1. Title: Social capital and the spread of COVID-19: Insights from various European countries

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3. Abstract:
   We explore the role of social capital in the spread of the recent COVID-19 pandemic in Europe. Social capital is known to be an important driver of economic development by overcoming free rider problems and stimulating collective action. We hypothesize that social capital is particularly valuable during the current pandemic, in which complying with formal social distancing rules and informal norms is crucial to contain the spread of the virus. Exploiting within-country variation in social capital, we show that regions with a higher level of civic values exhibit smaller growth rates of COVID-19. We document consistent patterns in independent analyses for Austria, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Switzerland and the UK. We conduct various tests that suggest that the observed effects are indeed driven by social capital and not confounded by other factors.

4. Data description
   We use official data on the total number of COVID-19 cases provided by the official institution in each country (Austria, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Switzerland, the UK). In addition, we use social capital data and other regional characteristics from official country sources.

5. JEL codes for the project:
   A13, D91, H11, H12, I18,

6. Keywords:
   Covid-19, social capital, collective actions, health costs, economic costs, Europe