



< BACK

MAJOR TRENDS



Democratisation of energy

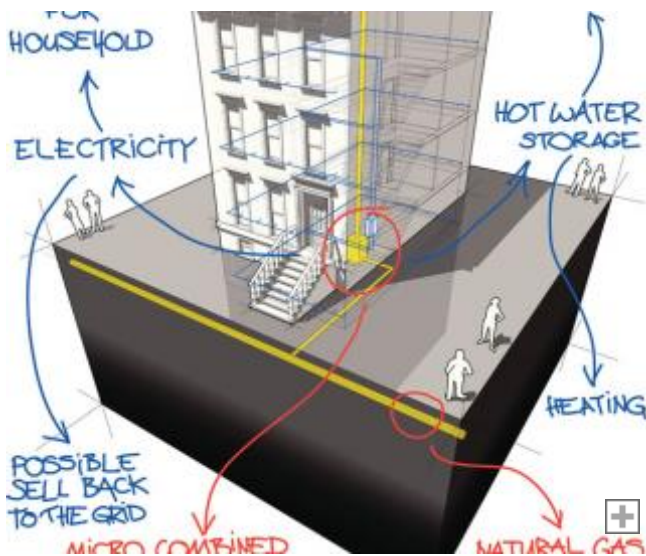
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✘ PROSUMERS ✘ RENEWABLES ✘ SMART GRIDS

Distributed generation (DG), a key part of the evolving smart energy sector, represents in essence the democratisation of energy, according to a white paper of January 2013 from clean tech market research firm Navigant Research.



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The availability of micro-generating equipment, such as solar panels, small wind turbines, and residential combined heat and power (resCHP) systems, enables people to produce, and even sell, their own power. This process will take a while to gain momentum, and significant impact on the energy market will not be seen immediately. A key application within this DG trend, and in the democratisation of energy, is resCHP. With a basket of technology and size options, homeowners worldwide are increasingly able to produce power and sell power – from tens of watts up to a few kilowatts. They are changing from passive consumers to active micro-generators (also called prosumers). The chart above taken from the 2012 Navigant Research Residential Combined Heat and Power report, shows the expected capacity of resCHP. Navigant Research estimates a cumulative installed capacity of 26,568 MW between 2010 and 2022. However, it also comments that this forecast could be on the low side.

The White Paper goes on to speculate that, in 2013, grid operators, seeing the growth of small producers wanting to feed load into the grid, will wish to exercise a certain control. However, the adopters of resCHP systems may resist such control. So, in addition to the increased adoption of DG technologies in 2013 and the removal of barriers to selling to the grid, the year could be decisive in just how much democracy micro-producers are to be allowed.

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