1. Are you aware of any evidence as to how far, if at all, the co-terminosity (or otherwise) of electoral boundaries for local authorities, regional parliaments/assemblies and national parliaments has an effect on the public? For example, does it affect their understanding, their relationship with their representatives, or their engagement with politics?

The most relevant official work we are aware of is the study made for the Scottish Government by the Commission on Boundary Differences and Voting in Scotland (“The Arbuthnot Commission”).

In terms of the delivery of public services, coterminosity matters as having different boundaries at several different levels adds to complexity. Wales, due to an ad-hoc development at different levels, is often described as a ‘congested state’ with a complex governance and public services map where responsibilities overlap, and a devolution settlement with continued blurred areas of responsibility.

It is worth noting the Williams Commission on Public Service Delivery on the effect of such complexity:

“The structures and working arrangements in the Welsh public sector are far more complex than they need to be. It has three very serious broad consequences:

* In the short term, it means that organisations and their leaders are severely constrained. They have to spend far too much time negotiating and managing complexity in terms of reporting relationships, conflicting demands, boundary issues, functional overlaps and extensive partnership arrangements. This is both inefficient and ineffective. It wastes resources and leaves not nearly enough capacity to manage delivery and improve services effectively;
* It is also very likely to inhibit the radical strategic thinking and creativity which will be essential to overcome financial and demographic challenges…
* Complexity also causes serious problems for those who rely on public services. Citizens can find that their rights and entitlements are often unclear; requiring them to understand and navigate complex overlapping responsibilities to access the services they need. This makes it much harder for citizens and communities to hold public bodies effectively to account” (p 14, Williams Report)

Of course, having Assembly boundaries that are coterminous with Westminster has not solved this issue thusfar. However, there is a risk in adding an extra level of complexity with different boundaries for the Assembly and Westminster constituencies, or in not having new Assembly boundaries link to public service of local government as an alternative.

In such a complex public services map, AMs and MPs often serve as the first point of contact for their electorate and a guide or advocate through the system. A system that separates the two levels from each other can lead to greater difficulty and less clarity in this regard. This is particularly so as the public often have little knowledge of what matters are devolved.

AMs and MPs also interact often with public services and local governance in this role as advocates. Adding another layer of boundaries is unlikely to make this simpler, although how much effect it would have in and of itself is difficult to determine.

There is strong evidence the public feel more attached to smaller units nearer to home. This is true when looking both at surveys comparing trust Westminster and Assembly, but also at a more local level in terms of optimum size of community units, as seen in studies commissioned by the Welsh Government. This does do not deal with coterminosity per se, but community identity as a theme to work around is worth noting in terms of public perception of ‘representativeness’.

The effect of boundaries on governance requires more study and the evidence is patchy. It is worth noting that assessing the public’s relationship to electoral boundaries through surveys is difficult, as framing the question on public knowledge on a relative narrow issue (which forms only part of wider complex issues of governance) is itself difficult, particularly in a way that can provide meaningful causal effect. It is likely that work is ongoing of which we are not aware – we will update the panel on any useful work we come across.

It is also worth keeping in mind possible complexities arising from boundary reform in Westminster for 2020, in terms of administration and how this affects the Assembly’s model of change, and also in terms of engaging with the public and the possibility of increased confusion with different boundaries changing at different levels in a similar timeframe.

1. Are you aware of any research on the relative impact of aligning electoral boundaries for regional parliaments/assemblies with local government boundaries vis a vis national parliamentary boundaries?

See discussion on Williams Commission above.

In addition, an idea of how to link with local government can be seen in [Prof Roger Scully’s article here](http://blogs.cardiff.ac.uk/electionsinwales/2013/11/12/electoral-systems-in-wales-4-stv/)

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It can be argued that aligning Assembly constituencies with local government, which has responsibility to implement Welsh Government programmes is logical. AMs acting as scrutineers would also be linked directly to local authority areas through their constituencies in the Roger Scully model noted above.

1. Are you aware of any work that has been done on the impact of co-terminosity (or otherwise) on political parties, their members, and their elected representatives?

The most relevant piece of work is by Meg Russell and Jonathan Bradbury as a study for the Arbuthnot Commission “The Local Work of Scottish MPs and MSPs: Effects of Non-coterminous Boundaries and AMS”. [This can be found here](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/political-science/publications/unit-publications/125.pdf).

As Jonathan Bradley and Meg Russell note in their paper, there is a high level of cooperation between MSPs and MPs.[1] While how this works in practice is bound to change over time, and in different contexts, this relationship in a continuingly complex devolution settlement and division of powers will remain of vital importance. Collaboration across different boundaries is necessarily more complex than across the same territory. Moreover, there is a danger that if different boundaries mean less close working between AMs and MPs, that there is less incentive to pass on casework to the most suitable level of representative. All this can lead to greater confusion for citizens and potentially less support for users of public services in negotiating a complex system. It also may exacerbate confusion about where powers lie, and on what issues citizens are voting at which election, so that making an informed choice and vote more difficult.

In terms of the effect of boundaries on political parties, international research suggests that changing boundaries within a devolved level of a multi-national state can have a significant impact on parties.

The advent of devolution itself indicates how parties react to changes in the political landscape in Britain. Some academic analysts would expect party structure to quickly mirror those of the state in which they operate. Others would expect there to be some inertia to change and some time-lag, with the parties own traditions and ideology (whether generally centralist or federalist/devolved in its structure for example). As a result, the literature suggests that party leaders may require an incentive - or a crisis - to change internal ways of working, such as poor performance in an election.

The creation of a new devolved institution and polity following the 1997 referendum is of course a far more dramatic development than changing boundaries within that new polity. While we would not expect decoupling the link in UK and Welsh Assembly constituencies to have this dramatic effect, it is likely to have an effect and possibly accelerate trends already in place, as well as accentuate differences between the Welsh parties ‘in Cardiff’ and ‘in Westminster’. It will at the very least raise questions for parties to react to and problems to be solved.

In Scotland, these boundaries have been non-coterminous since 2007 election, and is likely to have affected the campaign capacity of Labour in particular in Holyrood elections. Certainly, the fact that [Scottish Labour produced a paper](http://www.revitalisescottishlabour.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/ScottishLabourPartyReorganisationGuidance2012Final.pdf) studying the need for a more flexible approach to campaigning and internal structure within the two tiers suggests that the party itself saw this as having some bearing, and the introduction of the paper highlights the move toward non-coterminosity as having an impact on its bureaucratic complexity. This paper can be found here.

Research in Canada indicates plausible effect of changing boundaries on political parties, and [Royce Koop’s work](ftp://host-209-183-10-27.static.dsl.primus.ca/cpsa-acsp/papers-2010/Koop.pdf.) provides a good overview and analysis.

Koop notes the reverse process to that in Wales, of moving from non-coterminous to coterminous boundaries, that is, the effect when disparate boundaries at regional and Federal level have been reintegrated and made coterminous:

“[In Canada] national and provincial constituencies have never had identical boundaries. Distinctive national and provincial boundaries in Canada have necessitated the maintenance of formally separate national and provincial constituency associations (Perlin, 1980: 22). However, provincial constituency redistributions in the province of Ontario were formally linked to national redistributions in 1996, with the result that national and provincial seats in that province are now for the most part identical (Courtney, 2001: 184). Common constituency boundaries in Ontario have assisted in the reintegration of national and provincial constituency associations (Koop, 2008: 204-206). Whereas national and provincial constituency associations had previously been separated, identical boundaries have allowed associations at both levels to coordinate their election and inter-election activities…

“The Canadian experience suggests that common constituency boundaries contribute to the maintenance of unitary constituency associations in Scotland and Wales, whereas distinctive boundaries are conducive to separation between the two levels.” [Koop 2010]

While work on the impact on the effect of coterminosity of boundaries is not definitive and is not determined to follow a given path, with different parties having different difficulties and room to adapt, they will have an effect on parties. They will have an effect on:

* How parties organise internally, including likely confusion for members and effect on campaign capacity;
* The structure on the parties in terms of how they work on a UK-Welsh basis, in terms of where policy-making, powers over candidates and so on resides, but also in terms of ‘Welsh/UK identity’ and risks of fewer formal and informal connections across the different levels within parties.
* It will raise questions on primacy of organisation (how a party is structured to deal with which boundaries and which election takes ‘precedence’ organisationally); members may feel more like choosing which level they have most interest in due to different boundaries.
* These effects will impact differently on different parties and their room for manoeuvre will also differ. Losing coterminosity is thus likely to affect some parties more than others, depending on their level of centralisation, sites of decision-making, federalised or localist structure, general identity and ideology, and so on.
* The particular political context, events, internal party debates, electoral performance and so on will also influence how parties adapt within the limits above.

None of these effects are predetermined – proactive intervention (or non-intervention) by party leadership will have an effect. Nevertheless, when it comes to boundaries, parties need to be aware of possible effects, and how change may impact their own structure, members, and campaign capacity.

In the end, the choice of boundaries and how parties adapt will also affect how politics is practiced, and how parties relate to Welsh voters in different elections in Wales.

Losing coterminosity will raise these issues, while making the effort to keep coterminosity will not. When looking at the ‘choice of least resistance’ it is important that the transaction costs involved in retaining or losing coterminosity are also taken into account.

Some other useful works in terms of parties in ‘regional’ position and how they adapt include the following (although we would not wish to present this list as exhaustive):

* Biezen, Ingrid van, and Jonathan Hopkin. 2006. Party Organisation in Multi-Level Contexts, in Dan Hough and Charlie Jeffrey (eds), Devolution and Electoral Politics. Manchester: Manchester University Press, pp. 14-36.
* Bratberg, ivind. 2010. Institutional Resilience Meets Critical Junctures: (re)allocation of Power in Three British Parties Post-devolution. Publius: The Journal of Federalism 40(1): 59-81.
* Bruce, John M., and John A. Clark. 1998. Segmented Partisanship in a Southern Political Elite. Polity 30(4): 627-644.
* Carty, R.K. 2004. Parties as Franchise Systems: The Stratarchical Organisational Imperative. Party Politics 10(1): 5-24.

1. What, if any, effect did the decoupling of Scottish Parliament constituencies from Westminster Parliamentary constituencies have on:
2. the conduct and administration of elections in Scotland?
3. political parties contesting elections in Scotland?
4. the people of Scotland?

See above

1. What are your views on the benefits and challenges which would arise for (a) political parties which contest Assembly elections and (b) the people of Wales, if Assembly electoral areas and Westminster Parliamentary constituencies:
2. have the same boundaries?
3. do not have the same boundaries?

See above

[1] The authors note that it is the fact that the same parties rule at both levels at constituency level contribute to this cooperation, and also fosters shared offices and surgeries and the like. The political map has changed to a large degree in Scotland since. However, single party dominance is now in place once again, with the SNP rather than Labour mainly in control.

Bradley regards competition between AMs and MPs (and regional list AMs) over casework with some hostility, although it can be argued that such competition can lead to better results for the public. However, whether cooperation or competition pertains, it is easier for citizens to evaluate representatives’ relative performance where representatives share the same geographical terrain of responsibility.