

WORKSHOP 1

1. Moral values, cultural change, and post-materialism in Europe and north America

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Much has been said about the abandonment of traditional moral norms, “post-materialism” and the secularization process. Although there are significant variations between countries and the clusters of countries that have been constructed on the basis of data from the World Values Survey, few have challenged the conclusion that there has been “a systematic erosion of religious practices, values and beliefs” rooted in growing material security and the systematic elimination of the “physical, societal and personal risks” that formerly laid the basis for faith and adherence to strict and unyielding moral codes, (see, for example, Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004). From this perspective the United States is an outlier insofar as industrialisation and material progress seem to have done relatively little to shake religious faith or moral traditionalism. Indeed, despite the constitutional separation of church and state in the US, faith-based organizations campaign directly in the political arena so as to promote explicit value agendas.

This workshop has a threefold purpose. Firstly, it will consider the degree to which calls for moral orthodoxy and “family values” and faith-based agendas play a part in shaping the political process, mass opinion and cultural perceptions within the individual countries of Europe and north America. Secondly, the workshop will seek to draw cross-national comparisons so as to identify the relative importance of particular variables in determining the extent to which moral values play a part in structuring the political and cultural life of a country. Thirdly, the workshop will, on the basis of this, seek to throw critical light on theoretical constructs such as post-materialism and the secularization thesis as well as the assumptions that underpin them.