





Dipartimento Territorio e Sistemi Agro-Forestali Università di Padova

FORESTE VETUSTE STRUTTURA E BIODIVERSITA' 2.0

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WORKSHOP

Form apps to collect and digitalise field data

The staff

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Forest biodiversity and forest planning

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Forest fires and wildland-urban interface







Introduction - Form apps in forest surveys

- Field data collection is a fundamental part in foresters work
- As an alternative to paper forms, recently some form apps have been created
- Form apps are smartphone/tablet apps that may:
 - Simplify field data collection
 - Speed up digitalisation
 - Limit errors
 - Make the work more efficient



Introduzione - Form apps in forest surveys

Several form apps are available





- ODK Collect (Android)
- GIC Collect (iOS)



- ArcGIS Survey123
- Ona (<u>https://ona.io/home/</u>)
- openforis (<u>https://openforis.org/</u>)
- ...









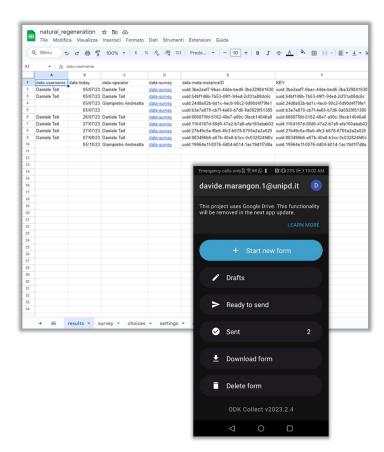


ODK Collect - Data collector

- Powerful tool to collect and digitalise field data
- Integration of web and app sides
- ODK Platform: ODK Central (server),
 Google Drive (discontinued)
- https://docs.getodk.org/collect-intro/



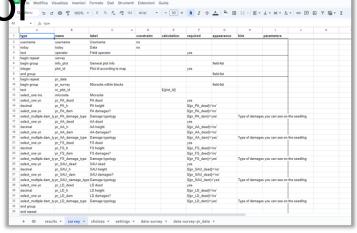


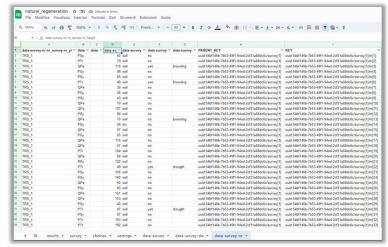


ODK Collect - Data collector

One matrix to collect and store data,
 even with different accounts and
 devices

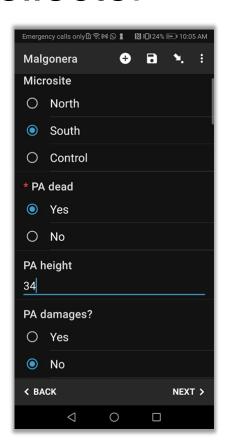
Standard survey protocol

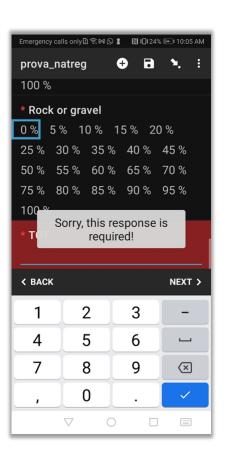




ODK Collect - Data collector

- User friendly interface
- Possibility to insert warnings and restrictions that reduce the probability to commit errors





How to programme - XLSform

https://xlsform.org/en

XLSForm.org

en

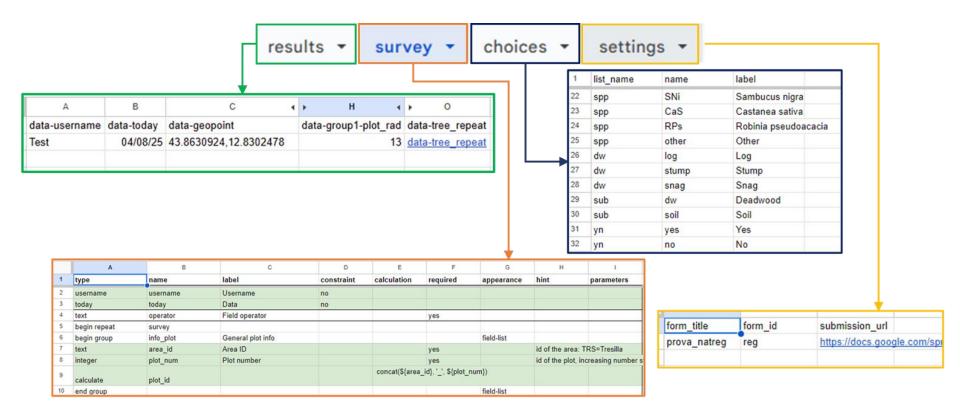
Reference and Template

- What is an XLSForm?
- · Basic format
 - The survey worksheet
 - o The choices worksheet
 - · Setting up your worksheets
- Question types
 - Capturing GPS location
 - o Multiple choice
 - Rank
 - Range

What is an XLSForm?

XLSForm is a form standard created to help simplify the authoring of forms in Excel. Authoring is done in a human-readable format using a familiar tool that almost everyone knows - Excel. XLSForms provide a practical standard for sharing and collaborating on authoring forms. They are simple to get started with but allow for the authoring of complex forms by someone familiar with the syntax described below. The XLSForm is then converted to an ODK XForm, a popular open form standard, that allows you to author a form with complex functionality, like skip logic, in a consistent way across a number of web and mobile data collection platforms.

How to programme - Google Sheet



How to programme - results

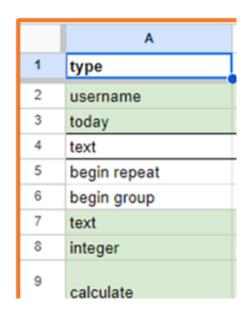
- Sheet where the results of the survey are stored (see settings)
- Links to additional items, if present (sub-tables, images, audio,...)

А	В	C 4	→ H •	> O
data-username	data-today	data-geopoint	data-group1-plot_rad	data-tree_repeat
Test	04/08/25	43.8630924,12.8302478	13	data-tree_repeat

- Sheet that allows to design the survey form
- 1. Which questions will appear on the screen
- 2. Order of the questions
- 3. Sets of questions, loops, automatic calculation

	Α	В	С	D	E	F	G	н	I I
1	type	name	label	constraint	calculation	required	appearance	hint	parameters
2	username	username	Username	no					
3	today	today	Data	no					
4	text	operator	Field operator			yes			
5	begin repeat	survey							
6	begin group	info_plot	General plot info				field-list		
7	text	area_id	Area ID			yes		id of the area: T	RS=Tresilla
8	integer	plot_num	Plot number			yes		id of the plot, inc	reasing number s
9	calculate	plot_id			concat(\${area_i	d}, '_', \${plot_nun	n})		
10	end group						field-list		

- Required elements (for the functioning of the app)
- Type: type of element
 - integer = integer number
 - decimal = decimal number
 - text
 - select_one [option] = select only 1 option
 - select_multiple [option] = multiple choice
 - begin_group/end_group = for sets of questions
 - begin_repeat/end_repeat = for loops



Question type	Answer input
integer	Integer (i.e., whole number) input.
decimal	Decimal input.
range	Range input (including rating)
text	Free text response.
select_one [options]	Multiple choice question; only one answer can be selected.
select_multiple [options]	Multiple choice question; multiple answers can be selected.
select_one_from_file [file]	Multiple choice from file; only one answer can be selected.
select_multiple_from_file [file]	Multiple choice from file; multiple answers can be selected.
rank [options]	Rank question; order a list.
note	Display a note on the screen, takes no input. Shorthand for type=text with readonly=true.
geopoint	Collect a single GPS coordinate.
geotrace	Record a line of two or more GPS coordinates.
geoshape	Record a polygon of multiple GPS coordinates; the last point is the same as the first point.
date	Date input.
time	Time input.
dateTime	Accepts a date and a time input.
image	Take a picture or upload an image file.
audio	Take an audio recording or upload an audio file.
background-audio	Audio is recorded in the background while filling the form.
video	Take a video recording or upload a video file.
file	Generic file input (txt, pdf, xls, xlsx, doc, docx, rtf, zip)
barcode	Scan a barcode, requires the barcode scanner app to be installed.
calculate	Perform a calculation; see the Calculation section below.
acknowledge	Acknowledge prompt that sets value to "OK" if selected.
hidden	A field with no associated UI element which can be used to store a constant
xml-external	Adds a reference to an external XML data file

- Required elements (for the functioning of the app)
- Name: univocal identifier of the element
- Label: text that will appear on the screen

В	С			
name	label			
username	Username			
today	Data			
operator	Field operator			
survey				
info_plot	General plot info			
area_id	Area ID			
plot_num	Plot number			

- Useful settings
- Appearance: how the questions and variables will appear on the screen
- Hint: an hint is provided alongside the question (e.g., measurement unit, specific aspect of the protocol, etc.)

appearance	hint	parameters
field-list		
	id of the ar	ea: TRS=Tresilla
	id of the pl	ot, increasing number
1})		

- Useful settings
- Required: you cannot go forward in the questionnaire if the field is left blank. It's useful to provide a required_message
- Constraint: threshold, minimum values (e.g., height, DBH threshold)

constraint	calculation	required
.>50		\${nr_species}='other'
.<0		yes
		yes
		yes
		\${nr_damage_presence}='yes'

How to programme - choices

- Sheet where the single/multiple choices are collected
- list_name: group of options for each variable (connected to the sheet survey)
- 1. name: unique name for each variable
- 2. label: name of the variable as showed on screen

NB: it is useful to include an "other" option for unpredicted answers (e.g., species)

1	list_name	name	label
22	spp	SNi	Sambucus nigra
23	spp	CaS	Castanea sativa
24	spp	RPs	Robinia pseudoacacia
25	spp	other	Other
26	dw	log	Log
27	dw	stump	Stump
28	dw	snag	Snag
29	sub	dw	Deadwood
30	sub	soil	Soil
31	yn	yes	Yes
32	yn	no	No

How to programme - settings

- Sheet with form title, form ID and link where results will be sent
- 1. form_title is the name of the form as appears on screen
- 2. form_id is the form name internally used by the software
- 3. submission link **MUST** end with "**#gid=0**"!
- → it is necessary to create Google Sheets from scratch, do not copy/paste an existing file! (it's possible to copy/paste the content)

	A	В	С	D	Е	F	G	Н	I	J
1	form_title	form_id	submission_url							٠
2	Test selvicoltura	rilievi_cavallettamento_san_vito	https://docs.goog	gle.com/spreadsh	eets/d/1BFDHF5	zwkEphmlyq4cRl	P4MR6rHSIQOEz	28p1dwU9MB7E/	edit?gid=0#gid=0	•
3									*****	• • •
4										

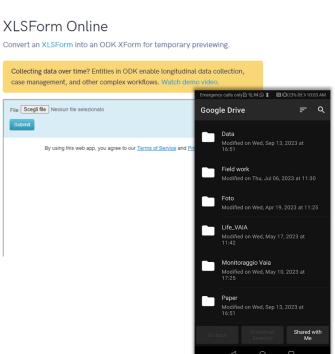
	A	В	C	D	E	F	G	Н		J	K
1	type	name	label	constraint	calculation	required	appearance	hint	parameters		
2	username	username	Username	no							
3	today	today	Data	no							
4	text	operator	Field operator			yes					
5	begin repeat	survey									
6	begin group	info_plot	General plot info				field-list				
7	text	area_id	Area ID			yes		id of the area: T	RS=Tresilla		
8	integer	plot_num	Plot number			yes		id of the plot, in	creasing number s	tarting from 1	
9	calculate	plot_id			concat(\${area_	d}, '_', \${plot_nr})					
10	end group						field-list				
11	begin group	soilcover	Soil cover				field-list	Percentage of s	oil cover. MUST b	e 100%	
12	integer	graminoids	Graminoids	.<=100		yes					
13	integer	herbs	Herbs	.<=100		yes					
14	integer	tall_herbs	Tall herbs	.<=100		yes					
15	integer	nat_reg	Natural regeneration <150cm	.<=100		yes					
16	integer	trees	Trees >150cm	.<=100		yes					
17	integer	cwd	Deadwood	.<=100		yes					
18	integer	branches	Branches	.<=100		yes					
19	integer	soil	Bare soil	.<=100		yes					
20	integer	rock_gravel	Rock or gravel	.<=100		yes					
21	calculate	tot	TOT	.=100	S(soilcover) + S(graminoids) + S(t	nerbs) + \${tall_h	erbs) + S(cwd) + S	(branches) + \$(so	il) + S{rock_gravel)
22	integer	total	TOTAL		S(tot)						
23	end group						field-list				
24	begin repeat	nr	Natural regeneration survey								
25	begin group	nr_survey					field-list				
26	text	nr_plot_id			\${plot_id}						
27	select_one spp	nr_species	Species			yes					
28	text	nr_add_species	Add species			\${nr_species}='c	ther'	Write the specie	es ONLY if not pre	sent in the list	
29	integer	nr_height	Height cm			yes					
30	select_one sub	nr_substrate	Substrate			yes		Growing substr	ate		
31	select_one yn	nr_damage_presence	Presence of damages			yes					
32	select_multiple dam_ty	nr_damage_type	Damage typology			\${nr_damage_p	resence)='yes'	Type of damage	es you can see on	the seedling	
33	end_group										
34	end repeat										
35	begin repeat	dw									
36	begin group	dw_survey	Deadwood survey				field-list				
37	text	dw_plot_id			\${plot_id}						
38	integer	dw_id	ID deadwood					id of each dead	wood element, inc	reasing number st	arting from
39	select_one dw	dw_type	Type of deadwood								
40	integer	dw_dbh_cm	DBH (cm)	.>=10				diameter of the	smaller end		
41	decimal	dw_lenght_m	Lenght (m)	1<.<=12				only the portion	within the plot rad	ius	
42	end group										
43	end repeat						field-list				
44	geopoint	ads_gps	GPS of the center			yes		Gos coordinate	s measured on the	center of the plot	

	A	В	С	D
1	list_name	name	label	
22	spp	SNi	Sambucus nigra	
23	spp	CaS	Castanea sativa	
24	spp	RPs	Robinia pseudoaca	acia
25	spp	other	Other	
26	dw	log	Log	
27	dw	stump	Stump	
28	dw	snag	Snag	
29	sub	dw	Deadwood	
30	sub	soil	Soil	
31	yn	yes	Yes	
32	yn	no	No	
33	dam_type	browsing	Browsing	
34	dam_type	mechanical	Mechanical	
35	dam_type	frost	Frost	
36	dam_type	fungi	Fungi	
37	dam_type	drought	Drought	
38	perc	0	0 %	
39	perc	5	5 %	
40	perc	10	10 %	
41	perc	15	15 %	
42	perc	20	20 %	
43	perc	25	25 %	
44	perc	30	30 %	
45	perc	35	35 %	
46	perc	40	40 %	
47	perc	45	45 %	
48	perc	50	50 %	
49	perc	55	55 %	
50	perc	60	60 %	
51	perc	65	65 %	

How to programme - convert in XLSform

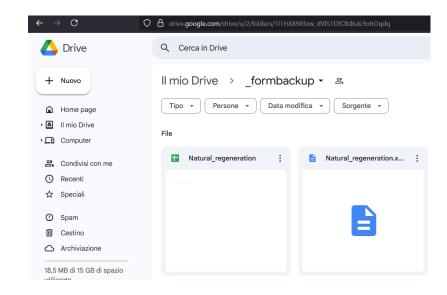


- ODK works through XLSform
- 1. Download the Google Sheet (.xlsx) on PC
- Use the online converter to get an .xml file (https://getodk.org/xlsform/)
- 3. Download the .xml file on PC
- 4. Upload the .xml file on Google Drive
- 5. Download the form in the app ODKCollect



How to programme - convert in XLSform

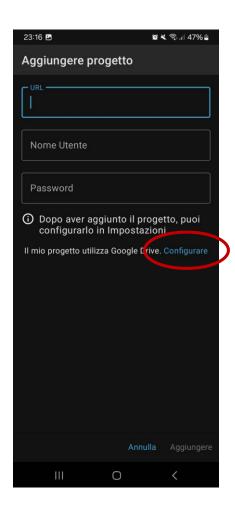
- This procedure works with Google Drive
- XLSform is a standard used in great part of the form apps, also those not examined in this workshop!



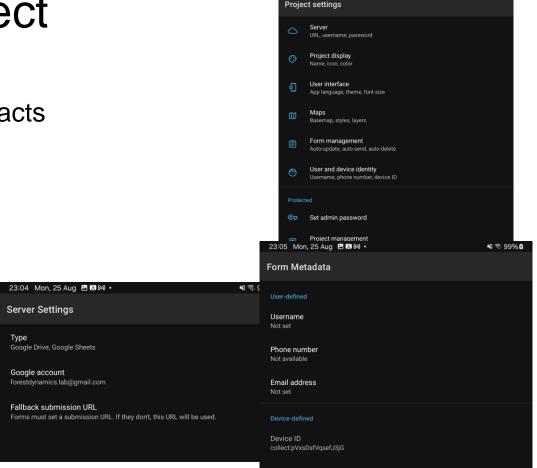
 Enter the Google credentials in the app. The form will be in the Google Drive, or will be shared with us from someone else

NB: last ODK versions do not support the connection with Google (see conclusions)





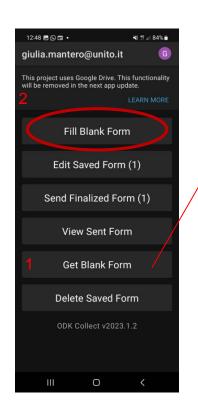
 Setup username and contacts (for tracking users)

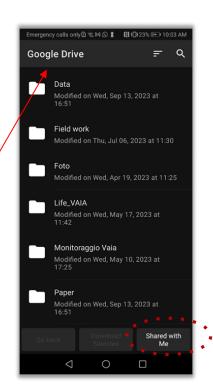


23:04 Mon, 25 Aug 🗷 🕒 🕅 •

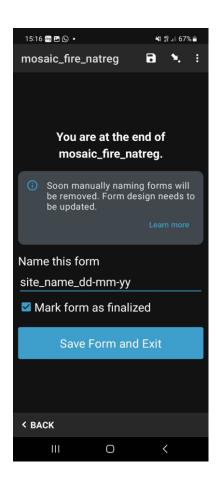
¥1 ≈ 99%**0**

- Download the form to compile
- Compile an empty form

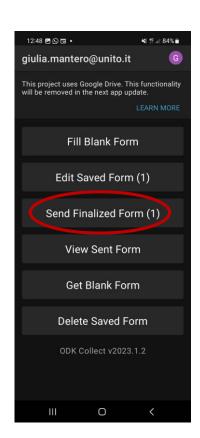


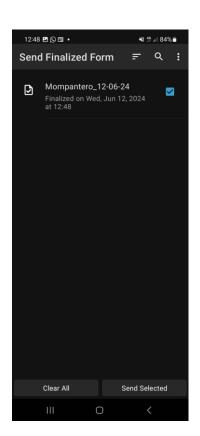


- Save the compiled form with an univocal name
- A) Save each sampling plot in a different file
- B) Save all the survey (several sampling plots) in a single file

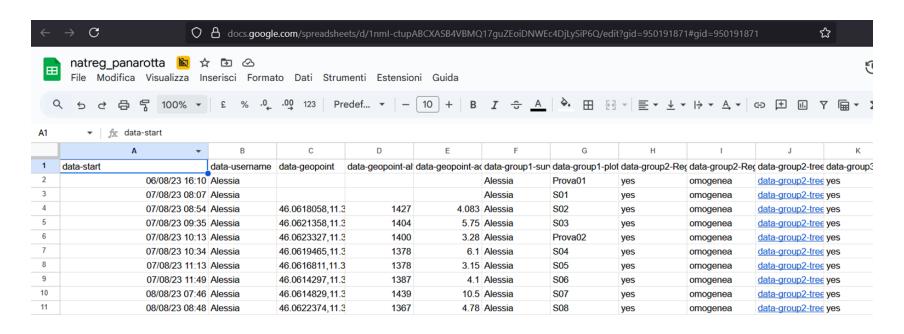


- Save the compiled form with an univocal name
- A) Save each sampling plot in a different file
- B) Save all the survey (several sampling plots) in a single file
- Send the compiled forms as soon as possible





The collected data will be visible on Google Sheet



Projects where we used ODKCollect

- EU Projects: CROSSIT SAFER, MOSAIC, ReEnforce, LIFE VAIA
- Support to forest management plans (Sinistra Piave, Val Grigna)
- PhD Teses, MSc and BSc students, ...









Publication connected

Sherwood digital n.6 (2024)

https://www.rivis tasherwood.it/fil evari/sfogliabilisd/2024/sherwo od_digital-06-2024/sherwood_ digital-06-2024.html#p=91

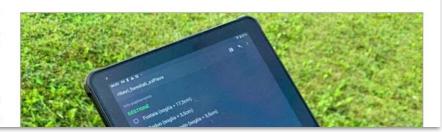
Carta, penna e... smartphone

Le form app per la raccolta dati in bosco

Raccogliere dati in campo è parte del lavoro del professionista forestale. Oggi sono disponibili degli applicativi per smartphone che possono semplificare la raccolta e soprattutto la digitalizzazione dei dati, velocizzando il lavoro e limitando il rischio di commettere degli errori di trascrizione. Questo articolo riporta l'esperienza del Gruppo di Selvicoltura dell'Università degli Studi di Padova nell'uso di ODK Collect e QFIELD.

di Flavio Taccaliti, Niccolò Marchi, Claudio Betetto, Davide Marangon

Negli ultimi anni, l'informatizzazione ha ridotto la quantità di tempo passata



Pros and Cons



PROs:

- User-friendly interface
- Harmonised and syncronised data collection
- Less errors
- Rigid system
- Ancillary data (e.g. pics)

CONs:

- Carefull planning and validation at the desk
- Works better with Android (iOS compatibile)
- Last versions do not support
 Google Drive (since v2023.1.2)
- Rigid system

Conclusions

- Form app can help foresters job
- Need to learn a new tool
- Always have a reserve plan! → Paper and pencil

Special thanks to Niccolò Marchi for having introduced us to ODKCollect

