

Costs and Risks in Nonviolent Conflict

International Center on Nonviolent Conflict

Webinar Series

Hardy Merriman

September 23, 2010

Definitions

Nonviolent conflict: a conflict in which at least one party uses nonviolent action as its means to wage the conflict

Definitions

Nonviolent action or civil resistance: A technique of waging conflict without the use of violence. It consists of:

- a. acts of commission,
- b. acts of omission, or
- c. both

Nonviolent Conflict is a Contest

Movements can:

1. Take action to improve their positions
2. Take action to weaken their opponents

Opponents can:

1. Take action to improve their positions
2. Take action to weaken the movement

Nonviolent Conflict is a Contest

2. Take action to weaken their opponents

Costs and Risks

Cost: Specific expense or penalty. Some costs can be projected and regulated.
(e.g. lost income from a boycott).

Risk: Potential loss that may occur because of an action, but is *not certain* in effect, scale or timing .
(e.g. arrest, other repression)

Outline

Three kinds of costs that movements and their opponents impose:

1. Economic/Material costs
2. Legitimacy/Political costs
3. Social/Psychological costs

Economic and Material Costs

Montgomery bus
boycott →



← Downtown Nashville
boycott

Economic and Material Costs

Port Elizabeth
boycott



Economic and Material Costs

Strike and boycott
by the United
Farm Workers



Economic and Material Costs

Indian boycott of British cloth



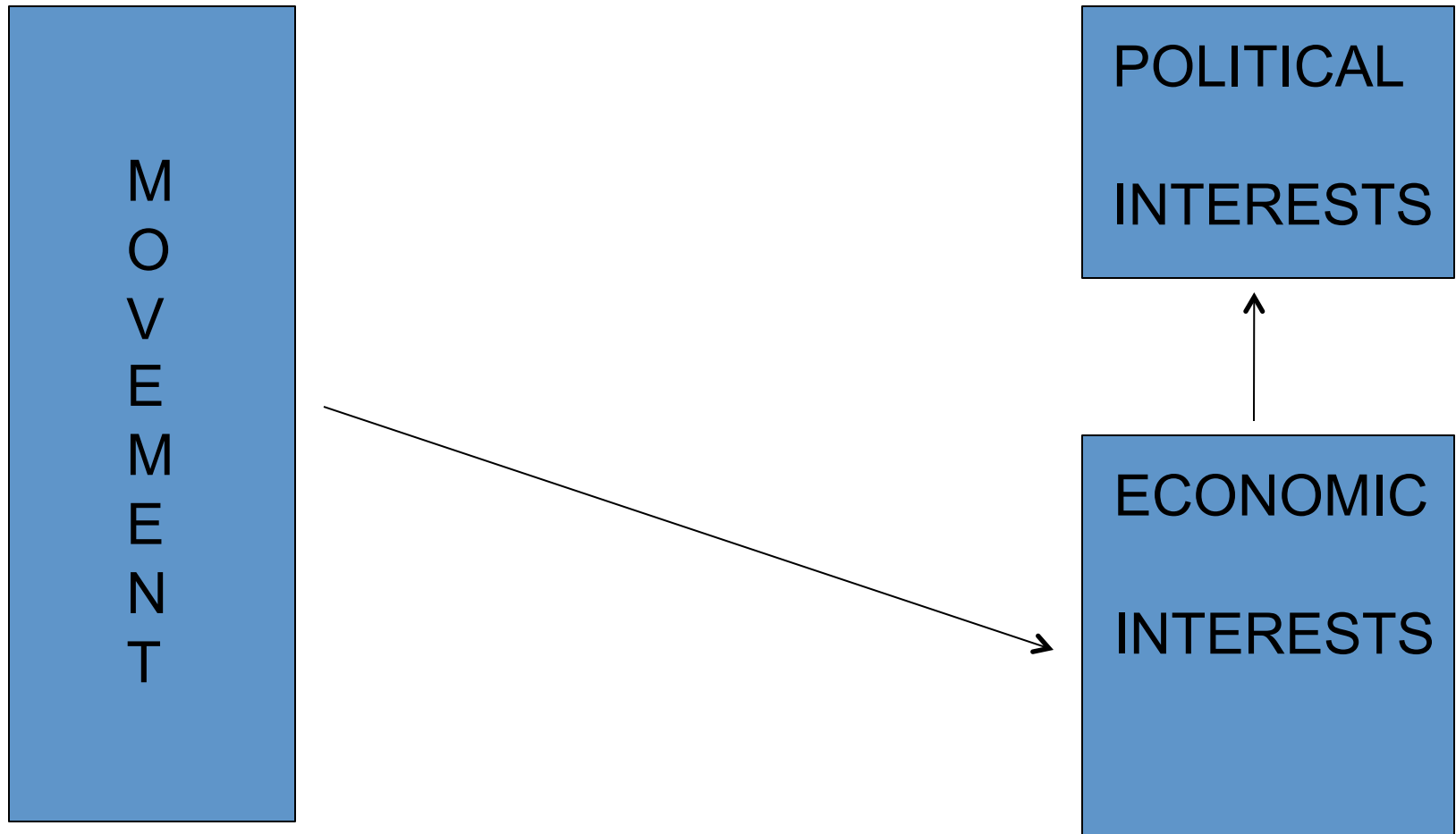
Economic and Material Costs

East Timor Action Network (ETAN)
campaign against US military assistance
to Indonesia

Other examples: “No March”, stickers and
graffiti, Budrus wall protest, tactics of
dispersion

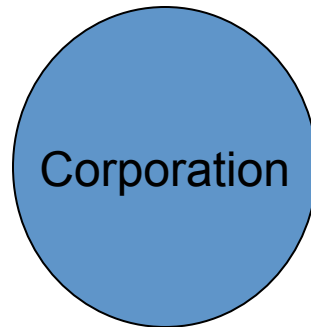
Why Are Tactics That Impose Economic Costs Powerful?

Key Concept: Creating Divisions

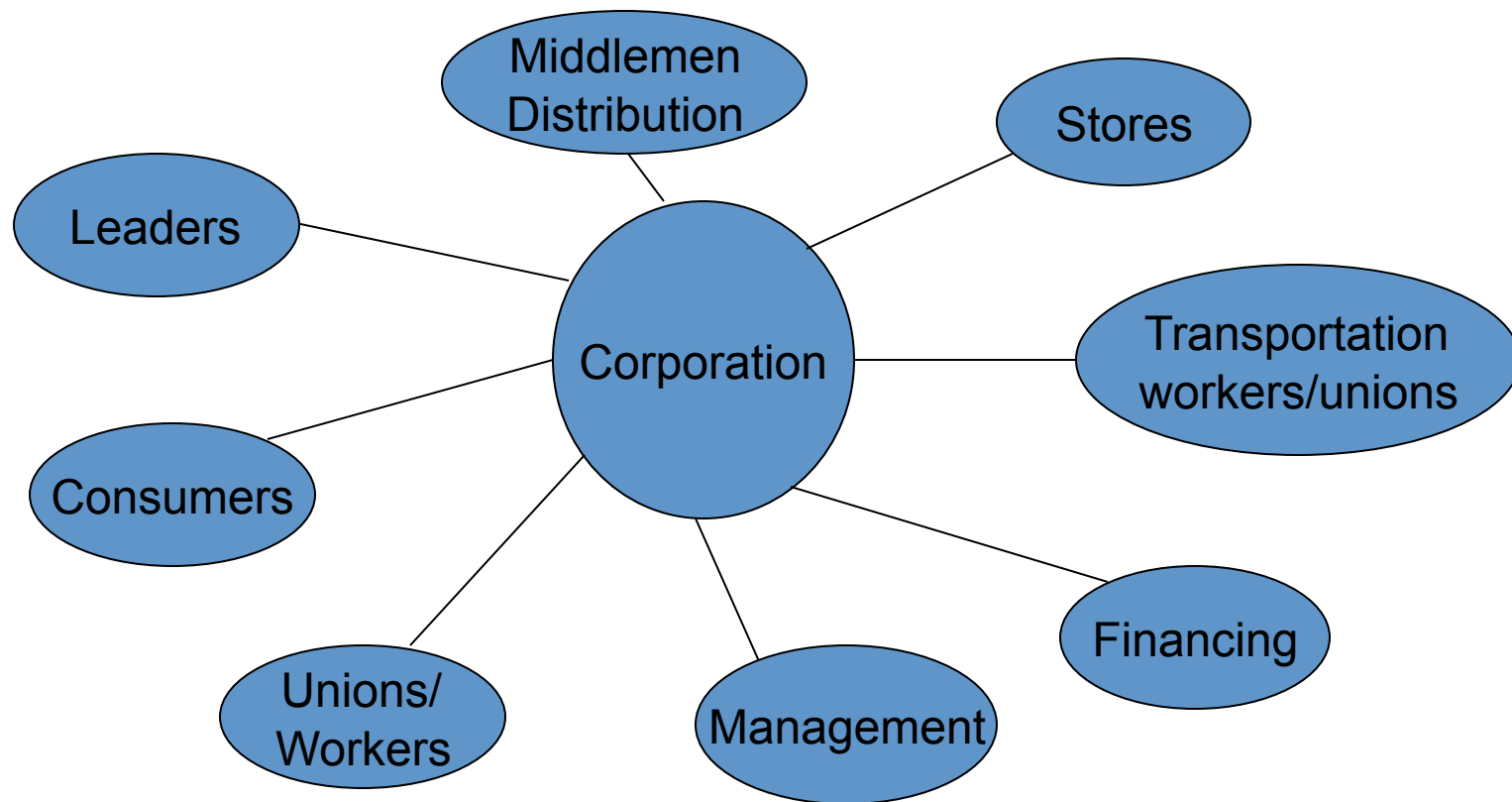


How Can Economic Costs be Targeted?

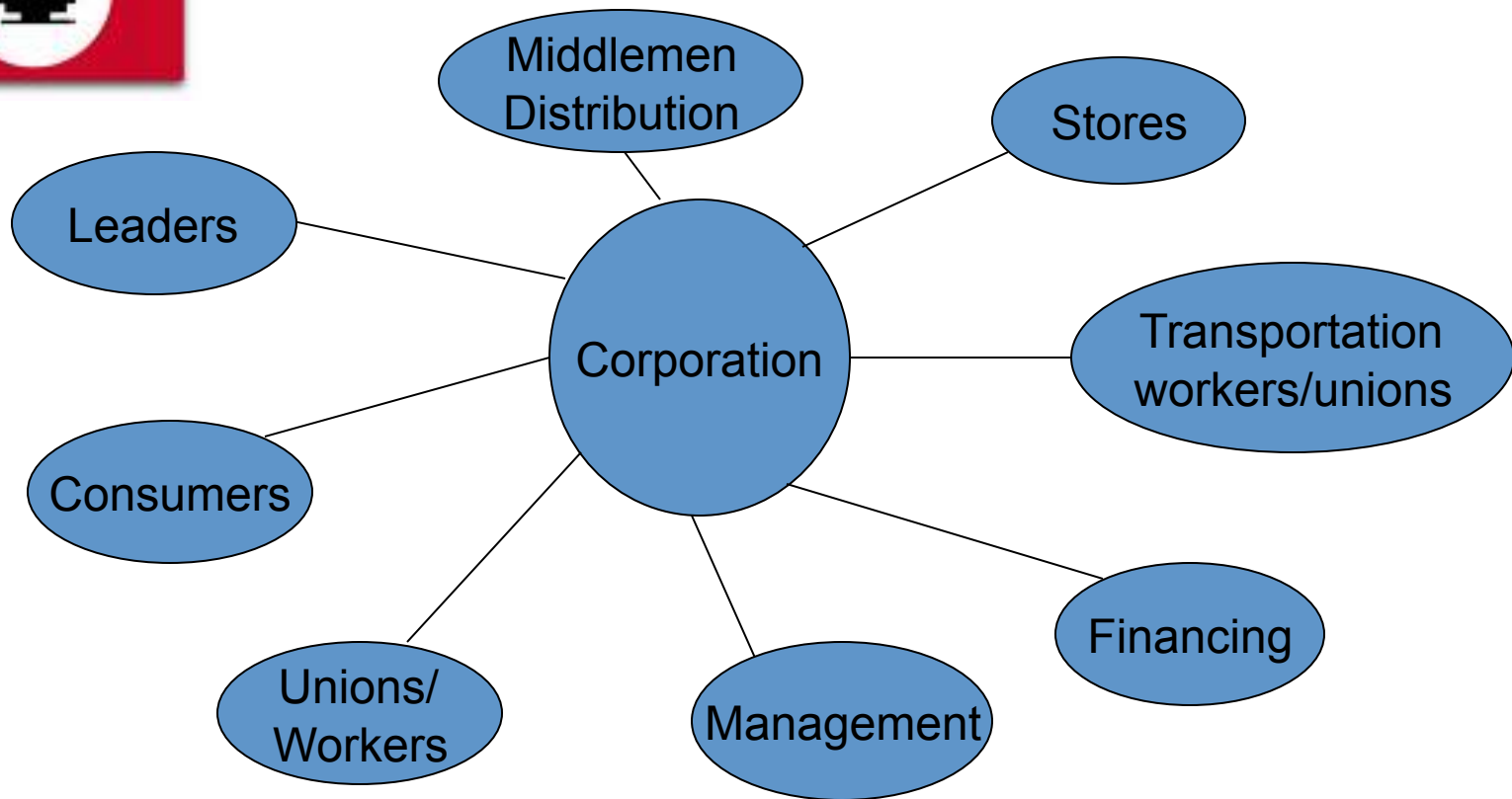
Key Concept: Target Selection Through Tactical Mapping



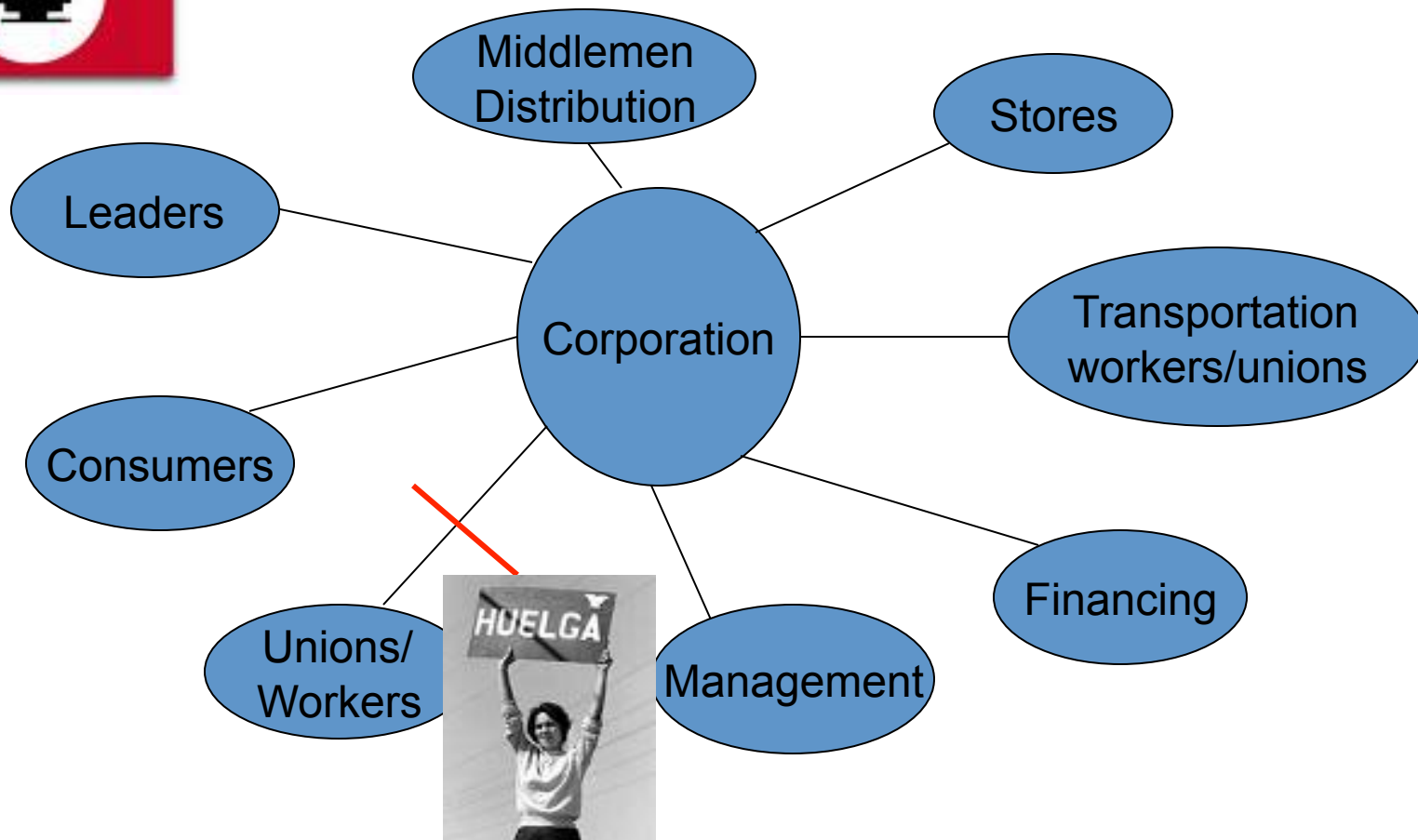
Key Concept: Target Selection Through Tactical Mapping



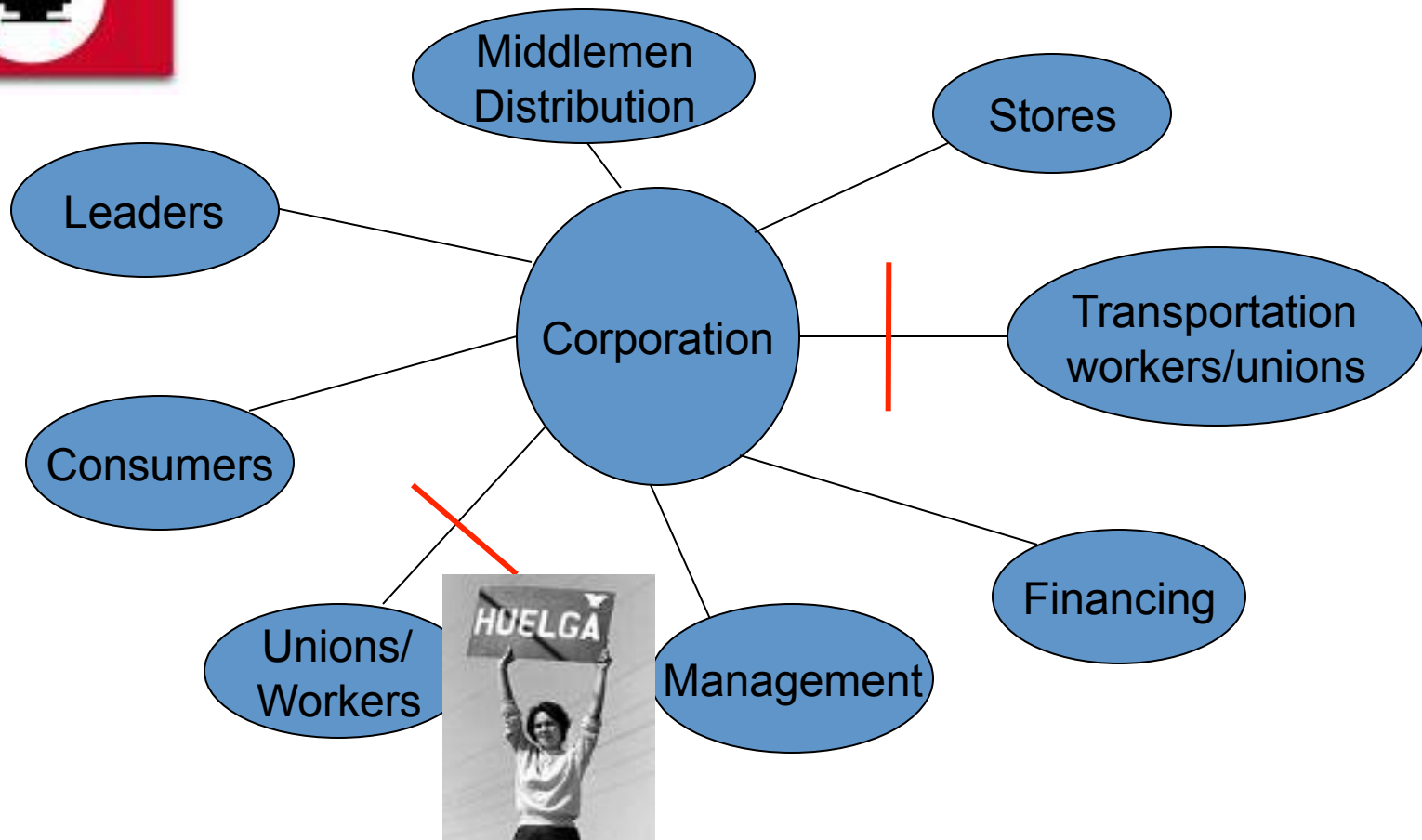
Key Concept: Target Selection Through Tactical Mapping



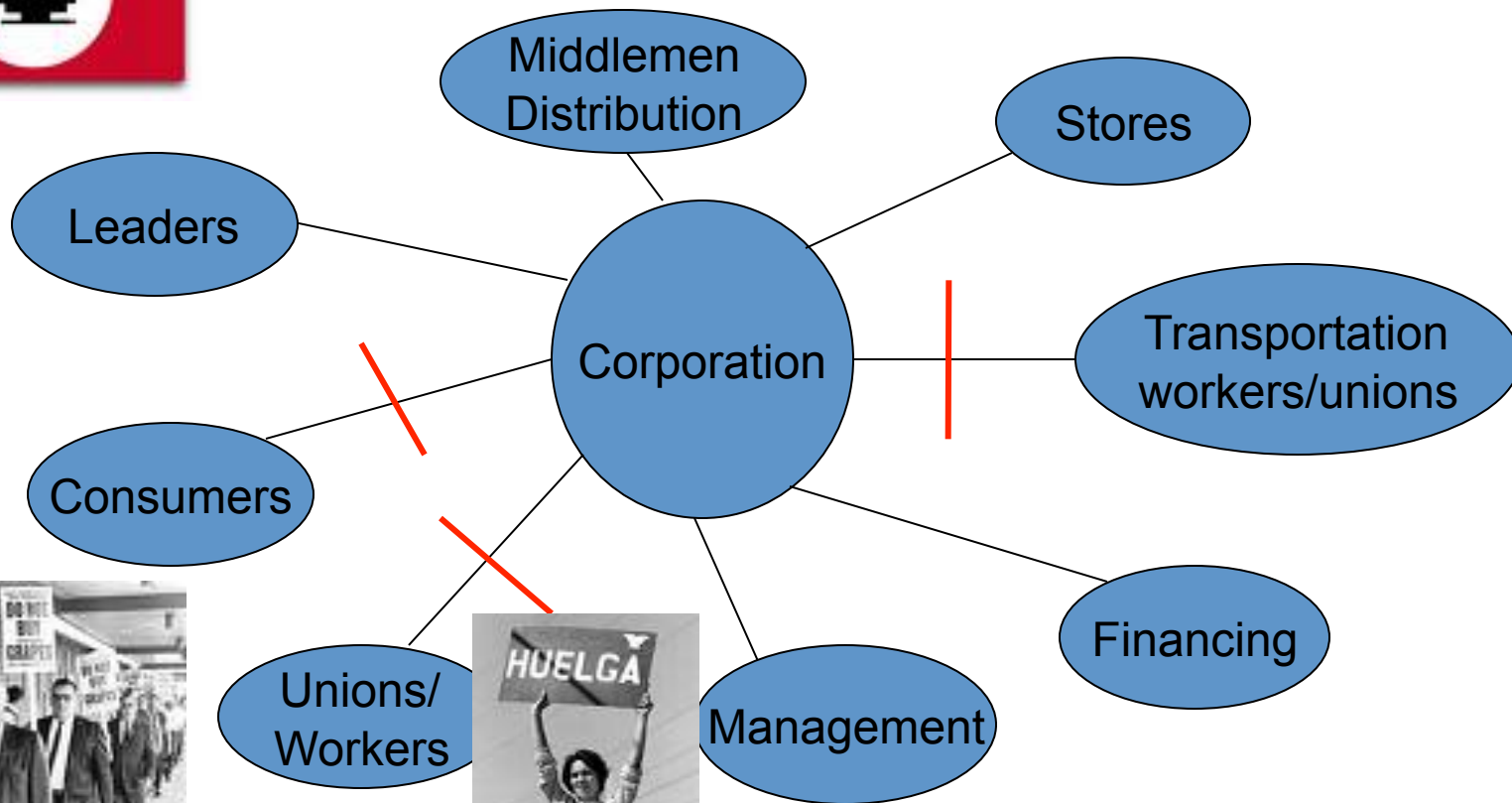
Key Concept: Target Selection Through Tactical Mapping



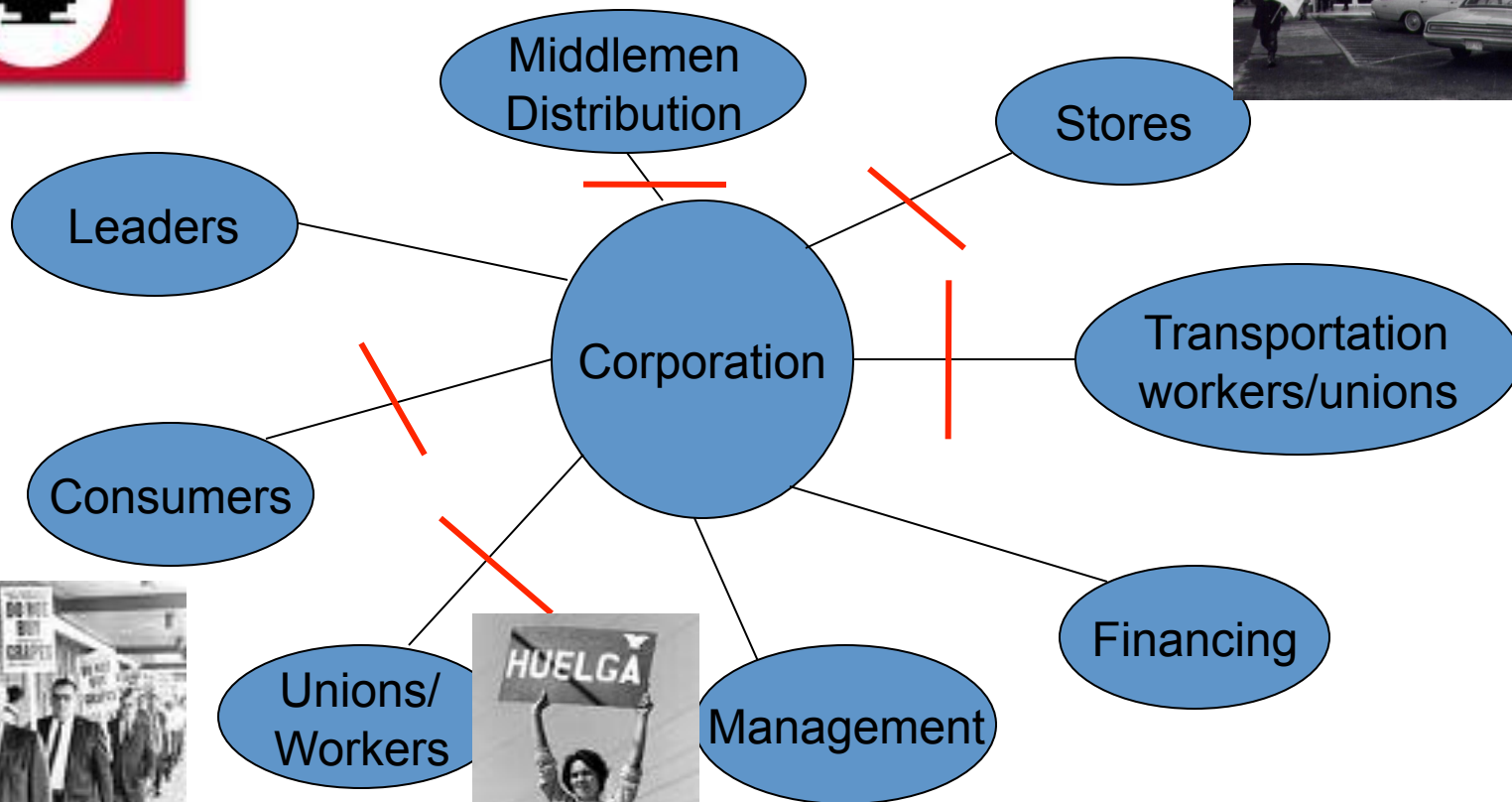
Key Concept: Target Selection Through Tactical Mapping



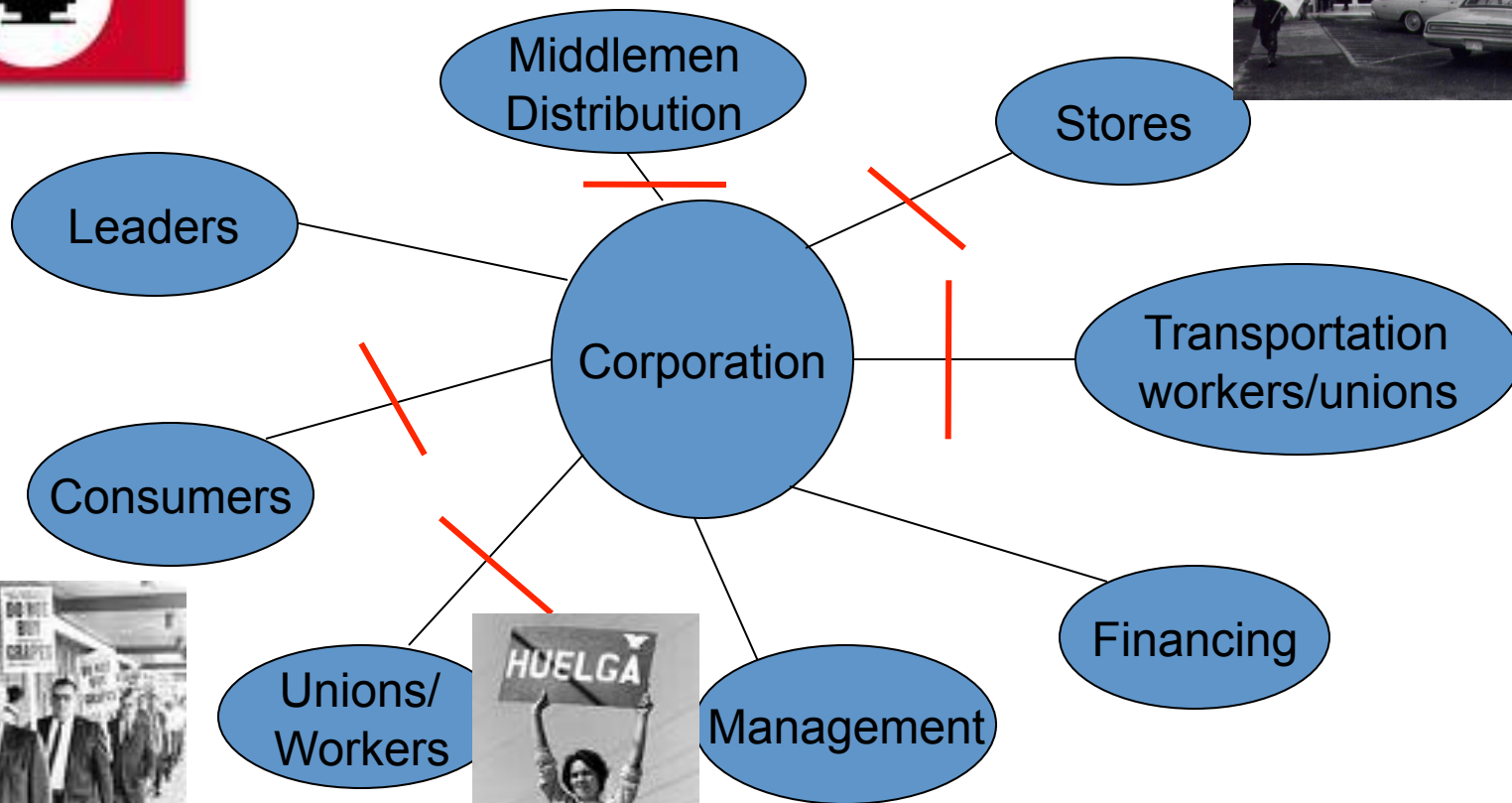
Key Concept: Target Selection Through Tactical Mapping



Key Concept: Target Selection Through Tactical Mapping



Lessons Learned?



Risks of Imposing Economic and Material Costs

?

Risks of Imposing Economic and Material Costs

A movement must be able to survive its own offense!

- Strike funds
- Need for parallel institutions
- Economic and material costs can be passed on

Part 2: Political and Legitimacy Costs

?

Political and Legitimacy Costs

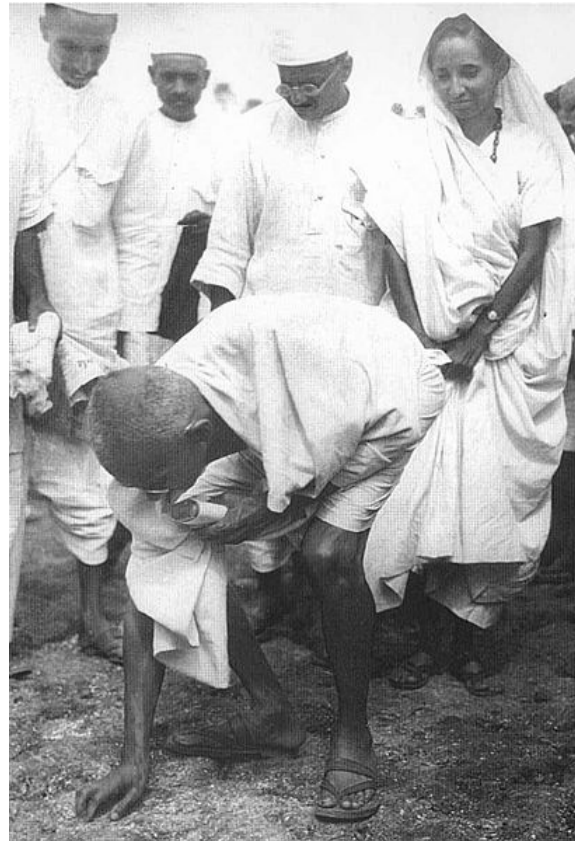
Otpor's response
to repression:

“This is the face
of Serbia.”



Political and Legitimacy Costs

Salt March



Political and Legitimacy Costs

Solidarity's push for independent labor unions



Political and Legitimacy Costs

Kmara protest in front of Health Ministry



Political and Legitimacy Costs

Chile – Slow down actions

Norway – symbolic anti-occupation
resistance

Burma – farmer's hat campaign

Iranian women at the 2006 World Cup

Dilemma Actions

1. Find legal restrictions that are widely unpopular, particularly those that affect people's day-to-day or personal lives
2. Design tactics to challenge these restrictions. Tactics may employ humor, public individuals, religious/cultural/patriotic language or symbols

Dilemma Actions

3. Strategize to gain as much as possible after the tactic has taken place, regardless of outcome

Making Repression Backfire*

Backfire:

1. Reveal – expose the injustice
2. Redeem – validate the target
3. Reframe – emphasize the injustice
4. Redirect – mobilize support
5. Resist – stand up to intimidation

* This framework was developed by Brian Martin.

Available at: <http://www.bmartin.cc/pubs/bf/bfbasics.pdf>

Risks of Imposing Political and Legitimacy Costs?

Risks

Unclear message:

1. [Melbourne G20 demonstration](#)
2. [anti-Iraq war demonstration](#)

Risks

Tactics can get hijacked by other groups

Incidents of violence

Questions