

The focus on this paper is to address the major issues and impacts of the Cloud, and more specifically data centers, on the world. The author outlines, with details from experience, how data centers require a lot of energy, water, and care to maintain. These things impact everything from water scarcity to the mental health of the communities in the surrounding area. People can make complaints, but technically no laws are violated, even if the sound is constant and their water access becomes limited. Data centers produce a lot of waste, like heat and carbon emissions as well. In the end, the author argues that the Cloud is influenced by culture as much as anything else, and the future impact depends on both behavior and regulation.

I liked how the author talked about the human aspect of the Cloud. Often when it's talked about, the focus is all on hard data and logic and tech. The people, both the ones who work on and with it and the ones who are affected by it, play the biggest part in how everything happens. From the technician whose job depends on keeping the servers running to the nurse whose health was impacted by the noise of a nearby data center, the author shows how the Cloud's operations have far-reaching impacts on people.

The part I disliked wasn't necessarily out of disagreement, but rather because it felt almost too real. Near the end the author writes a bit of speculative fiction with a group of people gathering in a virtual environment to escape from the bleak reality of the world they lived in, only to then have to deal with rationed internet access. I know online VR games already exist and so I looked up if there were any locations that had internet restrictions for similar reasons to the story. There are none yet, or at least that I could find with a quick search, but I could very easily see it happening and thus disagree with the author's "this bleak future is unlikely to unfold as I describe it".

The reading also connected with another class I'm taking, Intro to Cloud Computing. That course focuses on the technical side of the Cloud, like services, infrastructure, and architecture, but it doesn't explore the environmental or human costs. This paper made me think more critically about what companies mean when they reference availability zones, server locations, or fiber optic cables, and what those choices mean for the world.