

1 Development of a Portable IP-Based Remote Controlled System 2 for Mobile Robot

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7 Abstract

8 The use of Mobile Robots to interact with objects in remote locations has proved to be useful
9 in areas not easily accessible or too dangerous for humans. Various means have been used to
10 remotely operate or control Mobile Robots. These range from wired connection to Wireless
11 connection like radio frequency signal and more recently internet controlled Mobile Robot
12 using the TCP/IP protocol stack. However, the problem of remote control dependence on the
13 Mobile Robot Platform or configuration has made it difficult to switch controllers between
14 Mobile Robots. In this work, a portable IPbased remote control system has been designed and
15 implemented to remove the constraint imposed by the Mobile Robot's platform in choosing
16 the control interface. The system developed was built on three loosely coupled components
17 working together to ensure a high degree of Control interface portability. The Mobile Robot
18 Gateway component was used to receive and send data from the Mobile Robot

19 *Index terms*— mobile robot, remote control, command hub, rest architecture, TCP/IP, IP-based

21 1 Introduction

22 obile robots were defined by Posadas et al (2008) as physical agents that move and interact continuously while
23 embedded in a dynamic environment. A mobile robot is also described as a situated and embodied agent endowed
24 with mobility (Obe and Dumitrache, 2012). Control of mobile robots is categorized into three types namely,
25 autonomous control, semi-autonomous control, and Tele operation. Autonomous control implements various
26 control algorithms that control mobile robots in their environment without human intervention. Semiautonomous
27 control allows a user to instruct the mobile robot on what to do but the robot decides how the task is carried
28 out. This mode of control is supervisory. In a Tele operated control, the mobile robot is entirely controlled
29 by the user. Oxford dictionary (2015) defines "remote control" as the control of a machine or apparatus from
30 a distance utilizing radio or infrared signals transmitted from a device. Teleoperation is often used in place
31 of Remote control in research or technical environments. Teleoperation means controlling or doing work at a
32 distance (Wichmann et al, 2014). The meaning of the distance, however, can vary. The distance can be physical,
33 such as an operator controlling a robot at a remote location. The distance could also be a change in scale, for
34 example, a surgeon using teleoperation to conduct surgery at the microscopic level. In 2014, Wichmann et al.
35 reported that teleoperation systems are designed using a master-slave system model where the control system
36 depends heavily on the mobile robot platform.

37 Various communication technologies have been used to achieve teleoperation for a mobile robot. These
38 technologies include Bluetooth, Infrared, WIFI, GSM, Internet of Things (IoT) (Chikurtev, 2019), and Internet
39 (Luimula et al., 2007). While some of these technologies impose a constraint on the range of operation, GSM and
40 the Internet have proven to overcome such barriers (Chin et al, 2003, Ankit, 2014 and Juang&Juang, 2016).
41 The Internet which is based on TCP/IP enables connectivity of billions of devices worldwide, giving access to
42 communication, data, pictures, videos, and even real images of distant environments (Siegwart and Saucy, 1999).
43 The advancement in the development of internet applications has made it the ideal testing ground for sophisticated

44 new applications, such as video-conferencing and remote control systems (Oboe & Fiorini, 1997). However, only
45 a few examples of real physical interaction with distant places are available at the moment. Goodrich and Schultz
46 (2007) defined two categories of interaction, remote and proximate. Remote interaction refers to the situation
47 where the human and the robot are separated spatially or even temporally (i.e., Opportunity Mars rover), while
48 with proximate interaction the humans and the robots are collocated.

49 This research work aims at creating a portable IP-based remote-controlled system for mobile robot interaction.
50 According to James (1997), a software unit is portable (exhibits portability) across a class of environments to
51 the degree that the cost to transport and adapt it to a new environment in the class is less than the cost of
52 re-development. Portability in general terms is the usability of an object or component of the system in multiple
53 environments without any modification in the internal structure.

54 Internet Protocol (IP) is a protocol in the Internet Layer of Transport Control Protocol/Internet Protocol
55 (TCP/IP) model. It hides the underlying physical network by creating a virtual network view (Lydia et al,
56 2006). It is an unreliable, best-effort, and connectionless packet delivery protocol. Best-effort means that the
57 packets sent by IP might be lost, arrive out of order, or even be duplicated. IP was designed with the assumption
58 that a higher layer of the protocol will address these anomalies. According to Lydia et al., (2006), one of
59 the reasons for using a connectionless network protocol was to minimize the dependency on specific computing
60 centers that used hierarchical connection-oriented networks. Available remote control systems require specialized
61 hardware and software that are heavily dependent on the mobile robot's platform or architecture. In this work,
62 an architecture is proposed to eliminate the dependency of the remote control system on the robot's platform.

63 There are issues with existing mobile robot remote control systems which include but are not limited to,
64 operation range, portability, and the multi-interface option of the system. Various researchers have addressed
65 some of these problems, however, the problem of switching a remote control system from one mobile robot to
66 another with little or no reconfiguration has not been dealt with. In Chin et al. (2003), a Real-Time Remote
67 Control Architecture Using Mobile Communication was proposed. GPS, GSM, and GIS were applied in the
68 development of real-time communication for remote data transfer which solved the range of operation problems,
69 but the system lacked portability. Jose et al. (2004) illustrated a Java/Matlab-Based Environment for Remote
70 Control System Laboratories. Matlab/Simulink and the Quanser Win Con environment were used to develop a
71 control system using the HTTP server to process client requests. The client program is a java applet written in
72 Java. The range of operation issue was eliminated by the architecture but failed to address portability and multi-
73 interface options. In Mobile Robot Temperature Sensing Application via Bluetooth, Abdullah and Poh (2011)
74 developed a control system using the KC-21 Bluetooth module and PIC16F877A microcontroller for remote
75 temperature sensing. The system has a limited range of operations. Ankit et al. (2014) in Controlling of Remote
76 Robot through mobile phone using DTMF Signal, developed a remote control system using microcontroller,
77 CDMA modem, and DTMF signal. The system lacks portability and multi-interface options. Almali et al.
78 (2015) developed a Wireless Remote control for Mobile robots operating in dangerous or narrow places for
79 human beings. A 433MHz RF transceiver module was used to establish a connection between the mobile robot
80 and the computer controlling it. The system has a limited operating range and also lacked portability.

81 This research work addresses the issue of portability and multi-interface options for mobile robot remote
82 control systems. This will facilitate the use of one remote control system with a multi-interface for different
83 mobile robots on several platforms, this will give room for using a robust interface for the control system at a
84 particular time.

85 2 II.

86 3 Related Literature

87 Oboe and Fiorini, 1998 in "A design and control environment for internet-based telerobotics describe the
88 environment for the design, simulation, and control of internet-based force-reflecting telerobotics using a segment
89 of the network to connect the master to the slave. Simulation of the complete telerobotic system and emulation
90 using a planar force-reflecting master and a virtual slave uses a MatLab-Simulink program interfaced with a
91 set of dedicated routines for internet modeling. The issues in the variable time-delay system were addressed by
92 using the delay parameters acquired from the network probe to design the controller. However, the work does
93 not address multiple interfaces that could be used as the master or controller. Lung et al., 2002; designed an
94 internet-based human-assisted robotic controller system but the security of the web page was not considered as
95 anyone that stumbles on the web application can control the robot. Chin et al., 2003 adopted the use of G3 (global
96 positioning system (GPS), global system for mobile (GSM), and geographic information system (GIS)) system in
97 developing realtime communication and remote control systems for robot real-time remote control, navigation,
98 and surveillance. The designed system is not portable as it was only implemented on a Windows platform. Visual
99 Basic, which is the choice of programming language, is not supported on other operating systems. Jose et al.,
100 2004; developed a Java/Matlab-Based Environment for Remote Control System Laboratories, illustrated with an
101 Inverted Pendulum -a novel environment that provides 24-hours-a-day access to a Web-based lab for the remote
102 control of different didactic setups. A detailed description of an environment for the teleoperation of real Lab
103 via the Internet, was achieved however, the design cannot be replicated on robots with different platforms due
104 to the heavy dependence on Matlab/Simulink.

105 Abdullah & Poh, 2011; Mobile Robot Temperature Sensing Application via Bluetooth developed a Bluetooth-
106 based control system for remote measurement of temperature from the robot's surrounding environment. The
107 range of operation is limited to ten (10)

108 4 Method a) System Overview

109 The proposed portable IP-based remote control system for Mobile Robots is aimed at solving two basic problems
110 usually encountered with common Mobile Robot remote control systems. The first problem is the communication
111 range between the Mobile Robot and its remote control interface. This range limit is entirely dependent on how
112 far the communication link can transmit or receive data sent from both ends (usually 10 Meters for Bluetooth, 100
113 Meters for WIFI). The second problem is the portability of control interfaces with different platforms to provide
114 different user interfaces that can be used to control different Mobile Robots. To solve the above-mentioned
115 problems, the new system is divided into three functional parts namely: Command hub, Control Interface, and
116 Mobile Robot Gateway.

117 5 b) System Architecture

118 Figure 1 shows the entire architecture of the Mobile Robot Remote Controlled System. The system components
119 run separately on different devices, performing different roles in achieving the overall goal of the system. The
120 components are also loosely coupled to ease upgrade and maintenance without affecting the operation of the
121 other ones.

122 6 i. Command Hub Design

123 The Command Hub is at the center of the entire Remote control system for mobile robots. It is one of the three
124 components required to develop the full system as shown in figure ?? The control interface component in the
125 system is the one that interacts with the user and based on the operation performed on it, it will create and
126 send an appropriate HTTP request to the command hub respectively. The control interface performs two basic
127 functions. The first function is to take users' actions and transform them into a valid HTTP request required by
128 the command hub. The second function is getting telemetry data from the command hub to create visual feedback
129 for the users. The structure of this component is therefore organized along with its functions. Two modules are
130 provided, one to constantly fetch new or updated data from the command hub to update the telemetry view of
131 the mobile robot's vitals while the other module handles user interactions with the control interface and makes
132 appropriate HTTP requests to the command hub.

133 Different Control Interfaces are designed based on the two modules explained earlier to expand the choice of
134 control for each Mobile Robot in the system. Available control interface includes:

135 Cross-Platform Mobile Interface: This type of interface is meant for users that prefer to control their Mobile
136 robots from a smartphone. The interface was designed with Apache Cordova, HTML 5, CSS 3, and JavaScript.
137 This ensures that the resulting interface can be used on Windows Phone, Android Phone, and iPhone as well.

138 Web Application Interface: This type of interface is available to users that want to control their Mobile Robots
139 through a web browser. The web browser is used to access Web applications deployed alongside the command
140 hub to provide the control interface. This Control interface is designed with ASP.Net MVC 4, HTML 5, CSS 3,
141 and JavaScript. A variety of web browsers are supported.

142 Desktop Interface: In this type of control interface, the traditional Desktop application is used to provide the
143 interface to the users. C# programming language is used to develop this interface.

144 7 iii. Mobile Robot Gateway Design

145 This is the component that interfaces directly with the Mobile Robot. It plays a major role in connecting the
146 robot to the remote control interface through the command hub. There are two different types of Mobile Robot
147 Gateway namely, Internal Mobile Robot Gateway and External Mobile Robot Gateway. The internal Mobile
148 Robot Gateway runs locally on the robot's operating system. This type of Gateway is only supported by Mobile
149 Robots capable of running scripts, executable programs and whose hardware supports networking and direct
150 connectivity to the Internet. The Gateway is implemented as part of the required software running locally on the
151 robot's platform. The Gateway runs directly on the Mobile Robot's control board as shown by Robot 2 in figure
152 1. External Mobile Robot Gateway does not run on the robot platform, it runs on a remote computer connected
153 to the Mobile Robot through Bluetooth or a WIFI device. This type of Gateway is meant for Mobile Robots that
154 do not have shields or devices to directly connect to the Internet thereby using the remote computer's Internet
155 connectivity for its operation. In the case of External Mobile Robot Gateway, a remote computer connected to
156 the Internet is placed within the communication range of the Mobile Robot, the computer shares its internet
157 connection with the Mobile Robot. The Gateway is also executed on the remote computer to serve as the conduit
158 through which communication is established with the control interface via the command hub. Robot 1 in figure
159 1 makes use of the External Mobile Robot Gateway.

8 Gateway Operation Circle

The Mobile Robot Gateway operates in a circle of three operations namely Sense/Listen, Think, and Act. Figure 4 shows the interaction of Gateway operations in a single circle.

? Sense/Listen Operation:-in this operation, the Gateway awaits new commands from the command hub through an active Web Socket if available or through an HTTP request to the REST API exposed by the command hub. If the Mobile Robot is in autonomous or semi-autonomous mode, values from the proximity sensors are fetched by the Gateway. Any data acquired from this operation is then passed on to the THINK operation in the circle. ? Think -analysis of data passed from the Sense/Listen operation is carried out during this operation. It is mainly responsible for command interpretation and conversion into a simpler form that could be handled on the Mobile Robot easily.

After the interpretation and conversion task has been carried out, the result is sent to the ACT operation to take necessary action. ? Act: -this part is responsible for generating the control sequence based on the input received from the THINK operation. It determines the destination of the resulting control sequence (i.e. Mobile Robot or Command hub). The control sequence now determines the behavior the Mobile Robot will exhibit. This operation is also responsible for sending telemetry data to the command hub. After this operation is carried out, control is returned to the Sense/Listen operation iv. Command Design One of the roles of the Command Hub is the generation of commands to be sent to the Mobile Robot. These commands are generated based on the interaction of the users with the control Interface. Each action performed by the user on the control interface corresponds to a specific command meant for the Mobile Robot to execute. When an action is performed on the control interface, a request is sent to the REST API (Application Programming Interface) exposed by the Command Hub. The Command Hub now maps the request to the corresponding command to be generated and sent to the Mobile Robot. For example, if the user presses the "Move Forward" Button on the Control Interface, an HTTP POST request is sent to `http://Command-Hub-DomainName/api/move/1`, then "f" command is generated and sent to the Mobile Robot. The "Command-Hub-DomainName" is the domain name of the server hosting the Command Hub. Table 1 shows the comprehensive list of all Uri, HTTP verbs, and associated commands mapped to them.

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Volume XXI Issue I Version I At the hardware level, two robots were designed to validate the workability of the remote control system whose architecture was shown in figure 1. These Mobile Robots have different platforms and configurations each of which corresponds to the two types of Mobile Robots in figure 1. The Mobile Robots are: SleekBot V1: This was designed to use Arduino Nano R3 as its main control board. All other actuators and sensors are connected to the main control board. In this configuration, a Bluetooth module is used to communicate with an external Mobile Robot Gateway.

Figure 6 shows the breadboard schematics of the robot's hardware configuration.

SleekBot V2: This is the second Mobile Robot, it was designed to use Raspberry Pi 2 Model B as its main control board while Arduino Nano R3 was used as a slave control board. In this configuration, a USB camera with a two degree of freedom is connected to the mainboard and Internal Mobile Robot Gateway was used because the main control board is capable of running executable programs and it is also capable of connecting to the internet directly. Figure ?? shows the breadboard schematics of SleekBot V2.

10 Result and Discussion

11 a) System Implementation

The system was implemented in three stages, each stage corresponds to the deployment of each component that made up the system. For web interface users, the system provides a landing page where navigation to other modules is accessed. Figure 8 shows the home page layout.

12 i. Mobile Robot Gateway Stage

Two types of Mobile Robot Gateway were implemented. The specific implementation used was determined by the robot's ability to connect directly to the internet. In a scenario where the Mobile Robot can connect directly to the internet, a python program was used to implement the Gateway. The second implementation was used when the Mobile Robot connects to the internet through another computer. A desktop application written in C# was used to implement the Gateway on the computer with internet connectivity.

13 ii. Command Hub Stage

At this stage of implementation, a web API written in C# was used to implement a REST-Based service that acts as the command hub for the system. The service was deployed to Internet Information Service (IIS) with MS SQL Server 2012 to act as the backend storage for the system.

214 14 User Registration

215 This module is used to register all users making use of the control platform. All valid users of the system need to
216 be authenticated before they are granted access to control any mobile robot remotely. Figure ?? shows the user
217 registration interface for web interface users while figure 10 shows the registration interface for mobile users.

218 15 User Login

219 This module is used for authenticating all users making use of the system. All users must pass through this
220 module to use the system. Figure 11 and figure 12 show the login user interface (UI) for web and mobile users.

221 16 Main Menu

222 The main menu provides navigation to important modules the user can use to perform different tasks in the
223 system. Figure 13 shows the main menu for mobile interface users

224 17 Mobile Robot Registration

225 To make use of any robot on the platform, the user needs to register the robot. Figure 14 shows the interface
226 dedicated to the registration. After registration, all registered Mobile Robots by the user is displayed in the
227 Mobile Robot List as shown in figure 15.

228 18 Settings

229 The settings module is used to configure the parameters required for the interface to work properly. Figure 16
230 shows a settings Interface for mobile Users

231 19 Remote Control Interface

232 This interface provides the necessary widget to remotely control mobile robots. Actions performed on this
233 interface translate to a command to be executed on the mobile robot. Figure 17 and figure 18 show the remote
234 control interface for web and mobile interface users.

235 20 Conclusion

236 The goal of this research work to develop a portable IP-based multi-interface remote-controlled system for mobile
237 robots was achieved. The system offers the use of a single remote control device across different mobile robots
238 and the use of a multi-interface for a single mobile robot.

239 The solution architecture is based on three loosely coupled components performing various tasks at different
240 levels to collectively achieve a single aim of having a portable control system. At the core of the system is a
241 REST-based web service handling communication between the user interface and the mobile robot. Various
242 programming languages were used at different levels to achieve the overall goal of the system. A cross-platform
243 mobile application, Web application, and the desktop client was developed to serve as the system's user interface.
244 Implementation of the system was carried out on three different mobile robots based on different platforms. The
245 system was evaluated based on the time complexity of the algorithm used in its components. The result shows
246 that the system time of execution is linear ($O(n)$).

247 The system developed is not without its weakness, hence the need to improve some parts that are currently
248 inefficient in its mode of operation. These include:

249 1

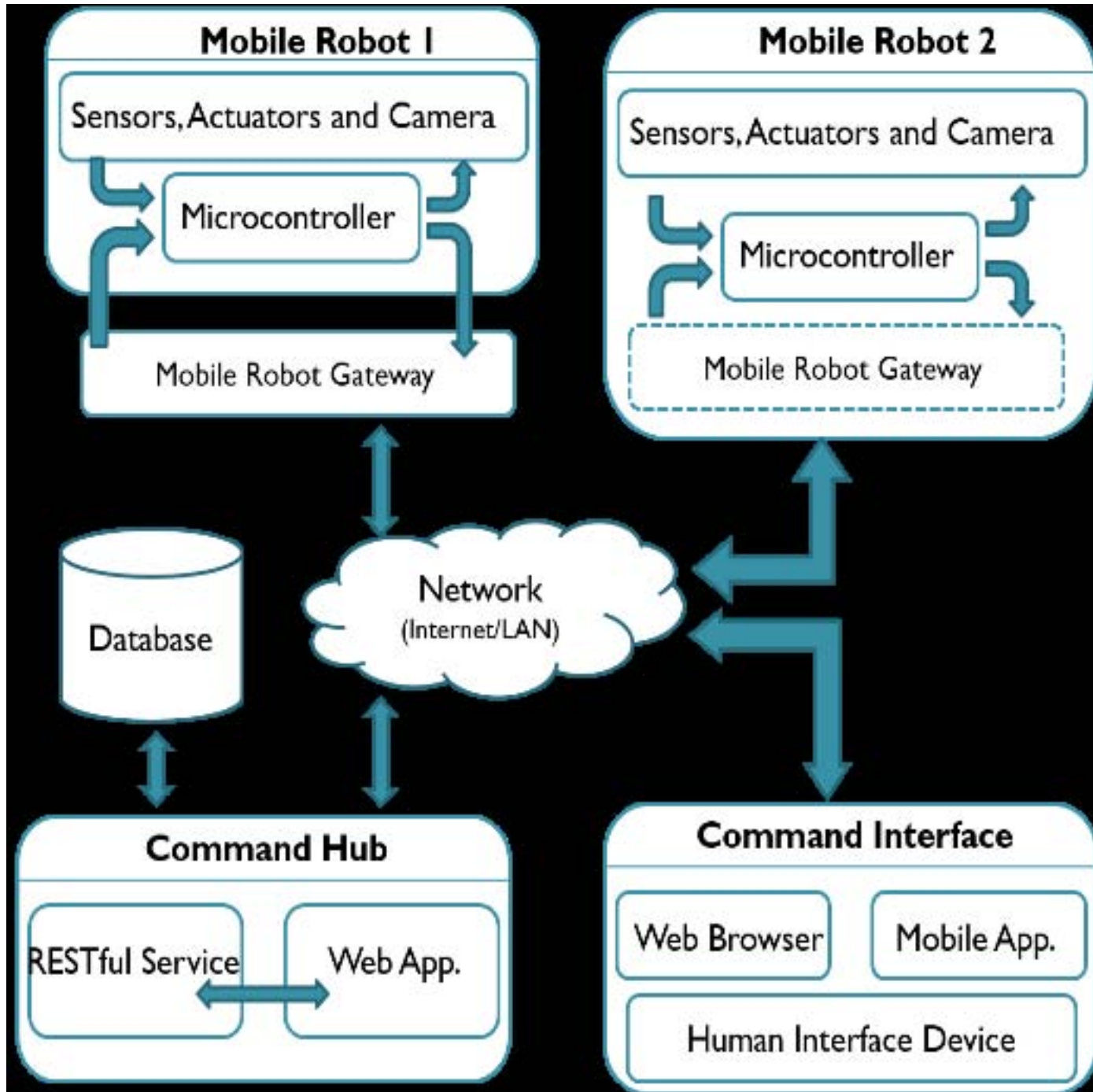


Figure 1:

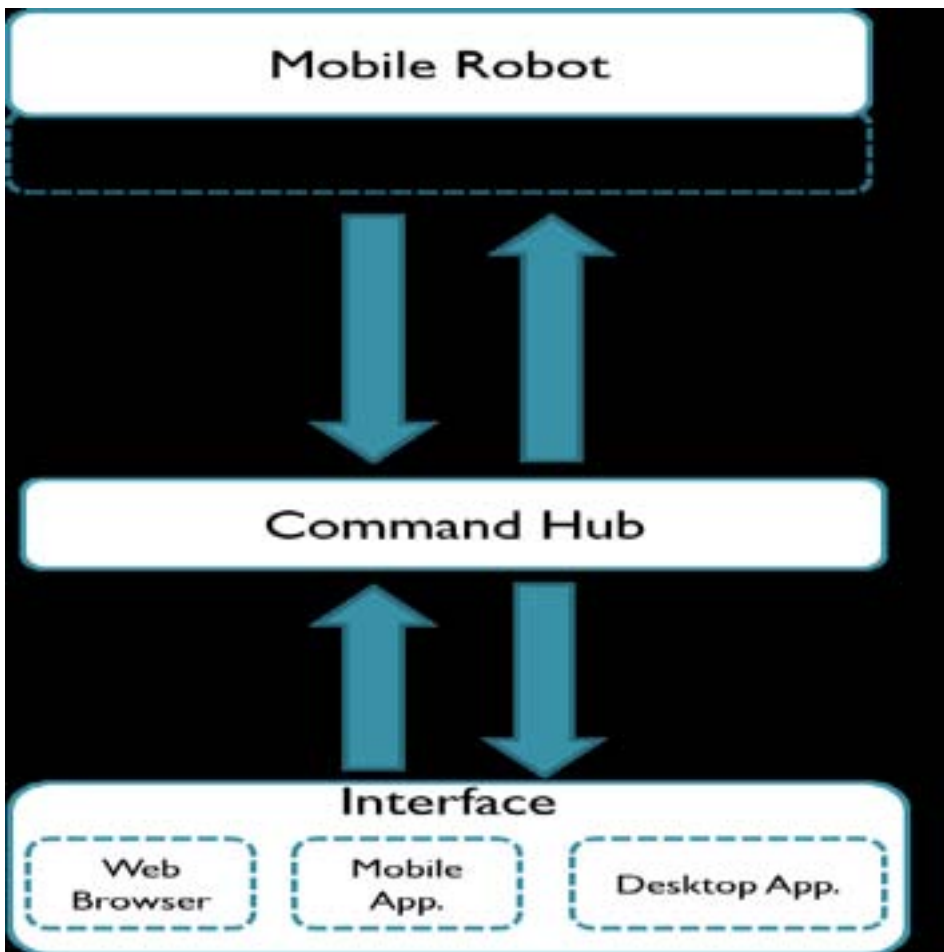
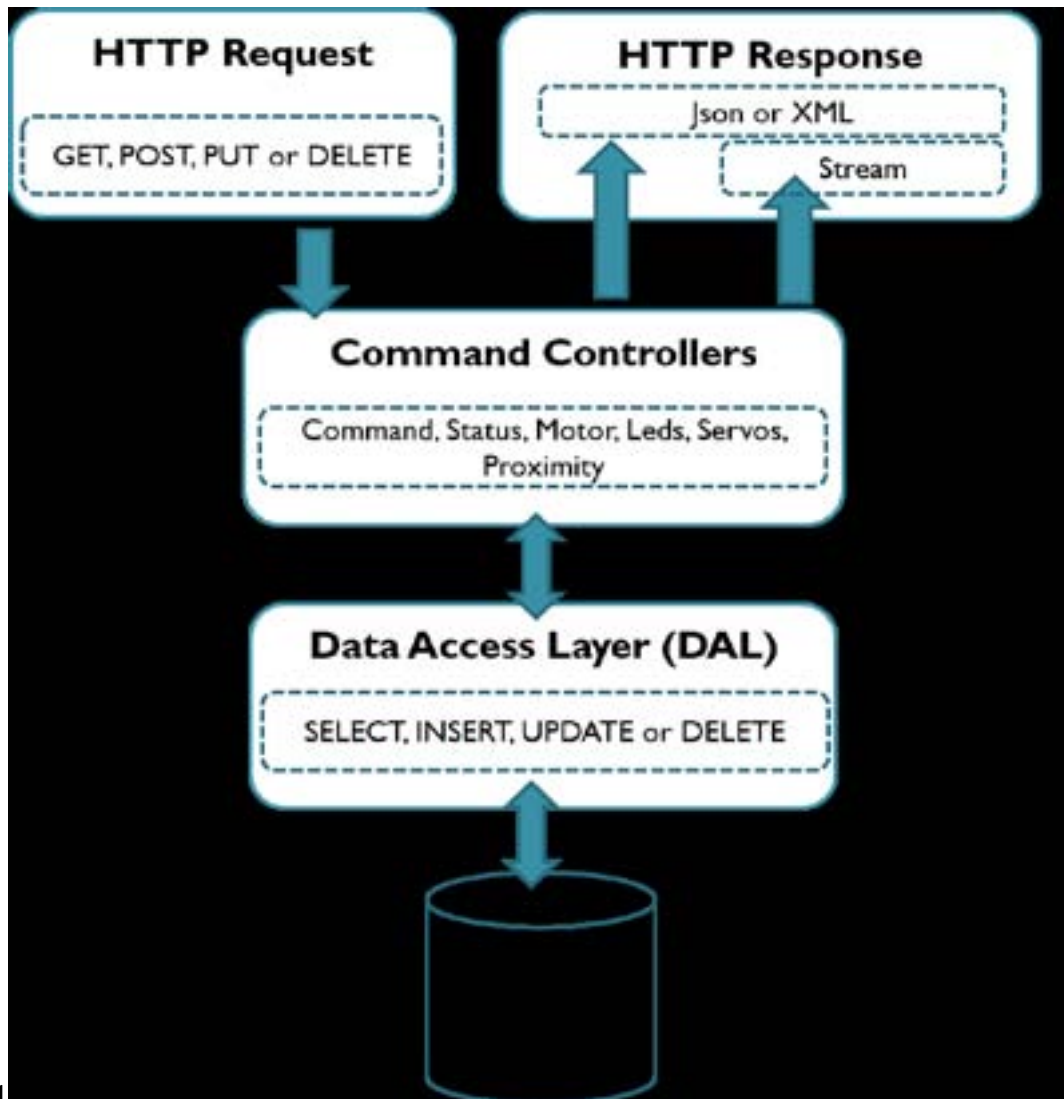
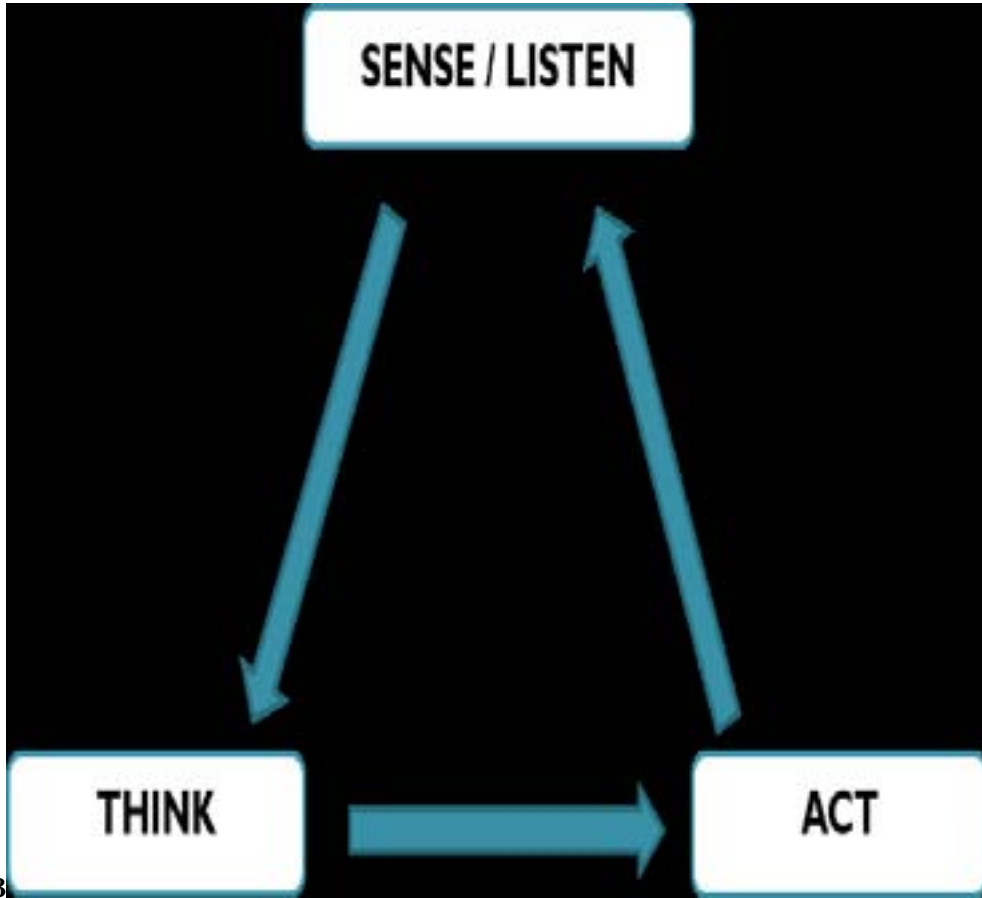


Figure 2:



1

Figure 3: Figure 1 :



3

Figure 4: Figure 3 :

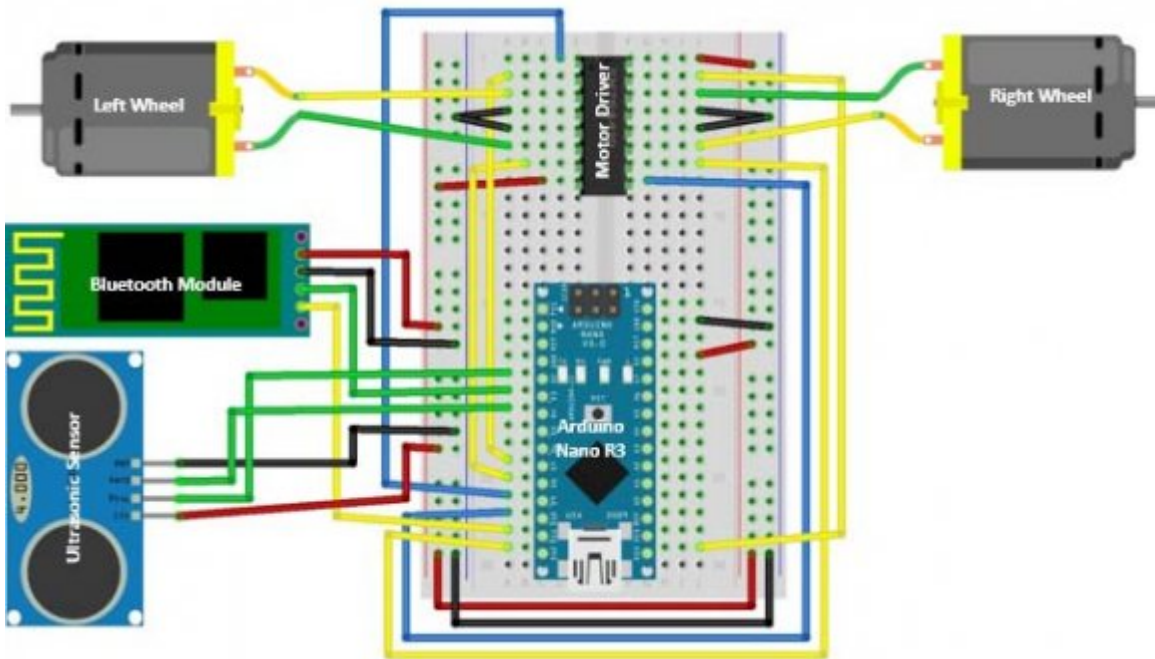
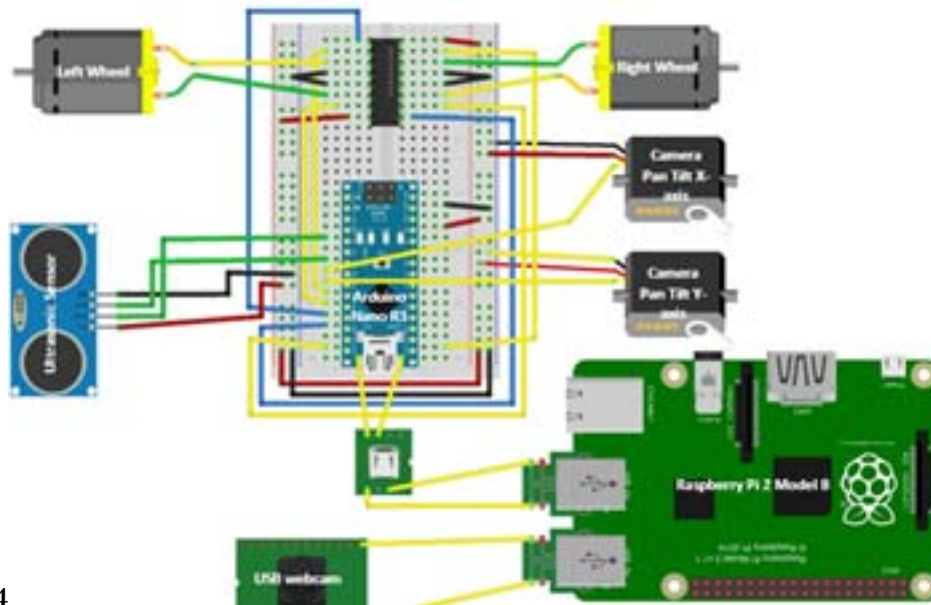
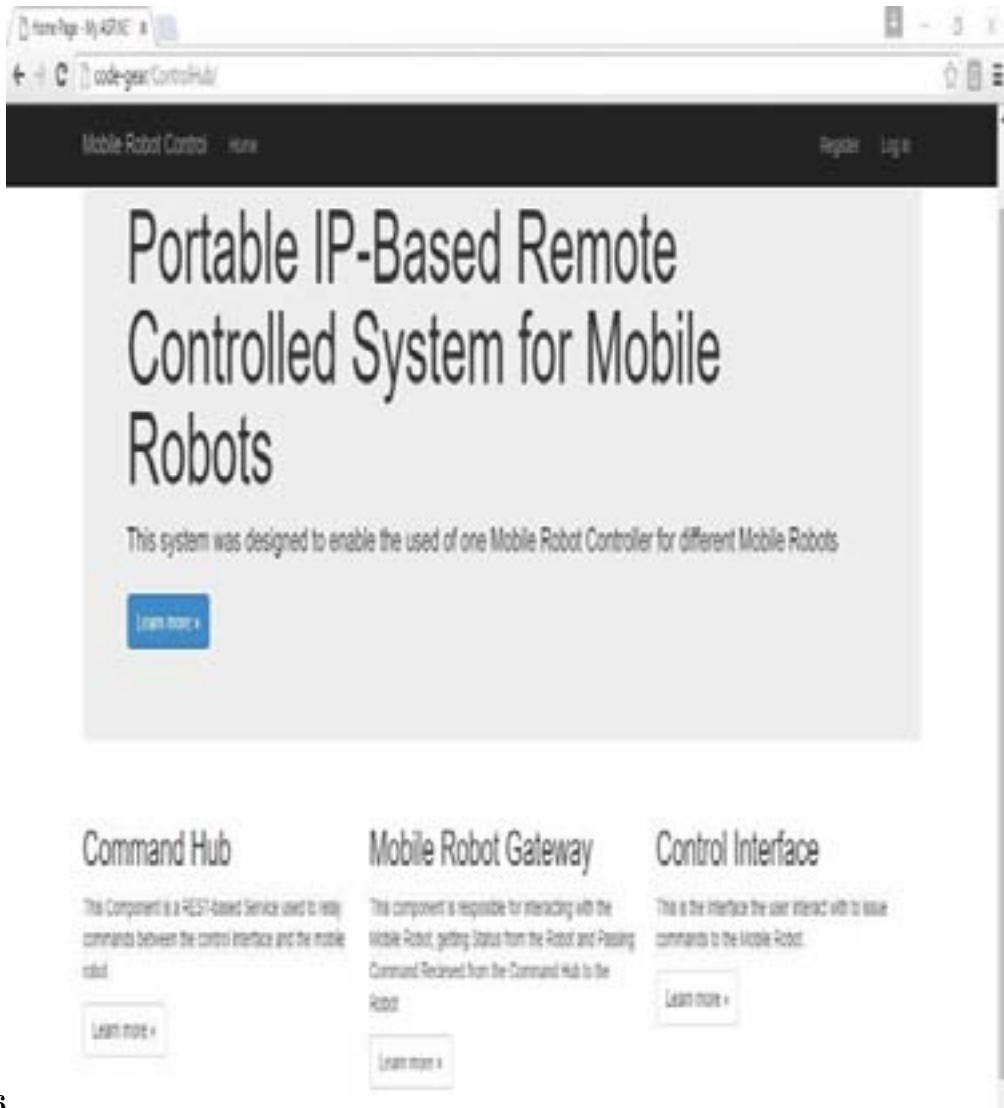


Figure 5:



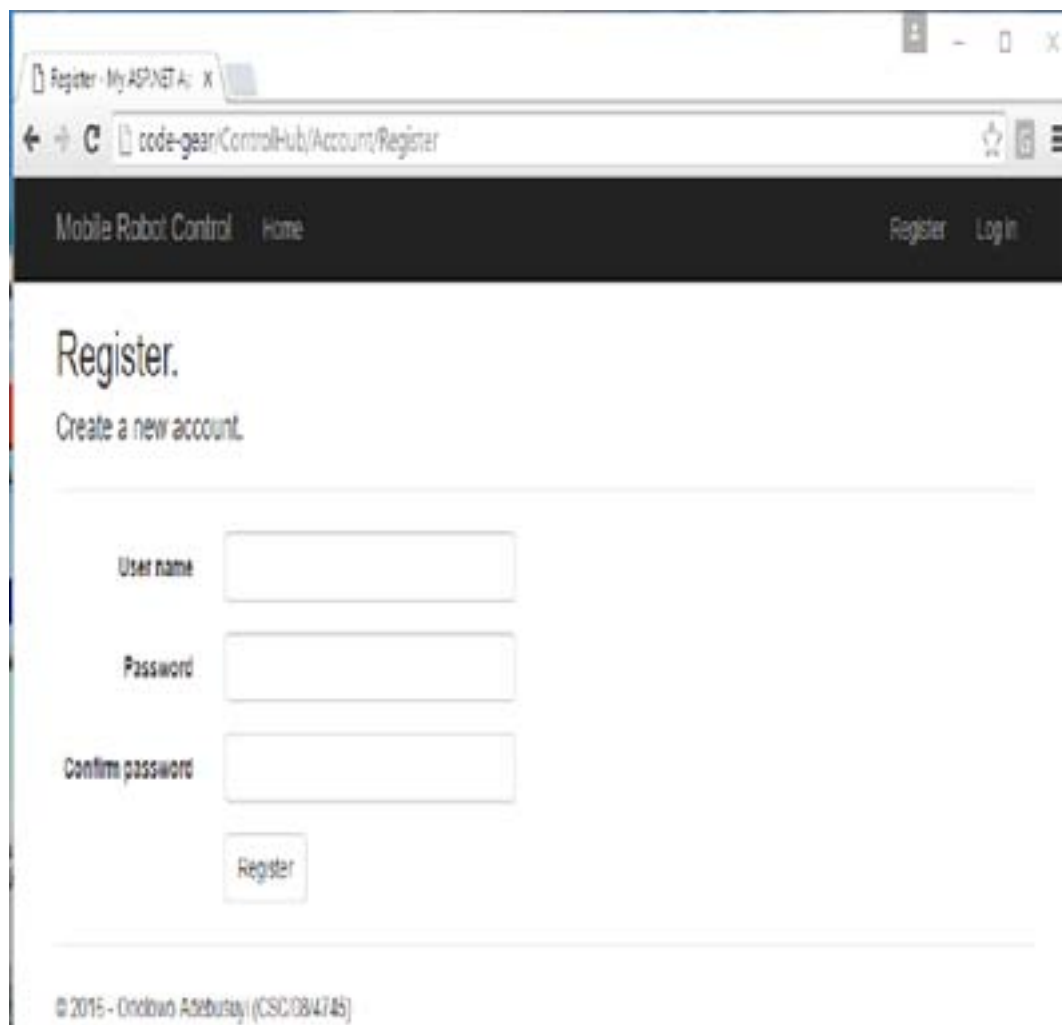
4

Figure 6: Figure 4 :



6

Figure 7: Figure 6 :



8

Figure 8: Figure 8 :

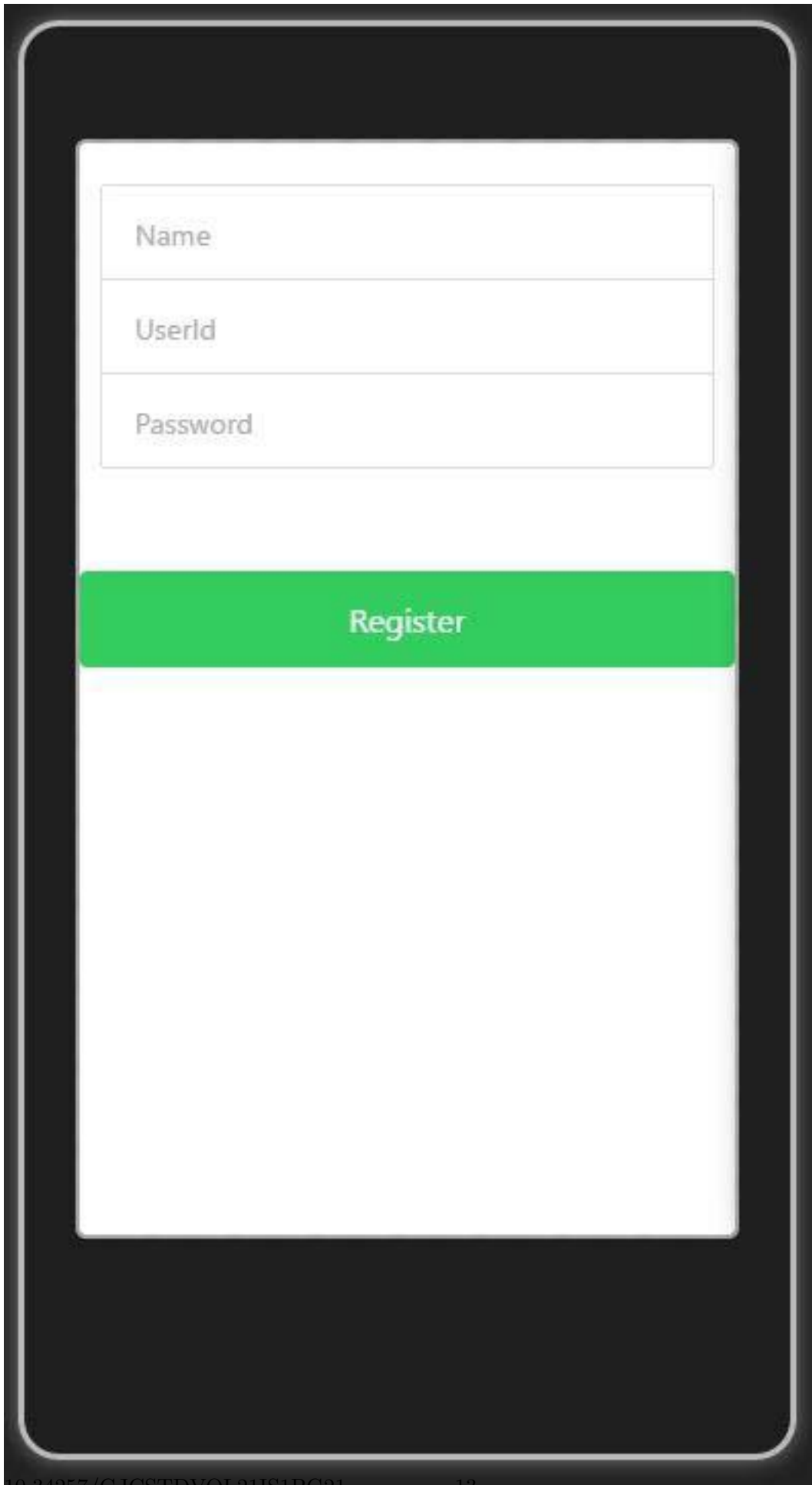


Figure 9:

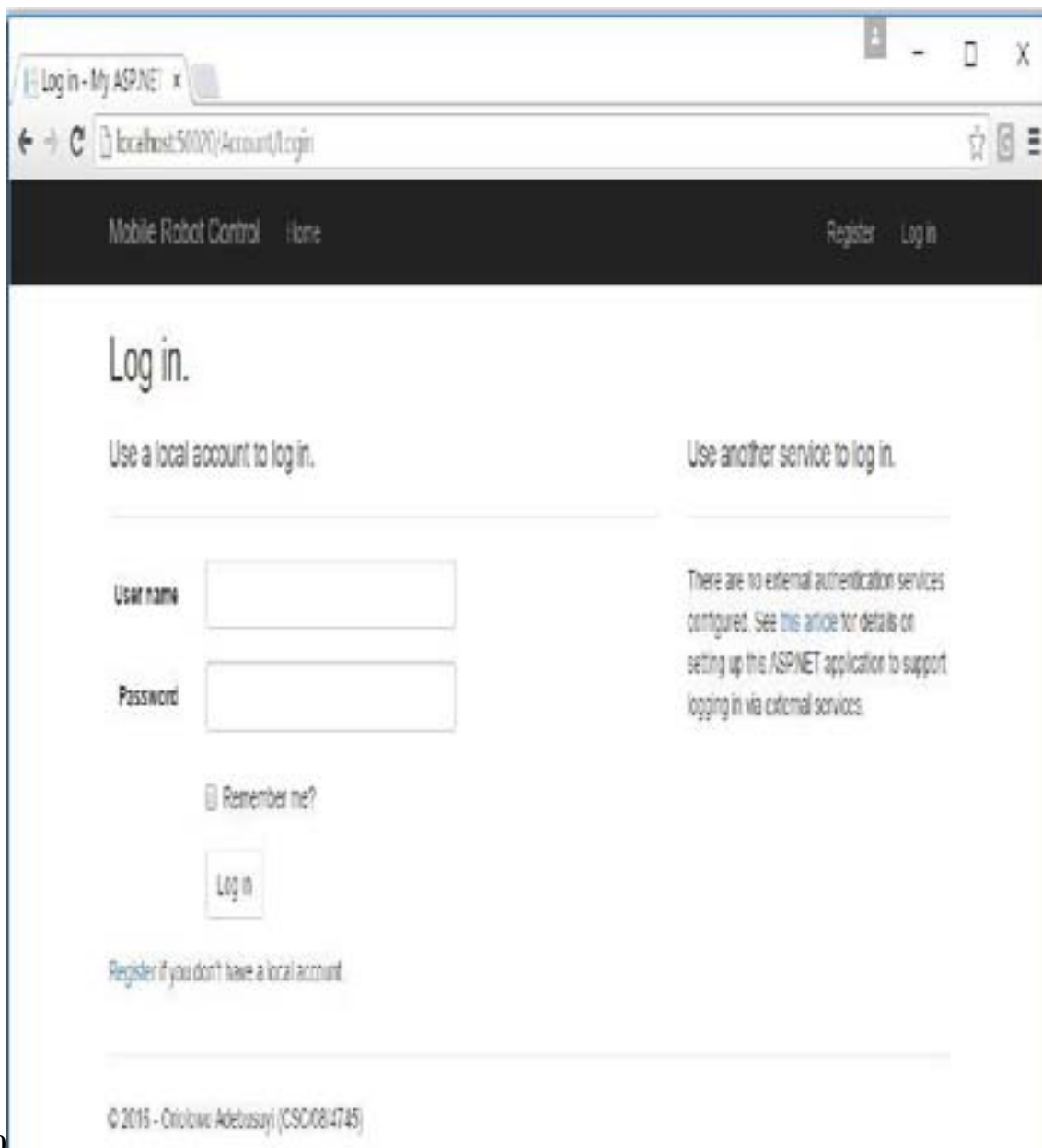
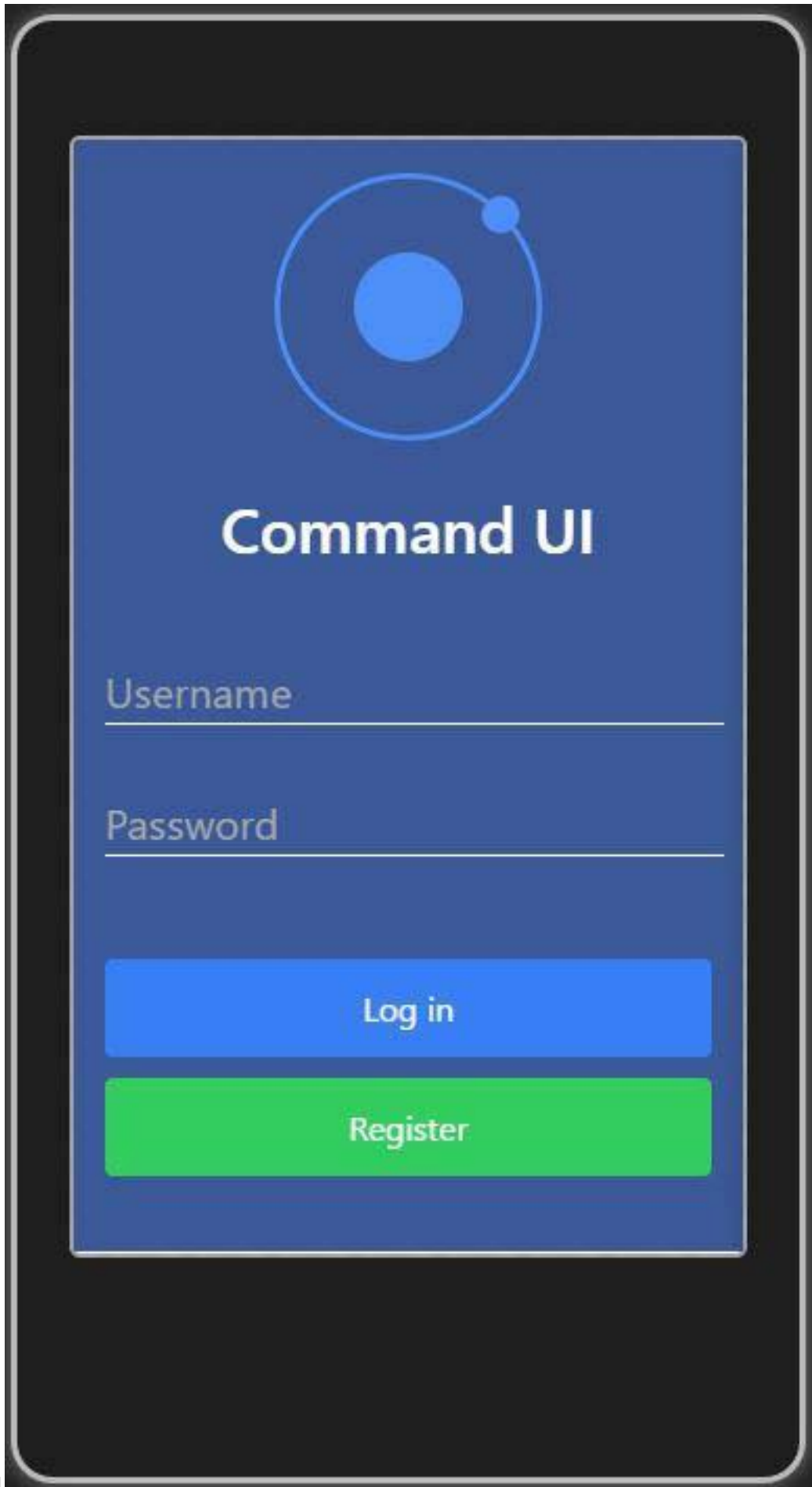
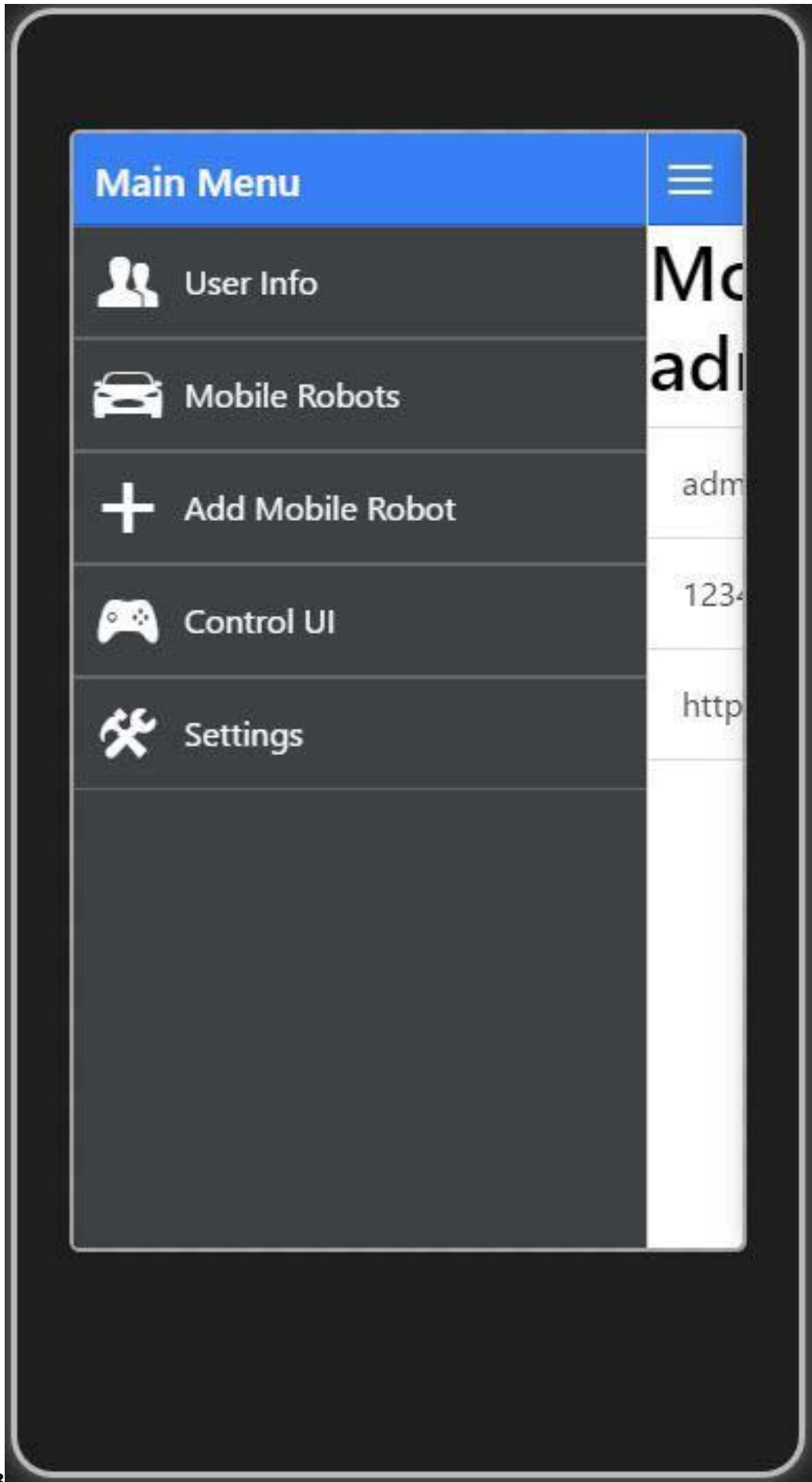
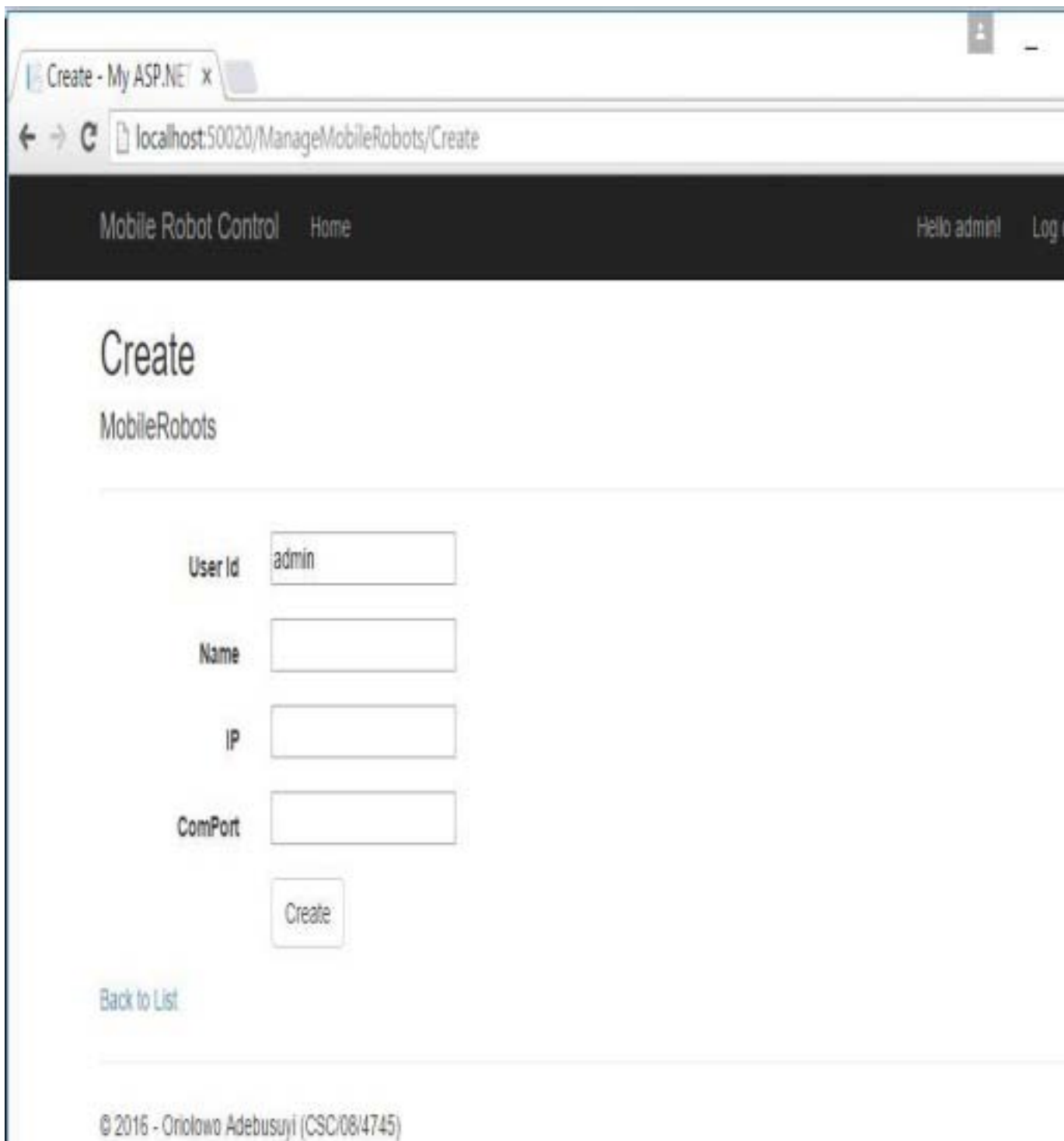


Figure 10: Figure 10 :







14

Figure 13: Figure 14 :

15

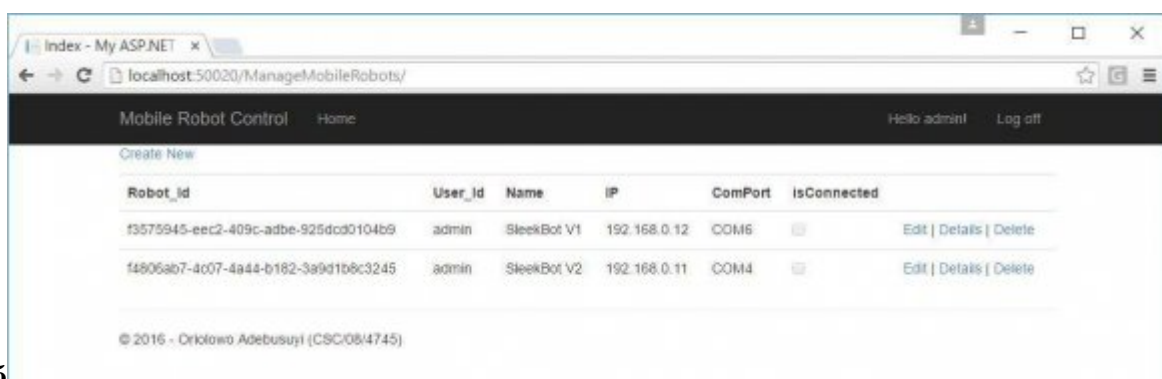
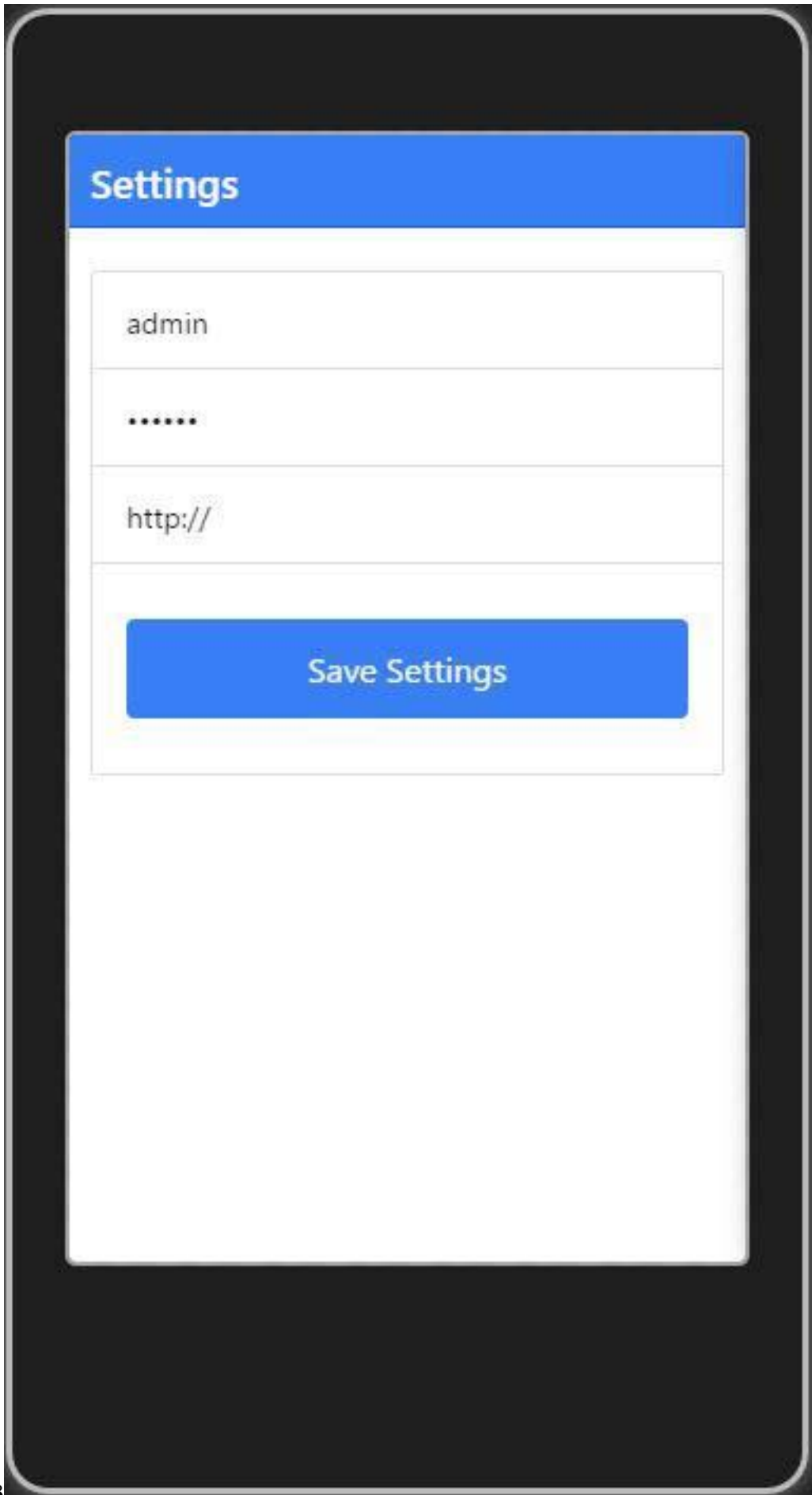


Figure 14: Figure 15 :



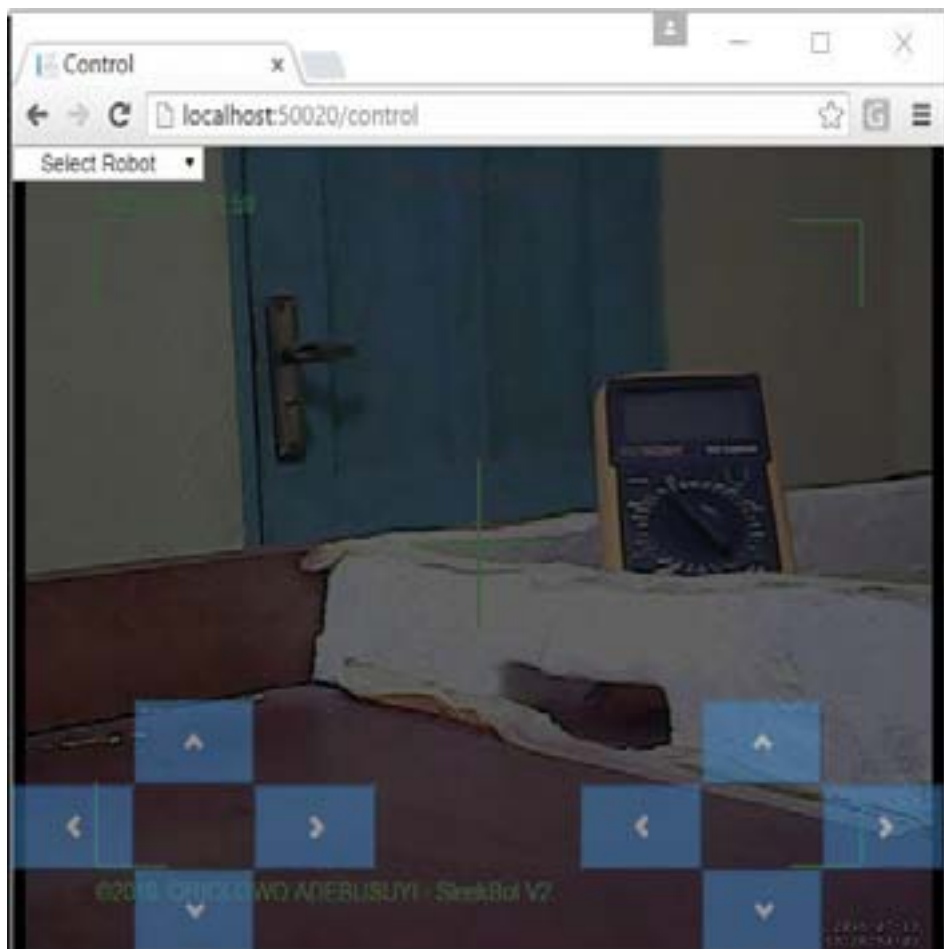


Figure 16:

1

URI	HTTP VERB	COMMAND	DESCRIPTION
/api/move	GET	W	Get Wheels State
/api/move/1	POST	F	Move forward
/api/move/2	POST	b	Move Backward
/api/move/3	POST	r	Move Right
/api/move/4	POST	l	Move Left
/api/move/5	POST	s	Stop
/api/speed	GET	v	Get Robot Speed
/api/speed/value	POST	v,value	Set Robot Speed to value
/api/leds	GET	d	Get all LED Status
/api/leds/id	GET	d,id	Get the Status of LED id
/api/leds/id/status	POST	d,id,status	Set the state of LED id with status
/api/servo	GET	c	Get Status of all Servo
/api/servo/id	GET	c,id	Get state of Servo id
/api/servo/id/pos	POST	c,id,pos	Set the position of Servo id to position
/api/motor	GET	m	Get the state of all Motor
/api/motor/id	GET	m,id	Get state of motor id
/api/motor/id/pwm	POST	m,id,PWM	Set the PWM signal of Motor id
/api/prox	GET	p	Get state of all proximity sensor
/api/prox/id	GET	p, id	Get state of proximity sensor id

[Note: v. Mobile Robot Design and Configuration]

Figure 17: Table 1 :

Raspberry Pi 2 Model B: this is a credit card size computer capable of running a trim-down version of the Linux operating system. It has a quad-core processor with a clock speed of 900 MHz, 1 GB RAM, and 40 GPIO (General-purpose Input Output) pins. This was used with Arduino Nano R3 to develop SleekBot V2 Mobile Robot

ePuck Mobile Robot: this a differential drive educational mobile robot based on a dsPIC30F6014A microcontroller chip running at 60 MHz clock speed. It has 8 KB RAM, 144 KB flash Memory, 3D accelerometer, VGA camera, 8 infra-red sensors, Bluetooth for wireless communication with a computer, speaker and LED. It was used as one of the Mobile Robots used in testing the workability of the developed remote control system.

Software

Programming Languages: C, C#, Python, JavaScript

Interface Design: HTML 5, CSS 3, Win form

Backend: MS SQL Server 2012

Framework: .Net Framework, Apache Cordova, Ionic Framework

Web Server: Internet Information Service (IIS) 8

ii. User Interface Documentation

Home Page

[Note: b) Implementation Toolsi.]

Figure 18:

Get Command from Command Hub
 If Command != null
 Map command to the Mobile Robot Kinematics
 Execute Command
 End If
 End While
 While Interrupt NOT available
 Get Mobile Robot Status
 Send Status to Command Hub
 End While
 Time Complexity of Mobile Robot Gateway algorithm
 Number of Operation

c) System Evaluation

Algorithm for Command Hub
 Initialize Command Hub
 While interrupt NOT available
 Get HTTP request from client
 Map request to command controller
 Construct response message
 Return response message
 End While
 Time Complexity of Command Hub algorithm
 Number of Operation

$$\begin{aligned}
 &= 1 + 1 \\
 &+ N(1 \\
 &+ 1 + \\
 &1 + 1) \\
 &= 2 + \\
 &N(4) \\
 &= 2 + \\
 &4N \\
 &= 2 + \\
 &4N
 \end{aligned}$$

Number of Operation

In Big O notation, the algorithm executes in linear time i.eO(n)

Algorithm for Command Interface
 Initialize Command Interface
 While UserAction != null
 Construct command object
 Send command object to Command Hub using HTTP Request
 Get Response for the HTTP Request
 If Response != null
 Process Response
 Update Interface
 End If
 End While
 While Interrupt NOT available
 Get Status from Command Hub
 Update Interface
 End While
 Time Complexity of Command Interface algorithm
 Number of Operation

$$\begin{aligned}
 &= 1 \\
 &+ 1 + \\
 &N(1 + \\
 &1 + 1 + \\
 &1 + 1) \\
 &+ N(1 \\
 &+ 1)
 \end{aligned}$$

Figure 20:

250 []. remote controldefinition of remote control in English from the Oxford dictionary Oxford dictionary (2015)]
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