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Dear Professor Leja,

I am writing to provide an evaluation of the doctoral dissertation submitted by Mr. Jaromir Durkiewicz, titled *Digital Government Value Logic: Conceptual and Benchmarking Model*. This review letter is written to support the Dissertation Committee's deliberations by furnishing an assessment of the dissertation's problem framing and aims, methods, originality, and theoretical knowledge and scholarly mastery. I close my review with several observations on the strengths of the dissertation and my recommendation regarding admission to the defense under Art. 187, sections 1–2. My evaluation reflects my perspective as a Digital Government (DG) scholar.

Problem Framing and Aim. The dissertation situates DG as an evolving sociotechnical system within two long-standing analytical lenses—the process and the system perspectives—and notes that some influential models (e.g., value chains) attempt to integrate them through public value generation. Crucially, the dissertation identifies that among internationally recognized country-level Digital Government Benchmark (DGB) projects (e.g., EC, UN, WB) “none explicitly adopts a value-generation perspective. By and large they provide static, context-free snapshots of arbitrarily selected aspects of the countries’ DG operation.” The author expertly makes the case that this gap constrains their ability to provide “reliable, actionable feedback” to surveyed

countries. Responding to this, the author proposes to re-ground benchmarking in value-generating processes, reframing DG not as a static stock but as a technology-enabled system that transforms inputs into outcomes, with diagnostics focused on how value is produced (or not).

The problem is stated with precision: DGB instruments emphasize composite scores while missing the linkages among enabling conditions, capacities, services, citizen uptake, and democratic outcomes. The dissertation effectively criticizes this as a conceptual and practical flaw and aims to align DGB with the value-generation imperative by introducing a conceptual and methodological framework that positions Digital Government Value Logic (DGVL) as a foundation for more relevant DGB and to demonstrate its practical usefulness.

Methods. The methods section presents a coherent, mixed-methods design that is well aligned to the dissertation's central question: how to re-ground digital-government benchmarking (DGB) in a value-generation logic and operationalize it for policy use. The author proceeds in four staged studies—Project, Concept, Method, and Pilot—each feeding the next; this staged architecture is clear, auditable, and appropriate for instrument building.

A notable strength is the Formal Concept Analysis (FCA) step used in the concept study to map heterogeneous indicators into interpretable conceptual packages, thus normalizing meaning across disparate benchmarks without inventing new indicators. This is both methodologically original in DGB and pragmatically wise, because it reuses existing data ecosystems while creating a bridge to later process modeling. The FCA procedure is described with sufficient detail and the selection logic for the retained packages is explicit, increasing replicability.

The pilot study demonstrates feasibility and policy relevance. The design choice to test in the EU is justified by data richness, policy salience, and high DG maturity, which maximize the chance that process inefficiencies can be revealed.

Validity is handled thoughtfully. The dissertation reports internal/construct/external validity considerations, indicator correlations, and an expert survey of international DG scholars/practitioners whose assessments are “mainly favorable and encouraging,” while also capturing suggestions for clarity and scope. The candid limitations—EU-centric pilot, dependence on available indicators, DEA specification sensitivity—are acknowledged with plausible mitigation steps (e.g., portability to other contexts, expanding usage/impact measures, conducting sensitivity tests). Overall, the methods are fit-for-purpose, innovative, and well documented.



Originality Conceptually, the dissertation makes an original contribution by formalizing value-generation as the central organizing logic for DGB and by defining benchmarkable processes between DG components, something current global instruments do not do explicitly. Methodologically, the FCA→DEA pipeline is an innovative way to reuse rather than replace the existing indicator ecosystem, thereby enabling process-aware diagnostics without imposing new data burdens. Applied to EU member states, DGVLB surfaces where inefficiencies arise and identifies peer-based targets and best-practice matrices to guide improvement. The pilot’s takeaway is that the model can “help countries identify their DG weaknesses, address them, and pursue deliberate DG development goals and trajectories,” rather than simply producing new rankings.

Theoretical Knowledge and Scholarly Mastery. The literature review is broad and discriminating, engaging DG nomenclature, definitions, and evolution; benchmarking as purposeful organizational practice; public value; and sociotechnical systems. The author shows strong integration skills by producing theoretical synthesis that underpins diagnostics that are credible to policymakers while remaining analytically grounded.

Strengths of the Dissertation, Compliance with Art. 187, sections 1 and 2 and Recommendation.

The dissertation has several major strengths including:

- *Purpose reorientation—diagnostics and improvement over rankings.* The thesis explicitly argues that DGB should be “directed less toward providing new rankings and more toward helping countries identify their DG weaknesses, address them, and pursue deliberate DG development goals and trajectories.” This reframing aligns benchmarking with benchmarking and actionable policy guidance.
- *Sociotechnical coherence across components and processes.* DGVLB defines DG as a “technology-enabled system of public value generation” and implements it through value-generating processes; the approach ensures that legal/institutional foundations, technology platforms, data governance, service quality, usage, and democratic outcomes can be analyzed together rather than in isolation.
- *Transparent, transferable instrument design.* The framework is clearly documented (components, processes, data sources, algorithms), facilitating adaptation to other regions and datasets as they evolve. The pilot demonstrates that DGVLB is feasible and policy-serviceable with current European data holdings.

The dissertation specifically meets with the doctoral standards outlined in Art. 187, sections 1–2 as follows:



- *Original solution to a significant research problem.* The dissertation introduces an original conceptual model (DGVL) and a novel benchmarking instrument (DGVLB) that together resolve the missing value-generation perspective in DGB and show how to apply this perspective with existing data.
- *Mastery of general theoretical knowledge in the discipline.* The author demonstrates command of DG theory, public value, benchmarking foundations, and sociotechnical analysis, and critically synthesizes them into a coherent, policy-relevant framework.
- *Demonstrated ability to conduct independent scientific research.* From agenda setting through model design, implementation, pilot evaluation, and expert validation—paired with a candid discussion of limitations—the candidate evidences independence and scholarly judgement.

After an in-depth review of the dissertation my professional judgement is that Mr. Jaromir Durkiewicz has produced a doctoral dissertation of high quality, originality, and practical import. It advances DG research with a coherent, value-centric model and equips policymakers with actionable diagnostics that can guide improvement.

Accordingly, I recommend, without reservation, that Mr. Durkiewicz be admitted to the doctoral defense. In my judgement, the dissertation meets the requirements for doctoral dissertations within the meaning of Art. 187, sections 1 and 2.

Sincerely,

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