Citizen Assembly on Electricity in Hamra, Beirut

Held in
November 2025, Beirut

Preliminary report January 2026
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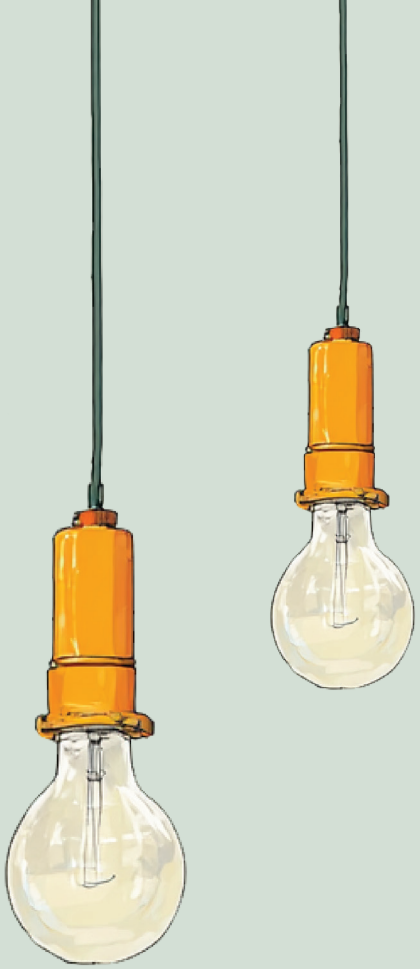

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Organized by Jibal with the methodological support of (En)Visioning Justice: Citizens' Assemblies and Energy Futures in the Global South at University College London (UCL)

The Assembly centered on one overarching question:

How can we organise collectively to reduce the cost, pollution, and mental burden of electricity on our lives?

1.The **Citizens' Assembly** on **Electricity** in **Hamra,** Beirut

Citizens' Assembly (CA) on "Energy and Electricity Justice in Hamra" was conducted over three sessions in November 2025 in Hamra, Beirut. It was organised and implemented by Jibal[1], following a mandate and methodological input from University College London.

Building on the first Hamra Citizens' Assembly on energy justice held in 2020, this second CA has been implemented in a very different context. When the first CA was held in 2020, Lebanon was at the beginning of its energy crisis; with a progressive decrease of public electricity provision, generator providers were progressively stepping in to fill the gap. A year later, the government had removed fuel subsidies, which led to diesel shortages that preceded long power cuts and rapidly rising fuel prices. During that period, many households resorted to either buying their own private generators or to installing their own solar systems to meet their electricity needs; some becoming fully autonomous with much less or no reliance on neighborhood generator providers anymore. While at the same time, many people were losing access to electricity. With air pollution taking over Beirut's sky, and considering all this evolution, and the fact that people were organizing in different ways; perhaps it was time to create a collective context that is fair for everyone.

This is why the second Citizens Assembly's primary purpose was to understand the current energy context in Lebanon and to expose assembly members: residents, students, employees, business owners in Hamra; to existing and emerging alternative energy models; and through structured deliberation and democratic participation, to identify collective priorities and criteria for energy justice in Hamra, ultimately reaching final recommendations through a voting process.

The Assembly centered on one overarching question: How can we organise collectively to reduce the cost, pollution, and mental burden of electricity on our lives? To answer this, 35 randomly selected residents of Hamra participated in a structured process combining learning, facilitated discussions, and decision-making.

1. Local organisation that works under the umbrella of social and environmental justice. www.jibal.org

1. Citizens' Assembly On Electricity In Hamra, Beirut

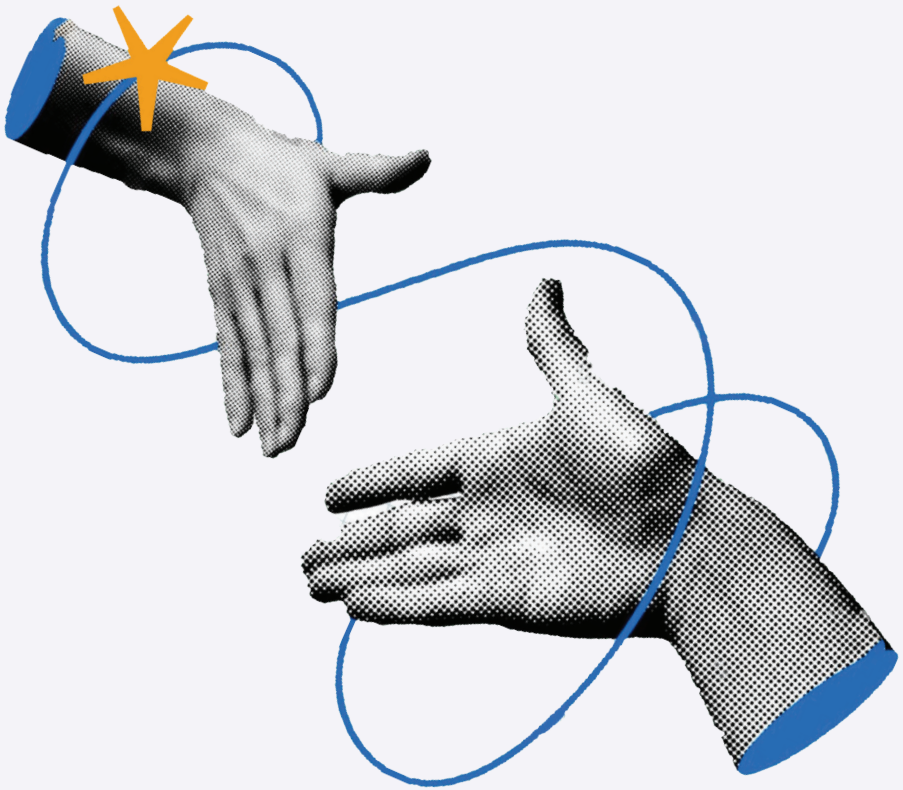
Who Were The Participants?

Participants were selected considering a sortition that would allow a representation of Hamra's residents. The Beirut Urban Lab (BUL) provided recent 2025 Hamra demographic and electricity data, which included information on residential buildings, commercial shops, tenant/owner composition, and electricity arrangements.[2] BUL extracted the relevant data for the Hamra perimeter adopted for the CA, allowing the team to define the variables and ratios for gender, age, tenure, nationality, and energy arrangement; among other variables.

These ratios were then used to set recruitment quotas. Stratification ensured that the assembly reflected the neighborhood's diversity, balancing long-term and newer residents, owners and renters, and people using a representative diversity of electricity sources used in Hamra.

2. Available through this page: https://beiruturbanlab.com/en/Details/2066/

1. Citizens' Assembly On Electricity In Hamra, Beirut



When and Where?

The CA process took place over three sessions spanning 2.5 days; combining learning, small-group deliberation, and collective decision-making. It began with a two-hour introductory session on Thursday November 16th, followed by a six-and-a-half-hour session two days later on Saturday November 18th, and a final six-and-a-half-hour session one week later on Saturday November 25th. This spacing between sessions allowed participants time to reflect before reconvening and supported a more grounded pace of learning and deliberation. As for the choice of venue, the Near East School of Theology (NEST) was selected. Located in the neighborhood, NEST offered proximity, accessibility, and a community-centered environment that contrasted with the formality of hotel conference halls and the exclusivity of university spaces.

2.The Process:
Learning
Deliberation
Decision

Learning Phase

The learning materials were developed to equip participants with essential and basic knowledge on electricity, Lebanon's context, and collective energy projects. It consisted of the short videos done about the various topics needed to understand the electricity issue, and the models that showed what has been done across the country.

The expert group was designed to bring together a broad spectrum of voices: technical specialists, policy experts, activists, and practitioners with lived or community-based knowledge. They ensured that participants received a balanced, practical, and grounded understanding of energy and different energy models in Lebanon.

General Experts (Context and Foundations)

→ **Marc Ayoub** - Researcher and policy consultant in energy, provided a panorama of Lebanon's electricity past and present and reflections on possible futures. (Not present in person.)

→ **Shareef Tarhini -** Urban researcher (Beirut Urban Lab), presenting "The Electricity Reality in Lebanon: Past and Present"

→ **Najat Aoun Saliba -** Professor of analytical chemistry specializing in atmospheric chemistry; presenting "Health and Air Quality Impacts of Electricity Generation"

→ **Ammar Fadlallah** (at the assembly) and Mohammad Hajj (for the video) both from the Lebanese Center for Energy Conservation; presenting "What Exists Today? Current Numbers, Renewable Scenarios, and What Comes Next"

→ **Sorina Mortada -** Legal expert on energy issues in Lebanon

These experts (except for Sorina Mortada) filmed short videos where they responded to a structured list of questions provided by Jibal. The videos offered participants a clear, engaging, and accessible introduction to the technical, environmental, and local energy realities relevant to their future deliberations.

Model Experts (Alternative Energy Models)

→ **Jumana Nasser,** presenting individual rooftop solar installations in her residential building

→ **Najwa Baroody and Ziad Emile Boustani,** presenting shared solar system installed in a Hamra residential building; demonstrating efficiency gains of collective systems

→ **Philippe el Khoury (ME Green),** presenting financing and investment models, self-funding, and examples such as the Bshaale solar farm supplying 24/7 power

→ **Zeina Abla,** presenting a multi-building solar project in the city of Mina, Tripoli, backed by a private investor

→ **Martin Accad (NEST) –** Presenting the conceptual model of NEST's plan to install solar panels and share energy with adjacent buildings

These model presentations were filmed in advance and shown to participants during the learning phase of session 2 on Saturday November 8th.

How the assembly reached its decisions: ranking and voting method

The assembly used three stages for its decision-making approach:

1. Criteria Identification: Participants first listed and discussed what they valued most in an energy solution; directly extracting criteria from the learning materials.

2 Refinement: Criteria were refined and clarified through group discussion and leading to the production of 9 concrete recommendations.

3. Voting and Ranking: Participants ranked the recommendations and potential actions using a transparent voting process.

3.Key Considerations

Through deliberation, the assembly identified a set of guiding principles, based on the criteria outlined above, to inform the development of any energy solution in Hamra

→ **Health and Environmental Protection:** All energy solutions must prioritize public health and minimize environmental impacts.

→ **Security and Safety:** Systems must account for physical safety risks, and general security, including fire, theft, vandalism, shooting and war.

→ **Scale and Efficiency:** Solutions should serve a large number of people efficiently, leveraging shared networks and avoiding high costs for individuals.

→ **Collective Responsibility:** Risks, investments, and maintenance should be shared collectively, not placed solely on individuals.

→ **Collective Ownership and Funding:** Property and resources should be both individually and collectively managed, with cooperative or shared investment mechanisms.

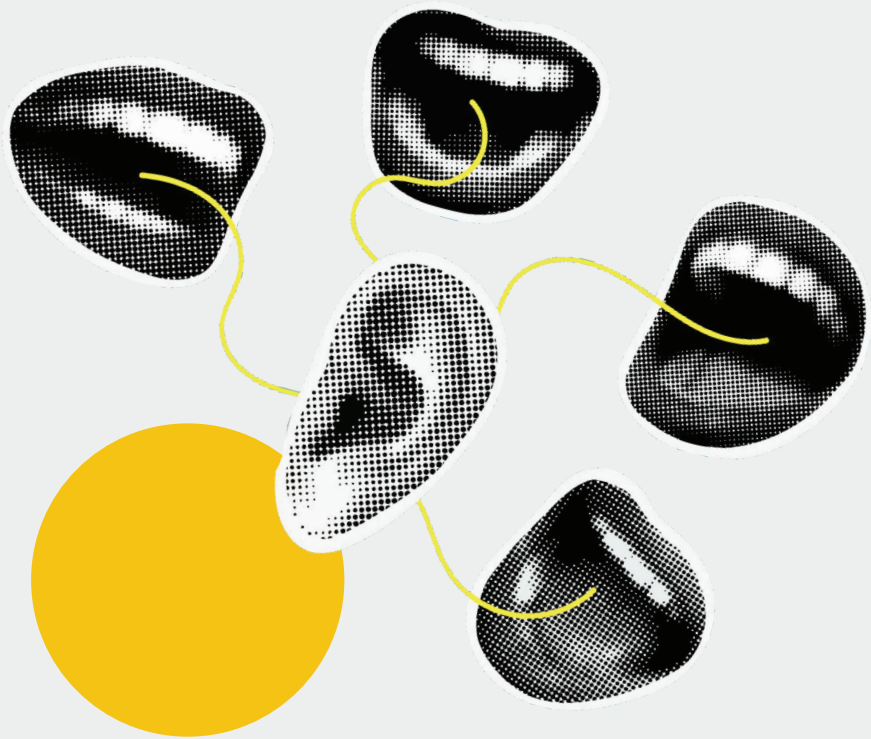
→ **Government and Municipal Oversight:** The state and local authorities must enforce laws, organize, and regulate energy provision, in order to avoid any potential new "generator phenomena" to reappear.

→ **Use of Public Spaces:** Public lands and buildings should be utilized for energy projects serving public interests.

→ **Accessibility and Affordability:** Projects must be inclusive, enabling participation for low-income residents and ensuring equitable cost structures.

→ **Community Engagement:** Users' needs must be consulted and incorporated before project planning, ensuring transparency and relevance.

4.The **Recommendations**



The assembly developed and ranked nine key recommendations in the following order of priority:

1. Pressure on the government to enforce laws and on municipalities to regulate the energy sector (22 votes)
Participants emphasized the importance of state and municipal accountability in ensuring fair, legal, and safe electricity provision.

2. Provision of public spaces for solar projects by Municipalities(19 votes)
The use of public land and buildings for energy projects was highlighted as critical for neighborhood-level solutions. Examples included parking lots, rooftops, big institution buildings, and other communal spaces.

3. Support for assembly members to continue implementation, backed by Jibal (17 votes)
A representative and diverse group of participants would continue moving the recommendations forward. Neighborhood committees were suggested, in collaboration with building committees, local groups,

and institutions. Training in negotiation and advocacy was also recommended to empower residents, including tenants, to participate meaningfully.

4. Rehabilitation of electricity infrastructure (17 votes)
Existing infrastructure should be upgraded or repaired to enable the integration of renewable energy production into it.

5. Establishment of a consumer cooperative or company (13 votes)
Community funded cooperatives or companies were suggested to organize collective investment, oversee shared solar system installations, and ensure broad participation in ownership.

6. Participation of universities through student committees (12 votes)
Local universities, such as AUB and LAU, should engage students in practical projects and committees that support research, implementation, and monitoring of neighborhood energy initiatives.

7. Private and institutional funding of alternative energies as CSR (11 votes)
Businesses and institutions (e.g., AUB, AUH, Spinneys) should be encouraged to fund solar and/or renewable energy projects as part of corporate social responsibility, supporting accessible and clean energy in Hamra.

8. Awareness-raising and community knowledge sharing (10 votes)
Creating spaces for residents to exchange experiences and learn from each other was seen as essential for the adoption and maintenance of energy solutions. The participants also agreed on the necessity for general awareness and learning on these topics, similarly to their experience during the CA.

These recommendations are intended to inform Beirut's wider energy stakeholder discussions through the Assembly's observers; activists, municipal representatives, government institutions, and private sector actors; pushing for the inclusion of perspectives that are often excluded from formal decision-making, to be meaningfully integrated into future energy planning and policy making.

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