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The Ethics of Cloud Computing

Titel	The Ethics of Cloud Computing
Publicatietype	Artikel
Publicatiejaar	2016
Auteurs	de Bruin, B. [1], & Floridi L. [2]
Secondaire titel	Science and Engineering Ethics
Publicatiedatum	02/2016
Uitgever	Springer
RefMan	10028
Samenvatting	Cloud computing is rapidly gaining traction in business. It offers businesses online services on demand (such as Gmail, iCloud and Salesforce) and allows them to cut costs on hardware and IT support. This is the first paper in business ethics dealing with this new technology. It analyzes the informational duties of hosting companies that own and operate cloud computing datacentres (e.g., Amazon). It considers the cloud services providers leasing 'space in the cloud' from hosting companies (e.g., Dropbox, Salesforce). And it examines the business and private 'clouders' using these services. The first part of the paper argues that hosting companies, services providers and clouders have mutual informational (epistemic) obligations to provide and seek information about relevant issues such as consumer privacy, reliability of services, data mining and data ownership. The concept of interlucency is developed as an epistemic virtue governing ethically effective communication. The second part considers potential forms of government restrictions on or proscriptions against the development and use of cloud computing technology. Referring to the concept of technology neutrality, it argues that interference with hosting companies and cloud services providers is hardly ever necessary or justified. It is argued, too, however, that businesses using cloud services (e.g., banks, law firms, hospitals etc. storing client data in the cloud) will have to follow rather more stringent regulations.
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DOI	10.1007/s11948-016-9759-0 [4]
Citation Key	72

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Datum eerste publicatie:

maandag, 22 februari 2016 - 5:00pm

 [14]



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