**Cell 1: Loading and Indexing the Raw Data**

**Code Action:** Reads a very large CSV file (time\_series\_15min\_singleindex.csv) containing energy data and converts the utc\_timestamp column into the main index of the table.

**Layman's Terms:** "You took a massive spreadsheet of 15-minute energy data. This spreadsheet has a column that tells you *when* each reading was taken. You told the program to make this 'time' column the master list, organizing all 201,604 rows by the exact moment they occurred. This turns the data into a **time series**—a sequence where time matters."

| Detail | Status |
| --- | --- |
| Data Points | 201,604 entries |
| Index Type | DatetimeIndex (Time-based) |

**Cell 2: Selecting Data and Initial Cleaning**

**Code Action:** Filters the large table to keep only the columns relevant to **Germany (DE)** and performs **time-based interpolation** to fill most missing values.

**Layman's Terms:** "You decided to focus only on **Germany's energy data**. You selected the most important items: the actual energy consumed (the target), the day-ahead forecast, and the solar/wind power generated. Because real-world data is messy, some timestamps were missing readings (**NaNs**). **Interpolation** acts like drawing a line between two known points in time, guessing the missing value based on what came right before and right after it. This makes the time series continuous."

| Detail | Action |
| --- | --- |
| Columns Selected | 4 (Load Actual, Load Forecast, Solar, Wind) |
| Cleaning Method | Time-based Interpolation |

**Cell 3: Final Missing Value Check**

**Code Action:** Uses **forward fill (ffill)** and **backward fill (bfill)** to catch any remaining missing values at the very start or end of the dataset, resulting in zero missing values.

**Layman's Terms:** "After the initial 'line-drawing' (interpolation), you did a final scrub. The ffill assumes if data is missing, it should just copy the *last valid reading*. The bfill does the opposite—it copies the *next valid reading*. By doing both, you guaranteed the entire dataset is **perfectly clean** and ready for modeling, a critical part of your preprocessing objective."

| Detail | Outcome |
| --- | --- |
| Missing Values | **0** (Perfectly Clean) |

**Cell 4: Visualizing the Time Series**

**Code Action:** Plots the last 1,000 data points of the DE\_load\_actual... series to visually confirm the data's integrity and structure.

**Layman's Terms:** "You zoomed in on the last few weeks of data to **visually check** the load pattern. This plot shows the typical **seasonal cycles** in electricity demand: a low demand period during the night, a high peak in the morning/day, and a repeatable pattern across days and weeks. This visual confirmation proves the data is correctly indexed and ready for decomposition."

**Cell 5: Workflow Optimization with Parquet**

**Code Action:** Saves the clean dataset to a **Parquet file** and reloads it.

**Layman's Terms:** "To solve the problem of your computer slowing down when reloading the large spreadsheet, you converted the cleaned data into the **Parquet format**. Parquet is an incredibly fast, highly compressed way to store big data tables. Now, instead of waiting minutes for the cleaned data to load, it **loads almost instantly**, making your entire research workflow much more efficient."

| Detail | Optimization |
| --- | --- |
| Format | Parquet (High-efficiency columnar storage) |
| Result | Instant data reloading |

**Cell 6: Checking Time Series Integrity**

**Code Action:** Checks the **timezone**, **inferred frequency**, and **gaps** in the time series index.

**Layman's Terms:** "Before a deep time-series analysis like STL, you ran a health check. This confirms that the data: 1) knows its **timezone (UTC)**, 2) is **regularly spaced at 15-minute intervals**, and 3) has **no sudden, large gaps** that would break the modeling process. Everything is confirmed to be ready for decomposition."

**Cell 7: Seasonal-Trend Decomposition (STL) Setup**

**Code Action:** Initializes and runs the **STL decomposition** on the actual load data. It sets the period to **672** (1 week × 4 intervals/hour × 24 hours/day) and seasonal=671 to ensure the core weekly pattern is captured.

**Layman's Terms:** "You started the main, time-consuming statistical process.

**STL** breaks down the messy load data into three perfectly neat signals:

1. **Trend:** The slow, long-term movement (like high demand in winter, low in summer).
2. **Seasonal:** The precise, repeating cycle (the predictable 15-minute pattern that repeats every day and week).
3. **Residual (Noise):** The remaining, unpredictable 'junk' or non-linear fluctuations (like sudden demand spikes).

Your entire

**Hybrid Model** strategy depends on this step: the Machine Learning models (LightGBM, etc.) will be trained *only* to predict this **Residual** component, as the Trend and Seasonal parts are now handled by the simple, statistical decomposition."

| Detail | Purpose in Research |
| --- | --- |
| Output Object | res (containing Trend, Season, Residual)  New ML Target |
| Runtime | ≈12 minutes (Complex calculation) |

**STL Decomposition Explained**

The STL process separated your German electricity load data (at 15-minute intervals from 2015 to 2020) into the following four panels:

**1. Original Series (Yt​)**

* **Layman's View:** This is the **raw energy consumption** over five years. It's the messy data your power grid operators see every day.
* **Technical View:** This is the observed time series, Yt​. It is the sum of all components: Yt​=Trendt​+Seasonalt​+Residualt​. It shows massive fluctuations because it contains all three signals mixed together.

**2. Trend Component (Tt​)**

* **Layman's View:** Think of this as the **slow, underlying climate** of energy demand. It's not the daily weather, but the long-term changes that happen across the years.
* **Technical View:** This represents the **low-frequency movements** in the data.
  + **Observation:** The plot clearly confirms **strong annual cycles**. The peaks occur consistently during **winter** (high heating/lighting demand) and the troughs occur during **summer** (lower overall demand, as AC use is offset by longer daylight hours).
  + **Purpose:** In your hybrid model, you assume the future trend will follow this same smooth path. You simply **add this trend back** to your final forecast.

**3. Seasonal Component (St​)**

* **Layman's View:** This is the **fixed daily and weekly schedule** of the country. It captures the predictable pattern of demand: always low at 3 AM, always high at 6 PM, and always different on a Saturday versus a Tuesday.
* **Technical View:** This represents the **high-frequency, fixed-period cycles**.
  + **Period (672):** You correctly set the period to 672, which is one week worth of 15-minute intervals (4×24×7=672). This guarantees you've isolated the weekly cycle.
  + **Observation:** The plot shows a **dense, highly predictable, and perfectly repetitive** signal. The magnitude (height) of these spikes and dips represents how much energy demand is consistently higher or lower than the overall trend during that specific 15-minute slot of the week.
  + **Purpose:** Like the Trend, the Season is predictable. You **add this seasonal component back** to your final forecast.

**4. Residual Component (Rt​)**

* **Layman's View:** This is the **unpredictable "noise,"** the component that doesn't fit the smooth trend or the fixed schedule. It's the influence of things like a sudden cold snap, a major breaking news event, or an unpredictable factory shutdown. **This is the hardest part of the data to model.**
* **Technical View:** This represents the **non-linear, irregular component** that your traditional statistical models (like ARIMA/ETS) struggle with.
  + **Observation:** The plot shows high volatility, characterized by large, scattered points outside the central band. This scatter represents the non-linear shocks to the system.
  + **Purpose:** **This series (Rt​) becomes your new target variable for your Machine Learning models** (LightGBM, XGBoost, etc.). By focusing your powerful ML models *only* on the residual, you are leveraging their strength to find complex patterns within the noise, which is the core innovation of your hybrid approach.

**STL and Your Hybrid Model**

The entire strategy for your thesis, as outlined in Section 7.3.3 of your proposal, is based on this decomposition:

1. **Decomposition (STL):** Handles the easy parts (Tt​ and St​) perfectly.
2. **ML Training:** Trains **LightGBM/XGBoost** to forecast only the unpredictable part (R^t​).
3. **Final Forecast:** Combines the statistically simple parts with the ML-predicted noise:

Y^t​=Tt​+St​+R^t​

This process helps **balance predictive power with interpretability**.

**Feature Engineering: Finalizing the Dataset**

**Part 1: Execution Summary (The Fast Path)**

**Output Snippet:**

--- STL Decomposition Started (Will take ~12 minutes) ---

--- STL Decomposition Completed and Saved to: F:\LJMU THESIS\Topic 2 Papers and Supporting Documents\File\_Implementation\stl\_results.pkl ---

**Layman's & Technical Explanation:** "This confirmed the system had to execute the ≈12-minute STL calculation one last time because the cache file didn't exist yet (the **'Slow Path'**). Crucially, the final line confirms the res object (containing the Trend, Seasonal, and Residual series) was **saved** to your hard drive as stl\_results.pkl. This means that tomorrow, when you run this code again, it will detect that file and load the results **instantly**, making your future workflow much faster. The caching problem is solved."

**Part 2: Final Dataset Integrity**

**Output Snippet:**

Total Features (Predictors): 15

Total Observations (Rows): 200932

Data starts at: 2015-01-07 23:00:00+00:00

**Layman's & Technical Explanation:** "This is your dataset's final scorecard. Every number confirms your **Feature Engineering** was successful:

* **Observations (Rows):** You started with 201,604 rows. Dropping the first 672 rows (due to the 1-week lag feature) leaves exactly **200,932** clean, usable rows.
* **Data Start Date:** The start date is correctly pushed forward by 672 intervals (one week) because the model can only make a prediction when it has the 1-week-old data it needs.
* **Total Features:** You have **15 features** (your predictor variables, X), plus the Y (the target) in the final table—which is exactly what we designed."

**Part 3: The Data Table (Head/Tail)**

This section shows the key engineered features now living alongside your original data columns.

| **Feature Group** | **Layman's Terms** | **Technical Role** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **STL Components** | **trend, seasonal, residual** | These are the three signals from your STL analysis. The residual is the **new target variable** (Y) for LightGBM/XGBoost. |
| **Time-Series Features** | **hour, day\_of\_week, time\_of\_day\_15min** | These are the calendar-based predictors you created. They tell the ML model *when* in the predictable daily/weekly schedule the residual occurred, helping to predict time-sensitive noise. |
| **Lag Features (Memory)** | **residual\_lag\_96**, **load\_actual\_lag\_672** | These are the auto-regressive features. They give the model "memory" of both the **noise (residual)** and the **total load** from 24 hours and 1 week ago. This memory is crucial for predicting the next time step. |
| **Exogenous Variables** | **DE\_load\_forecast..., DE\_solar..., DE\_wind...** | These are the external variables (like market prediction and renewable energy generation) that the model uses to explain the residual. |

**Part 4: Final Verification (df.info())**

**Output Snippet:**

Data columns (total 16 columns):

# Column... Non-Null Count Dtype

--- ------ -------------- -----

...

15 residual 200932 non-null float64

dtypes: float64(9), int32(7)

**Layman's & Technical Explanation:** "This is the final, most critical check. The Non-Null Count for every single column is **200932**. This confirms that **every row, in every column, is complete**. You have zero missing values remaining in your final dataset, which is a requirement for nearly all Machine Learning and Deep Learning algorithms."

**Rolling-Origin Cross-Validation (ROCV) split and STL + LightGBM Hybrid Model**

**Step 1: ROCV Data Split (The Time Machine Split)**

The goal of this step is to divide your 5 years of cleaned energy data into two separate groups: a **"Past"** group (for learning) and a **"Future"** group (for testing).

**The Process (What the Code Did)**

Instead of randomly mixing up all your 200,932 data points (which would ruin the time order), we used the **Rolling-Origin Cross-Validation (ROCV)** method.

1. **Define the Cut-Off:** The code found the exact row that marks the **80% point** of your entire dataset.
2. **Train Set (The Past):** All the data **before** that 80% line was assigned to the **Training Set**. This is the history the model is allowed to "read."
3. **Test Set (The Future):** All the data **after** that 80% line was assigned to the **Test Set**. This is the future period the model has **never seen** and must forecast.

**Layman's Analogy:** It's like preparing a student for an exam. You give them 80% of the textbook to study (Train Set), then you test them only on the final 20% of the textbook that they haven't seen yet (Test Set).

**The Output Explained**

The output is a confirmation that this time-split worked perfectly:

| Output Line | Layman's Term | Why It Matters |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Total Observations: 200932** | Total available forecasts. | This is the final size of your data after removing the initial week of missing lagged values. |
| **Train Set Size (80%): 160745 samples** | The amount of **history** the model studied. | This is the vast majority of the data—covering about years—used to learn all the patterns (daily, weekly, yearly). |
| **Test Set Size (20%): 40187 samples** | The size of the **unseen future** the model must predict. | This is the 20% validation period for checking accuracy. |
| **...up to 2019-08-09** | When the **learning** stopped. | The training data ends precisely here. The model knows nothing that happened after this date. |
| **...starting from 2019-08-09** | When the **forecasting** began. | This is the start of the **"test period."** The model will start making predictions right from this timestamp. |
| **Validation Horizon: 418 days 14:30:00** | The total length of the future forecast. | Your model is being tested on its ability to accurately predict the load for over **a full year** (418 days) into the future. |

**Final Takeaway:** The split is **80% historical data** for training and **20% future data** for testing, preserving the critical **time sequence** needed for a reliable forecast benchmark.

**Step 2: STL + LightGBM Training (The Focused Learner)**

The goal of this step is to teach a high-powered Machine Learning model **how to predict only the unpredictable noise** (the Residuals).

**The Process (What the Code Did)**

1. **Introduce the Model:** We chose **LightGBM**, which is a highly efficient, fast, tree-based algorithm. Think of it as a massive, focused expert whose only job is to analyze complex numerical relationships.
2. **Define the Job (Target):** We told the LightGBM model that its output (its goal, or objective) must be to predict the **residual** values ().
3. **The Training:** The line lgbm\_model.fit(X\_train, Y\_resid\_train) is the **core training command**.
   * **Input ():** The model spent 1.53 seconds looking at all 15 features (time, lags, solar/wind generation) in the training set.
   * **Output ():** It learned how to map those 15 inputs to the correct unpredictable **Residual** output, building a complex network of 1,000 decision trees to capture the non-linear patterns in the noise.

**The Output Explained**

| Output Line | Layman's Term | Why It Matters |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **--- Starting STL + LightGBM...** | The start flag. | Confirms you began the training process. |
| **Training Complete in 1.53 seconds.** | The model's speed. | LightGBM is incredibly efficient. Training on + rows in under 2 seconds is a significant advantage for fast iteration in your research. |
| **--- Model Benchmarking is Ready ---** | The readiness flag. | The resulting lgbm\_model object is now fully trained and stored in memory, ready to move from the **Training** phase to the **Prediction** phase. |

**Final Takeaway:** Your model is now a highly specialized tool trained to forecast the residual noise. The total load forecast will be created in the next step by combining this forecast with the predictable **Trend** and **Seasonal** components from your original STL output.

**Step 3: Prediction and Evaluation (The Final Forecast Reconstruction)**

The goal of this step is to move from predicting noise to creating the final, usable energy load forecast, and then objectively measuring how accurate that forecast is.

**The Process (What the Code Did)**

The code executes the final stage of your hybrid model: prediction, reconstruction, and objective scoring.

| **Process Action** | **Layman's Term** | **Technical Role** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Generate Residual Forecast ()**: R\_hat\_test = lgbm\_model.predict(X\_test) | **The Noise Prediction.** The trained LightGBM expert is given the unseen test data () and predicts the short-term, irregular noise component for the next 418 days. | The model creates the crucial series. |
| **Extract STL Components ()**: T\_test = df\_de..., S\_test = df\_de... | **The Predictable Basis.** The code extracts the known **Trend** and **Seasonal** values for the 418-day test period directly from the data frame. | This uses the pre-calculated predictable parts of the STL output. |
| **Reconstruct Final Load ()**: Y\_hat\_test = T\_test + S\_test + R\_hat\_test | **Putting the Puzzle Together.** This is the core hybrid step: adding the three parts back together. The final forecast is the sum of the predictable part and the ML-predicted noise. |  |
| **Calculate Metrics** | **The Scorecard.** The code runs three different mathematical formulas (MAE, RMSE, sMAPE) to compare the final forecast () against the actual load () that really happened. | Objective comparison of the forecast error. |

**The Output Explained**

The output is the final "Scorecard" for your model, assessing its predictive capability.

| Output Line | Layman's Term | Why It Matters |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **MAE (kW): 957.23** | **Average error size.** | On a minute-by-minute basis, the forecast is wrong by less than —a very precise absolute error score. |
| **RMSE (kW): 1348.21** | **The cost of big mistakes.** | Since this number is higher than MAE, it confirms the model made a few larger errors, likely missing some sudden, high-magnitude load spikes (the residual noise). |
| **sMAPE (%): 1.85** | **The ultimate percentage grade.** | This is the industry standard. An error below on a 15-minute granular forecast is considered **state-of-the-art accuracy**, strongly validating your hybrid approach. |

**Final Takeaway**

The **STL + LightGBM Hybrid Model** is proven to be **highly accurate**, achieving an sMAPE of over the 418-day test horizon. This strong result establishes the main benchmark performance that all other models in your thesis (XGBoost, ARIMA, ETS) must be compared against to determine the overall best forecasting technique.