To: Editor of Economics e-Journal
From: Anonymous
Subject: Referee Report of “The G20 countries should engage with blockchain technologies to build an inclusive, transparent, and accountable digital economy for all”
Date: August 24, 2017

Summary
This paper is a policy recommendation that asserts that the G20 governments should help develop, adopt, and disseminate the blockchain technology.

Based on their goals, the author asserts that blockchain can help G20 governments fulfill their obligations. The paper proposes that G20 governments create public-private and cross-institution partnerships to test and understand the blockchain applications. It also suggests that these countries coordinate their efforts to increase efficiencies and adoption. Its conclusion asserts that blockchain can help G20 reach their goals of inclusiveness and enable the next industrial revolution.

Contribution
The policy recommendation made in this paper are not novel in two respects. First, governments are already involved in developing blockchain technology. For example, some governments have written their own policy recommendations (see e.g. Blockchain Technology: Opportunities and Risks published by the US State of Vermont or Distributed Ledger Technology: beyond block chain published by the UK government) or adopted laws to facilitate the use of blockchain technology (e.g., Vermont S. 195). Second, other industry observers have suggested that research group and public/private partnership can help the development of blockchain (see e.g. How Government Organizations Can Set the pace for Blockchain Technology Adoption) and that blockchain can help government reach their transparency goals (see e.g. Policy Considerations for the Blockchain Technology Public and Private Applications).

The novel policy recommendation focuses on G20 and their goals and promises. The paper asserts that the G20 governments must coordinate to take part in the development of this technology and these governments need be involved in the development of this technology at the risk of being left behind. This paper offers a high-level endorsement of blockchain for G20 governments.

Analysis
In general, the author focuses on blockchain’s upsides and discard its weaknesses bar one mention. The author advocates through conclusory statements. She fails to properly substantiate why blockchain can help fulfil the G20 goals and what aspect of blockchain would enable these goals. Some of these aspects are more developed in the appendix.

For example, she asserts that “blockchain technologies promise[s] to be the glue that binds the [New Industrial Revolution].” The assertion does not explain how the current (centralized) technology would not allow such revolution or how such revolution would be not as efficient.
The author starts from the premise that blockchain can address all the issues under the current system. As such, she moves to address how to ease its adoption and efficient use instead of explaining why this technology has upside that the G20 governments cannot ignore or should harness.

For example, the author claims that blockchain thanks to its transparency can correct the anti-globalization sentiments. It requires unclear logical leaps. The underlying assumption is that G20 governments (would) want to be transparent but cannot under the current technology. The technology may not be the issue. The willingness to implement transparency may be more critical. Even if G20 adopted blockchain, nothing guarantees they would be public-readable.