

The Instagram-riot

Lessons learned – Signs – Responsibility and prevention

Lars Arrhenius

Lars Arrhenius, Secretary General of Friends, starts his lecture speaking of the organization and their work. Friends started 17 years ago with the aim of working against bullying. A large part of Friends work involves working preventively with bullying in schools. Friends are also co-arrangers of the conference. The focus of Arrhenius lecture is on the so called Instagram-riot, which took place in the end of year 2012.

Reactions to the account. October 24th 2012 an account named “Gbg Orroz” was registered on Instagram. On this account, photos and comments of people labeled as “orror” (sluts/whores) in Gothenburg were published. In his lecture, he shows examples of comments, taken from the lawsuit that was made. For example, one girl was portrayed as “the whore of the year”. Speculations regarding who had created the account culminated in the riot-like event in the city center of Gothenburg in December 19th 2012. A lot of teenagers who had their photos published reported experiencing great distress. According to Lars Arrhenius, the Instagram-riot led to a sudden awareness to this kind of problems in the society. However, he describes it as surprising that the reactions came with the “riot” and not previous when the Instagram account started.

Responsibility and signs. The legal process that followed the publications on Instagram is described. During the trial in the District Court of Gothenburg, two young girls were sentenced to juvenile detention for slander. The girls’ legal guardians were, together with the girls, required to pay compensation to the victims. But in situations like these, schools also have responsibility, but this was not judicially reviewed in this particular case. Schools are by law required to act on violations and that there has to be systems for dealing with situations like these, but when it comes to violations online the schools’ responsibilities are a bit unclear, which is a major problem.

Lessons learned and prevention. Lars Arrhenius asks: What demands can be put on children using internet when they have never been informed about how to act? Adults have for a long time had an attitude that what happens online is not “for real”, but that this has changed a bit due to the Instagram-riot. The responsibility for prevention is shared by companies, schools, parents and politicians. The companies which provide the services (e.g. Instagram) have to become better at taking their responsibility. Politicians have the power to prioritize these kinds of questions and for instance, put pressure on the companies or provide more resources to the police. In schools, there have to be higher competence in dealing with cyberbullying. Parents (and other adults) could, according to Lars Arrhenius, prevent events like these by showing interest and establish trust among youths, showing that they are supportive if anything would happen. In conclusion, Lars Arrhenius urges all adults to be positive role models online since the online environment currently is a very harsh environment for everyone and not just for youths.