Art of Harvesting – Capturing and Documenting Results

Art of Harvesting refers to a collection of methods used to capture, document, and further develop insights, ideas, and experiences generated during participation processes. The focus is not only on collecting outcomes but also on making learning processes, relationships, and shared understanding visible. The method is commonly used alongside dialogue and participation formats.

Participation Depth	Participate, Have a say
Project Phase	Onboarding
Goals	Structuring & Prioritising
Format	Analogue, Digital
Duration	1 - 3 Hours, 1 Day, Several Weeks
Target Group	Directly Affected, Interested Public, Hard-to-Reach Groups, Organised Actors
Group Size	Small Group up to 15, Medium Group up to 30
Characteristics	Creative, Structured

GOAL OF THE METHOD

The goal of Art of Harvesting is to intentionally collect, document, and make use of the knowledge, experiences, and outcomes generated during participation processes. Beyond recording factual results, the method also captures learning processes, relationships, and shared meaning to support future collaboration and decision-making.

PROCEDURE

Preparation

1. Define the objectives and desired outcomes

Before the process begins, consider:

- What should be documented?
- Which outcomes are most important?
- Which results should be used afterwards?
- Which insights or experiences should become visible?
- Who will work with the results later?

Important:

- Plan documentation from the beginning.
- Select harvesting methods that match the intended outcomes.

- Clearly define how the results will be used.

2. Choose appropriate harvesting methods
Different methods are suitable for different purposes.

Examples include:

- clustering
- mind maps
- graphic recording
- harvest posters
- podcasts or videos
- creative methods such as theatre or collages
- reflective dialogue sessions
- AI-supported analysis

The chosen method should always match the desired outcome.

3. Prepare the venue and materials
Depending on the selected methods, you may need:

- pinboards
- flipcharts
- markers
- templates or worksheets
- moderation cards
- large work surfaces
- cameras or audio recorders
- digital collaboration tools

Ensure there is sufficient space for both group work and documentation.

4. Assign roles and responsibilities

Clarify in advance:

- Who documents the process?
- Who collects the results?
- Who takes photographs or digitises materials?
- Who prepares the final documentation?
- Which documentation format will be produced?

For larger events, dedicated harvesters or documentation teams can be assigned.

Execution

1. Use generative questions
Well-designed questions encourage deeper conversations and help reveal meaningful insights.

Good questions are:

- open-ended
- non-leading (avoid questions such as "Don't you agree that…?")
- engaging
- easy to understand
- impossible to answer with only "yes" or "no"

These questions can support the entire participation process.

2. Encourage reflective dialogue
Participants reflect together on questions such as:

- What was most important today?
- What have we learned?
- Which new questions emerged?
- Which ideas will stay with us?

Reflection can take place in:

- small groups

- learning triads
- reflective walks
- other dialogue formats

3. Document results throughout the process
Capture ideas continuously using methods such as:

- templates
- posters
- written notes
- mind maps
- sticky notes
- digital documentation

Important:

Present the results clearly, highlight connections, and ensure contributions remain understandable.

4. Section 4
Use visual documentation

Methods such as Graphic Recording capture conversations visually in real time.

This may include:

- visual meeting records
- illustrations
- symbols
- graphic summaries

Visual documentation improves understanding, strengthens memory, and provides a shared point of reference.

It is particularly suitable for:

- Fishbowls
-

World Cafés

- workshops
- panel discussions
- closing events

Visual summaries help participants quickly understand complex discussions and remember key outcomes.

5. Identify patterns and relationships
Methods such as mind mapping help organise and synthesise information.

While doing so:

- avoid evaluating contributions
- allow contradictory viewpoints
- highlight relationships
- include examples where helpful

This helps create a shared understanding of the overall discussion.

6. Use creative harvesting methods
If participants are interested, creative approaches can complement the documentation process.

These are often particularly engaging for young people.

Examples include:

- collages
- theatre
- pantomime
- storytelling
- poetry
- music

Creative methods help capture emotions, experiences, and atmosphere alongside factual results.

7. Share the results publicly

The documented outcomes can be shared through:

- reports
- videos
- podcasts
- exhibitions
- websites
- social media

Making the results publicly available increases transparency and keeps the participation process visible.

Evaluation

1. Secure all documentation
After the event, preserve all collected material, including:

- photographs of pinboards
- digital files
- audio and video recordings
- written documentation

Important:

Always photograph analogue materials before dismantling displays.

2. Organise the findings
Review the collected material by identifying:

- recurring themes
- prioritised ideas
- remaining open questions
- agreed next steps

3. Make the results accessible
Share the documentation with all participants whenever possible.

Possible formats include:

- reports
- videos
- podcasts
- presentations
- digital documentation
- social media platforms such as Instagram or TikTok
- exhibitions

When participants can clearly see both the results of their contributions and the impact they have had on their community, they are much more likely to participate in future projects.

Source: https://partizipation.at/partizipation-anwenden/methoden/

WHEN USEFUL?

- making the outcomes of participation processes visible
- capturing insights and learning processes
- documenting discussions in a structured way
- supporting complex or long-term participation processes
- making results transparent and accessible to the public
- documenting workshops, dialogue events, conferences, or other participation activities

WHEN NOT USEFUL?

- only a simple written record or meeting minutes are required
- events are very short or purely informational
- the results will not be used afterwards
- working within highly hierarchical processes without genuine participation

TIPS

- Combine different forms of documentation.

- Use open and curiosity-driven questions.
- Capture ideas, emotions, and learning experiences while they are still fresh.
- Make sure the results remain visible after the event.
- Before the process begins, identify who will use the documented results later.

NOT SUITABLE FOR

- processes where the results will not be used further
- situations where no time has been allocated for documentation
- events that only provide information
- processes without openness to reflection or learning

View online: https://methoden.urbankit.de/en/methods/ernte-und-dokumentation