



## **Report**

### **2015**



The University of Manchester

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**A Comparison of Multilingual Landscapes  
within Manchester: A case study of  
Chinatown and Deansgate**

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## **1. Background**

Linguistic landscapes refer to the use of language in its written form that is displayed to the public (Gorter, 2006: 2). Landry and Bourhis (1997: 25) further define this as the language shown on billboards and shop signs, which is relevant to our study of the commercial centre of Manchester.

The particular areas of interest within Manchester City Centre are Chinatown and Deansgate; both commercial areas but targeted towards different consumers. A 2011 study found that in several businesses in Chinatown, language use between colleagues was Cantonese, but with customers it was 'a mix of Cantonese, Mandarin and English' (Ryan, 2011: 19). This implies that the first language of most locals is Cantonese. It will be interesting to find whether now in 2015, the Chinese languages are still the most prominent language on signage or if others have been integrated into the community.

Our research in Deansgate will be new in the field of multilingualism within Manchester due to a lack of previous research, though we expect points of interest due to the variety of ethnic restaurants. We intend to compare previous findings of multilingualism in Manchester to our own, to see how the linguistic landscapes have developed over time.

### **1.1 Methodology**

Our method for acquiring data for Chinatown and Deansgate involved capturing fifteen images of the signage within each area, focusing on signs that contained languages other than English. From these images, we then analysed the choice of language adopted, paying attention as to why they were chosen and the effects of the signs on the surrounding community and local consumers.

Upon collecting each image, we intended to interview a small sample of individuals in each area, aiming to understand whether or not they utilised the signs themselves, or were aware of people who did. We also planned find translations provided by the commissioners of the signs. During interviews with the business owners, we aimed to discover which language they spoke most commonly when addressing their customers and during business transactions.

Our motivation behind obtaining this information was to understand the attitudes of each of the individuals in terms of the signs presented to them and whether or not they found them helpful in any way.

## 1.2 Alterations

One alteration to our research plan involved exploring a larger portion of the Deansgate area (appendix 32) than intended. This was decided upon discovering that there are fewer multilingual signs within Deansgate.

We discovered some individuals were reluctant to being interviewed, possibly due to a lack of understanding of our intentions of the interview. Therefore we decided to focus our questions on business owners. Some interviews also lost their structure and turned to more casual conversations.

While it was not our intention to collect non-multilingual signs, we found one English sign of interest as the fonts featured mimicked the style of the languages of the cultures they were trying to convey.

## 2. Data

### 2.1 Chinatown

Chinatown has a high density of multilingual signage, as expected. Figure 1 shows the languages found on signs within Chinatown, the high incidence of Cantonese confirming previous studies (Ryan, 2011).

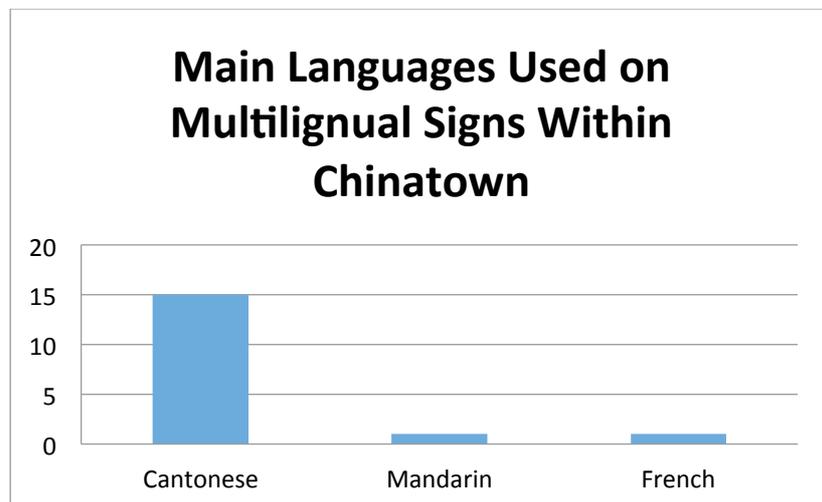


Figure 1: Languages on signs within Chinatown

<b>Appendix:</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Business</b>	<b>Language</b>	<b>Translation</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
1	Nicholas Street	n/a	Cantonese	'China Town Manchester'	Place name
2	George Street	Real Estate	Cantonese	'Luxurious Business Property'	Advertisement
3	Portland Street	Massage Parlour	Cantonese	'Back Neck and Shoulder Expert: Eliminate back...'	Advertisement
4	Portland Street	Visa specialist	Cantonese	'China Visa Expert'	Business name
5	Nicholas Street	Restaurant	Cantonese	'Hiring full time staff, some part time, if interested go in store for more details'	Job advertisement
6	Faulkner Street	Newspaper Stand	Cantonese and French	French - 'News of Europe' Cantonese - 'European News'	Newspaper name
7	Faulkner Street	Salon	Cantonese and Mandarin	Cantonese - 'Beauty and nails salon. Nails from £8. Facials from £15.' Can't read black writing.'Mandarin - 'For Details please come into the store to get more information.'	Advertisement

8	Charlotte Street	Bank	Cantonese	'Bank of East Asia'	Business name
9	Princess Street	School	Cantonese	'Chinese education cultural centre.'	Institution name
10	Princess Street	Offices	Cantonese	'Office, deals with businesses, home related, commercial property insurance.'	Business name
11	Princess Street	Linen Hiring Company	Cantonese	'Sun Lee Linen Hire company'	Business name
12	Nicholas Street	Supermarket	Cantonese	'Lucky supermarket'	Business Name
13	Faulkner Street	n/a	Cantonese	'China Banking'	Advertisement
14	George Street	Restaurant	Cantonese	'Big Promotion Afternoon dim sum 30% off (Afternoon 12-5) Dinner dishes buy 4 get 1 free including special village dishes, South East dishes and China dishes. Official HK chef in charge. Offers on seafood and lobster set menus.'	Advertisement

15	George Street	Solicitors	Cantonese	'Chung & Co Solicitors'	Business name
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*Table 1: Signs within Chinatown*

Many of the signs photographed within Chinatown were for essential businesses such as supermarkets, estate agents, solicitors, schools, banks and visa specialists. The languages used on these signs were necessary, as many of the business owners stated that the majority of their clients speak a variety of Chinese; some with limited English skills.

In terms of signage utilised for leisure purposes, we located signs advertising a massage parlour (appendix 3), as well as signs on restaurants (appendix 5 & 14), one being a job advertisement (appendix 5), in which the owner of the restaurant stated that it was essential that their staff speak fluent Cantonese, as this is the first language of the majority of their customers.

We spoke to a multiple business owner on George Street (appendix 2) who displayed real estate signs written in Cantonese. He informed us that he speaks Cantonese, Mandarin and English, and the majority of his customers speak a variety of Chinese. He claimed many of these customers could not speak English fluently or at all and the signs therefore helped bring in many customers who otherwise would not have been able to take advantage of his services. Interestingly, the Chinese on the signs often added extra information to the advertisement; in this case, the Chinese on the top of the sign in appendix 2 said 'luxurious business property'. This may add a sense of exclusivity for the Chinese customers.

Only one sign was found featuring Mandarin (appendix 7) in addition to Cantonese. While the Cantonese provided prices, the Mandarin only instructed consumers to enquire in store, suggesting Mandarin speakers are a minority within the community.

## **2.2 Deansgate**

Whilst Deansgate has a similar density of businesses per area as Chinatown, the multilingual signs found were distributed further apart. Most signs were found on food establishments, with the exception of one Thai massage parlour, differing greatly from the functional purposes of languages found within Chinatown. The graph below shows the languages featured on signs within the area.

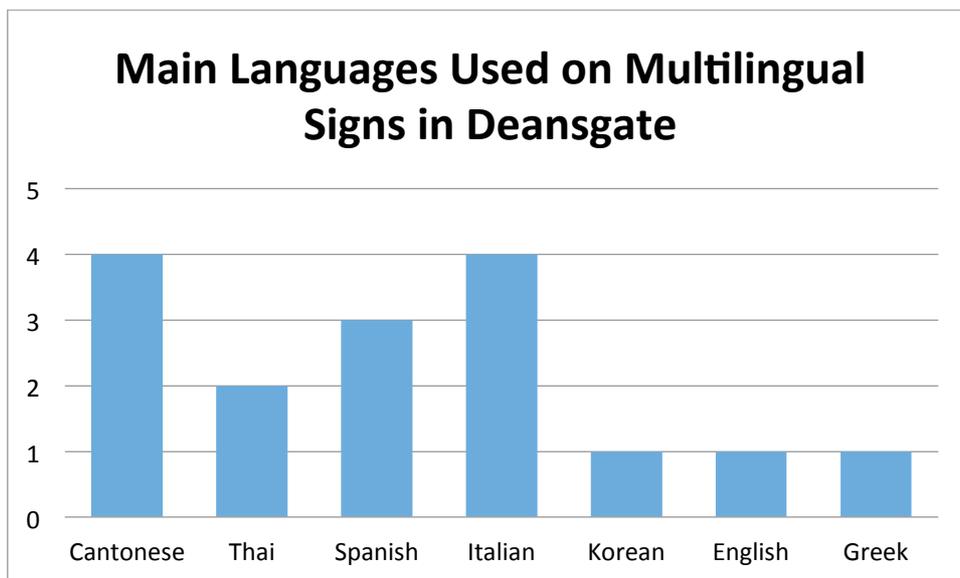


Figure 2: Languages on signs within Deansgate

Appendix:	Location	Business	Language	Translation	Purpose
16	Peter Street	Restaurant	Cantonese	'Vegetables'	Stylistic Feature
17	Peter Street	Restaurant/bar	Spanish	'Fast lunch revolution'	Stylistic Feature
18	Queen Street	Restaurant	Cantonese	No translation given	Stylistic feature
19	Queen Street	Restaurant	Italian	'Italian appetizer'	Stylistic Feature
20	King Street West	Restaurant	Italian	'Hello Italy' 'worldwide organization of true Italian Restaurants' 'associate'	Stylistic Feature
21	King Street West	Restaurant	Korean, Cantonese	Chinese proverb, loosely translates to 'it's not good it's better.'	Advertisement

22	Bridge Street	Massage Parlour	Thai	'accepting applications for a masseuse'	Job advertisement
23	Deansgate	Cafe	Greek	'Coffee house and Deli'	Stylistic Feature
24	Deansgate	Restaurant	Spanish	'Menu of the day... Welcome!'	Advertisement
25	Deansgate	Restaurant/Bar	Spanish	'Sangria bar'	Stylistic Feature
26	Blackfriars Street	Restaurant	Italian	'Enjoy your meal'	Stylistic feature on a menu
27	Deansgate	Restaurant	Italian	'Café... Restaurant... bar'	Stylistic Feature
28	Deansgate	Restaurant	English	n/a	Stylistic Feature
29	Chapel Walks	Restaurant	Thai	'Chao Phraya' (name of a Thai river)	Menu
30	Cross Street	Fast Food	Cantonese	'Noodle' 'Dim Sum'	Stylistic Feature

*Table 2: Signs within Deansgate*

The first multilingual sign photographed within Deansgate (appendix 16), was at the pan Asian restaurant 'Sakana.' The Cantonese symbol displayed on a decorative panel outside the restaurant was of particular interest as restaurant staff could not inform us of the meaning. A bilingual friend used as an interpreter translated the symbol as 'vegetables,' which loosely ties with the food industry but serves no functional purpose.

Other signs within Deansgate used Chinese symbols, two of which were present on the restaurant and fast food establishments 'Wing's.' One of these (appendix 18) was untranslatable by several Cantonese speakers, suggesting that these were used purely as stylistic features and were potentially not real words in the language.

Korean was used in combination with Cantonese on one sign (appendix 21), which is a common proverb used on buildings in East Asian countries but difficult to translate into English.

Several Spanish signs were found on bars and restaurants (appendix 17, 24 & 25), though the Spanish consisted of simple phrases or language similar enough to English that it could be deciphered easily by a non-Spanish speaker. This is demonstrated in appendix 17, where 'rapido lunch revolucion' is used with the English word 'lunch' rather than the Spanish 'almuerzo.' This may be due to the fact the Spanish term differs too much from English, while 'rapido' and 'revolucion' are orthographically similar to their English translations. Staff within these establishments informed us that all of their customers spoke English during their visits; therefore the use of English within their multilingual signs helps to avoid alienating their potential clientele.

The signs which included Italian (appendix 19, 20, 26 & 27) were similar to that of Spanish as the words chosen would easily be identified by English speakers. The businesses that utilised these signs were Italian restaurants. San Carlo featured one sign which included Italian which may be difficult for non-Italian speakers to identify, 'associazione mondiale dei veri Ristoranti Italiani' (see appendix 20). This establishment also had several other signs in English, stating that the restaurant offered an 'authentic Italian dining experience,' which may emphasise why they use less common Italian lexis. However, the staff within these establishments told us that English was the language which takes place during all business interactions.

One language we expected more of within Deansgate was Greek, as this is the third most common language within Manchester city centre (see part 1), with 5% of city centre residents speaking Greek as a first language (LocalStats, 2011). Only one instance of Greek signage was found on the Greek deli 'Katsouris,' and like the Italian and Spanish examples mentioned above, the language is similar to English, with terms 'delicatessen' and 'cafenion.'

Thai was also present within Deansgate, one example used as a stylistic feature on a menu of a Thai restaurant (appendix 29) and another advertising job opportunities at a Thai massage parlour (appendix 22). While staff within each of these businesses told us that they speak English during most of their business interactions, they also speak Thai with customers who require it. The One Thai Massage staff explained to us that it is essential for them to maintain a 'true Thai massage experience,' for their customers and therefore they use Thai within job advertisements to ensure that only Thai masseuses apply.

While the Red Hot Buffet sign (appendix 28) is written only in English, we found it interesting due to the obvious styles that were chosen to give an impression of a multicultural dining experience. An example of this is the font in which 'India,' is written, as there is a horizontal line at the top of the lettering, mimicking the orthographic style of Sanskrit. The text 'Japan,' is written in a font possessing stylistic features similar to the Kanji alphabet.

### **3. Discussion**

The main distinction between Chinatown and Deansgate in terms of their multilingual signage is the functionality. While Chinatown focusses on the needs of Chinese migrants making use of services within the community, Deansgate concentrates on giving the appearance of cultural authenticity to British individuals.

#### **3.1 Chinatown**

The reason for the multilingual aspect of the signs is that many businesses in Chinatown aim to welcome and aid Chinese migrants; many of the business owners are themselves Chinese and are aware that the population in and around Chinatown has a high percentage of Chinese people. Therefore Chinatown has many examples of language being used as a commodity, implicating the existence of a market in which the languages have an economic exchange value (Cameron, 2012). The multilingual signs held different purposes and were written mostly in Cantonese, with some Mandarin, English and French.

From the data we deduced that the speakers most catered for within Chinatown were Cantonese, due to the fact all of the fifteen photographed signs featured at least some Cantonese. This supports the findings of previous studies of multilingual signage in Chinatown (Ryan, 2011). Additionally, as the salon sign (appendix 7) offered the full list of services and prices in Cantonese, but only 'ask inside for details' in Mandarin, this suggests that while the community caters towards Mandarin speakers, they are not the main intended audience of the signs. This was also confirmed through many of the interviews as we were often told Cantonese takes place in more business interactions than Mandarin.

Tan (2008: 107) states that globalisation has led to an increased commodification of language with respect to its usefulness in the global as well as the local market, which we are seeing happen in Chinatown. Tan (2008: 117) elaborates on this point by outlining that English is used as a commodity in Malaysia, explaining that English is important in Malaysia because it is associated with 'getting jobs' and 'dealing with foreigners'. This is reflected

within Manchester city centre; Chinese languages are used as a commodity, offering jobs to Cantonese speakers (appendix 5) and broadening the range of potential customers.

In addition to language playing a vital role in aiding the understanding of non-English speakers, certain signs created a sense of community. The traditional Chinese architecture style depicted in the Chinatown sign (appendix 1), combined with the Cantonese translation helped one member of the public whom we interviewed experience a 'welcoming feeling' and the community helped with the homesickness he often felt while studying abroad in England.

We determine that multilingual signage within Chinatown is imperative to the local community through not only comprehension of non-English speakers, but in creating community cohesion.

### **3.2 Deansgate**

Deansgate has a diverse range of languages featured on multilingual signs than Chinatown, with Italian and Cantonese being most common. While Cantonese is to be expected due to the high numbers of Chinese people living within the city centre, Italian is not expected as there is not a large Italian speaking audience. This is largely due to the high numbers of Italian eateries in this area.

Use of multilingual signage within Deansgate differs greatly in its functions compared to Chinatown. The majority of signs were simply used as stylistic features to add to the authenticity of the particular culture which a restaurant fitted. While in Chinatown we found that business owners could provide us with the direct translations of their signs, often this was not the case in Deansgate. This was particularly true for the restaurant 'Sakana' (appendix 16), as no staff member could inform us of the English translation, which we later found to be 'vegetables,' whereas in Chinatown, staff within 'Pacific' offered a translation of the language which displayed promotional offers. This emphasises the decorative function of signage within Deansgate, suggesting there is no intended purpose of the symbol to assist native Cantonese speakers.

Decorative functions of language are found in English too (appendix 5), mimicking the style of fonts so that readers may initially think the text is in a different language. This can help an establishment retain a more authentic feel, without alienating their customers who speak only English.

The non-functional use of multilingual signage in Deansgate is further highlighted through the use of language similar to English in orthography. *Revolucion de Cuba*

(appendix 17) is an example of this, as the Spanish translations of 'fast' and 'revolution' are easily comprehended by English speakers. The term for 'lunch,' was intentionally left in English, as 'almuerzo,' differs greatly from the English term.

The only instances of multilingual signage found to have a functional purpose were on back roads (appendix 21 & 22), while the majority of non-functional signage was on main roads. This may suggest that those using functional language have a specific audience in mind, who are likely already aware of the location, while the non-functional language serves to attract passer-by's who want to indulge in a different culture on a whim. This is confirmed by the owner of 'Koreana', stating that the majority of their customers were Korean and Chinese regulars.

### **3.3 Conclusion**

Overall a general trend can be seen in that the functionality of signs is used differently in each area. Chinatown uses multilingual signs as a commodity; to cater for the high percentage of Chinese speakers, whereas Deansgate uses foreign language as stylistic features. The foreign language in Deansgate is often somewhat recognisable to an English speaker to add authenticity to the product or experience the businesses are promoting. For this reason the languages used in Chinatown reflect the population, whilst in Deansgate this does not correlate, the languages used are more diverse but simply reflect the cultures mimicked by different businesses.

The huge demand for and use of Cantonese in Chinatown may have implications on future language requirements of signs within the community, particularly since we were often told many locals had limited English skills. This has happened in other large cities which cater to speakers of non-native languages, such as Rome's Chinese community (Barni & Bagna, 2010: 6-9). The visibility of Chinese within the area was so prominent that in May 2007, the official documents in the City of Rome stated that they must facilitate the life and integration of the Chinese community. As a result of this, the signage became bilingual with both Italian and Cantonese translations (Barni & Bagna, 2010: 9). If the Chinese community continues to grow within Manchester, it is possible similar laws will be passed.

#### 4. Bibliography

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## 5. Appendix

### 5.1 Chinatown

#### Appendix 1 – China Town sign, Nicholas Street.



#### Appendix 2 - Real estate, 43 George Street

**創城地產**  
GENESIS CITY PROPERTIES

# 豪華物業

Beetham Tower, Deansgate,  
Manchester M3 4LQ

## 豪華物業出售

售價/Price  
**£1.4M**  
編號: GC1018

- 現時可規劃兩間會客室, 廚房, 酒吧區, 2/3 房間, 客房, 書房, 3 個廁所, 兩個浴室和一個按摩池浴缸
- 45 樓
- 裝修格局可以調整滿足買家需要

如有任何查詢, 歡迎隨時聯我們。  
4470161 838 9058 info@GenesisCityLtd.com www.GenesisCityLtd.com

Planning for 2 reception room, kitchen, bar, 2/3 bedrooms, guest room, study, 3 toilets, 2 bathrooms and a Jacuzzi  
45<sup>th</sup> floor  
Layout can be decided by buyer to suit needs

**Appendix 3 - Massage place, Portland street**



**Appendix 4 - Chinese Visa Expert, Portland Street**



**Appendix 5 - Hiring sign, Nicholas Street.**



Appendix 6 – Newspaper Stand, Faulkner Street.



Appendix 7 – Salon, Faulkner Street.



**Appendix 8** – Bank of East Asia, Charlotte Street.



**Appendix 9** – Chinese School, Princess Street.



**Appendix 10** – Offices, Princess Street.



**Appendix 11** – Linen Hiring Company Van, Princess Street.



**Appendix 12** – Hang Won Hong, Nicholas Street



**Appendix 13** – Bank advertisement, Faulkner Street



Appendix 14 – Pacific, George Street



Appendix 15 – Chung & Co Solicitors, George Street



## 5.1 Deansgate

Appendix 16 – Sakana, Peter Street.



Appendix 17 - Revolucion de Cuba, Peter Street.



**Appendix 18 – Wing’s, Queen Street.**



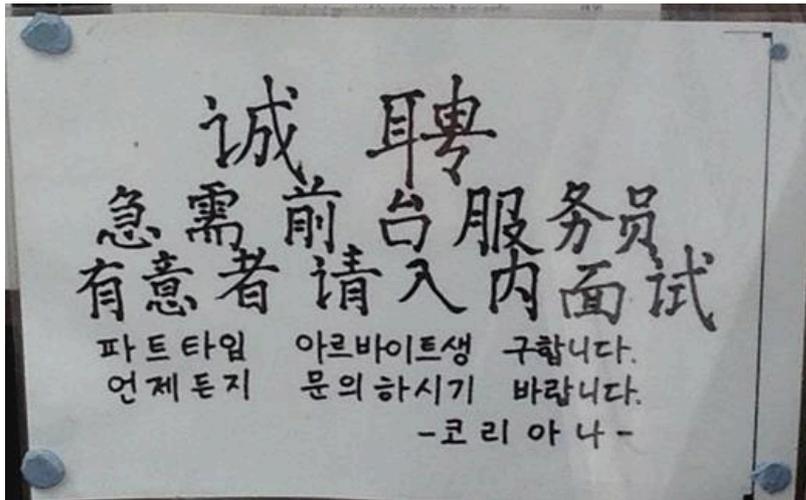
**Appendix 19 – La Vina, Queen Street.**



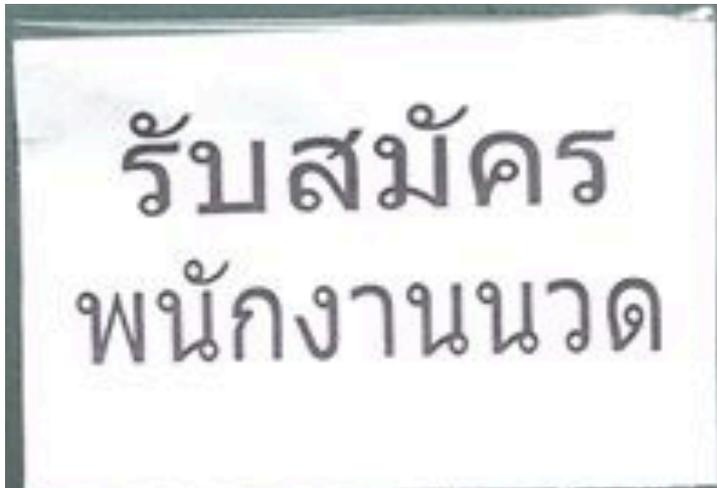
**Appendix 20 – San Carlo, King Street West.**



Appendix 21 – Koreana, King Street West.



Appendix 22 – The One Thai Massage, Bridge Street.



Appendix 23 – Katsouris Deli, Deansgate.



Appendix 24 – La Vina, Deansgate.



Appendix 25 – La Tasca, Deansgate.



Appendix 26 – Dom’s, Blackfriar’s Street.



Appendix 27 – Bella Italia, Deansgate.



Appendix 28 – Red Hot Buffet, Deansgate.



Appendix 29 – Chaophraya, Chapel Walks.



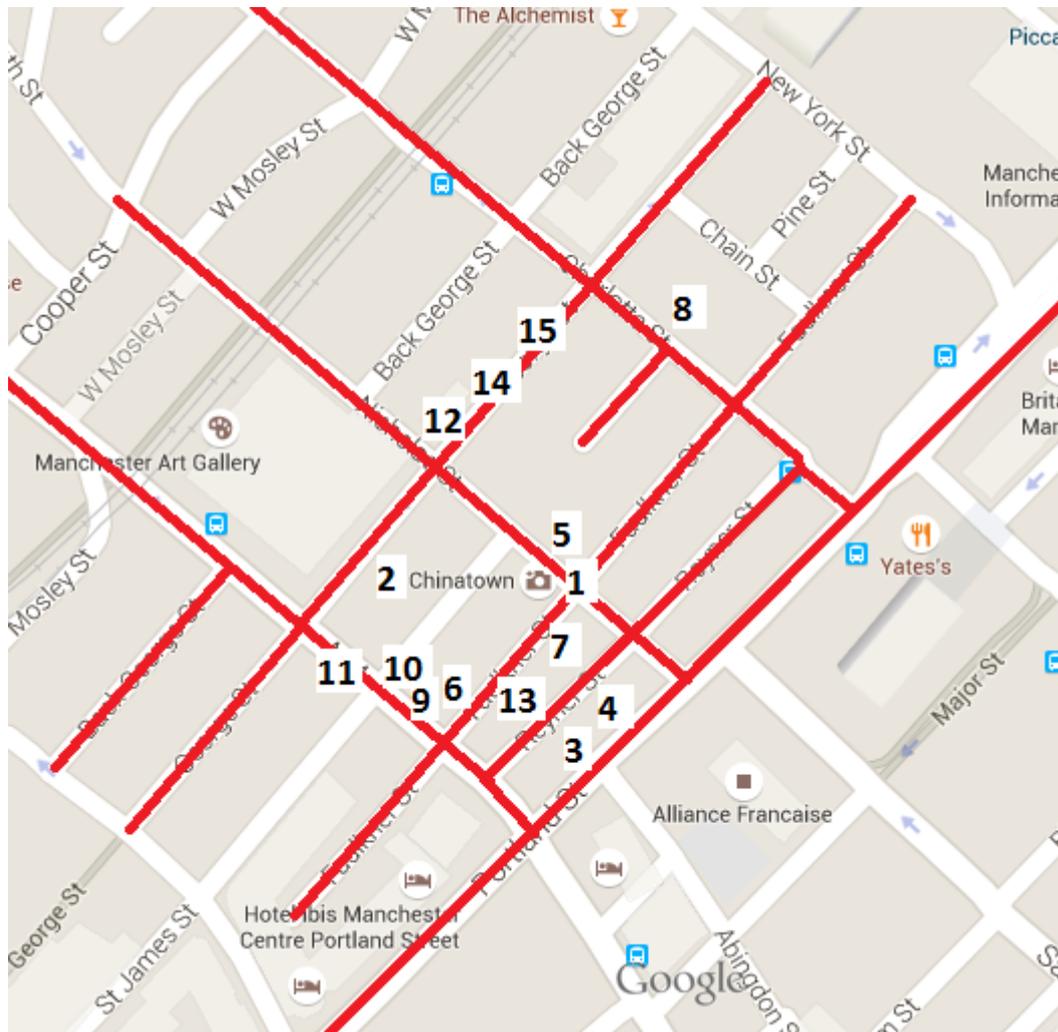
Appendix 30 – Wing's Dai Pai Dong, Cross Street.



### 5.3 Maps

#### Appendix 31 –

Chinatown area. Red lines show area explored, numbers reference appendix.



**Appendix 32 – Deansgate area. . Red lines show area explored, numbers reference appendix.**

