Shining a light on dark money
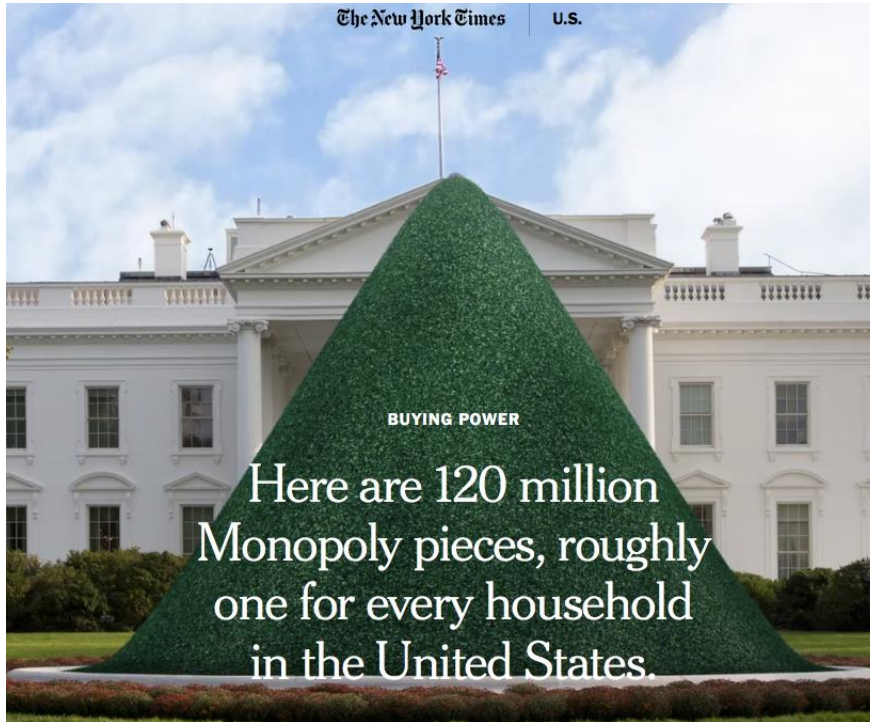
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The problem

Financial contributions to U.S. political campaigns are supposed to be publicly reported, with sources identified, in a timely fashion.

Contributions to nonprofit organizations can be anonymous, and are reported on time cycles out of sync with election cycles.

Legal changes made in 2010 have led to an increase in financial contributions through nonprofit organizations for political campaign purposes, but these funds are hard to track (and hard to identify sources).

The challenge

- Can we draw from multiple datasets to surface information about hidden flows of money within the time frame of an ongoing election cycle?

- Specifically can we get better at identifying the groups through which the funds are flowing (if not the actual sources of funds?)

Existing data sets

Data Source	Contents	Frequency	Size	Access	Format
Federal Elections Committee (FEC)	filing, registration, receipts, disbursements from candidates and committees	varies - monthly/quarterly	>26 mm receipts	beta.FEC.gov	csv exportable
Employer Identification Numbers	Federal tax ID numbers for enterprises	rolling	>8.5 mm	http://www.einfinder.com/faq.asp	FAstMatch for bulk matching - paid service
State business registries	Business registries for 50 states	rolling		50 state sites	
Lobbyist disclosures	Lobbyist disclosures - US House of Reps	semi annual		http://disclosures.house.gov/ld/ldsearch.aspx	csv, XML
	Lobbyists - US Senate	semi annual		http://soprweb.senate.gov/index.cfm?event=lobbyistSelectFields&reset=1	
	Lobbytist - executive branch				
Wesleyan Media project Kantar Media's C-Mag	TV ad purchases information			http://mediaproject.wesleyan.edu/dataaccess/	2012 data not avail till after 11/2016
Securities Exchange Commission	Public companies 10Ks include expenditures to C5s and C6s	annual	All US public companies ~20 mm	http://www.sec.gov/edgar/searchedgar/companysearch.html	individual pdfs

Other resources
Center for Responsive Politics

Opensecrets	Lobbying database			**http://www.opensecrets.org/elections/**	
Guidestar	data on nonprofit registrations			guidestar.org	no
Maplight	Spending on issues, bills, legislators			http://maplight.org/	by arrangement