to a station when you are done with the bicycle, where you then retrieve your 20 DKK, which makes the system free to use [10]. The system is built on trust, because if people do not return the bicycles to a station when finished using them, the bicycles gradually disappear.

Aalborg Bicykel has had, as of 2012, success with their system. According to a report, if the system had not been in place more than half of the users would have walked and 5 percent would have driven in a car instead [8]. Furthermore, it shows that over three seasons the percentage of bicycles lost have been at maximum 11% [8].

As the bicycles are borrowed by depositing 20 DKK, no consequences exist for not returning the bicycle except for losing the deposit. This can lead to bicycles getting lost and as there is no additional monitoring of where the bicycles are located around the city, other than travelling around the city to locate the bicycles, which is a problem. Another problem of not monitoring the position of the bicycles is that it can be difficult for Aalborg Kommune and the potential users to know which stations have bicycles.

On the website of Aalborg Bicykel shows that a way for them to locate misplaced bicycles is through people reporting lost bicycles by way of SMS and voice mail, or by returning the bicycle themselves claiming the 20 DKK [11]. However, if a lost bicycle is not reported or returned by someone, the bicycle is practically lost. The company AFA JCDecaux is in charge of bicycle maintenance and storage during winter time and is also the company in charge of retrieving the lost bicycles [8].

2.1.1 Meeting with Aalborg Kommune

In order to gain more information about Aalborg Bicykel, a meeting with Aalborg Kommune was conducted. Through this meeting various information was found that is kept in mind when developing the system.

For the overview of bicycles, it was found that Aalborg Kommune has no control over and little actual knowledge about the usage of the bicycles when they are placed at docks in Aalborg during the season. The only information they get is if they see somebody bicycling in the city, or if a person makes a phone-call regarding a bicycle.

We asked them if they had received any complaints, if so what those complaints consist of. This lead them to talk about how they are interested in information about the usage of the bicycles. They said that the complaints they get is mostly about bicycles not being available. Additionally, they said they often see empty stations themselves. They thought that GPS tracking could be interesting, to monitor the bicycles and see how the bicycles are used, indicating that some administrator page is useful.

Additionally, we asked them if they have had any thoughts on booking of bicycles. They told us that they had not thought of that but are open to the idea. However, they can also see some cons for such a system, namely that it could become too restrictive for the user since bicycles have to be made unavailable from free access because of bookings. They think of the usage of the bicycles as a spontaneous action instead of something the user plans to do. However, the system is not strictly developed for Aalborg Kommune alone but more on the focus of the users of the system, and as such, the booking system can still be of use. Whereas, the administrator part with statistics is aimed to be used by Aalborg Kommune.

2.2 Other Existing Systems

A part of analysing and designing a city bicycle system is to investigate the current solutions on the market. Therefore an evaluation of existing systems is conducted. We found several existing systems that implement different aspects and features of a city bicycle system. These systems are listed below:

- Bycyklen in Copenhagen by Gobike.
- Cibi by AFA JCDecaux.
- Alta Bicycle Share by Alta.

2.2.1 Bycyklen in Copenhagen by Gobike

The bicycle share system in Copenhagen is called Bycyklen and contains 1,860 bicycles and 100 stations [12]. Gobike [5] is a Danish/Dutch company that designed this smart system with a bicycle they call Smart Bike. The Smart Bike is equipped with an information screen in the form of a tablet providing the user with an interface to lock the bicycle, select the level of assistance from the electrical system, navigate through the city via GPS, and explore new interest points such as cafés and shops. Furthermore, users of the bicycle system are able to check bus or train arrivals near their current location. The Smart Bike uses the tablet to send the location, who is travelling, and other statistics about the bicycle such as battery life to Gobike Admin. Gobike is currently looking at possibilities such as location based marketing, adjusting the traffic lights according to the cyclists based on the pattern of the bicycle trip, and the weather such as wind speed. The Smart Bike enables the user to lock the bicycle and securely park it during the bicycle trip. Bycyklen has a simple 3-step process to rent a Smart Bike.

1. Book a Smart Bike ahead from your computer or tablet, find a Smart Bike and log in via the on-board tablet.
2. Unlock the bicycle through the tablet, drive around in the city, possibly assisted by the GPS, paying by the hour.
3. Return the Smart Bike, lock the bicycle and log out of the system via the tablet.

2.2.2 Cibi By AFA JCDecaux

The Cibi bicycle system relies on SMS, where a booking of a bicycle is performed by sending an SMS to a special number with the ID of the bicycle slot at the station [4]. The user then receives a confirmation SMS and the bicycle is unlocked from the station. A bicycle trip is charged by the hour, and as with the bicycle share system in Copenhagen, a user can lock the bicycle during the trip. This is done through a wire lock which uses a code that the user was given in the SMS when booking the bicycle. The system also allows for checking the amount of bicycles at a station on the website, using special docks and chips on the bicycle [13].

2.2.3 Alta Bicycle Share

Alta Bicycle Share is a company that design, deploys, and manages bicycles in USA [6]. The company currently have projects ongoing in nine different cities in USA, with more than a thousand stations and over tens of thousands of bicycles. The bicycle stations are designed such that they can be placed everywhere in the cities without any preparation, since they get electricity from solar panels. Furthermore, the stations are using a cellular connection to upload data to the main database, so the citizens can see if there are any bicycles at a given station. To rent a bicycle from one of Alta Bicycle Share's systems, you have to use a card, which can be bought in shops near the stations. These cards then give access to any bicycle for a given time at any station, however, using the bicycle for a longer period of time can lead to a fee.

2.2.4 Summary

The Copenhagen city bicycle system, Bycyklen, includes some good features such as a booking system that works using a tablet on the bicycle that is connected to the internet. It also includes a GPS used for navigation and tracking. One downside to this system, however, is that the bicycles are seemingly very expensive.

Cibi is a little different in that booking happens over SMS. At the same time it also allows for locking of the bicycle using a special code also sent over SMS. It also allows for retrieving information about the amount of bicycles at a station using a special dock and a chip on the bicycles.

Alta on the other hand uses a card to rent bicycles, and uploads information about bicycles at stations for the users of the system to easily get an overview of where bicycles are located.

	Aalborg Bycyklen	Copenhagen Gobike	Cibi	Alta Bicycle Share
Booking	No	On a tablet	Yes	No
Borrowing / unlocking	Deposit 20 DKK	Login with tablet	SMS code deposit 300 DKK	Keycard
Tracking	No	GPS	Dock + chip at stations	Dock at stations
Penalty	Loss of deposit	200 DKK	Loss of deposit	Fine per half hour overtime
Cost	Deposit, but otherwise free	First half hour free, then pay per hour	First hour free, then pay per hour	Depends on membership

Table 2.1: Comparison of bicycle systems.

A comparison of the different bicycle sharing systems examined can be seen in Table 2.1. As can be seen, Aalborg Bicykel is lacking in features compared to the other systems and signifies a room for improvement. The improvements to be performed are then inspired by the other examined systems. However, Aalborg Bicykel is free to use as long as you deliver a bicycle back after use. This ease of accessibility of Aalborg Bicykel we find valuable, and is something we wish to keep in the developed solution. The knowledge gained is then kept in mind for defining the problem definition and the specification of the requirements for the new system.

2.3 Problem Definition

With the analysis of Aalborg Bicykel and other similar existing systems performed, it indicates that there is room for improvement. It is found that Aalborg Bicykel is basic when it comes to technologies.

In other similar existing systems, GPS, SMS, booking, and card registration is used to enhance the bicycle experience for the users. This gives inspiration to improvements that can be performed regarding Aalborg Bicykel, and leads to our hypothesis which is defined as follows.

It is possible to develop a system for Aalborg Bicykel that is user friendly and manageable, within the context of the Internet of Things.

In order to verify this hypothesis, the following questions have to be answered:

1. What are the requirements for a city bicycle booking and positioning system?
2. How can the booking and positioning system be designed and implemented, within the context of the Internet of Things?
3. Why should the developed system be used over the currently used system?

2.4 Requirements

A few system criteria have been set up that the different software and hardware solutions should conform to. In addition to this, software and hardware requirements are listed with the highest priority first, such that the goal for the product is to fulfil the requirements in the listed order. Not all requirements are necessarily fulfilled as time is limited, but we strive to fulfil as many requirements as possible. We do not make any concrete decisions on the hardware, however, we determine some requirements for the hardware but how they are fulfilled is beyond the scope of this project.

2.4.1 System Criteria

Below is a set of system criteria that should be considered when choosing a solution for the system. These criteria should not be taken as requirements for the system, but as guidelines for the desired outcome of the system. In that, when choosing a solution these criteria should be considered and discussed to help choose the solution that matches them best.

- A chosen solution should not redesign the entire existing system but rather add an extension to the existing system.
- A solution should be easy to use and access by everyone. It should require as few steps as possible in the process of borrowing a bicycle.

With the system criteria specified, the software requirements follows.

2.4.2 Software Requirements

These are the requirements that should be fulfilled by the software in prioritised order.

The system should be able to:

See how many bicycles and docks are available at a given station

The users should be able to see how many bicycles and docks are available at a given station, such that the user can easily see which station to go to.

Provide the option of booking a bicycle

The user should be able to book a bicycle and this booked bicycle should be locked and unavailable for everyone except the one who booked it in some time frame before usage.

Track bicycles

The data collected by the positioning system should be used to locate the bicycles if they are not returned to a station.

Obtain data for analysis

The system should be able to collect information and statistics about the usage of the system. The organisation responsible should be able to use this information to, for example, perform analysis about where to redistribute bicycles and to determine if purchase of new bicycles is necessary.

Predict availability of bicycles depending on placement and other variables

The position should be used for predicting the usage of the bicycles as well. For example to predict when a bicycle is available at a given station.

2.4.3 Hardware Requirements

In order to fulfil the requirements for the software listed above, a set of hardware requirements are necessary. These requirements specify a communication interface between software and hardware, and as long as the hardware implements these interfaces, the software solution should be able to perform the required tasks.

The software requirements are listed in prioritised order, and depending on what requirements are implemented different hardware requirements need to be fulfilled.

Interface between station and server

This interface is necessary to register the amount of bicycles and docks that are available at a given station as well as enabling the station to register bookings performed. Furthermore, the data obtained with the use of this interface can be used for analysis.

Interface between bicycle and server

In order to track bicycles, this interface is necessary. This also comes in handy for the data analysis and to predict availability of bicycles.

An example of this is if the *Track bicycles* requirement is implemented, then the hardware on the bicycles should be able to transmit its position.

2.5 Target Audience

The target audience for this project are the regular users of Aalborg Bicykel, such as tourists and other people in Aalborg that do not have other means of transportation immediately available to them. Thus, we strive to develop a system that meets their needs. In that category goes low-cost and easy access for tourists. In general we strive to develop the booking part of the system for users who are not particularly tech-savvy, because if the solution works for them, it works for most other users as well.

Additionally, the organisations running Aalborg Bicykel are also part of the target audience, and is kept in mind for the administration part of the system.

3 Suggested Solutions

Various suggested extensions for the current system are proposed. These solutions are then in turn examined and evaluated with the system criteria and requirements in mind, in order to determine if a solution is preferred over others based upon what solution gives the best quality information for the software system in an easy way. An exception to this is the Booking Software examination, which makes a concrete choice on what solution to choose. In order to determine which solution is preferable, a discussion of the solutions is performed, after which an overall chosen solution for the entire system is given.

3.1 Availability of Bicycles

One of the requirements is that the users of the system need to be able to see how many bicycles are available at a given station. This section covers the suggested solutions for that requirement. We look at three different availability checking solutions, which is camera, dock, and chip based

3.1.1 Camera

A solution that is easy to implement is to use a camera such that users of the system can visually check if any bicycles are available at a given station.

This solution is an easy way to add some kind of availability checking without investing in a larger system.

Of course this solution has its downsides, because the information is not reliable in certain situations. One example of a situation where a camera would be insufficient would be if it is dark at the station. You also have to consider that the information transmitted by the camera can be deceiving, in that it could show a bicycle that does not really belong at the station and that would make the user come to the conclusion that there are bicycles at the station. Another problem with the camera solution is that it does not provide an exact number of bicycles available but rather leaves it up to interpretation for the user. Another possible issue would be with bicycles being at the station but not being available to use because they are booked. Furthermore, the amount of data needed to be transmitted from the camera to the user could become a bottleneck.

3.1.2 Dock

Another solution that requires more work to implement is a *Dock* based implementation. The main idea is that when a bicycle is delivered at a station it is placed in a dock. A given dock with some kind of detector is then able to register if there is a bicycle placed in it. Each station then contains several docks, and can read from each of them to provide a number for how many bicycles are located at that station.

This solution, unlike the *Camera* solution, provides exact information about how many bicycles are available at a given station with nothing up to interpretation for the user.

For this system to work, the bicycles would have to be placed into the docks to provide any correct information. That is, the system is not registering bicycles misplaced outside the docks.

3.1.3 Chip

A similar solution to the *dock* solution is to use chips, such as RFID chips. Such a solution is similar in that it provides the same information, namely the amount of bicycles at a given station. The solution differs, however, in the way this is registered.

One way to register bicycles is to take inspiration from a car park. The station would have one or more entrance gateways and one or more exit gateways that are able to read the chip. When entering the station with a bicycle, the total amount of bicycles then gets incremented, and when leaving with a bicycle it gets decremented.

Another way, depending on the distance these chips could be read from, is the possibility to deposit the bicycles at the station and the station would continually count the amount of bicycles it detects in the near-distance.

These two solutions have in common that they are easy to use, as you come and pick a bicycle and then return it when you are finished. On the downside it requires modifying all the bicycles in the fleet, furthermore, if using the car park idea, the stations can end up taking more space than the other solutions.

3.1.4 Chosen Solution

Among the above mentioned solutions to the problem of determining the availability of bicycles, a preferred solution has to be chosen.

The impact of the solutions is measured on the amount of hardware needed to be added to the current system in order to get a working solution. For example, common to all the solutions is that they require a network connection available at every station because communication with the system is necessary. Furthermore, each solution require different hardware and installations in order to provide the information needed.

The solutions in order of least impact are as follows: *Camera*, *Chip*, and *Dock*. With the *Camera* solution, only an addition of a camera at every station is required. The *Chip* solution on the other hand requires every bicycle being equipped with a RFID chip and readers at the stations. The solution with the most impact, the *Dock* solution requires an installation of multiple docks at stations, but it does come with some benefits. Specifically that it is believed to be easy for the user to use, and can be more easily extended than other solutions with more functionality such as forced locking. This assessment is based on the other existing solutions such as Gobike which uses docks.

The *Camera* solution is not considered further because of the possibly inconsistent interpretation by the user, possibly leading to situations where a bicycle is interpreted by a user watching the camera feed to be available, but in fact is not.

The *Chip* solution might be suitable if you only consider the availability of bicycles, however, since there is a requirement for booking of bicycles this solution is not considered further as a standalone solution. However, it is worth considering for the *Dock* solution to register which bicycle is located at a given dock.

The *Dock* solution provides the system with a simple way of determining the number of bicycles docked at each station. The *Dock* solution appears to be best, though it does require some hardware installation. This solution is also very user friendly and easy to use, which is why we think it is the one that fulfils the criteria best and is thus chosen as the preferred solution for availability of bicycles.

3.2 Booking Software

In order to book a bicycle the user needs to interact with a GUI. This interface could be in the form of a website or a mobile application, each with their pros and cons.

3.2.1 Website

The users could make their booking through a website where they could be asked to create a profile. The advantage of requiring a user to make a profile could be that the user, as well as Aalborg Kommune, would be able to see statistics about their bicycle usages. It does, however, have the disadvantage that it is slightly complicated to make the booking, since the user is required to login, although with a modern browser that is capable of saving usernames and passwords, and using cookies for auto login, it does not necessarily have to be very complicated. If the user is not required to create a profile, then in combination with the ideas about unlocking the bicycles the user would still need to enter some information that can be used to identify him and his booking. In the long term it would be simpler to create a profile and login, rather than to enter the same uniquely identifiable information for each booking.

3.2.2 Mobile Application

The booking part of the system could be in the form of a mobile application. This would simplify the booking process for the users on the move, because the application could be optimised for finding nearby stations. The mobile application would exclude people without a smartphone unless both a mobile application and a website is developed. However, the mobile application could be in the form of a website optimised for phones, and thus allow people to easily use their phone, as well as their desktop computer for booking.

3.2.3 Chosen Solution

For this project it was decided to focus on one application. We decided to focus on a website, since it can be optimised for use on mobile phones, as well as for desktop computers. If the solution had been a dedicated mobile application it would limit the possible users to be people with smartphones and thus not target the entire target audience. Furthermore, for users on the move the mobile application can become expensive due to internet roaming prices, whereas this is not as big of a problem for the website solution, as you book once and are done.

We chose that the better solution is for the user to create a profile in order to book bicycles. This allows Aalborg Kommune to keep better track of who was booking the bicycles and the user would not need to enter their user information each time they want to make a booking. The users who do not book a bicycle should be able to just borrow one of the bicycles that is not already booked without creating a user. They would therefore not be needed to use the website, but should still be able to see how many free bicycles there are at a given station. This was decided because we believe it would be too inconvenient to create a profile if you quickly want to borrow an available bicycle.

3.3 Unlocking of Bicycles

There should be a way for the user to unlock a booked bicycle when reaching the station. This can be solved in several ways, some of these are described hereafter. We look at several solutions, which are unlock on time, SMS, password based, QR code, and GPS based.

3.3.1 Unlock on Time

This option is independent on whether or not the user is at the station at a specific time. However, it leads to problems in that a user arriving too early at the station has to wait for the bicycle to unlock, and if the user arrives too late the bicycle might have been taken by another person. However, this solution is cheap since it only needs the lock on the bicycle, and the communication with the global system, which the other suggestions need as well.

3.3.2 SMS

Whenever the user is ready to retrieve his booked bicycle, he sends an SMS to the system, and the system unlocks his bicycle. Compared to the previous suggestion, this suggestion does not make the bicycle available to everyone, therefore if the user is late, he can be sure that the bicycle is still available at the station. Furthermore, if the user comes too early to the station, he is still able to unlock the bicycle and does not have to wait for the bicycle to get unlocked. Moreover this solution is also cheap since it only needs to have a lock, some kind of receiver for the incoming SMS, and be able to communicate with the global system. However, this suggestion is not a free solution to the user since they have to pay for the SMS, which can become expensive if the user does not have a Danish mobile subscription.

3.3.3 Password

When the user arrives at the station he has to enter a password at the station to unlock a bicycle. To be able to do this it requires additional hardware at the station to make it possible to input a password to the system. Therefore this solution increases the price of each station, as the additional hardware has to be located at every station. However, it solves the issue that it can become expensive for the user, as this suggestion only costs something for the organisations behind Aalborg Bicykel.

3.3.4 QR Code

In order to unlock a booked bicycle the user has to scan a QR code located next to one of the locked bicycles at the station and navigate to the read link to unlock the bicycle. This suggestion compared to the previous suggestions does not require any additional hardware and can therefore become cheaper for Aalborg Bicykel. However, it does require that the user has a mobile device that is able to scan a QR code and send the information over the internet to the system. This could, however, be as expensive for a foreign user as the SMS solution due to roaming prices.

3.3.5 GPS

This suggestion uses the GPS of a device to see if the user is close to the station. If the user is close to the station the booked bicycle gets unlocked. To use this solution, the user is required to have a mobile device which is able to send GPS information to the system. This would require that the user has an internet connection as well. Additionally this is very resource demanding for the mobile device as the use of GPS prevent sleep mode [14], which results in significantly lower battery duration. Moreover, if the user passes by the station before he actually wants to use the bicycle there is a risk that the station detects this, therefore unlocking the bicycle.

3.3.6 Chosen Solution

The chosen solution should be simple for the user, without requiring specific tools, while still being usable, as specified in Section 2.4.1.

The *Unlock on Time* solution is simple as it does not require anything from the user in terms of equipment, it does, however, have the drawback that the user has to be at the station in time of the unlocking of the bicycle. It does not leave much flexibility for the user to arrive a little early or a few minutes late.

The *SMS* solution requires that the user has a phone capable of sending an SMS and according to Danmarks Statistik 89% of people aged 16-74 as of 2013 were able to do so [15]. It is expected that nearly everyone has a phone capable of sending SMS, but for tourists it might be a problem since not everyone is able to send an SMS to a foreign number or that it might be expensive. Since the bicycles are also minded towards tourists, this could prove to be a problem.

To be able to use the *QR Code* solution, the user would need some kind of scanner with internet connection, for example a smartphone. According to Danmarks Statistik, 60% of the people aged 16-74 in the year 2013 was using internet on their phone [15]. For the GPS solution, with a smartphone kept in mind, it is important that the smartphone with GPS also has an internet connection to communicate its position to the system, such that the system can react on this.

The *Password* approach covers more users than the other solutions as it does not require people to have a phone, and people can access public internet access points. The *Password* solution appears to require more hardware installations at the stations, though it does solve the problems of the other solutions in that everyone can use it and the user is in control of when they get the bicycle. Due to the password based approach covering most users, it is deemed to be the best solution. In the future, however, the password can also be sent to the user over SMS without additional costs for the user.

3.4 Tracking of Bicycles

In order to counter the loss of bicycles, tracking of the bicycles could be used. With tracking, lost bicycles can be located and reused in the system. Furthermore, tracking can be used for analysis of the bicycling patterns, to see where most bicycles travel to, indicating hotspots for potential placement of new stations, expansion of stations, and removal of old ones. Additionally, tracking can be used to give an estimate of when a bicycle may arrive at a given station, opening up the possibility of providing waiting users with information about when a new bicycle might be ready for use.

3.4.1 GPS

GPS satellites are in orbit around the Earth, and is used for navigation purposes because it provides a reasonably accurate position of objects on the ground. In addition to this, it could be used to determine the position of a bicycle, though it would require some kind of GPS device being attached to the bicycle. This could then be used to find lost bicycles. GPS usually only works when outside, but as you bicycle outside this is not a problem [16].

For each bicycle it is sufficient to have a GPS device used to determine the position and a power source for it. Then to report the position, some connection to the developed system would have to exist.

3.5 Chosen Solution

To provide the project with valuable information about how the system could work in the real world, we also choose a solution for the hardware elements. This is despite the fact that only the chosen software solution is implemented, which is the website, the interfaces and the simulated hardware elements.

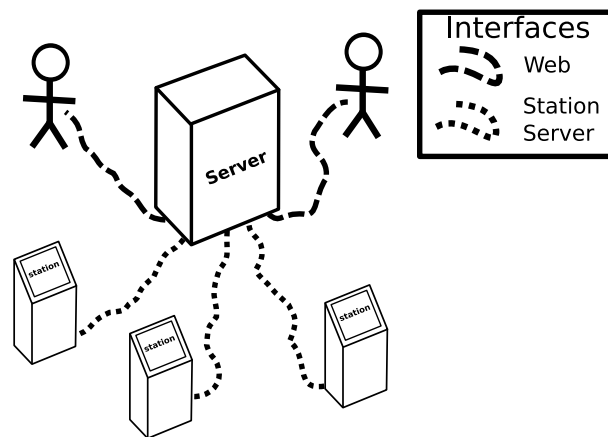


Figure 3.1: The server and the associated stations.

For the availability of bicycles, we choose to use docks since it also covers part of the hardware aspect of a different requirement, being able to lock. For locking we also choose to use passwords that need to be input at the station because it is something everyone can do once the booking has been done, as SMS, QR codes, and GPS require phones and might not be suitable for tourists. For tracking of bicycles we use GPS.

The following provides an overview of the chosen solution using rich pictures.

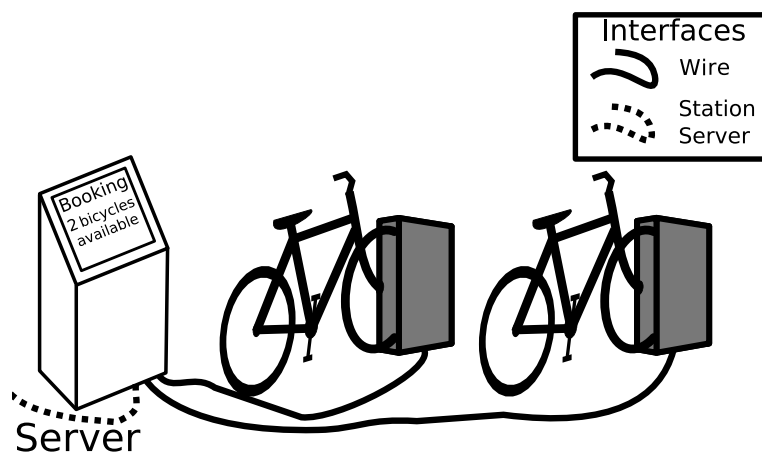


Figure 3.2: The station and the bicycles.

The server-station relationship is shown in Figure 3.1. It depicts a central server, where the different bicycle stations are connected to. Furthermore, people can access the website to gain information e.g. bicycle count, but also to register bookings, where the server then communicates this to the given station(s). Those stations then takes care of locking and unlocking bicycles to satisfy the bookings performed. The server contains all information about each station, such as bookings, amount of available bicycles at stations, and usage statistics. It provides booking and amount of available bicycles at stations through a website to the user. Usage statistics are provided to the facilitators of the system and gives them the ability to improve the system.

The dock that provide the locking and unlocking mechanism along with the bicycle detection ability have to communicate with the station. This is for example when they need to unlock a booked bicycle, the information needs to be propagated from the station to the individual dock containing the bicycle. A sketch of how a station could look like when deployed can be seen in Figure 3.2. The figure depicts a station and two docks connected to the station, which contains a bicycle each. On the display of the station, it can be seen that two bicycles are available for use.

4 Technologies

Some background material is needed for the development of a solution and is examined and discussed. This includes a description of the Internet of Things and what issues that follow, a description of the Model-View-Controller pattern used for the website, Asynchronous JavaScript and XML used for dynamic updating of webpages, and Simple Object Access Protocol to provide standardised web services.

4.1 Internet of Things

This section introduces the Internet of Things (IoT), along with examples of how it is used. The section also introduces various hardware considerations to provide the context in which real-world applications for the IoT are developed.

The IoT is the concept describing the interconnection of uniquely identifiable things in the problem domain. The IoT also includes the virtual representation, the interfaces that allow for manipulation, and information retrieval regarding these things [17–19].

Real usage of the IoT manifests as systems to provide some service, either by informing the user about things or allowing an intelligent system to manage those things. An example of this could be a ‘smart home’ that allows you to use a single device to manage the connected things in your home, such as the lights or the oven in the kitchen [20]. One society-wide use for it is the idea of a ‘smart power grid’, where the electricity usage is monitored and managed by an intelligent system that e.g. redirects electricity if a cable has been cut somewhere in the system [21].

There are already a lot of things in the IoT, and by 2020 it is estimated that there can be upwards of 26-30 billion things in it [22, 23]. This likely requires a shift to the IPv6 protocol as the amount of IP addresses are severely limited by IPv4 [24] given that the additions to IPv4, such as multiple devices sharing a single IP address, at some point becomes insufficient.

One important aspect of the things connected to the IoT is what technology they use to connect, WiFi or mobile networking are obvious choices of communication means. For most purposes the connectivity technology has to be low-power and cheap. Other than WiFi and mobile networking, it is possible to connect things to a server with a cable connecting to the internet, though that is not practical for things that must be mobile. RFID chips can provide relevant information to an outside observer about the thing itself [25] with active research in making it low-cost and low-power [26].

The geographical location in the IoT matters, especially for sensors where the location provides important context for the accessed information [27]. For example if there is a station for bicycles in a bicycle sharing system that needs to provide information regarding the amount of bicycles at the station, it is important for the usage of the information that it also provides the actual location of the station, if that is not otherwise known.

In order to give more detail on the IoT, aspects about identification, communication, and software is given.

4.1.1 Identification

In order to uniquely identify the things in the IoT, different approaches can be taken.

One idea is to use the IP address of an object, which has relation to the previously discussed IPv4 versus IPv6 issue. With IPv6, this approach would have enough addresses to uniquely identify a large number of things. Given IPv6 has a theoretical possibility of $3.4 \cdot 10^{38}$ unique addresses [28], not having enough addresses would not be a problem in the foreseeable future.

When you have a unique address, you can use that to uniquely identify the given thing. An example of use is the power grid, where each power station can uniquely be identified with the IPv6 address, and as such, in case of malfunction in one of the grid connections, it would be possible to identify the stations lacking power.

4.1.2 Communication

In order for the IoT to work, it is necessary to have a communication established. If that was not the case, the things would not be part of the IoT, as the central idea is that you can communicate over the internet.

One idea of communication for sensors is as follows. Each sensor has access to the internet to contact a web service with their given reading. However, it is unrealistic that each sensor alone is directly connected to the internet, and as such, other alternatives can be performed. One such alternative is that a thing consists of a communication device connected to several sensors and the internet. The communication device can then read from the sensors and contact the web service.

However, the communication does not end at this point. The idea is that the communication is not limited to machine-machine communication, but is expanded to communication over the internet, such that the things of the IoT can be contacted from anywhere on the internet.

4.1.3 Software

Examples of Software that utilise the IoT are given to get a concrete idea of the power of the IoT.

We expand on the example of the smart power grid. Such a power grid uses the information it has about each section of the grid, to ensure that there is sufficient power reaching every part of the grid, even in cases where part of the grid malfunctions. This ability is achieved through the system being able to automatically reroute the power flow in the grid, so power flows through functioning areas to reach the parts that would otherwise have been affected by the malfunction.

Another example is the mentioned home automation system. For such a system, the things of the house being the lock, coffee machine, lights, washing machine etc, is then the central parts. If the things of the house is connected to the IoT, it is possible to connect to those devices and control them over the internet. This has several advantages, which includes ensuring the door is locked, preparing coffee before you get home, and other actions you may want to do with the things of your house, even though you are at work or on vacation.

4.2 Model View Controller

The Model View Controller (MVC) is a design pattern widely used in programming to separate the program into different layers called 'Model', 'View', and 'Controller'. This provides

the advantage that the structure gains clarity and becomes easier to maintain as it separates responsibility to individual layers, and is why this design pattern is used.

An illustration of MVC can be seen in Figure 4.1.

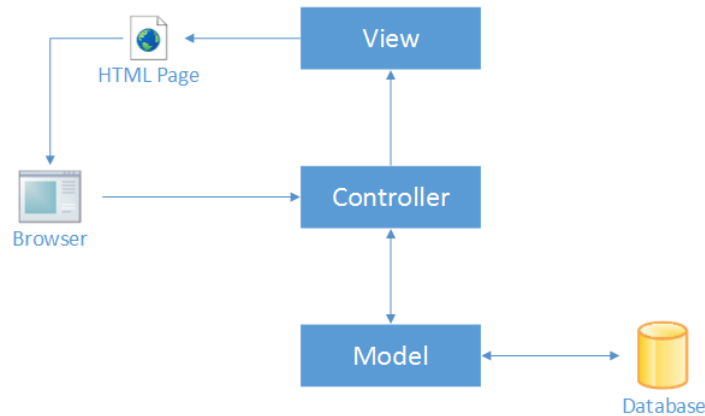


Figure 4.1: Illustration of the MVC pattern.

The ‘Model’ layer provides abstraction over the data stored in the database. Additionally it provides business logic to work on this data and functions to modify the state of the database.

A request from the browser is interpreted into a controller action. The ‘Controller’ provides a set of ‘actions’ that can be executed based on the interpretation of the browser request. These actions then use functions in the ‘Model’ layer and uses views to show an representation of the model, e.g. a table or a map of stations. These views are then presented to the user through the browser. A controller may include multiple views to get a HTML page generated for the client to view. As multiple views may be included by the controller, it may use separate views for the header, the body, and finally one for the footer. These multiple views allow for reuse of views and is also well suited for asynchronous loading of smaller parts of a page.

It is important to note that there is a single model layer, consisting of multiple entities (e.g. bicycle and booking) and their associated services. Additionally, it is a good practice to have multiple controllers, which each handle different parts of the website. An example is to have a home and user controller. With the user controller taking care of everything connected to user login, editing of profile, logout etc. and some actions could be moved to a separate controller if it becomes unmanageable. The home controller takes care of the presentation of the frontpage. To ensure better code clarity, the controllers are split into different responsibility areas of the website, each such controller containing a set of actions related to its responsibility area.

In addition to the better code clarity, as the website is organised in the way it is, working with the same model, the layout of the website can easily be changed, by including other views or developing additional controllers for other work routines. This is related to the high modularity you gain with the MVC pattern, leading to high cohesion (elements in a module belong together to a high degree) and low coupling (low interdependence between modules).

However, some things need to be loaded asynchronously for increased usability, which is where AJAX comes in.

4.3 Asynchronous JavaScript and XML

Asynchronous JavaScript and XML (AJAX) is a way to update parts of a web page without user interaction. By using AJAX, parts of the web pages can be updated without reloading the whole web page every time, which makes the user experience of a website smoother. Even though XML is a part of AJAX, it is not necessary to use when using AJAX, other methods to encode the data can be used, an example could be to use JSON, HTML, or plain text. For the data transmission, data is obtained per request in some encoding, where the response can then be used by JavaScript to decode and reload the affected parts.

The reason to use AJAX is to improve the usability of a website, as well as the performance of a web page. An example of this is when rating a film on IMDb [29] then when a user rates a movie, the web page does not reload, but instead utilises an asynchronous update to the database giving the user a non-interrupted experience. AJAX should be used whenever the user interacts with something that does not need to update the entire page, but only update information on the database, this could be used when updating only a part of the web page.

4.4 Simple Object Access Protocol

The theory of this section primarily based upon [30, 31].

The **Simple Object Access Protocol** (SOAP) is a protocol for sending structured messages over a computer network. With the specification of the website being provided with use of XML [32]. The use of a SOAP helps structuring message passing, providing type information for the parameters and return value.

SOAP is useful because at the same time as allowing transmission of information, it also allows implementation of functionality for what is to be done once that information has been received.

A reason to use SOAP over other methods for transmitting information is because it provides more possibilities for security and is generally considered more reliable, and because it provides a standard practice that makes it easier for new developers to pick it up.

We chose to use SOAP because it provides a standard protocol that when implemented is easy to use. Other methods do exist, but SOAP was sufficient for our purposes and is a technology we knew beforehand making it easily adaptable.

5 Design

This chapter presents the design of the product, where the conceptual design is described after which a prototype is presented. We also examine what the administration tools need to be able to do. Then the ER-diagram of the database is presented for both usage and logging purposes. The architecture is also explained for both the website and the station software. Finally an explanation of how the synchronisation between the central server and the client is going to be handled follows.

5.1 Conceptual Design

In this section we describe how a user should be able to use the system, but also the constraints on usage built in to the system. Additionally, the section covers some administrative aspects to monitor use and misuse of the system.

5.1.1 Booking

A user is able to get an overview of the available bicycles at each station through a website. On the website, it is possible for the user to book a bicycle, if a bicycle is available for booking at the station he wants to book. In order for a user to perform such a booking, he first needs to create a profile and login, then he has to specify the time and station for his booking.

The reason the user has to specify the time for his booking, originate from the idea that the system has to make the bicycle unavailable to others and therefore has to lock the bicycle at some time. A user is able to book a bicycle up to one day before he actually needs to use it, and in order to avoid that all bicycles are locked, as a consequence of possible long period of lock time for each bicycle, the system only locks a bicycle one hour before the specified time. This gives a more dynamic system because bicycles remain available for use in the mean time.

Once the user arrives at the station at the specified time, he enters a password generated by the system in order to unlock his bicycle and is further elaborated in Section 5.1.2.

To avoid that a bicycle keeps being locked in case a user forgets his booking, the system gives a deadline of one hour after the booking time. If the bicycle has not been retrieved at the deadline, the system automatically unlocks the bicycle thereby returning the bicycle to the pool of available bicycle at that station.

5.1.2 Retrieving a Bicycle

A user has to be able to retrieve a bicycle at one of the stations located around the city of Aalborg. Two cases exist, the user may have a booking or he may not have a booking.

If a user has a booking there is also a password associated with this booking which the user can read on the website. When the user then travels to the specified station in a time range of one hour before the specified time to one hour after, since that is the time range of the locking, he can enter the password at the station computer and get a message telling him to walk to a given dock to retrieve his bicycle, where he then has to deposit 20 DKK to have his bicycle unlocked. That is, for a bicycle with a booking to be unlocked, it is a two step process of first unlocking it at the server and then use the regular 20 DKK deposit.

If the user does not have a booking he does not have to use the station computer, but can instead walk to a free bicycle and deposit 20 DKK to retrieve it. In order to avoid that a user without a booking retrieves a bicycle that has just been unlocked from the server by another user, we imagine a distinction of reserved unlocked bicycles and free bicycles. This could be in the form of some status sign at the docks indicating whether a given bicycle is locked, unlocked with booking, or free to use.

5.1.3 Deliver a Bicycle

When a user is finished using his bicycle he has to deliver it back to some nearby station. In order for him to avoid bicycling to various stations to find one that has free docks, he instead uses the website to locate a nearby station with free docks. Once such a station is located he bicycles to this station and places his bicycle in a free dock, which ends his usage of the given bicycle and he gets the 20 DKK deposit back.

5.1.4 Usage Monitoring

As per request of Aalborg Kommune, some monitoring of bicycles and their use is desired.

An example of this is if some bicycles have gone missing, or have been reported seen in other cities, the administrator can then go to the website to have a map presented indicating where the bicycles are located and in that way locate missing bicycles.

Another example of misuse is if some bicycles has not been delivered to a station in a long time, then the administrators might suspect that the bicycle is instead being used as a private bicycle. To support such an investigation, the website enables the administrator to obtain the route history for a single or multiple bicycles. The route history, would then draw the routes on a map and thus indicate some unusual route for the privately misused bicycle compared to the other bicycles.

Examples also exist for monitoring some usage patterns of bicycles. This relates to the route history, which also provides an indication of what routes are usual.

Other usage monitoring is also interesting. An example of this is if administrators suspect some stations to be used a lot more than others, it would be useful to administrators to provide them with an overview of this in form of a chord diagram or some graph that shows the bicycles count at a given station over time. According to these statistics, the administrators can then make informed decisions on where to add or remove docks.

Given this conceptual idea of the system, prototyping is the next step.

5.2 Website Prototype

In order to get a better idea of how the website should look like, various prototypes were drawn. As they are prototypes, they are by no means a representation of the final product, but more of a source of inspiration and brainstorming, to consider when developing the website. Throughout this section, prototype sketches for different parts of the website are presented, explained, and discussed. Our primary inspiration is based on the current website for Aalborg Bicykel [7].

For all the prototypes presented in this section, the arrows on the pages have been drawn with different styles to distinguish between different actions. If two arrows have the same style it means that they are associated with one action following the other. Additionally, the prototypes

presented are for the booking part of the website, with the administration prototypes omitted, as those were quick sketches on a blackboard.

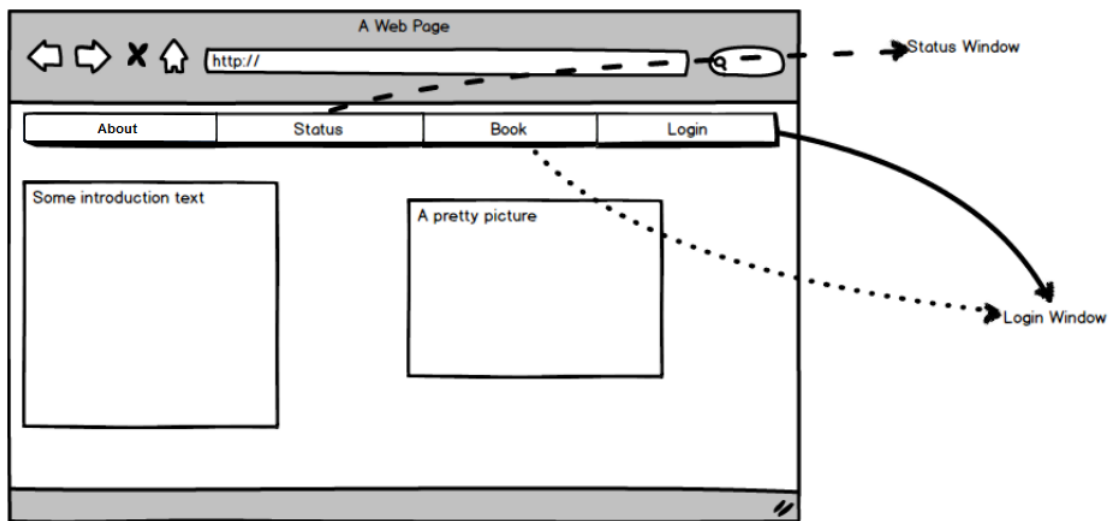


Figure 5.1: About page.

First, we take a look at Figure 5.1. This illustration presents a draft of the about page, it is structured as a standard about page with some description of the organisation behind the website. What is more interesting to see in this illustration is the first draft of the menu bar. The menu bar consists of links to about, status, book, and login, each of which have their page(s) illustrated hereafter.

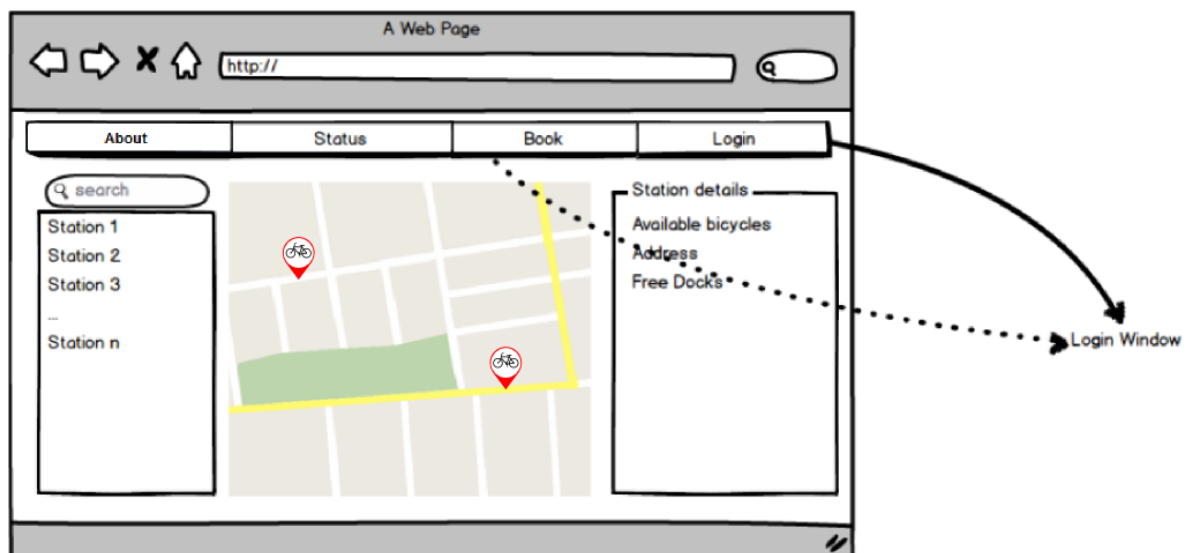


Figure 5.2: Status page.

The status page can be seen in Figure 5.2. The main idea is that the status page should be easily

accessible and is what should be shown when navigating to the homepage. The reason for this is that the status page should easily be able to give you an overview of the status of each station. As can be seen from the illustration, this station detail can be found by selecting a station from a list, searching for it, or selecting the station on a map. When a station is selected, details are shown for it, which can be useful to see if available bicycles exist at the station. In many ways, the status page is similar to the booking page, which is presented hereafter.

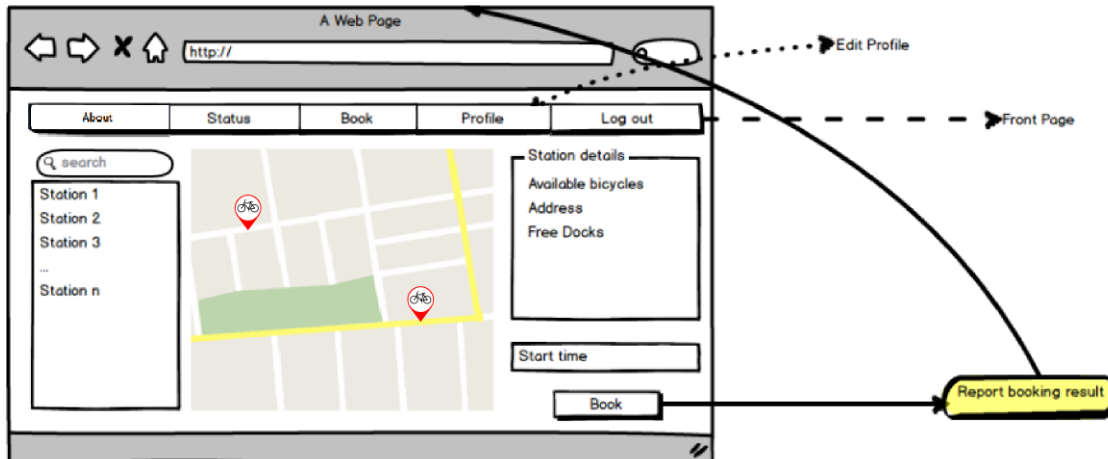


Figure 5.3: Booking page.

For an illustration of the booking page, see Figure 5.3. The booking page can only be navigated to if you are logged in, if not you are redirected to a login page. The booking page is otherwise the same as the status page, except you are able to book a bicycle at a given time. To make a booking, you would login to the website and navigate to the booking page. Thereafter you would select a station where you want to book a bicycle and select start time, which is the time you expect to retrieve the bicycle. When you then click *Book*, the booking result is handled and registered in the system if valid.

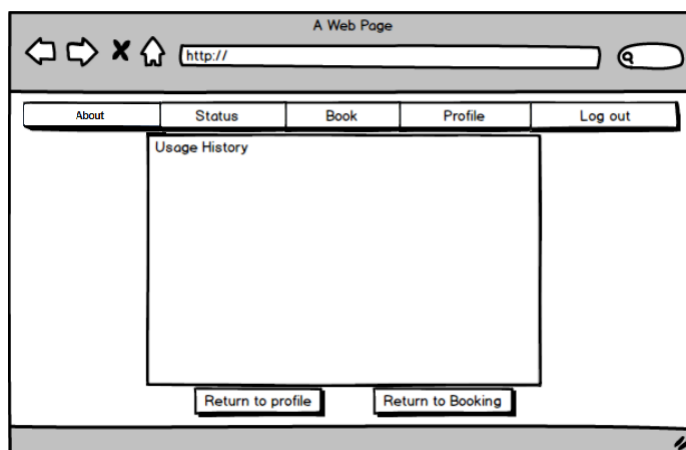


Figure 5.4: Booking history page.

Prototype pages also exist for the profile login and management, but has been omitted as these pages are very standard pages. In that meaning one page being a login form and another page being a form with some fields to edit your password, phone, and email. What is interesting though, is that you can access your booking history page through the profile page.

The booking history page can be seen in Figure 5.4 and shows your whole booking history. The booking history is thought useful because it might be reassuring to show the user that their bookings have been handled correctly by the system and to generally support users that think their actions have not been properly registered.

This ends the description of the prototypes for the system, and is what we first had in mind before implementing the system, and as such you later see some parts of this used for the implemented system.

5.3 Administration Tools

In order for the administrator of the bicycle system to make reasonable decision about future improvements towards the bicycle system, statistical data has to be collected and shown to the administrator. This then provides an overview of the usage of the bicycles and prepare him to make an informed decision or provide him with a knowledge of how the system is used. A list of questions should be able to be answered or hinted by the system, however, the implemented features in the final system is likely limited by available time:

Which routes are used?

If routes could be determined, patterns could possibly be seen, e.g. if there is a particular route that is very popular.

Where is the most traffic of bicycles during some period?

An administrator would be able to see how many bicycles leaves and arrives at each station and thereby get an overview of where the traffic is high and low, providing an indication of where to put focus for relocation of bicycles and expansion of stations.

How does the amount of bicycles at a given station change over time?

The administrator can choose a long time interval, providing a general overview of when the activity at each station is high or low, also providing him with an overview of usage at each station.

What is the status of the stations?

An overview page of the stations should be implemented, providing information about stations such as if they are online or not and what their status is with regards to usage.

What are the hotspots for bicycles?

If positions of bicycles could be determined, it would mean that different kind of patterns could be detected, for example detecting stagnant bicycle hotspots could provide valuable knowledge about where to add new stations.

More details about how this is stored in the database can be seen in Section 5.4.

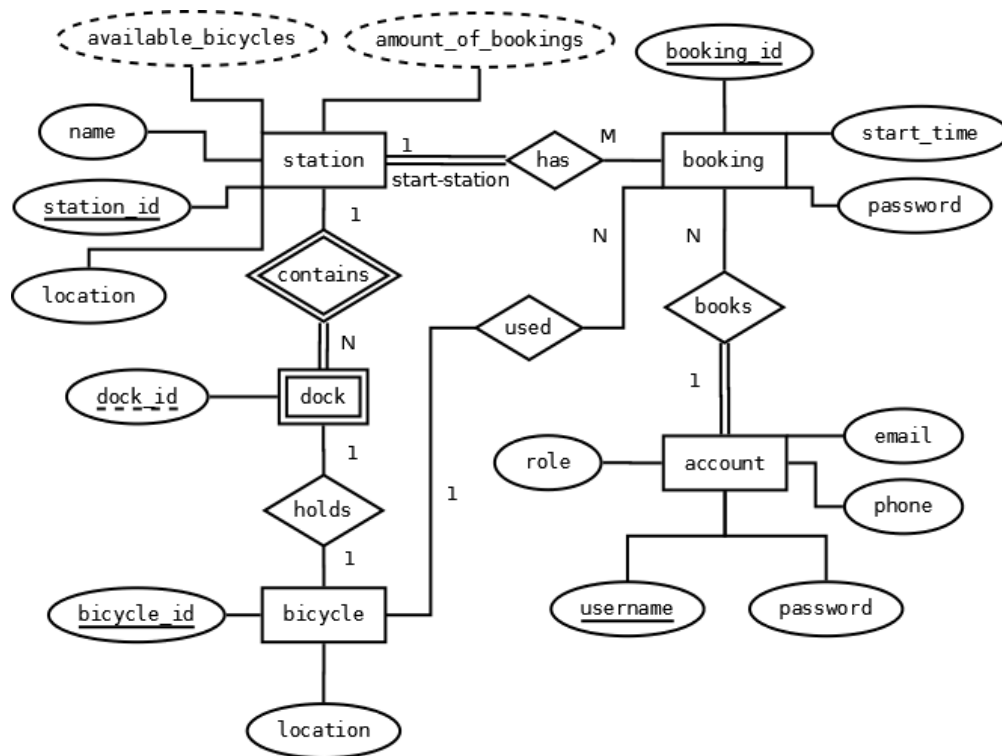


Figure 5.5: The ER Diagram for database overview.

5.4 Entity–Relationship Diagram

In order to have an idea of how the database store bookings, location of bicycles, and their relation to the location of the stations, an ER Diagram was made, see Figure 5.5.

As seen in the diagram, the entities consists of bicycle, dock, station, booking, and account. An account consists of a username, email, which both must be unique, phone number, password, and role which can be either a regular user or an administrator. These attributes are common for an account entity, with the idea of the phone number is that they should, in the future, be able to receive the booking password over SMS.

In relation to this is the booking entity, where it can be seen that a user can have many bookings whereas a booking is registered to one account. The booking then has a booking_id, to uniquely identify a booking, a start_time, such that a station knows when to lock a bicycle, and a password, used to unlock a bicycle.

A booking is also tied to a station, such that a booking is located at one station, whereas a station can have many bookings.

A booking is also tied to a bicycle, such that when the booking is fulfilled it identifies which bicycle was taken.

A station has the attribute station_id, to uniquely identify the station. Furthermore, it has a name, which is thought to be used to give a meaningful description of a given station. We are

aware that `name` could be used as a primary key, but having an integer `id` as the primary key reduce storage requirements when using foreign keys to the station `id`'s.

In addition to this, a `station` has a `location`, which is used to easily place a station on a map, and can also be used for calculations such as distance between a given station and bicycle. A station also has two derived attributes, which are `available_bicycles` and `amount_of_bookings`, where `available_bicycles` is beneficial to show to the user, such that they can see if it is possible to gather a bicycle at a given station.

Next is the `dock` entity, which is a weak entity, as it cannot exist without a `station`. This represents the real-life situation with stations located around the city, and each of these has a number of docks. The dock only has one attribute, which is the `dock_id`, used to identify a dock in combination with a `station_id`.

The interesting part of a `dock` is its relation with a `bicycle`. A dock may or may not hold a `bicycle`, which is represented with the `holds` relation.

The `bicycle` entity then consists of a `bicycle_id`, to uniquely identify a given `bicycle`, and a `location`, which can be used to locate lost bicycles.

5.4.1 Data Logging

Keeping a log of information for administrative purposes as described in Section 5.3, requires additional database tables having timestamps as an important factor since the usage of bicycles is tied to some real life events that needs to be logged. In order to log the routes for a bicycle, a new relation is added to the database schema storing information about longitude and latitude and of course which bicycle it is for and when it was logged. In order to log traffic of bicycles between stations, another relation is added to the schema having information about a start station and an end station for a trip along with times for each of the events (start of trip and end of trip). Last, a relation to store the count of bicycles at each station along with a timestamp, is added to the schema.

Putting all this together, also illustrating foreign key references, can be seen in Figure 5.6.

Addition and removal of bicycles, users, and stations are part of the responsibility of the administration tools. For bicycles, they should be added to the system loosely and not directly to a station. We do it like this because when the administrator adds a new bicycle, they receive an `id` and the idea is that they use this `id` to program the bicycle such that it can be recognised by the system. For stations, an IP address needs to be known. Addition of users does not have any such considerations to make. The dock is not part of the administration tools, since it is handled at the stations.

Since the logging tables use the other tables like the `station` and `bicycle` tables it is important to handle deletion of stations and bicycles. If deletion is not handled properly the logged data could end up being inconsistent. In our case we handle deletion by adding a column to the affected tables indicating if the row is deleted or not, this ensures that we do not encounter foreign key constraints due to the logs referencing those rows. When using the `station` and `bicycle` table on the website we make sure to only use the rows that are not deleted, while for the history data we use all rows within a chosen time interval ignoring the `deleted` attribute.

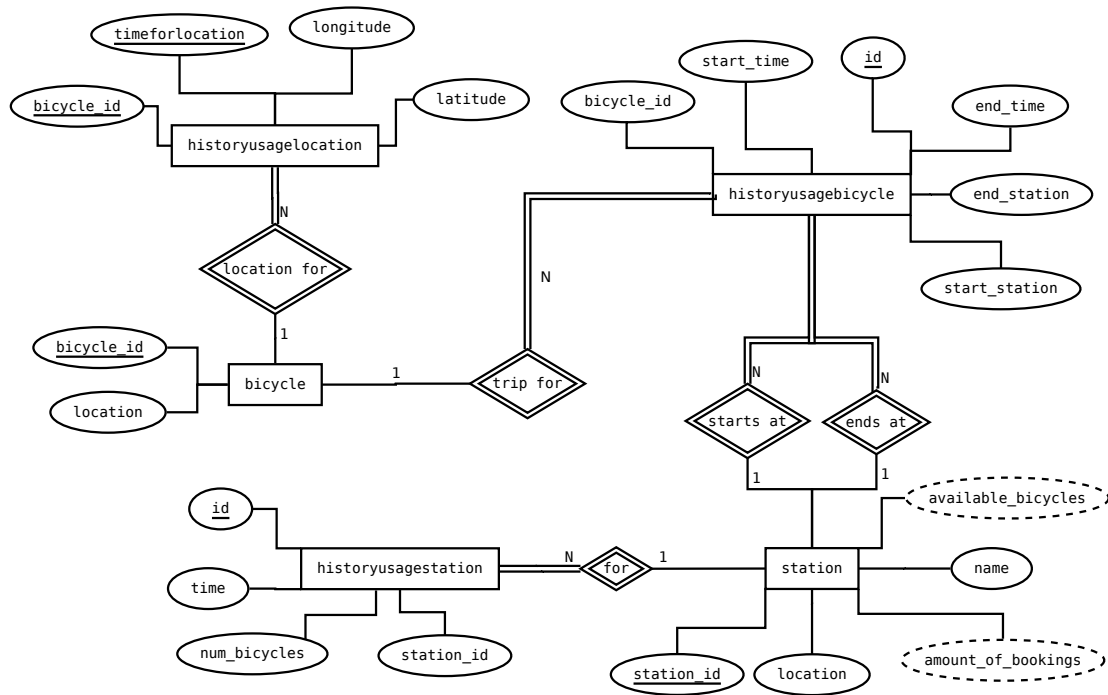


Figure 5.6: ER-diagram showing relations covering data logging.

5.5 Architecture

Before implementing the software system, it is a good idea to have a general overview of how the various parts of the system are connected. In order to gain this overview, an overall architecture diagram is drawn.

The overall architecture can be seen in Figure 5.7. In the illustration a single arrow is a one way communication, whereas two arrows are two way communication. The architecture is very similar to a client-server pattern, where the central database is the server, and the stations and bicycles are the clients. As we have a central booking system, and multiple simultaneous access points, the client-server pattern is applicable and appropriate.

As can be seen from the figure, the architecture consists of a central database as well as a website and three interfaces, named `GPSRegister`, `StationToDBRegister`, and `WebsiteToStationNotifier`, where `GPSRegister` and `StationToDBRegister` contact the central database. Additionally, multiple stations and their associated local database and docks exists. The reason each station needs to have its own local database, and not merely use the central one is to minimize the necessary network communication, as well as allowing the stations to remain operational in case of network failure. As such, the local databases contains a subset of the central database, corresponding to the data involving the given station. Each dock is associated with a given station, and is used by the users to retrieve and deliver bicycles.

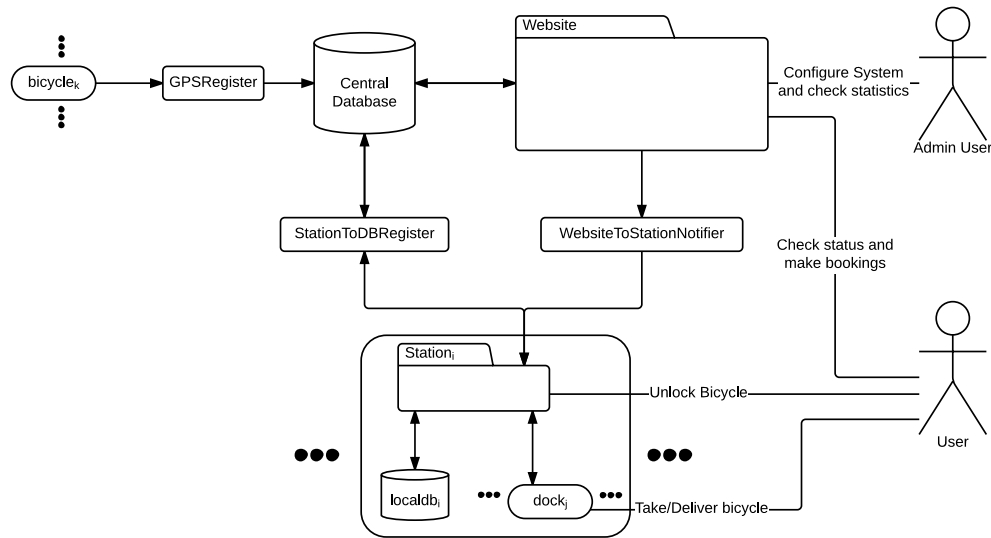


Figure 5.7: Overall architecture.

The three interfaces each serve a different purpose. The `GPSRegister` interface, is provided for the bicycles to register their current position in the central database, as well as logging its position in another table, which is used to provide a route. This data provided can be used for route mapping and positioning of bicycles.

The `StationToDBRegister` interface serves the purpose of updating the central database of changes performed at the local stations. Furthermore, it enables the local stations to read their subset of the central database, which is used for first time booting of stations, when their local database is empty.

The `WebsiteToStationNotifier` is a little different, in that it is an interface provided to the website, such that when the website changes data, e.g. create a booking, the involved station is notified by the interface.

Taking a look at the architecture for the website, we see a MVC pattern in use, see Section 4.2. A detailed overview of the architecture of the controller and model part of the website is provided in Appendix A.1 and Appendix A.2

Another part of the figure is the user interaction. For the website, we distinguish between administrators and regular users. The administrator has access to an administration website, where he can modify stations, bicycles, docks, and users. In addition to this, the administrator is also provided with some statistics pages about the usage of the system. The administrator also has access to the features a regular user has access to.

A regular user can interact with the system in several ways. The website allows for station status, in order to see how many bicycles and docks are available at any given station, but also the position of each station. In addition to this, the website also provides the option to book bicycles in advance for a given station, where the station locks a bicycle some time in advance. If you book a bicycle, you are provided with a password needed to unlock a bicycle at the station. Two ways to interact with the system exist, which is with or without a booking and are described in Section 5.1.2.

For delivery of bicycles, the interaction is the same whether the bicycle is booked or not. The process is easy, as you locate a free dock and then place the bicycle at that dock. The system then automatically registers that the bicycle has been returned to a dock at the station.

5.5.1 Station Software

While Figure 5.7 of the overall architecture provides an overview of the system, the station component has its own architecture as well, which can be seen in Figure 5.8. In this figure the arrows represent flow of information.

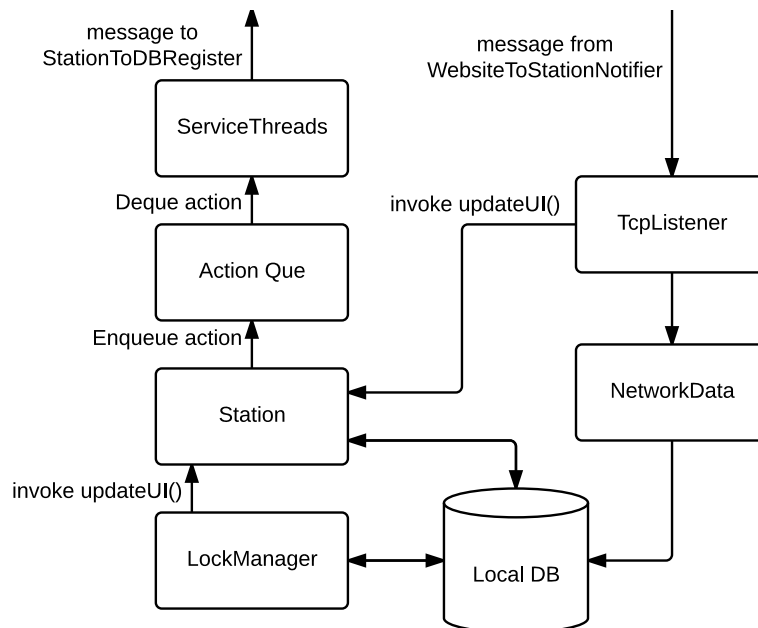


Figure 5.8: Station software architecture.

In this figure, the station is responsible for the GUI. **TcpListener** is running in a thread and has the responsibility of listening for messages from the global system through the **WebsiteToStationNotifier** and stores these messages as a **NetworkData** object, and tells this object to perform the action the message contains.

The **NetworkData** area has the responsibility of adding a booking to the local database corresponding to the information the object contains or removing a booking with the ID it received.

The **LockManager** area is running in a thread, and is responsible for locking a bicycle when a booking is close to its start time and unlocking said bicycle again if the booking's start time is exceeded by a certain limit.

The **ServiceThreads** area also running in a separate thread. This thread is responsible for reporting changes at the station, which are stored in the **ActionQueue** queue. As soon as there is something in the **ActionQueue** queue, the thread tries to report it to the online interface, repeating until it succeeds in transmitting it.

How locking should be tackled has not been touched upon yet, specifically when docks should be locked. It is, however, a central part of the system and as such is examined hereafter. The lock

mechanism cannot be left as a responsibility of the database as the goal is to make the system less static, as requested by Aalborg Kommune, see Section 2.1.1. If we were to make this a responsibility of the database, it would mean that the locking should be performed immediately, but if you book a bicycle for tomorrow that would mean a bicycle would be unavailable for other users for a whole day, which is highly undesired. An alternative would be to limit the time in advance you can make a booking, this would also increase the dynamic of the system, but would limit the booking flexibility. This is a trade off between certainty of getting the bicycle booked and a dynamic system where more bicycles are in use. It is chosen that the dock should be locked one hour in advance of a booking, risking that not all bookings have a bicycle locked for it. Bookings having earlier start time are prioritised, if two or more bookings have equal start time they are prioritised according to registration time.

5.6 Synchronisation

As the stations and the website are located on different addresses, you have to consider how to synchronise the various parts of the system, in order to avoid an inconsistent state.

Several scenarios resulting in such inconsistencies could happen if you are not careful.

A scenario that could lead to an inconsistent state, if not handled well, is what happens when a station fails to communicate its current state to the global system. A station maintains a local database holding information about each current booking made at that station. When a booking has been processed, meaning that the user has taken the bicycle associated with the booking, the state of the local database changes in that the booking does not exist any more. This change in state is also communicated to the global database maintained by the global system.

A problem can occur when trying to communicate the change as the connection can be interrupted. This problem is then, formulated with other words, which database holds the correct state of the overall system? This depends highly on the direction of communication failure. In the described case above, the communication failure lies with the station software resulting in the local database of the station having the correct and current state of the system.

But if the direction of communication is the opposite, which would be involving bookings registered, the global system would have the correct booking information.

The desired behaviour of the system is to always be in a correct state, which requires that when a communication failure happens, the part participating in the communication holding the correct state resends its information, or the one with the inconsistent state reads the state from the consistent counterpart.

There are two cases for the communication between the station software and the global system.

Station to Global System

A communication failure in this direction results in a faulty state of how many bicycles are available at the given station thereby resulting in a rather useless website for booking. Additionally, this can also involve the global system having the incorrect amount of docks registered, if such a change were performed at the station.

Global System to Station

A communication failure in this direction results in a failing booking system, in that no booking made at the website reaches the station and thereby has no effect at all. In the end this results in a faulty state of how many bicycles are available at the given station because

the station does not know of the booking and thereby not lock a bicycle, resulting in the system thinking the booking is registered and the bicycle is locked whereas the station has no knowledge of said booking.

How these cases are handled is described in Section 6.10.

With the architectural design and the visual design of the system set in place as well as rules set in place for how locking should behave, the implementation details of how this is implemented follows.

6 Implementation

This chapter covers implementation details for the features covered in the design chapter. This is covered by describing how we implement the GUI, Website Structure, Database, Interfaces, Model View Controller, Google Maps API, Administration Tools, Bicycle Simulation, Station Software, and Synchronisation.

6.1 GUI

Based on the website prototypes in Section 5.2, a graphical user interface is implemented. The website is implemented using HTML, CSS, and JavaScript. Different JavaScript frameworks have been used for graphs, AJAX, layout, animations, and maps. These frameworks are: jQuery, jQuery-UI, amCharts, D3, Google Maps Javascript API v3, and different plugins for jQuery [33–36]. This user interface is then iterated upon based on the usability test, what follows is the final result based on these iterations. As can be seen from the prototype, the website has many pages, therefore only the essential ones are shown. The first we look at is the start page shown when an administrator is logged in, which can be seen in Figure 6.1.

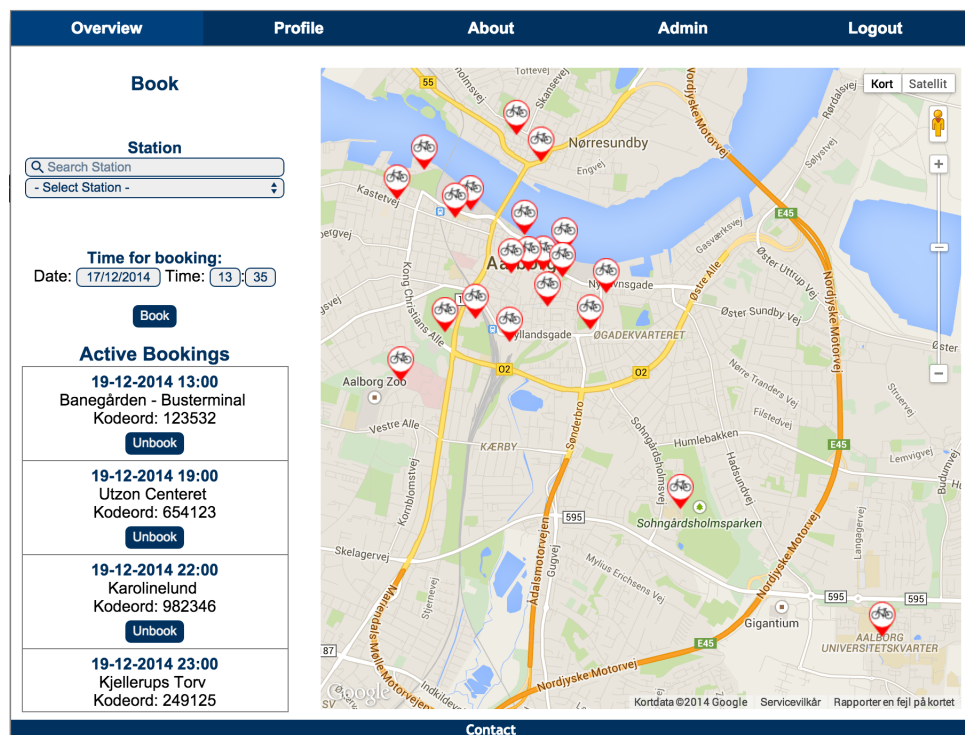


Figure 6.1: Overview page.

In this figure we see that the original idea from the prototype has been changed, mainly the fact that the screen is now split in two parts, where the booking/station details covers one third and the map the last two thirds. The map in the figure shows a map of Aalborg city with bicycle

icons on it representing the placement of the station. The left side of the webpage is used for booking, where users can book a bicycle on a chosen station at a specified time. The user can also see a list of bookings he currently has, and is able to cancel said bookings by clicking on the unbook button.

In Figure 6.1 the navigation bar contains five elements, of which the administrator element is only shown to administrators and directs the user to the administrator section of the site when clicked. The profile element in the navigation bar directs the user to their profile page, where they can change their profile information if so desired, as well as view the history of their usage of the system.

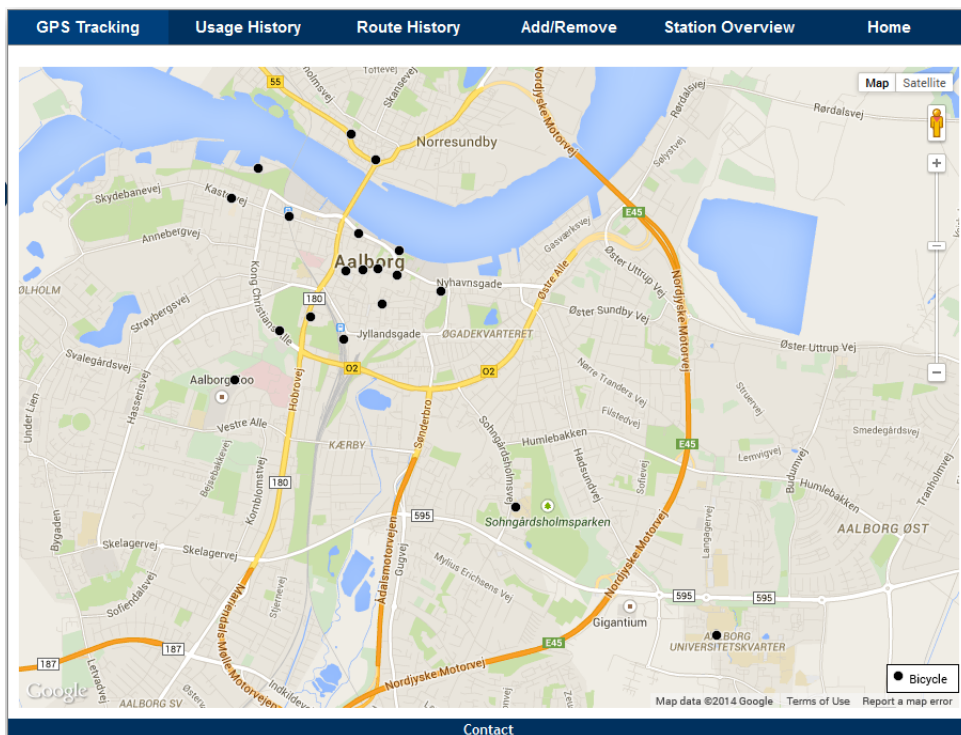


Figure 6.2: Administrator page.

The administrator features are created for use by Aalborg Kommune, and they start on the page that can be seen in Figure 6.2. This page is a map containing black dots used to represent the current position of bicycles. The navigation bar can be used to navigate to the various administrator tools, elaborated more in Section 6.7. The only navigation bar element that does not direct to another administrator page, is the home element, which sends the user to the overview page, see Figure 6.1. Furthermore, if an ordinary user tries to access an administrator page he is redirected to the homepage.

For an overview of the website a sitemap is created, see Figure 6.3. The figure shows how you can navigate to the different web pages of the site, each level showing different web pages you can navigate to on that level. An example of this is the GPS Tracking page, from that page you can navigate to all its siblings as well as its ancestors, its siblings being Usage History, Route History, Add/Remove, Station Overview, and its ancestors being Admin and Home.

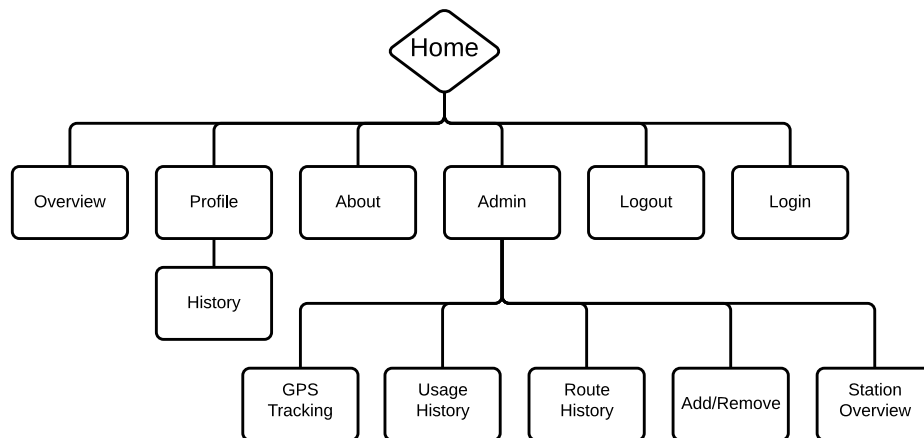


Figure 6.3: Sitemap.

6.2 Website Structure

The website is structured with a modified MVC pattern, for an explanation of the general idea of MVC see Section 4.2. In order to make the usage of MVC easy, a framework from [37] is used.

The framework provides a `controller` base class, see Figure 6.4, which the new controllers inherit from, mainly providing a database instance. It also provides an `Application` class that handles URL parsing and navigation to the correct pages based on the URL. In addition to this, it provides a directory structure. As an example, you can add a controller to the controller directory, and the `Application` class is able to load them, same idea goes for the model and view layer.

With inspiration from the MVC pattern and usage of the framework, the website was then structured as seen in Figure 6.4. The idea of the figure is to represent the structure, where we abstract from concrete entity, view, and controller names, and instead denote these with the names `Entityj`, `EntityServicej`, `ConcreteControlleri`, and `Viewu`. The structure is split into several parts, each of which is examined in turn.

Model Layer

If you take a look at the Model layer, it is split into three parts, `Entityj`, `EntityServicej` and `iService`. `Entityj` is a wrapper class, which is used to encapsulate a row from a table in the database. `EntityServicej` is then a service, implementing the CRUD methods of `iService`, thought of when determining the design, read is excluded from the interface because the number of parameters needed varies. `EntityServicej` is what part of the model that is responsible for establishing the connection to the database, and enables the controller to work on the model, via calling the CRUD methods of the service, when a read method is called from a controller, an entity, or a list of entities representing the row(s) is then what is returned. The reason we differentiate between `Entityj` and `EntityServicej` is that we find it makes sense to differentiate between the data and the methods working on the data. Furthermore it provides a separation of responsibility from the Entities and the EntityServices, given that Entities provide a means of rep-

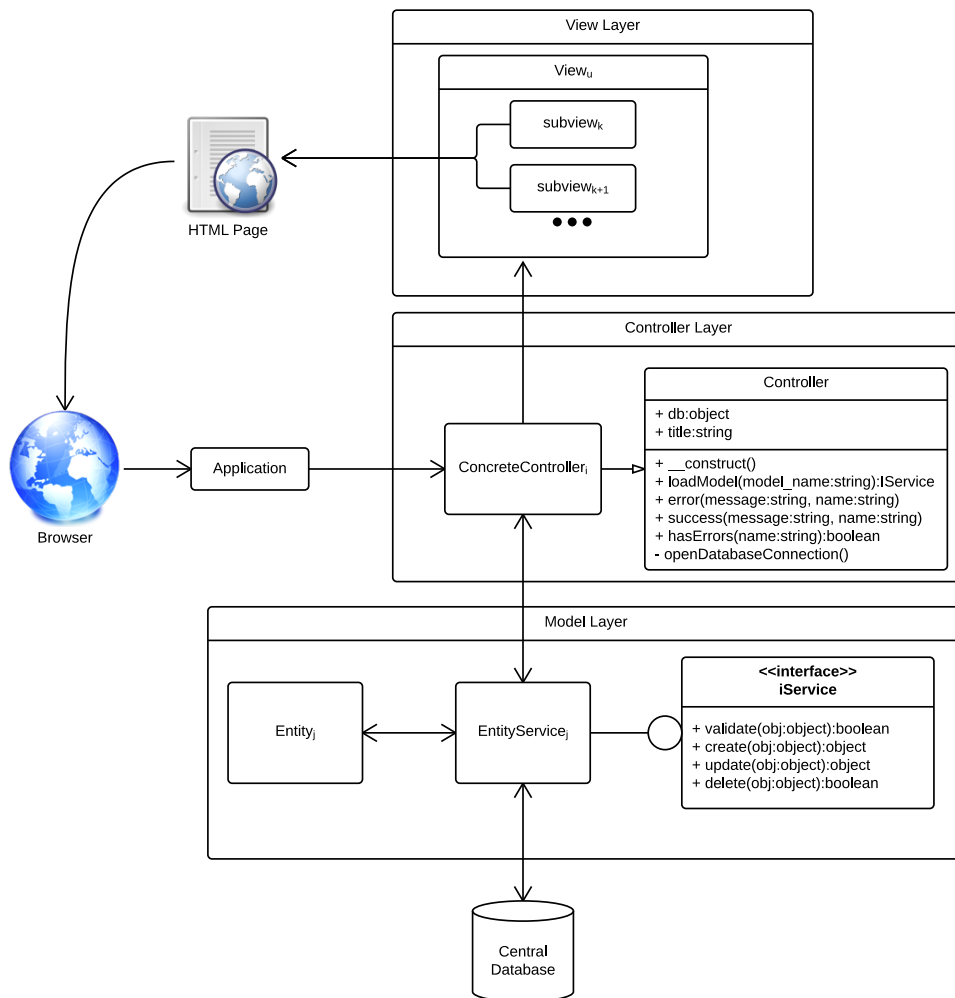


Figure 6.4: Website Structure.

representing an entity of the database and that `EntityServices` provide the behaviour for those representations.

Controller Layer

The `Controller` layer consists of a number of controllers, `ConcreteControlleri`, each of which inherits from a base `Controller` class, which provides functionality to load the model as well as registering successes and errors to be displayed to the user. Each concrete controller then contains a number of methods, corresponding to different pages, these methods are also called actions. The responsibility of the concrete controller is then to work on the `model` and include `views`.

View Layer

The `View` layer has the responsibility of presenting the data, prepared by the `controller`, to the user in a readable manner.

In other words, the `View` layer takes care of the HTML generation part of the website, where each complete view in this context is considered a complete HTML page possibly consisting of various subviews. Some of the subviews reoccur in multiple complete views. Different classes of subviews exist, normal subviews and templates that are used almost universally throughout the website, for example the header and footer subviews. The combination of these subviews forms a complete view which constitute a HTML page to be provided to the browser.

A characteristic of views in general is that it consist of a lot of HTML markup and a low amount of program logic, as this work is delegated to the model and controller layer.

Application

When the browser visits the website, rewrite rules has been set in the `.htaccess` file, to ensure that the relative path part of the URL is given as an argument to the default index file. This index file then loads the required files, such that the instantiated Application object has access to the configuration files needed. The GET variable URL, which was set from the `.htaccess` file is then used by the Application object to navigate to the correct controller and action.

For a more detailed look at the model and controller layer, see Appendix A.1 and Appendix A.2.

6.3 Database

To support the necessary information storage, a database is implemented in accordance with the ER diagram described in Section 5.4. The implementation of the ER diagram leads to the database schema that can be seen in Figure 6.5, however, there is more than what the ER diagram describes. In this figure, the connections between the tables represents foreign key constraints.

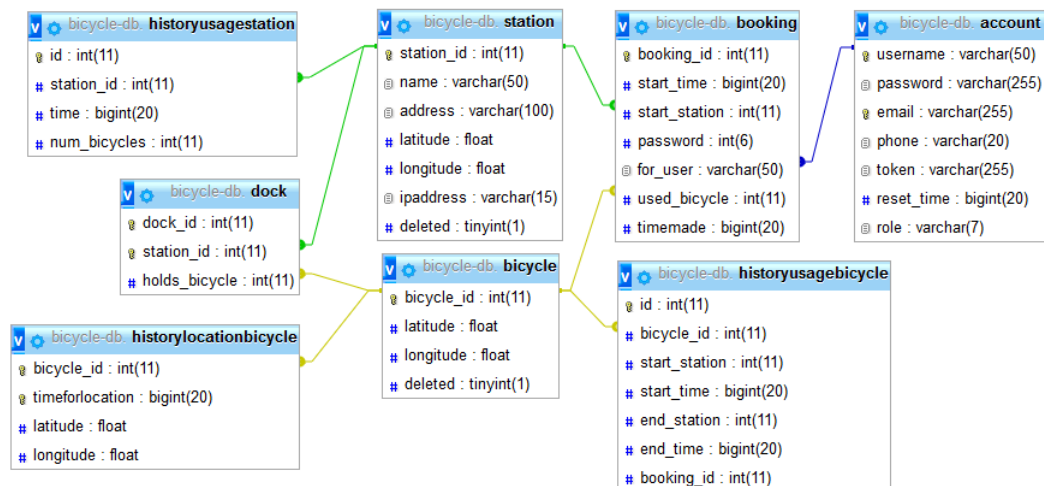


Figure 6.5: Database tables, foreign keys represented with the colours green for `station_id`, yellow for `bicycle_id`, and blue for `username`.

Logging is different from the general usage of the system in that it uses all historical data. That means for the purposes of the tables mentioned above it is important for the station and bicycle tables that rows are not deleted, but rather flagged as deleted, which is the cause of the deleted attribute in those tables. For regular use of the system it changes little but administratively it allows for using historical data.

In the translation from the ER diagram to the schema presented, the relations between the various entities could in all cases be represented as an attribute on one of the involved entities, as no N to M relations exist.

This was implemented in MySQL [38], primarily because it was packaged with the webserver that we used to develop the system with. There is no reason why MySQL was chosen instead of competing DBMS such as PostgreSQL [39] or MSSQL [40] other than convenience, and there is little reason why the schema could not be adapted to work on others.

6.4 Interfaces

As is described in the design, some communication between the stations and the database has to be established, e.g. to retrieve booking. This communication is established through the three interfaces `WebsiteToStationNotifier`, `StationToDBRegister`, and `GPSRegister`. These interfaces being from website to station, station to database, and bicycle to database. Each of these interfaces are described below.

6.4.1 Website to Station

This section is about the `WebsiteToStationNotifier` interface from Figure 5.7. The website has to establish contact to a station when a booking or un-booking has been performed. It is evident that this is important, as the stations need to be notified to keep track of bookings involving themselves as station, or else the booking information of the stations is outdated.

This contact is established through TCP/IP, and is used in implemented notification methods. These being `notifyStationBooking` and `notifyStationUnbooking`. The call to the notification methods is added in the `BookingService`, as each time a booking is created, updated, or deleted, it is called through `BookingService`.

In general, the notification methods work in the following way:

- Construct JSON encoded message to be sent to the station.
- Create the TCP socket.
- Connect the socket to the station involved with the booking.
- Send the data to the station.
- Close the socket.

The reason the message is JSON encoded, is to have a standard way of encoding data, which can be easily decoded by the station. It is then up to the station to parse this information and perform the action specified in the message. How the JSON encoded message looks like, as well as how the station handles this notification is elaborated in Section 6.9.2.

6.4.2 Station to Database

This section is about the `StationToDBRegister` interface from Figure 5.7. The station to database interface is important in order to register when a bicycle has been taken at a station or returned to a station, in order to give correct information on the website. Additionally the interface is used to retrieve information about bookings registered in the large database, in case of boot/reboot of a station.

The interface has been implemented in a SOAP encoding by help of the NuSOAP library [41]. This library makes you able to write regular PHP functions and then register these with the NuSOAP library, in order to have a web service generated. Bear in mind that all methods registered with NuSOAP needs to have a return value and as such a dummy boolean value is used where no other return value is needed.

An example of the implementation of an update operation on the database is presented in List 6.1.

```

1 $server->register('BicycleReturnedToDockAtStation',
2   //input paramters
3   array(
4     'bicycle_id' => 'xsd:int',
5     'station_id' => 'xsd:int',
6     'dock_id'    => 'xsd:int'),
7
8   //return value
9   array('return' => 'xsd:boolean'),
10
11  //additional information
12  $SERVICE_NAMESPACE,
13  $SERVICE_NAMESPACE . '#soapaction',
14  'rpc',
15  'literal',
16  'Registers that a given bicycle has arrived at a given dock at a given
    station'
17 );
18 function BicycleReturnedToDockAtStation($bicycle_id, $station_id,
    $dock_id)
19 {
20   global $db;
21   [...]
22   $stmt = $db->prepare("UPDATE dock SET holds_bicycle = ? WHERE dock_id
    = ?");
23   $stmt->bind_param("ii", $bicycle_id, $dock_id);
24   $stmt->execute();
25   $stmt->close();
26
27   [...]
28   return true;
29 }
```

List 6.1: Method for registering a bicycle has been returned to a dock at a given station.

If you take a look at List 6.1, the code is split into two parts, line 1-17 and line 18-29, which handles different parts of providing a method to register that a bicycle has returned to a dock

at a given station.

Line 1-17 takes care of registering the PHP function, such that it can be included in the auto-generation of the SOAP encoded web service. As can be seen from this specification, we tell the NuSOAP library the name of the function to register on line 1. Then line 4-6 specifies the input parameters, line 9 specifies the return value, and line 11-16 is less interesting parts which deals with how the method should be represented in SOAP.

Line 18-29 is the actual method for registering that a bicycle has been returned to a dock at a given station. This is performed with use of prepared statements, as can be seen in line 21-24, which is done to prevent SQL injection. As you can see, the actual statement expresses an update on the dock, such that the dock, where the bicycle has been placed, gets a reference to that bicycle.

Other methods for reading exists in the web service as well, the difference then being that a special `tns:BookingObjectArray` type is defined, which is an array type used to contain multiple JSON encoded strings that represents bookings. Such a method is for example useful when first booting a station where its local database is empty or that the local database data is outdated, e.g. it has been offline for some time. The implementation details have been omitted, as it is the same principle but where reading from the database is performed instead of updating the database.

6.4.3 Bicycle to Database

This section is about the `GPSRegister` interface from Figure 5.7. The interface from bicycle to database, is an interface that is needed to register the location of a bicycle, as GPS tracking is decided to be implemented, due to the meeting held with Aalborg Kommune. The idea is that each bicycle use the interface to inform the system of its location, according to the coordinates received from GPS.

The interface is implemented in the same fashion as the interface from station to database. As such, it is implemented as a SOAP web service, using the NuSOAP library to gain an encoding that makes the interface easy to call. There exists one method, the `RegisterGPS` method, which takes three arguments, the bicycle-id, latitude, and longitude. The way this interface is constructed is similar to the other SOAP encoded interface, but where the bicycle location is updated instead.

6.5 Model View Controller

The specific details of the MVC implementation is described hereafter. In this we touch upon how the implementation details differs from the overall MVC theory, but at the same time follows the design choices made. The description of MVC consists of the three subsections Model & Model Services, Controller, and Views.

6.5.1 Model & Model Services

This section describe the implementation of the model layer. We illustrate this by giving an example model, showing what it looks like and what it does. A diagram of the model layer can be seen in Appendix A.2.

The `Bicycle` entity class can be seen in List 6.2. As can be seen, what it does is to capture the attributes of the Bicycle entity from the database.

```

1 <?php
2 class Bicycle
3 {
4     public $bicycle_id = null;
5     public $longitude = null;
6     public $latitude = null;
7
8     function __construct($bicycle_id, $latitude, $longitude){
9         $this->bicycle_id = $bicycle_id;
10        $this->longitude = $longitude;
11        $this->latitude = $latitude;
12    }
13 }
14 ?>

```

List 6.2: Bicycle Class.

Every entity have a corresponding service that contain the manipulation and handling of objects of the same type as its corresponding entity. Each model service implement an interface enforcing the class to implement methods such as `validate`, `create`, `update`, and `delete`, for an overview see Figure 6.4. Enforcing these methods to exist in every service dictates the responsibility of the service, for example enforcing a `validate` method dictates that it is the responsibility of the service to ensure a correct format of the model entity before making any changes to the database. Furthermore, CRUD dictates that the service should handle all contact with the database concerning its specific entity.

It is also the responsibility of the model to handle all reads from the database, although it is not included in the implemented interface. This is because it may not always make sense to have a method that can read an entity from the database, and thereby this would possibly never be used. The reason for this is because what you want to read varies a lot, e.g. do you want to read multiple rows from the database or a single row. This is in contrast to delete or update that works on a single row.

With the model layer described, we take a look at how the controllers are constructed, and how they use the model layer.

6.5.2 Controller

This section shows how the controller layer works. We illustrate this by giving an example controller, showing what it looks like and what it does.

In List 6.3 part of the Home Controller can be seen. It defines an ‘action’ (`index`), this action is what is interpreted from the request sent by the client. For space saving purposes all actions but the `index` action have been omitted. The home controller uses two services, `StationService`, used to retrieve an array of all stations, line 8-9, and `BookingService`, used to retrieve an array of all active bookings for the currently logged in user, line 11-14. This illustrates the general idea behind the separation of the entities (the models) and the services associated with those entities. The `index` action of the home controller then uses the information loaded by ‘including’ views, and these views then use this information for displaying the content read from the services.

```

1 <?php
2 class Home extends Controller
3 {
4     public function index()
5     {
6         $this->title = "Home";
7         $currentPage = substr($_SERVER["REQUEST_URI"], 1);
8         $stationService = new StationService($this->db);
9         $stations = $stationService->readAllStations();
10
11         if (Tools::isLoggedIn()) {
12             $bookingService = new BookingService($this->db);
13             $activeBookings = $bookingService->getActiveBookings(
14                 $_SESSION["login_user"]);
15         }
16         require 'application/views/_templates/header.php';
17         require 'application/views/home/index.php';
18         require 'application/views/_templates/footer.php';
19     }
20     // [...]
21 }

```

List 6.3: Home Controller Class.

As can be seen on line 16-18 three views are included into the function. Because of the way include works in PHP the included content is in the same scope as the rest of the function, which means we can use the variables declared in the function, inside the included content.

The controllers and their actions can be seen in Appendix A.1.

As has been seen, the controllers utilise various views, as such, a description of the views follows hereafter.

6.5.3 Views

This section describes the view layer and what it does, illustrated by example.

In List 6.4 a truncated version of the home index view can be seen. Most of it is normal HTML, but the important part is how it utilises variables set in the controller, because a view is included by a controller, it gives access to the variables of the controller. This allows it to use them to generate more HTML as can be seen on line 6-10 where it uses the array of stations set in the controller, see List 6.3, to output option elements in a select element.

```

1 [...]
2 <form action="/Home/Book/" method="post">
3     [...]
4     <select name="station" id="stations" style="width: 243px;" onchange=
5         "UpdateMarker()">
6         <option value="0" disabled selected>- Select Station -</option>
7         <?php
8         foreach($stations as $station){
9             echo '<option value="' . $station->station_id . '>' . $station->name
10                . '</option>';

```

```

 9      }
10      ?>
11      </select><br />
12      [...]
13      <?php
14          if (Tools::isLoggedIn()) {
15              echo '<input type="submit" value="Book" />';
16          } else {
17              echo '<a href="/User/Login/">Login</a>';
18          }
19      ?>
20      [...]
21 </form>
22 [...]

```

List 6.4: Home Index View.

As can be seen, views consist of a lot of HTML markup and HTML generation, which is also the impression given for views in Section 6.2.

6.6 Google Maps API

The Google Maps API [35] is used to show maps on the front page and some of the administration pages. However, these pages use the API differently, the front page uses the API to show the map with the stations that are currently in the system, whereas the administrator pages visualises the usage of the bicycles in different ways.

To use the API, the construction of the map is done first, which can be seen in List 6.5. Map options are chosen, these options are e.g. the center of the map, which zoom level the map should have, and the style of the map.

```

1 var mapOptions = {
2     zoom: 13,
3     center: aalborg,
4     panControl: false,
5     zoomControlOptions: {
6         style: google.maps.ZoomControlStyle.LARGE,
7         position: google.maps.ControlPosition.RIGHT_TOP,
8     }
9 };

```

List 6.5: Construction of the map.

After the map is constructed the map markers are added to the map representing e.g. the stations or the bicycles, depending on the page.

For the front page the stations are inserted into the map by use of AJAX. For each station, the work-flow of this is as follows:

Gather data

Use the station service to read data to be displayed on the map.

Create info window

The info window is a window that appears whenever the user clicks on a station marker. It shows information about the station, which is the name, amount of free bicycles, and the amount of free docks.

Marker creation

Create a marker, which are the bullet points indicating the station on the map. The creation of the marker contains position, title, icon.

Assign listeners

Assign listeners to the marker clicks, in order to show the info window for the given marker when the marker is clicked.

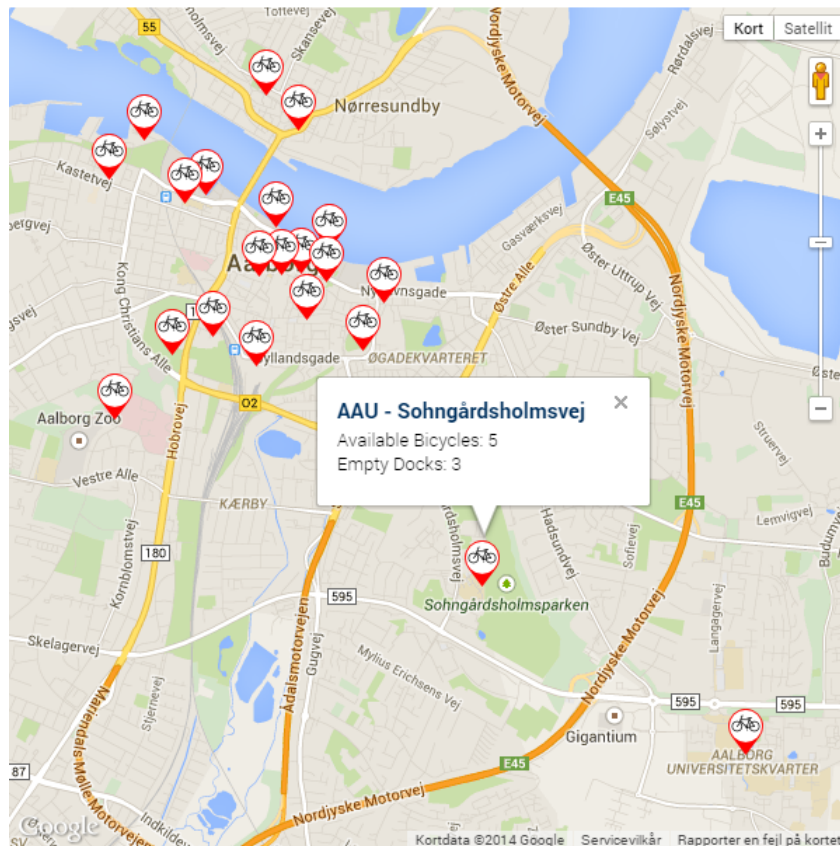


Figure 6.6: Google map with station markers and info window shown.

An example of the final map with markers placed can be seen in Figure 6.6.

For the administrator front page the markers are bicycles, which are updated at a set frequency using AJAX, and is created in a similar fashion, but with other objects placed on the map. The main purpose of the administrator front page is to be able to see where the different bicycles are at a given time, which is the reason why the markers are updated with set frequency. For the update of the marker position AJAX is used to get all the positions of the different bicycles, which allows the makers to move without refreshing the page.

6.7 Administration Tools

In Section 5.3 a list of questions were made and explained, setting out requirements or guidelines for the features of the administration tools, in that an administrator should be able to answer the questions using these tools. In this section we describe how to answer the questions from Section 5.3 with a visual presentation of the relevant data.

To answer the question about ‘which routes are used’ we implemented a feature to show route history, which can be seen in Section 6.7.1. ‘Hotspot detection’ is not implemented, but GPS Tracking is implemented, see Section 6.7.2. The ‘traffic of bicycles during some period’ can be seen using the chord diagram in Section 6.7.3. How the ‘amount of bicycles at a station change over time’ can be seen in the line diagram in Section 6.7.3.

6.7.1 Route History

This part of the administration site handles showing a map of the historical locations of a bicycle. The administrator provides one or more bicycles, a start, and end date. Then if there are historical GPS coordinates for the bicycle(s), they are shown on the map.

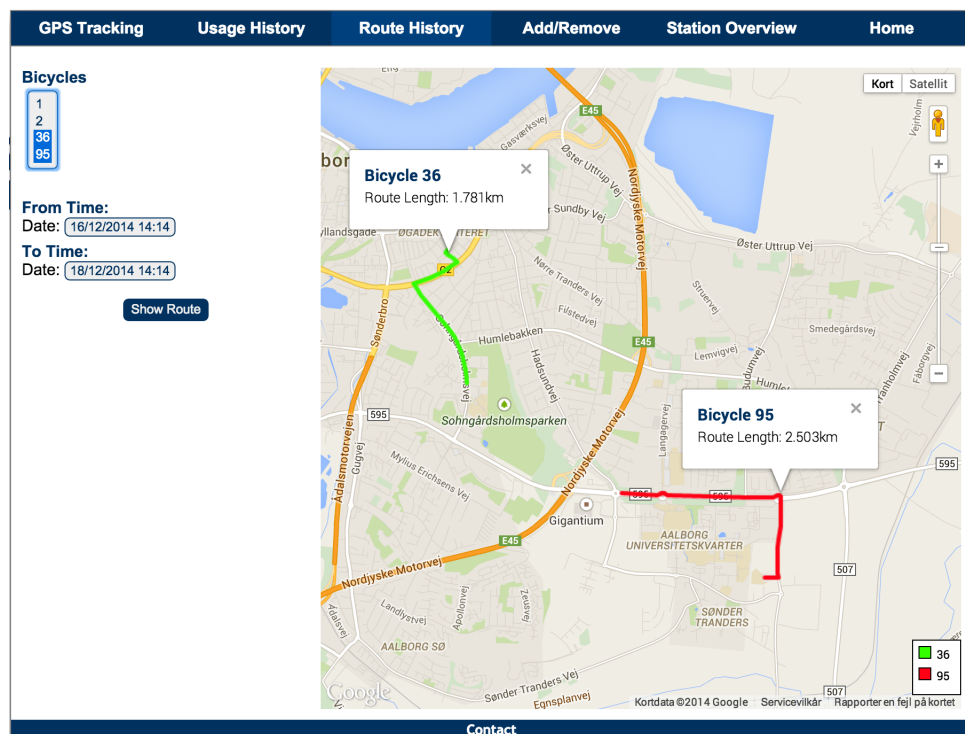


Figure 6.7: Route History.

The purpose of the route history page is to give the administrators an idea of which roads the bicycles are traveling a lot on. This can then be used as a decision-making tool to decide where to put new stations, in that if the administrator can see that a lot of bicycles are traveling to a specific point it might be a good idea to put a station there. It could also be used to see if a

specific bicycle is being misused in the sense that it would be visible if the bicycle is being used as a private bicycle.

See Figure 6.7 for an illustration of what the page looks like.

From the figure, the presentation of routes are shown for the bicycles with id 36 and 95. The reason multiple bicycles can be selected is to enable the administrator to compare routes on the same map.

This feature make use of the `historyusagelocation` table designed and implemented, showing the coordinates from the table in a map. The table is updated by the `GPSRegister` interface described in Section 5.5. It is implemented by finding all the bicycles that have associated historical GPS data. The administrator then chooses which bicycles to map, and these bicycles then have their routes loaded which are then given to Google Maps API to display as a polyline.

6.7.2 GPS Tracking

The bicycle table has two useful attributes for GPS tracking, which is the longitude and latitude. These attributes can be used to find the last known location of the bicycle. This would allow the administrator to determine where missing bicycles are, which in turn would allow for easier recovery of bicycles. We present this data to the administrator on a map to gain a better overview. The result of this can be seen in Figure 6.2.

6.7.3 Bicycle Usage History

Besides recording the exact location of each bicycle with GPS coordinates, the system also records the stations a given bicycle visits. This information is stored in the `historyusage-bicycle` table implemented from Section 5.3. Information is inserted into this table based on events happening at the stations. Every time a bicycle is taken from a dock at a station the `StationToDBRegister` interface is contacted, which takes care of inserting the information about the start station of the trip. Furthermore every time a bicycle is returned to a station the interface takes care of updating the trip with an end station. Keeping such information about a bicycle trip can be used to give an overview of the bicycle traffic between stations.

The amount of docked bicycles is tracked for each station, giving an overview of which stations that have high and low activity. This is implemented through the `historyusagestation` table described in Section 5.3, storing the amount of bicycles at each station. The insertion is event-based and happens every time a bicycle is either returned to or taken from a station, and is done through the `StationToDBRegister` interface described in Section 5.5.

A timestamp is generated for an event right before query execution, which means that some delay can occur from the actual event firing time to the insertion time, resulting in an imprecise trip duration. This is, however, considered a minor deviation in most cases, because the communication delay is short (seconds maybe even less). In case of a bad connection, the generated timestamp causes inaccurate data in the light of statistical usage, which can pose a problem if time is an important aspect of the analysis. For showing the traffic between stations the timestamp is used for filtering on a specified time interval. For the specification of the time interval the granularity is assumed to be down to an hour, but would have to be specified by the administrator. If the granularity is specified down to an hour, registering an event a few seconds too late is no problem. A graph to illustrate this information is in this case considered acceptable with some imprecision since the data is only used for a visual overview.

To illustrate how the amount of bicycles change over time, a line diagram is generated showing time on the abscissa axis and the amount of bicycles on the ordinate axis, see Figure 6.8.

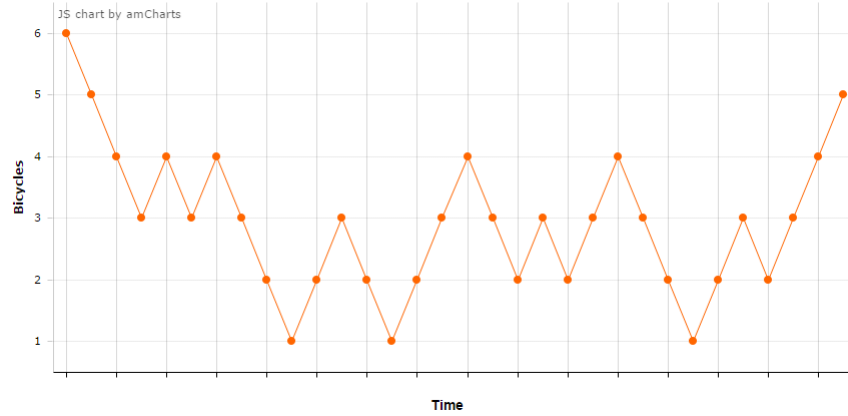


Figure 6.8: Line diagram showing the amount of bicycles.

To illustrate the traffic between stations we use a chord diagram. An example of this diagram can be seen in Figure 6.9. The main idea for the usage of such a diagram is that it provides an overview of the amount of trips between stations, easily illustrating which stations are popular and what stations are popular to travel to from a given station.

The diagram can seem messy if you take a glance at it, however, if you hover over a given station, the connections not involving the station is greyed out, making it easier to focus on said station.

The input to the diagram is a list of station names and a $n \times n$ matrix where n is the number of stations and where each entry $e_{i,j}$ is the number of bicycles travelling from station i to station j . Each block at the edge of the diagram represents a station. The wider the block, the more bicycles have left that station. Each arc of the same colour as the block it is connected to, indicates the number of bicycles leaving the station and the destination of the bicycles. The width of the arc at each end point shows how many bicycles have travelled in each direction between the two stations. For example the red one in the top between the two blue blocks shows that bicycles leaving have travelled to two different destinations.

As seen from the table on the right, one bicycle went to Karolinelund, and one to Strandvejen. Since the arc is narrow at the destination block it means that no bicycle went the other way. In some cases the arc destination is somewhere between blocks. This means that the destination station does not have any bicycles leaving in the selected time period, as only stations with bicycles leaving is shown as a block.

6.8 Bicycle Simulation

Part of the problem domain are the bicycles themselves, specifically one of the requirements for the system is that the bicycles can be tracked. One aspect of tracking bicycles is displaying historical data and how this is managed on the administrative part of the website, for more detail about this see Section 6.7. Another aspect is what interface the bicycles need to report their position, which can be read about in Section 6.4.3. Given those two, we also need to

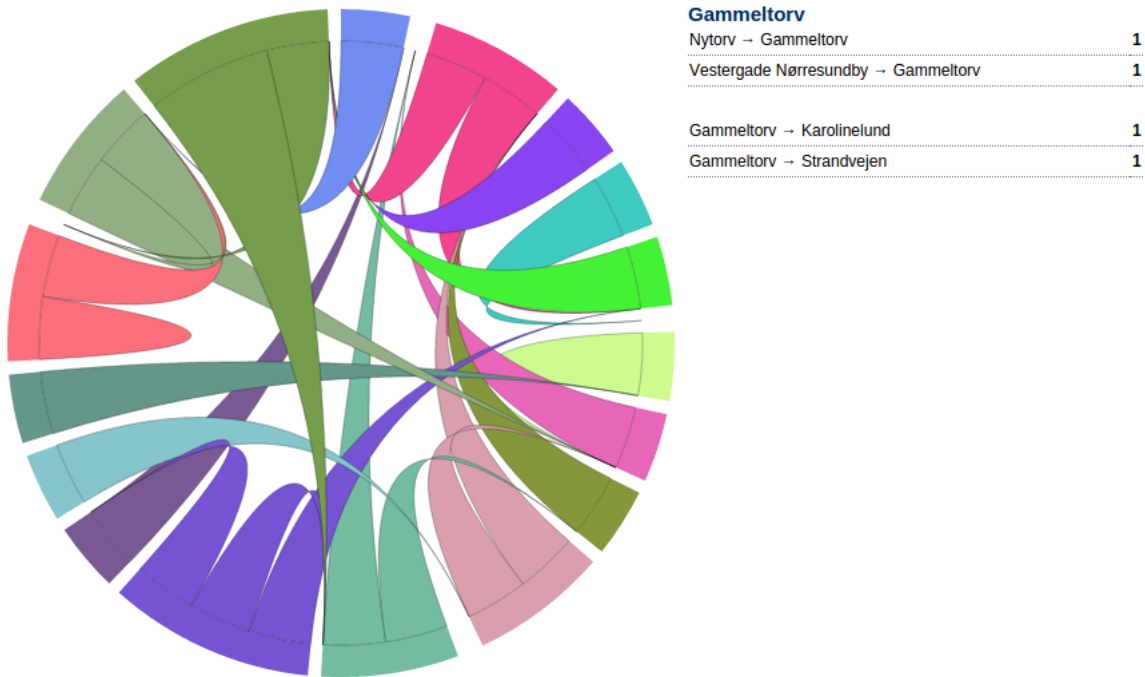


Figure 6.9: Chord diagram showing traffic of bicycles.

simulate bicycles in some way. To do this, a program was made where the user can pick which bicycles to move. This program also includes various routes following roads in Aalborg, such that the position reported is realistic. Simulation of bicycles is implemented by, foreach active bicycle a new thread is started to continuously contact the `GPSRegister` interface of the next point in the route at a specific frequency.

6.9 Station Software

The station software package contains two aspects, software intended to be run on the stations, and software to simulate the hardware we do not have access to, used as proof of concept. For an overview of the station structure, see Figure 5.8. However, to use these two aspects a GUI is needed, and is described hereafter.

6.9.1 GUI

The Main GUI window has two parts, which can be seen in Figure 6.10, part one is the station software, and part two is for the hardware simulation, which is explained later in this section.

The station software GUI, part 1 in Figure 6.10, has been designed to be simple and understandable by users of the system with the necessary content. The blue colour was chosen as this is the colour of the bicycles and the Aalborg Bicykel website. The station software GUI is divided into two pages, the first one can be seen in the figure. It has a field to input a password to unlock the booked bicycle. In addition to this it also displays how many bicycles on the station that are locked and how many that are free to take. When a valid password is input, the station GUI

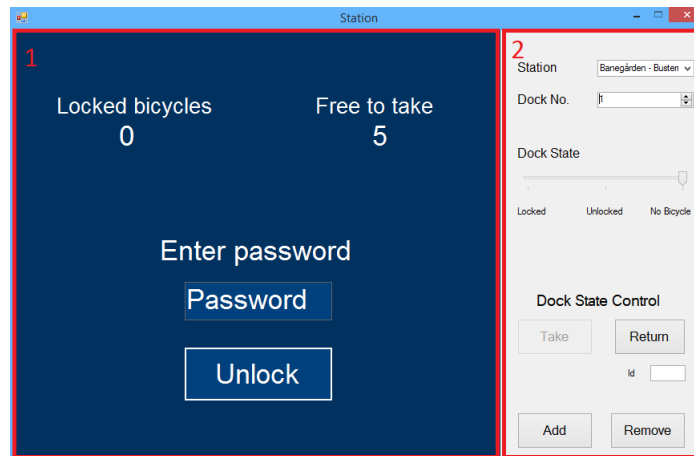


Figure 6.10: GUI for the station software.

changes to the other page, which can be seen in Figure 6.11. The user is told at which dock the bicycle for him has been unlocked. There is also a button to quickly return to the main window, which otherwise happens after 10 seconds.

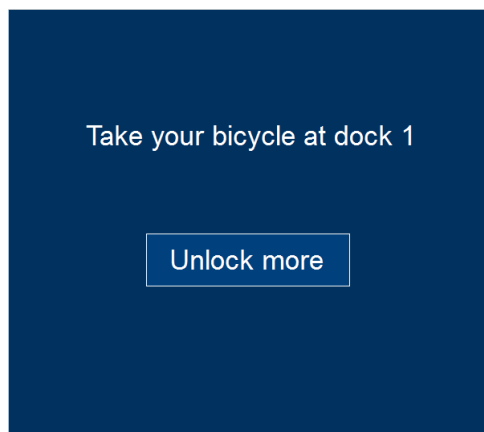


Figure 6.11: GUI for unlocked bicycle.

6.9.2 Station Model

The station model contains three responsibilities as listed below, see Section 5.5.1 for a description of the architecture of the station software.

- A listener that listens for signals from the global database interface called `WebsiteTo-StationNotifier`, see Section 6.4.1, signalling that a booking has been created or removed.
- A lock manager that is responsible for locking a bicycle at a dock when a booking is close to its start time, and unlocking if a booking has expired.

- Communication with the global database through a SOAP service interface described in Section 6.4.2.

In the following each of these three responsibilities are described further.

Listener

The listener is made as a TCP Listener based on code found on Microsofts Developer Network [42]. The listener listens for messages on port 10000, reporting changes in bookings, either addition or removal of one. The messages are JSON encoded strings of different forms depending on the content, two such examples can be seen in List 6.6 and List 6.7.

```
1 {
2   "action": "unbooking",
3   "start_station": 5,
4   "booking_id": 2
5 }
```

List 6.6: Example of an unbooking message.

```
1 {
2   "action": "booking",
3   "start_station": 5,
4   "booking_id": 2,
5   "start_time": 1414135298,
6   "password": 483923
7 }
```

List 6.7: Example of a booking message.

The information contained in the received message is then used to either remove a booking from the database, or add a booking to the database at the specified station, which action to perform is decided based on the action parameter.

SOAP Service

The SOAP Service is used to report changes in the local data of the station to the global database, which is implemented in the `StationToDBRegister` interface, see Section 6.4.2. The methods in use along with a description of when they are used is listed below.

BicycleWithBookingUnlocked

Used when a booking has been used by the user and when a booking has not yet been used but has expired.

BicycleTaken

Used when a bicycle has been taken at a dock possibly by means of a booking.

BicycleReturnedToDockAtStation

Used when a bicycle has been returned to a dock.

SyncDockStatus

Used when a dock has been added or removed from a station. It synchronises the status of the docks at that station.

At the start-up or reboot of a station all bookings are synchronised, in order to get updated information for that station, where all bookings are first removed from the station database, and then all bookings are requested from the global database through the interface, using the

method `GetAllBookingsForStation`. It is important that you delay the deletion of bookings until you are certain that a connection is established, as else you won't have any data until a connection has been established. This is done in order to have up to date information and catch bookings performed while the station was offline.

With the communication between the station software and the global database, there is a risk of losing data during the communication or not having a connection at all. However, this connection loss is taken care of by starting threads that attempt to send the data to the global database every second. This does give another problem which is when the threads are executed, which does matter because if a bicycle is returned and taken shortly after, the threads can be executed in a different order which makes the system believe that the bicycle is at the station. In order to solve this, an `Action Queue` of function calls is made, so that the function calls are called in the right order, and thereby making this part of the program thread safe. In other words, the function calls are serialised.

Lock Manager

The `LockManager` runs in its own thread, with the sole responsibility of locking and unlocking docks based on booking start times. Currently the time constraints is set to locking a bicycle to a dock one hour before booking start time, and unlocking again one hour after start time, see Section 5.5.1. As this functionality requires constant monitoring, the function is run in an infinite thread, however, since we do not want to waste our processor time by executing this constantly, it sleeps for a short period of time after each iteration.

The loop starts out by finding all the expired bookings, removing the lock they had on a bicycle, telling the global database that the bookings have expired, and removing the bookings from the station database. The loop then finds all bookings that start within the next hour and locks a bicycle for each booking not locked in the last iteration of the loop, if possible. It is important to note that if more than one booking start at the same time, the order of docks being locked is given by when the booking was created.

At the end of the execution of the loop the GUI is updated to reflect any changes performed to the database.

6.9.3 Simulation of Hardware

The part of the GUI representing the simulated hardware is the second part seen in Figure 6.10. The simulated hardware represents what would normally be observed at the physical station. We simulate the ID chips on the bicycles and the lock on the dock. The ID chips are simulated when they would normally have been read at the docks, which is when the bicycles are returned to it after use. In this case, when a bicycle is returned, we find a random ID from among those not currently in a dock, and selects this as the ID returned. Random ID is sufficient at this time, as we have no way of predicting where a bicycle in use would be returned to. Alternatively a bicycle ID can be specified from the GUI, giving more control for illustration purposes. But for a real station, this can be performed with an RFID chip. The lock is simulated by a boolean representation, stating if it is locked or not.

In the simulation part of the GUI, there is a dropdown list where it is possible to select which station a user is standing at, along with a numeric selector allowing selection of a specific dock at the current station. In addition, there is also a slide bar showing the state of the selected dock. The possible states being locked, unlocked, and no bicycle. At the bottom of the GUI there are four buttons that simulate the user actions of returning and removing a bicycle, a field giving

the option of specifying which bicycle is returned, and buttons to add and remove docks at the selected station.

For the addition and removal of docks it is handled station-side and not centrally, because otherwise it would require the administrator to add the dock to the system on the website and it could create situations where the administrator adds a dock that does not exist at the station. This is of course a design choice that could work in either direction, but due to the reasons given station-side seemed more natural.

6.10 Synchronisation

As the system is split into stations and a central system, it is necessary to have communication between them, and tackle the synchronisation of data. This communication data flow have been illustrated in Figure 5.7, additionally Section 5.6 has discussed this problem previously as well.

A description of the various synchronisation problems to consider follows hereafter.

Bicycle locking/unlocking not synchronised

What is important for the central part of the system to know is the amount of bicycles placed at the stations. However, it is not important for the central system to keep track of what bicycles are locked and unlocked at a station, as this information is of no use for the central system. The information is on the other hand important for the station, as this is the part of the system that ensures that bicycles are locked in time. For that reason, the information is kept at the station. Furthermore, the central system can calculate how many bicycles are locked at a given station, as it can use the bookings for this.

Removal/Insertion of bicycles

On the other hand it is important for the central system to know when a bicycle has been removed or inserted at a station. This is due to the website providing status information to the user, such that they can know where free bicycles are located. The communication to ensure this, as previously mentioned, is then performed by use of SOAP. In order to ensure that this communication goes through, the station has a separate thread to communicate this information, if the station is unable to communicate that a bicycle has been removed/inserted, it waits and then tries again until connection has been established.

Booking/Unbooking

The booking and unbooking of bicycles are performed on the website. The central database is then updated accordingly, and in order to ensure that the station affected is notified, JSON encoded actions are sent using TCP, as described earlier. However, problems may arise if the connection to the station is down. In such a case, you can risk the station not registering the booking, and as such, one of the following actions have to be performed.

- Flag to indicate new bookings.
- Constantly ping central database.
- Call local service to continuously try and connect until notification has been achieved.
- Give the user an error message, telling him to try and book/unbook again later.

The idea behind having a flag to indicate new bookings is that a flag is set for the station that failed to be connected to. On the station side, a thread runs and checks every x amount of seconds for a flag that may have been set. If such a flag is registered when

connection is re-established, the station then knows that it should update its bookings to correspond to those of the central database.

Another more simple, but non reliable, idea is to constantly ping the central database. If you for one or several of your pings then fail to connect to the central system, you know that the next time you get connection, you have to update the bookings. One problem that makes us not use this approach, though, is in the timespan of two pings, if the connection fails there, the station does not get notified of a registered booking in that said time-period.

Those two ideas involves giving the station the responsibility of having up to date booking information. However, another perspective can also be taken. One such approach is to develop a service to run on the central part of the system. The responsibility of this service is then to ensure that the station gets notified. The idea is that the service holds queues of notifications to be sent out, one such queue for each station. The service can then get notified to enqueue a notification, but the service then continuously tries to deliver the notifications from the queues to the stations. This is found to be a good approach, since it ensures that when connection is established to a station again, the notifications it needs gets delivered.

The last approach is to give the user an error message telling him to try and book/unbook again later. This approach is not desirable as we want the system to be as responsive as possible. The approach with a flag or the additional notification service is desirable. However, due to lack of time, the error message approach has been chosen, as it was deemed a necessary compromise, but with more time, the flag or the separate service solution would be strived for.

Station boot/reboot

When the station boots/reboots it may have missed some booking information. For that reason, when the station boots/reboots it reloads the booking information. However, with the notification developed, this should not be necessary. This part of the synchronisation is, however, developed as this is a simulation, and as we run the station software on different computer it is advantageous for testing to keep this updating of booking information in place, such that the various computers gets the booking information updated.

Dock insertion/removal

When a dock gets inserted or removed from a station, the station has a separate thread that keeps trying to call the web service on the central system part, to register that a dock has been inserted/removed at the given station, this is repeated until the web service has been correctly used. This is achieved with specific functions for the `StationToDBRegister` service.

This ends the general synchronisation implementation details, with a documentation of our testing following hereafter.

7 Test

Testing is an important aspect of ensuring that a system works as intended. That is why it is important to verify that the model and interface layer works as intended, and this can be done using unit testing, which is why we perform unit tests on those layers.

While unit testing works for behavioural code and verifying that everything works correctly, we have an architecture that separates the behavioural aspects of the system away from the visual and experience aspects, specifically the controller and view layers. These layers also need to be tested, and unit testing does not fit well with them and as such a different way to test them is required, which is where usability testing comes into the picture because while they mostly reveal usability problems they can also reveal functionality errors where the system does not behave as expected. As such, usability tests are also performed.

7.1 Unit Testing

Unit testing is testing individual components of the code systematically and thoroughly, to determine if the overall system works as intended. In order to perform the tests in a systematic way some process is needed and this process follows these steps:

Set Up

The objects, and data needed is set up.

Action

Some action are performed on the objects and the data.

Test

The output of the actions are tested if they match the expectations through assertions.

Tear Down/Clean Up

The objects and data are cleaned up. This is specifically important for us because we insert data into a database and it needs to be removed afterwards in order for the tests to be repeatable.

The unit tests are performed on the model layer of the website along with the SOAP interface used to send messages to the station software. As the tested parts are written in PHP, the PHPUnit testing framework is used for running the tests because it provides a consistent approach to writing and running them.

```

1 public function testRead()
2 {
3     $stationService = new StationService($this->db);
4     $station = new Station(10000, "test station name", "test address",
5         57.1, 9.2);
6     $stationService->create($station);
7     $result = $stationService->read($station->station_id);
8     $this->AssertEquals(10000, $station->station_id);

```

```

 9  $this->AssertEquals("test station name", $station->name);
10  $this->AssertEquals("test address", $station->address);
11  $this->AssertEquals(57.1, $station->latitude);
12  $this->AssertEquals(9.2, $station->longitude);
13
14  $stationService->deleteForTest($station);
15  $result = $stationService->read($station->station_id);
16  $this->AssertEquals(null, $result);
17 }

```

List 7.1: Example of a unit test.

For an example of a unit test, see List 7.1.

As can be seen it sets up the data on lines 3-6, acts on line 7 and 15, tests on lines 8-12 and on line 16, and cleans up on line 14. Usually we do not delete stations entirely due to history concerns, however, for testing we need to remove the station due to the test needing to be repeatable, which is why `deleteForTest` is introduced.

We currently have 51 tests with 203 assertions and these cover every model and their associated model services as well as the three discussed interfaces. The benefit from unit testing was great as it showed errors that were not immediately obvious, for example multiple places when binding parameters to MySQLi statements incorrect types were used and as another example methods were called incorrectly. As such the unit testing led to a lot of errors being resolved. Additionally, unit testing was good to register erroneous changes made to the program, as you could run your tests and the erroneous parts of the program would be located.

7.2 Usability Test

This section covers the usability tests performed on the system. Tests have been performed on the public part of the website. The administrator site was not usability tested because no potential users were available to do so. However, we did test the site ourselves but this does not classify as a usability test.

These are the tasks:

1. Establish an overview.
2. Status for bicycle.
3. Booking - Login.
4. Booking - Time and booking.
5. Cancel planned booking.
6. Examine the booking history.

For a full description of the tasks see Appendix C.

The usability problems were uncovered using Instant Data Analysis (IDA) [43].

The procedure for IDA is as follows:

- The test monitor person introduces the test subject to the evaluation procedure. After which the test monitor gives the first task to the test subject.
- The test subject attempts to solve the task until they feel to have accomplished it, or until the test monitor gives them a new task.
- Test subjects talk and explain what they are doing and how they feel they understand the overall system while doing the tests.
- The test subjects are interviewed where they talk about their experiences when finished with all the tests.

After the test, there is a meeting with the user where problems are discussed and which they felt were significant. The result of IDA is a set of usability problems categorised into one of three categories: Cosmetic, Serious, and Critical. We used IDA because it catches most of the usability problems in much less time than what a more rigorous approach would have caught [43].

7.2.1 Test Subjects

The tests were performed on four test subjects, whose demographics are as follows.

1. Gender: Female, Age: 29, Profession: Lawyer, Technological abilities: Average.
2. Gender: Male, Age: 28, Profession: Lawyer, Technological abilities: Above average.
3. Gender: Female, Age: 56, Profession: Office clerk, Technological abilities: Average.
4. Gender: Male, Age: 58, Profession: Electrician, Technological abilities: Above average.

By average we think of a person who can construct basic text and spreadsheet documents as well as write mails and search on the web. For above average we think of a person who has the same skills set as an average person but where they also can delve into technical details such as a settings menu.

The tests subjects are part of the target audience, see Section 2.5, however, with more time it would be beneficial to have tests subjects with below average technological abilities to cover the whole target audience and address what issues might occur with such persons.

7.2.2 Usability Problems

As a result of the tests, the following usability issues were uncovered.

#1 Fields reset

All subjects experienced a problem with the fields resetting if they tried to book with incorrect information. This is for test subject 3 particularly critical, as she double booked a bicycle.

#2 Error message understandability

Test subject 4 had a problem with understanding the error message if location is not selected. The error message is not descriptive enough, as it says "Please fill in all fields" instead of "please choose a location".

#3 Difficulty finding history

Test subject 1 and 3 both experienced some problems finding the booking history button, with subject 3 having it being a bit more severe, as it took her half a minute to find the button, whereas for subject 1, it took about 15 seconds. The problem for both of them being that they did not notice the button the first time they navigated to the profile part of the site.

#4 Booking/Unbooking confirmation

Subject 2 became a bit confused on whether he booked/unbooked something, as no confirmation is shown to the user. Additionally, he requested a confirmation box, to prevent a person with clumsy fingers to on accident book/unbook a bicycle.

An overview of the issues that each test subject experienced can be seen in Table 7.1. The issues are ranked for each test subject, such that Cos means a cosmetic issue, S means a serious issue, and Crit means a critical issue.

Issue Description		Test Subject ID			
		1	2	3	4
#1 Fields reset		S		Crit	S
#2 Error message understandability					Cos
#3 Difficulty finding history		Cos		S	
#4 Booking/Unbooking confirmation			Cos		

Table 7.1: Usability issues overview.

As can be seen, the amount of usability issues found is very low. This may be because the website is simple and easy to use, however, it is probably also connected to the size of the document with the usability tasks and the amount of test subjects. Four issues are found, and for each of these issues, we go through how we correct these issues.

#1 Fields reset - Serious

The issue with fields resetting when you click on book can be solved in three ways. One is to restructure that part of the website to use AJAX. Another way is to save the information of the fields in sessions, in order to be loaded when the page gets reloaded. The third and most convenient way is to check if the fields has been entered correctly with jQuery, and determine whether to perform the booking based on this. This issue is deemed serious as it took a long time to perform the task because of this and resulted in a bit of frustration from the test subjects, but they did solve the task.

#2 Error message understandability - Cosmetic

This issue is tied to checking if any of the fields are empty. Instead, a more specific error message could be given to indicate which field has a missing entry. This issue is deemed cosmetic as it was only experienced by one test subject, and he was not severely affected by it.

#3 Difficulty finding history - Cosmetic

In order to solve this issue, the button size could be increased. It could be a matter of overlooking the button and may not be an issue that is present when the user have located the button at least once before. This issue is deemed cosmetic as all found the history with enough time, and is probably easier to locate the next time they need to find it.

#4 Booking/Unbooking confirmation - Cosmetic

The booking/unbooking issue can be solved in two ways. One way is to present some status text when the booking/unbooking action has been performed. Another way is to enforce a confirmation box for the user to agree with the action initiated.

We find the first way better, for the booking action, and the confirmation box better for the unbooking action. This is due to booking a bicycle by accident is not as severe an action as the unbooking, since if you booked something by accident, you can unbook it after and no harm is done. On the other hand, if you by accident unbook something, you have a smaller chance of getting a bicycle booked again, if for instance another person books the last bicycle in the meantime.

This issue is deemed cosmetic as all performed the task, but one test subject expressed that he would like a confirmation box.

An effort to correct the problems was made, and these are the changes that were made: More descriptive error messages, confirmation dialog boxes added for unbooking, and the history button was made easier to locate by making the font size larger. Additionally we also resolved the issue with fields being reset by use of the jQuery approach.

8 Discussion

While developing the system, various problems were found, which may affect the functionality of the system, where several of these problems were solved. For that reason, it is necessary to touch upon these issues and discuss what can be done differently, or why the chosen solution is sufficient. In relation to this, decisions are discussed. Additionally, the system is compared to the existing systems discussed in Section 2.2, in order to determine the pros and cons of the developed system. Moreover decisions about what should be implemented in the future to support or improve the system is discussed in Section 8.3.

8.1 Decisions

The decisions that are discussed is the issue with how static bookings should be, the issue that the system has primarily been designed for PCs, and the issue of hardware versus simulation. Other approaches could have been taken, and it is discussed why we have decided to develop the system the way we have.

8.1.1 Booking Static

A concern of Aalborg Kommune, mentioned in Section 2.1.1, is that the booking system might be too static. By that meaning that too many bicycles are locked at docks instead of actively being used around Aalborg. The problem with the system is that as the booking part of the website is used more, the system becomes more static. Ways to ensure that the system stays a bit dynamic are one or more of the following, each of which are discussed in turn:

Lock late

The idea of this solution is to delay the locking of bicycles, reducing the static time each booking affects the system. However, the risk with this approach is that as you reduce the amount of time a bicycle is locked, you increase the risk of the bicycle not being available for the planned booking. This is something to consider, but for the moment, the simulation of a station has a lock time of one hour before a bicycle is planned to be obtained. Alone, this solution is not desirable, as you have no way of detecting how many bicycles are available in the future. To compensate this, the lock time could vary if you were to integrate the locking mechanism with GPS tracking, and is related to the latter point about prediction. As an example of this is that you vary the lock time depending on how many bicycles reach the station in the foreseeable future. If no bicycles are predicted to reach the station in the foreseeable future the lock time should be increased, whereas if several bicycles are predicted to reach the station in the foreseeable future the lock time should be decreased.

Subset of bicycles for booking

The idea is to allow a subset of the amount of bicycles on a station to be booked, this could for instance be that at all times at most half of the bicycles on a station can be booked. There are a few different approaches to how this could be handled. One option is to simply exclude some of the docks from the system, so that at each station some of the docks physically placed at the station is not in the system. Another option is that the system

itself keeps track of how many bicycles are currently at each station, and then it cannot lock anymore than a predefined percentage of these. The problem with the first option is that the system cannot accurately tell how many bicycles are available at a station, if it does not have access to read from all the docks. The problem with the second approach is that it is difficult for users of the website to know when a booking is possible as the amount of lockable bicycles at each station is dynamically updating. This leads to a third option, which is a combination of the first two. This option is that each station has a set amount of bicycles that it can lock. As this is a fixed amount, it is possible to predict if a bicycle can be locked at the given time and due to this, it is possible to inform users at the time of booking creation, whether the booking was successful or not, but also give a status of how many bicycles are available for booking and how many are free to take.

Prediction

The idea is that if you are able to predict when bicycles are returning to the station, you can unlock bicycles on that basis. An example of this is that you have a booking in 15 minutes and one bicycle is left at the station. Then since you predict that a bicycle returns to the station in about 5 minutes, the last remaining bicycle can be unlocked for use. How you are then able to predict this could be with use of GPS tracking and substantial statistical analysis. This would allow for a solution to the unreliability of the system, as the prediction could be integrated into how locking of bicycles are performed. However, to implement this is a project on its own, but is worth considering for further development. In such a further development, different machine intelligence methods could be looked at, in the area of classification. This is due to you having labelled previous bicycle routes with their end stations, by enough samples of this, it could be used to predict whether one or more bicycles arrives at the station in some timespan or not.

8.1.2 Website Designed for PC

At the current stage, the website part of the system have been designed with a PC in mind. However, it is evident that there is a tendency to more people using smartphones and tablets [44]. For that reason, it would be a good idea to design the website such that it is also easy to use for such devices. There are several ways to achieve this, each of which are discussed in turn.

Dynamic scaling

The main idea of this approach is to make the website more dynamic. This can be achieved with CSS and JavaScript to consider your screen size, and then transform the site such that each element of the site can be seen clearly, where to obtain all information, you then have to use scrolling. This is better than the standard website, as the website at the moment for small screens, known from smartphones, is near unusable unless you zoom in. However, it does not touch upon the type of device used for the website, an example is the touch gestures known from tablets and smartphones.

Detection of device type

The idea is to read the device type, and then have separate website layouts for each type of device. Contrary to the previous method, this makes it easier to design the layout for the different type of devices. Furthermore, it can change some elements to be better suitable for touch devices, an example is a navigation menu expanding vertically instead of horizontally. However, it still does not give the best feel for smartphone devices, as you are constrained to a browser. The pro is that you can reach many devices this way, on the other hand, applications could gain a more specialised feel, and is described hereafter.

Separate Application

The idea of this approach is to develop applications for some regularly used smartphone and tablet devices. The advantage of this approach is that you can specialise the interaction with the system for a specific device, ensuring the best interaction overall. The disadvantage is that it increases the workload a lot, as you have to create and maintain each such application for changes performed to the system.

This ends the discussion of website designed for PC versus a more dynamic website. While it would definitely increase the accessibility of the system if the website became more dynamic, it would at the same time require additional resources. Our target for the project has been to develop the website for PC usage, and that being optimal. However, in the future, the other options are worth considering.

8.1.3 Hardware vs. Simulation

One aspect of the system implemented that would have to be changed in the situation that the system was put into actual use, would be the simulation of the hardware. Specifically, the station, docks, and bicycles are all simulated and in the real world these would need to be changed to be real hardware. The simulation is done by having multiple programs behaving somewhat similar to how the real world would interact with the system. An example of this is the bicycle, the bicycle should upload its GPS coordinates to the system every now and then. A program for this was created to upload GPS coordinates that are loaded from a file instead of a real bicycle reporting the actual coordinates.

Differences exist between hardware and simulation of hardware, as an example the simulation of all the stations is implemented in a single program that handles all interaction. This would, however, not be the case in the real world where each station would have software instantiated. However, this problem was thought of in the development of the station software, such that each station has its own ip address, and can therefore work even if multiple computers are running the station software, as the central server requests the right IP address when sending a booking/unbooking to the station. The station software would, however, have to be rewritten in order to be runnable on the station hardware.

The simulation is done such that the development of this system does not require real station hardware. Furthermore, this project is a software development project, and therefore hardware is not the focus of this project. For the purpose of this project the simulation is considered sufficient because it allows the system to be interacted with as it is supposed to be in the real world without making it needlessly complex, for example by having to run multiple stations at the same time on several different computers.

8.2 Perspective

This section provides a perspective comparing our implemented system with existing systems, see Section 2.2, and the existing system in Aalborg, see Section 2.1.

In the Copenhagen Gobike system, the system uses expensive hardware which could make it difficult to purchase new bicycles because every bicycle needs a tablet before they can be integrated with the system. Because of this Copenhagen Gobike costs money to use, as do the other existing systems (Cibi and Alta Bicycle Share). This is something we wanted to avoid, we wanted a system that could be used for free, or at least be used on a deposit basis where you

get the money back at the end of the bicycle ride. We kept the system free to use, though it is unknown what kind of expenditures would be associated with the stations, docks, and GPS devices on the bicycles.

One of the bigger issues, especially for the administrators of Aalborg Bicyklen, is that they have no tracking capability. With Copenhagen Gobike this is not a problem as they provide GPS coordinates for their positions. However, for Cibi and Alta the only kind of tracking of bicycles is that the stations report how many bicycles are at the dock at any given moment. This leaves much to be desired in that it does not provide any kind of information about the bicycles once they leave the stations, which of course makes them difficult to locate if they get lost. Though they try to prevent people from stealing or otherwise not returning the bicycles by penalising the users with extra fees, loss of deposits, or fines. For our system, there is a mechanism for finding lost or stolen bicycles through GPS reporting, which does seem to be the simplest solution to the problem of not being able to recover bicycles. However, the only penalty for not returning a bicycle would be the loss of the deposit, but the original deposit is so low as to be fairly irrelevant. This is not something we considered changing, and our impression of Aalborg Kommune's desire for the system is that it should be easily accessible and not something you have to pay to use. Additionally, it is the responsibility of Aalborg Kommune to determine what fines might be associated with misuse of the system.

For existing systems, the unlocking process requires some kind of identification which is something we wanted to replicate, as such we ended up with a booking system that lets the user book bicycles and then provides the user with a code that unlocks the bicycle at the specified station. This is probably one aspect of our system that is somewhat worse than solutions other systems have used, but it does provide a means of reserving and ensuring that bicycles are available when you want to use it, which is something other systems do not do. It should, however, be said that the system is kept open and that you are not required to use bookings to retrieve a bicycle. So while the implementation letting the user to go online and booking bicycles could be better, it does come with benefits and the user is not forced to utilise this. One consideration made, to provide a more easily accessible booking and unlock mechanism, would be to have a mobile booking application providing a simplified version of the website implemented, see Section 8.3.1.

We attempted to provide an updated version of Aalborg Bicykel that could challenge other existing systems, which we feel we managed to do. However, it did come at the potential cost of compromising the ideals behind the original system to some extent, for example through locking of bicycles through bookings instead of leaving them unlocked and available to anyone. These changes are not made lightly and makes the system more predictable and reliable, because as Aalborg Kommune said they often see that stations remain empty at all times making it difficult to even use the system, see Section 2.1.1. The changes, however, could bring new problems that were not predicted and as such the system of course would have to be corrected once these come up.

These corrections could be part of the further development, which is discussed hereafter.

8.3 Further Development

This section covers various features that could be implemented in future iterations of the system. Specifically a mobile booking application, closest available station information, hotspot detection, usability testing for the administration site, and sending unlock code over SMS.

8.3.1 Mobile Booking Application

During early analysis, a mobile platform was suggested for implementation, but in the end the target platform chosen was the web. However, a simplified mobile application could be implemented, simplified in the sense that it would provide login and booking functionality and not much else. It would, however, also be an ideal platform for another further development feature, see Section 8.3.2, given that GPS and internet connection are pervasive in modern mobile platforms. The fact that you can take smartphones with you makes them much more practical in the sense that you can determine at any time where the nearest station is.

8.3.2 Closest Available Station

During usability testing, one of the test subjects brought up an idea. Specifically a feature that could be implemented on the website or as a mobile application is suggestion of closest available station.

The website could provide a suggestion of which station to go to based on distance where there is a bicycle free to use, where as the mobile application could suggest both the closest station with an available bicycle but also a station with an empty dock. The closest station with an available bicycle can be used to see where the user would be able to get a bicycle, where as the available dock could be used when using a bicycle to know where to go for delivering the bicycle.

8.3.3 Hotspot Detection

In Chapter 5.3 a feature for administrators was suggested for showing ‘hotspots’ for bicycle activity. It was thought that it would allow administrators to more easily make decisions on where to place new stations, because if a hotspot showed areas with a lot of activity not close to any existing station, it would be logical to put a new station there.

However, questions about how the location data should be used were raised. This meant more analysis on how to do it properly, and because of resource constraints this meant that no more development time would be dedicated to this feature. Specifically, should only location data where the bicycle has been at the same position for a long time be used? Should all location data be used, and would this not mean that popular routes would be hotspots as well and therefore be misleading?

There are many different ways of detecting hotspots, or clusters.

The simplest method that might work is using a third party premade library for Google Maps API called MarkerClusterer. The algorithm works in a grid based manner [45]. For each zoom level of the map, the clustering is performed. In a brief description, the algorithm traverses the markers to be clustered and adds a marker into the closest cluster. It is closest if it is within the minimum square bounds, else it is added to a new cluster. An example of the result of the clustering can be seen in Figure 8.1. Other clustering libraries for Google Maps exist and would have to be compared before a specific algorithm were to be chosen, a good place to start would be a list of various Google Maps clustering algorithm APIs [45].

8.3.4 Usability Testing on Administration Website

We originally wanted to usability test both the public and administrative parts of the website. Usability tests were performed on the public part, and problems were found and resolved. The

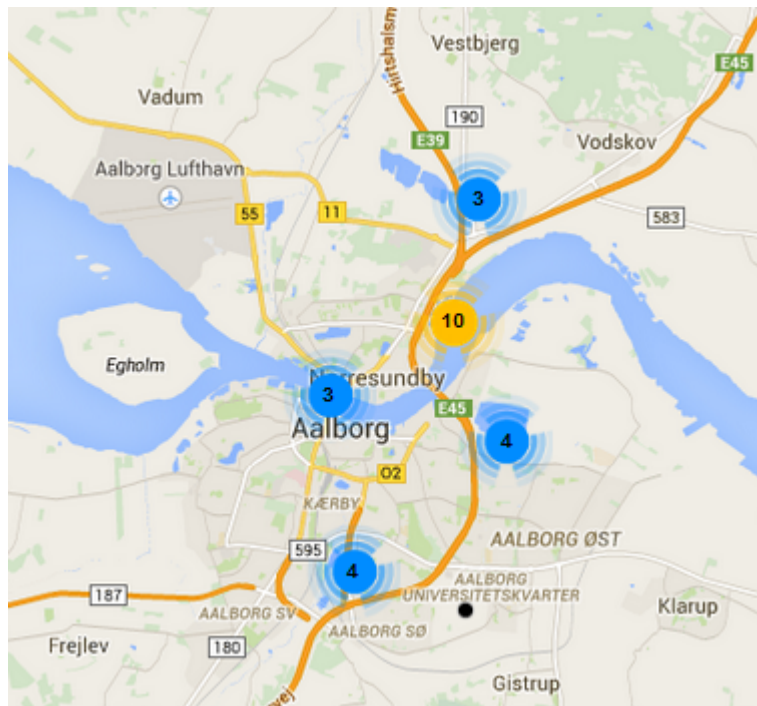


Figure 8.1: A result of the MarkerClusterer library on some randomly generated data within the city of Aalborg.

administrative users were, however, not available for usability testing. This usability could have given more features to be implemented on the administration site, which had not been thought of. It could also have resolved potential problems that we were not previously aware of. Furthermore, the usability test would be sufficient to make sure that the administrator could use the site.

The administration usability test should be done before the website is released, since it might reveal some problems with the site.

8.3.5 Sending Unlock Code over SMS

For further development it would be a good idea to send a confirmation message when your bicycle has been locked with certainty, with that message containing your unlock code. This would ensure that you do not walk to a station in vain, and would make it easy for the user to get notified of their active bookings without having to use the website. This seemed out of scope for the project and it would have cost money to do so, as such it was decided to provide the unlock code on the front page. This, however, is something that could be added in the future.

9 Conclusion

To conclude the project, the three questions from the problem definition have to be answered in order to confirm or deny the hypothesis, see Section 2.3.

The first question is:

What are the requirements for a city bicycle booking and positioning system?

The requirements were split into three categories, system criteria, software requirements, and hardware requirements. For the system criteria an emphasis was put on not redesigning the entire existing system but as an extension instead, as well as an emphasis on the solution being easy to use and access for the target audience. The emphasis of not redesigning the entire solution has been achieved in the way that a booking system is an additional overlay not necessary to be used, but can be beneficial. The prioritisation of a simple solution has been an important focus throughout the development of the system, and as is found through the usability tests, the product is generally an easy to use solution.

A list of software requirements were stated, all of which have been fulfilled except the lowest prioritised requirement of predicting the availability of bicycles. The reason for this is that the last requirement is a project on its own, but the system can function fine without it.

The hardware requirements were specified as two required interfaces, interface between station and server, and interface between bicycle and server. These two interfaces were implemented with help of SOAP and TCP. If you were to use the product for actual use, the simulation of hardware would have to be replaced with actual hardware.

The second question is:

How can the booking and positioning system be designed and implemented, within the context of the Internet of Things?

The product has been designed and implemented in the form of a website, a program to simulate stations, and a program to simulate bicycles travelling around the city of Aalborg. The website enables the user to perform bookings, though this does not guarantee a bicycle but increases the chance of one, and provides the administrators with a series of graphs indicating the usage of the system as well as enabling the administrators to add and remove the bicycles and stations connected to the system. The product lies within the context of the Internet of Things in that bicycles, stations, and docks, are the things we keep track of and we use common internet technologies such as SOAP and TCP to do so. Our product manifests in the form of a service that informs the user about the status of bicycles, station, and docks as well as enabling the users to register bookings to have bicycles locked at stations.

The third question is:

Why should the developed system be used over the currently used system?

The developed system should be used over the currently used system since it is an extension of the existing system and does not dramatically change any existing features. That is, the system

can be used in a similar fashion to the existing one in that the station software can replace the old lock. Additionally, the new system provides for status of the bicycles as well as statistics, which the old system was lacking. Furthermore, the booking feature is believed to be a powerful one, but if not desired by Aalborg Kommune, this part could be disabled and still provide useful status information for the user and statistics for the administrators.

Finally the hypothesis to verify is:

It is possible to develop a system for Aalborg Bicykel that is user friendly and manageable, within the context of the Internet of Things.

A system has been developed that makes it possible to perform bookings of bicycles. The system lies within the context of the Internet of Things as it keeps track of things as well as intercommunication between things that is stations, docks, bicycles, and central server. This relates to the system providing status information to the users, enabling them to more easily decide which station to go to. This suggests a user friendly experience and is also supported with the general positive responses from the usability tests. The system is arguably also more manageable in that statistics for the usage of bicycles exist with the developed system, whereas no statistics were provided beforehand. On the other hand, more maintenance of the stations would be required as the system has been extended, however, this is a problem setting to be considered by Aalborg Kommune.

However, with that in mind the solution generally offers additional features, where Aalborg Kommune can decide which part they would like in their system. The request of Aalborg Kommune was to be able to monitor the usage of bicycles in Aalborg more, and this feature is also included in the solution in form of the administrator part of the system. This concludes that the hypothesis can be verified.

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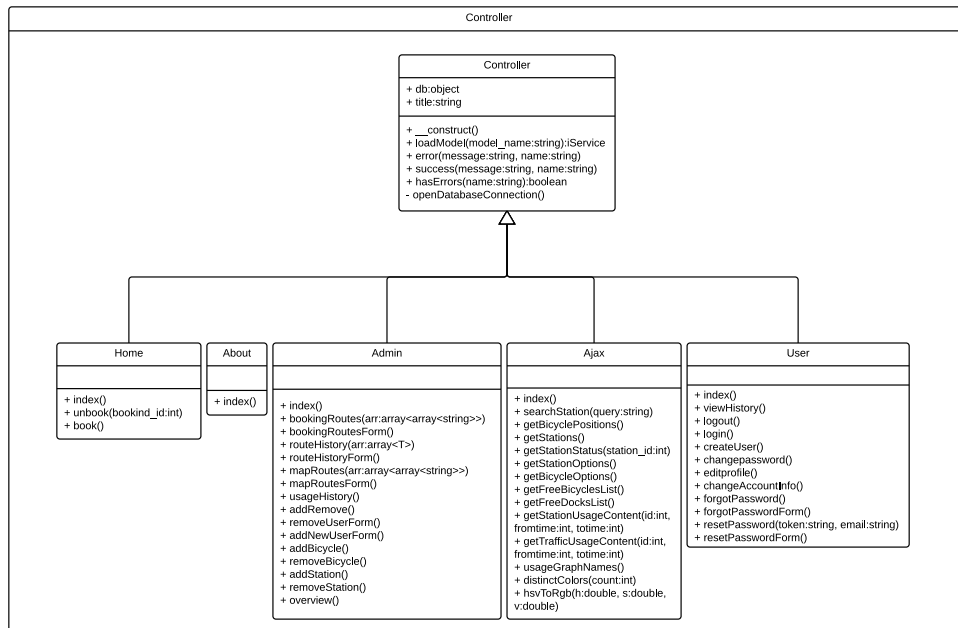
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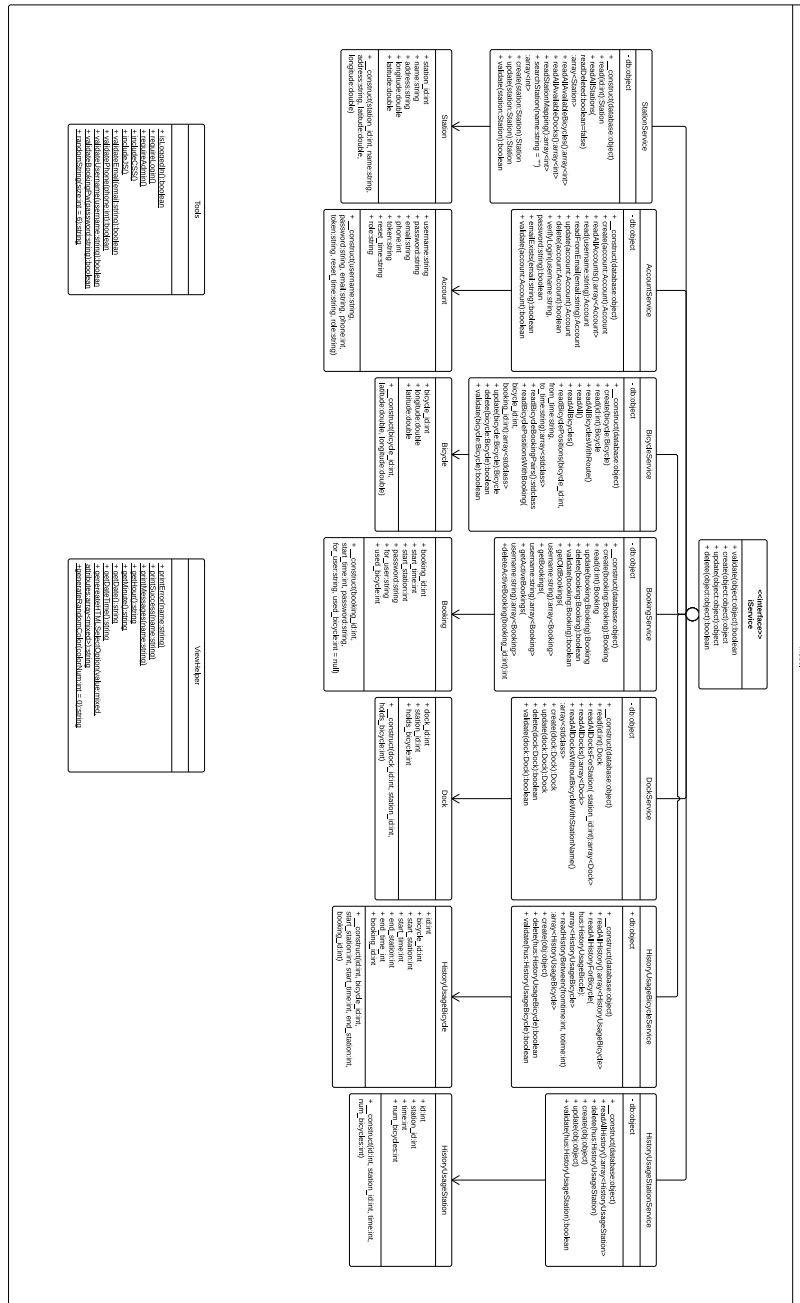
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A Website Architecture

A.1 Controllers



A.2 Model



B Administrator Site

B.1 Add-Remove

Add user

User:
Password:
Confirm Password:
Email:
Phone:
Role:

User▼

Add

Remove user

User:

▼

Remove

Add bicycle

Add

Remove bicycle

Bicycle:

1▼

Remove

Add station

Name:
Latitude:
Longitude:
IP address:

Add

Remove station

Station:

Banegården - Busterminal▼

Remove

C Usability Test

The website you are about to test is a site that enables you to book Aalborg city bicycles. You go through different parts of the website, involving booking and status of Aalborg bicycles.

Establish an overview

Take your time to get an overview of the website.

Status for bicycle

You consider borrowing a bicycle from Aalborg Banegård, but you are uncertain whether more bicycles are available at the station or not.

Find the amount of available bicycle at the station: "Banegården Busterminal".

Booking - Login

In order to gain access to the booking part of the website, you have to be logged in. Luckily you already have a user with the following login information:

Username: testuser

Adgangskode: testpassword

Use the above information to login.

Booking - Time and booking

Now that you are logged in you are ready to book a bicycle.

Book a bicycle for tomorrow at 11:25 a.m.

Cancel planned booking

You notice there is another booking planned for tomorrow but at 11:45 a.m. at Kunsten. This booking is not necessary and thus you want it cancelled.

Cancel the booking tomorrow 11:45 a.m. at Kunsten.

Examine the booking history

You have now booked a bicycle for tomorrow and cancelled another booking. However, you are interested in getting an overview of all your bookings, those active and previously used ones.

Find and read the booking history for your profile.

