

Cambridge Elements

Elements in Contentious Politics

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PROTEST WALLS

*Co-authoring Contentious
Repertoires*

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Protest Walls

Co-authoring Contentious Repertoires

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Abstract: Protest walls have played an important role in movement communication and mobilizing the public. We focus on contentious performances and the way diverse actors co-authored spaces into the protest walls that were seen in Hong Kong and other countries including Lebanon, Iraq, and Taiwan. We argue that once created, protest walls can become objects symbolic of dissent. They exist as a lexicon – a complex language of symbols and spatial practices. This language is now an internationally understood method of protest which has a high degree of transferability and can be adapted into local contentious contexts or used to transmit local concerns into the international consciousness. Finally, we show that the protest wall can shed new light on the relationship between activists, their claims and their targets that does not exist in other types of contentious performance.

This Element also has a video abstract: Cambridge.org/ECTP_Li

Keywords: protest wall, contentious repertoire, modular performance, social semiotics, symbolic objects

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