



# MIS RESEARCH SEMINAR

## “Success Driven Escalation: the Dark Side of Data Analytics Projects”

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### **Abstract:**

The current model of IS projects escalation is based on reactions to different forms of project failures. However, there is evidence, indeed presented in this article, that escalation can also be driven by project success. In this article, we investigate the project escalation dynamics of data analytic projects. Data analytic projects, when successful, are the gift the keeps on giving because of the reusable and reconfigurable nature of the data at the core of the system. However, these projects also have a dark side because novel, originally unplanned uses of the data bring about issues with privacy, ethics, and control. Through the analysis of a longitudinal case study (2003-2015) of the emergence, successful expansion, and collapse of a large-scale data analytic project in the Danish healthcare sector, we demonstrate how high expectations caused a surge of stakeholders and features that ultimately resulted in the project’s demise. We call this phenomenon success driven escalation and stakeholder creep and function creep its major mechanisms. The theorization of success driven escalation allows us to extend the current model of IS project escalation to include successful projects plagued by insidious escalation dynamics previously gone unnoticed.