

UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI

The Case of *Uppo-Nalle*:

How Affective Polarisation Can Affect a Theatre Performance

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Tiivistelmä: Tutkielmani käsittelee sitä, kuinka affektiivinen polarisaatio voi vaikuttaa teatteriteokseen. Tutkielma on tapaustutkimus Kivinokan kesäteatterissa vuonna 2021 tapahtuneesta maalittamistapauksesta, jossa teatteri sai lähinnä sosiaalisessa mediassa uhkailuja, että paikalle oltaisiin tulossa pesäpallomailojen kanssa, koska heidän lastennäytelmänsä *Upo-Nalle* sisälsi rokotuskohtauksen. Uhkailujen takia teatteri päätyi poistamaan ja korvaamaan kyseisen kohtauksen, jolloin affektiivinen polarisaatio suoraan maalittamisen kautta vaikutti jo lähestulkoon valmiiseen teatteriesitykseen. Vaikka tapaus on Suomessa ainutlaatuinen, toimii se esimerkkinä siitä, miten affektiivisen polarisaation kasvu yhteiskunnassa voi vaikuttaa teatteriin.

Tutkielmani teoreettisena viitekehyksenä toimii kolme eri teosta. Koska suurin osa tapauksessa käsiteltävästä affektiivisesta polarisaatiosta tapahtui sosiaalisessa mediassa, olen hyödyntänyt tutkielmassani eritoten Patrick Lonerganin teosta *Theatre & Social Media*, jossa Lonergan sekä käsittelee teatterin suhdetta sosiaaliseen mediaan, että määrittelee kyseisen termin kattavasti. Affektiivisen polarisaation teorian käsittely taas nojaa Arttu Saarisen kirjaan *Vastakkainasettelujen aika: poliittinen polarisaatio ja Suomi*, jossa Saarinen käy läpi polarisaation eri käsitteitä ja tekee katsauksen sen historiaan Suomessa. Affektiin liittyvien käsitteiden määrittelyssä olen tukeutunut Kaisa Koskisen kirjaan *Translation and Affect: Essays on Sticky Affects and Translational Affective Labour*, jonka käsitteet, kuten affektiivinen muisti, ovat olleet ensiarvoisen tärkeitä analyysissäni siitä, miksi lastenteos *Upo-Nalle* joutui maalittamisen kohteeksi.

Koska kyseessä on tapaustutkimus, olen käyttänyt tutkielmani lähteinä paljon hyvin erilaisia materiaaleja kuten nettiuutisia, sosiaalisen median julkaisuja, sähköposteja sekä haastatteluja. Tarkoituksena on ollut luoda *Upo-Nalle*-tapauksesta mahdollisimman kattava kuva, jonka avulla voidaan sekä hahmottaa mitä tapauksessa oikein kävi, että pohtia mitkä ovat sen mahdolliset implikaatiot teatterin tulevaisuudelle.

Tutkielmani loppupäätelmä on, että affektiivinen polarisaatio voi vaikuttaa teatteriesitykseen esimerkiksi siten, että teatteri joutuu muuttamaan teostaan maalittamisen takia. Vaikka tapauksessa oli teatterille myös positiivisia vaikutuksia, kuten julkisuus ja sen mukanaan tuoma taloudellinen hyöty, eivät ne kuitenkaan ole mitään verrattuna tapauksen negatiivisiin vaikutuksiin, kuten taiteen vapauden rajoittamiseen. Kuten *Upo-Nalle* tapaus täten osoittaa, affektiivisen polarisaation kasvu yhteiskunnassa olisi suuri uhka taiteen vapaudelle.

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Abstract: This thesis examines how affective polarisation can affect a theatre performance. The thesis is a case study of a targeting and shaming incident that occurred at Kivinkokan kesäteatteri in 2021, in which the theatre received threats, mainly on social media, that people would be coming to the theatre with baseball bats because their children's play *Uppto-Nalle* contained a vaccination scene. Due to the threats, the theatre decided to delete and replace this scene in question, and, thus, affective polarisation directly through targeting and shaming affected a nearly finished theatre performance. Although this case is unique in Finland, it does work as an example of how the growth of affective polarisation in society can affect theatre.

The theoretical framework for my thesis consists of three different books. Firstly, since most of the affective polarisation, in this case, took place on social media, as a source for this subject, I have used Patrick Lonergan's *Theatre & Social Media*. In the book, Lonergan examines the relationship between theatre and social media and provides a comprehensive definition of the term. Secondly, when analysing the theory of affective polarisation and terms related to it, I have relied on Arttu Saarinen's book *Vastakkainasettelujen aika: poliittinen polarisaatio ja Suomi*, in which Saarinen discusses the different concepts of polarisation and reviews its history in Finland. Thirdly, when defining the term affect and its concepts, I have used Kaisa Koskinen's *Translation and Affect: Essays on Sticky Affects and Translational Affective*, as the terms she uses in the book, such as affect memory, have been crucial in my analysis of why the children's play Uppto-Nalle became the victim of targeting and shaming.

As this is a case study, I have used a wide variety of materials such as online news, social media posts, emails and interviews as the sources for this thesis. The aim has been to create an all-encompassing picture of the *Uppto-Nalle* case, through which it is possible to examine what happened in this case and to reflect on the future implications for theatre.

This thesis argues that affective polarisation can affect theatre performance if, for example, the theatre must change its performance due to targeting and shaming. Although, in this case, there were some positive side effects for the theatre, such as financial benefits through the free publicity they received, they were nothing compared to the negative effects, such as the restriction of the freedom of arts. As the *Uppto-Nalle* case thus shows, the increase of affective polarisation in society would pose a grave threat to artistic freedom.

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1. Introduction

“I’m going to report this to the police”¹ is not the most common feedback a theatre might get about a performance; however, it is an example of one of the many emails Kivinokan kesäteatteri received about their 2021 children’s theatre show *Uppo-Nalle*.² It is not uncommon for a theatre performance to cause strong feelings in its audience. According to Marvin Carlson, as a social event, theatre “encourages more active resistance, and not a few demonstrations and even riots have arisen from performances . . . failing to play the game according to the rules many in the audience desired”.³ Arguably then theatre differs from many other arts because at its core it is very dependent on the spectators. Although several factors can vary between performances, some more accidentally than others, the aspect that changes the most is the audience. Reactions, behaviour, and quantity of other audience members often frame how an individual spectator views the performance. Theatre is, therefore, a very social art form. Alongside the fact that it is nearly always closely intertwined with a specific time and place, this sociability makes theatre extremely vulnerable as an art form.⁴ This, in effect, causes theatre to be very sensitive and reactive towards the surrounding society, for example, changes in the political atmosphere. In Finland, *affective political polarisation* has increased moderately yet steadily throughout the twenty-first century.⁵ Arguably, especially the ever-growing presence of *social media* is adding fuel to this fire, and many politicians, researchers, journalists, representatives of legal institutions, and even police officers have been victims of online targeting and shaming for years.⁶ As theatre is a very vulnerable form of art, that is reactive to the surrounding society, it is not immune to affective polarisation, as is exemplified by the case of *Uppo-Nalle* at Kivinokan kesäteatteri. In this case, the theatre became a victim of *online targeting and shaming* because of a vaccination scene, which they then had to change due to this harassment. This thesis is, therefore, a case study of the 2021 *Uppo-Nalle* case, and the main research question is how affective polarisation can affect a theatre performance. However, through the case, I will also examine how social media can affect theatre performances and theatre in general.

¹ Vainio, Mika 2023.

² As “Uppo-Nalle” is both the name of the theatre performance by Kivinokan kesäteatteri and the name of the character in the play and other works related to the bear, for the sake of clarity whenever Uppo-Nalle appears in the text in *italics*, this refers to the 2021 performance by Kivinokan kesäteatteri, and whenever it is written non-italicised in the text, this means the character.

³ Carlson 1990, 14.

⁴ Tawast 2021.

⁵ Suomen kansallinen vaalitutkimuskonsortio (FNES) 2023.

⁶ Tawast 2021.

Therefore, the focus of this thesis is to give a thorough picture of the 2021 *Uppo-Nalle* case, which I will do especially in chapter three, where I will go through the catalysts behind the case, examine what kind of targeting and shaming the theatre faced, and lastly, look at the consequences of the case for the theatre. However, very briefly already in here; in the *Uppo-Nalle* case, Kivinokan kesäteatteri, which is a summer theatre in Helsinki, had planned during the Autumn of 2020 that they would perform Jarmo Harjula's 1984 dramatisation of Elina Karjalainen's 1977 children's book *Uppo-Nalle* during their Summer season 2021.⁷ On 16 May 2021, just a few weeks before the premiere, which was on 9 June 2021, they started receiving targeting and shaming mainly on their social media platforms.⁸ The reason for the targeting and shaming was that they had told in an advertisement for the play that the performance will contain a vaccination scene.⁹ These adverts and the vaccination scene were criticised by Maria Nordin and Kirsi Kautiainen, both of whom have a decent social media following, and both of whom were running for the Crystal Party¹⁰ to be elected in the municipal elections of Finland 2021.¹¹ The municipal elections of 2021 had been postponed due to coronavirus restrictions by a couple of months and many of the candidates took stances on the coronavirus vaccinations as they were going on at the time.¹² The targeting and shaming led to the theatre deleting the vaccination scene and replacing it with a market place scene.¹³ Although there were some surprisingly positive outcomes of the case for the theatre, such as financial benefits, the overall impact of affective polarisation through the targeting and shaming was negative as they had to change the scene due to the fear of violence which means that their freedom of arts was compromised.

As this *Uppo-Nalle* case is a unique instance in Finland and there has not been any research on it, in this thesis, I will focus on giving a detailed description of what happened in this case. The primary sources for this thesis are news articles about the case, different social media posts, emails that I have received from people related to the case, and two interviews that I conducted in the Summer of 2023, one with Kari Kinnaslampi, the director of Kivinokan kesäteatteri and the *Uppo-Nalle* play, and another with Juha Uutela, an actor who played Uppo-Nalle in the show. However, before I move on to describing the case, which I will do in chapter three, in chapter two, I will look at important background information on Uppo-Nalle and Elina

⁷ Kinnaslampi 2023, Personal Interview.

⁸ Hyttinen 2021.

⁹ Kivinokan kesäteatteri 2021, Uppo-Nalle advert.

¹⁰ Crystal Party is a small, registered party in Finland with no parliamentary representation.

¹¹ Puolueohjelmien tietokanta POHTIVA 2021.

¹² Ministry of Justice elections-website 2024.

¹³ Rissanen 2021.

Karjalainen and Kivinokan kesäteatteri and define the concepts of affective polarisation and social media. There are three books that I will use as the basis of my theory on affective polarisation and social media: Kaisa Koskinen's *Translation and Affect: Essays on Sticky Affects and Translational Affective Labour*¹⁴, Arttu Saarinen's *Vastakkainasettelujen aika: poliittinen polarisaatio ja Suomi*¹⁵, and Patrick Lonergan's *Theatre & Social Media*¹⁶. Although the first deals with *affects* in translation studies and not in theatre studies, in the book, Koskinen gives excellent definitions of affects and *affect memory*, both terms which I found influential when researching how affective polarisation is born. However, my primary source on affective polarisation is Saarinen's book, in which he gives an excellent definition of the term and how it manifests itself in Finland. As the preeminent way affective polarisation appears in the case is through online targeting and shaming, it is also crucial to look at social media and its pre-existing relationship with theatre to see how abnormal the case is. I will do this with the help of Lonergan's book.

However, before I move on to chapter two, where I will look at, for instance, the concept of social media more closely, in this introduction, I will focus on a thorough explanation of why I chose the *Uppo-Nalle* case as the case study for my thesis. I will begin this by giving a brief introduction of the concepts of Uppo-Nalle and affective polarisation. Although I will examine these concepts later in chapter two, since the focus of this introduction is to highlight the uniqueness of this case, it is necessary to include a brief explanation of both already here. After this, I will move on to explain how I came to choose this subject. Here, I will briefly discuss existing research about the relationship between theatre and social media and how studying this led me to understand how little research there is about this subject. I will then follow this with a detailed account of why I chose this case over, for example, the *Kaikki äidistäni*¹⁷ case. In this section of the introduction, I will look at all the research questions more closely and explain why I chose "How can affective polarisation affect a theatre performance?" as my main research question over "How can online targeting and shaming affect a theatre performance?", "How can social media affect finished/nearly

¹⁴ Koskinen 2020.

¹⁵ Saarinen 2022.

¹⁶ Lonergan 2016.

¹⁷ The *Kaikki äidistäni* case happened in 2020 at the Finnish National Theatre when the theatre had planned to perform Samuel Adamson's 2007 dramatisation of Pedro Almodóvar's 1999 film *Todo sobre mi madre*. A couple of days before the premiere, some people on social media started to question why the theatre had hired a cis-man Janne Reinikainen to play the character of a transwoman Agrado. Due to the criticism, the theatre decided to fire Reinikainen from his role. However, it quickly became evident that in the dramatisation, Agrado is not a transwoman but rather a transvestite, and Reinikainen was rehired for the role. According to the theatre, there had just been a misunderstanding due to some confusing statements that the director Anne Rautiainen had made during an interview where she said that at first, they had tried to find a transwoman for the role but never specified that afterwards, they decided to stay true to the dramatisation and keep the character transvestite. In this case, social media did not change the performance after all. Kansallisteatteri 2020.

finished theatre performances?” and “How does social media affect theatre?”. Lastly, I will also explain why I opted to do a case study as my research method and why this method best serves my purposes here in this thesis. I will end the introduction with a short paragraph detailing the overall structure of the thesis.

Although I will give a more in-depth description of the concept of Uppo-Nalle and the author, Elina Karjalainen, in chapter two, it is necessary to specify just a few basic facts here to introduce the subject and its uniqueness. The most noteworthy aspect, which makes this case rather absurd considering that the theatre received threats that people were coming to the show with baseball bats, is that Uppo-Nalle is a children’s story character. The first Uppo-Nalle-book was published in 1977, and originally Karjalainen wrote it as letters to a sick family friend, a little girl who had to spend considerable time stuck at the hospital.¹⁸ Karjalainen then composed the first book based on these letters after which she wrote nearly thirty more books about the bear.¹⁹ She also wrote a play about Uppo-Nalle herself in 1980, and later, others made adaptations and, for example, merchandise about the bear, such as movies, a stamp, colouring books, audiobooks, and plays.²⁰ It is important to note that the 1984 version that Kivinkokan kesäteatteri used for their 2021 performance was a dramatisation made by Jarmo Harjula, not Karjalainen herself, and although it shares similarities with Karjalainen’s own dramatisation it differs slightly from especially the first Uppo-Nalle book.²¹ The differences between the book and the dramatisation will be better looked at in chapter two as some of it is relevant to why there may have been confusion about the vaccination scene.

Uppo-Nalle is, therefore, a popular character in Finland. There have been tens of thousands of copies of the books sold alone, so even if one might not remember the exact plot of any of the books, it is very likely that the bear is still familiar to most Finns.²² Especially those who grew up with the books have most likely at least some ideas of what happens to the bear in the book/s. Hence, the bear has become a part of Finnish cultural memory. Because of this, Uppo-Nalle likely causes some emotions, or what Koskinen would call *affects*, in people’s minds. As Koskinen explains, an affect is a challenging term to define as it means different things in different academic disciplines and, therefore, it is an umbrella term that contains the words “emotion” and “feeling” but is a larger concept than, for example, a singular emotion.²³ Thus, to say that Uppo-Nalle may

¹⁸ Kirjojen takana 2024.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Karjalainen and Harjula 1984.

²² WSOY 2024.

²³ Koskinen 2020, 12.

cause affects in people's minds means that it may stir a multitude of emotions and feelings that may differ from each other and vary in their supposed neutrality. Koskinen also talks about *affect memory*, which means "an emotionally expressed feeling that recurs when recalling a significant experience".²⁴ So, talking about an object/subject may stir affects in a person's mind like those that they had when they first encountered said object/subject. Thereby, the affects that Uppo-Nalle causes in people's minds may liken those they had, for example, in early childhood when they first read the book/s, and, therefore, they may be rather intense and cause strong opinions.

In her book, Koskinen uses children's books as examples of things that may cause affect memory.²⁵ According to Koskinen, retranslations of these books may cause resistance in those who grew up with the original translations because things in the new versions might differ from what they remember, which shatters the usually fond affect memory.²⁶ According to Sara Ahmed, some objects may become layered with affects and become sites of personal and social tension, which turns them into sticky affects.²⁷ Thus, certain things, such as children's books and vaccinations, almost always have affects associated with them, which may cause them to become sites of tension or even polarisation. However, it is noteworthy that sticky affects are different from what Koskinen calls affective valence, which means that an object/subject has either a positive or negative association with them.²⁸ According to Koskinen, prison is an example of something that typically has a high negative affective valence.²⁹ Arguably, things such as Uppo-Nalle and vaccinations do not have a clear affective valence but rather sticky affects. Therefore, they may cause a stir of emotions and feelings in a person, but these emotions may differ from one person to another or even within the person themselves. As mentioned earlier, the dramatisation by Harjula differs from Karjalainen's Uppo-Nalle books, which alone may disrupt the affect memory of a person who grew up with the book/s. More importantly, one of the things that changed in Harjula's dramatisation was that although both the book and the dramatisation contain a vaccination, only in the latter is Uppo-Nalle vaccinated.³⁰ As vaccinations also often have sticky affects, it makes sense that it was this subject that caused affects to stir in people.

²⁴ Ibid., 67.

²⁵ Ibid., 67.

²⁶ Ibid., 67.

²⁷ Ahmed 2014, 11.

²⁸ Koskinen 2020, 46.

²⁹ Koskinen 2020, 46.

³⁰ Karjalainen and Harjula 1984, 16–7.

In his book, Saarinen talks about *affective polarisation*, which refers to the prominence of emotions behind polarisation.³¹ According to him, *affective political polarisation*, in turn, means confrontation in which the problem is not necessarily ideological differences and differences of opinion but rather emotional attitudes towards groups with particular political positions.³² So, in affective political polarisation, vaccinations and Uppo-Nalle can become the subjects of political discourse because the discourse is first and foremost linked to emotions and emotional attitudes, not so much, for example, different research. In this discourse, there is a stigmatisation towards other political groups with differing opinions. According to Saarinen, this kind of stigmatisation and, therefore, affective polarisation happens, especially in the political conversations on social media, which is inherently an explosive media type, as the most active political debaters there often situate themselves within the political extremes.³³ One of the many forms that affective political polarisation takes on in social media is *online targeting and shaming*. In this phenomenon, a group that is usually somehow ideologically similar, for example, the Crystal Party and their supporters, begins an online attack against someone/some people, for instance, Kivinokan kesäteatteri. This attack can contain “direct or indirect threat, or of exposing details about someone’s private life and distorting the information”.³⁴ According to Saarinen, it is often the hostile rhetoric of political party leaders that deems what is an acceptable way to speak in their supporters’ perception.³⁵ Of course, online targeting and shaming can begin with people not necessarily related to politics, they can, for instance, be what Saarinen calls political social media “ambassadors”, but, typically, they have some authority in their supporters’ minds.³⁶

I will go more in-depth about the affective political polarisation and how it appears in the *Uppo-Nalle* case later in chapters two and three. First, however, it is necessary to give background on why I chose this subject and why I am doing a case study. Initially, I was interested in philosopher and sociologist Jean Baudrillard’s theory of *hyperreality* and what it means in the age of social media. At its core, hyperreality refers to the collapsing between reality and simulation, where reality no longer has an origin and simulation has become the real.³⁷ Baudrillard argues that it is the spread of technology and, especially, cameras, which has created this collapse where simulations of the real have become the real, hiding the fact that the supposed real is no longer the

³¹ Saarinen 2022, 32.

³² Ibid., 10.

³³ Ibid., 32.

³⁴ Ministry of the Interior Finland 2024.

³⁵ Saarinen 2022, 40.

³⁶ Ibid., 79.

³⁷ Schechner 2020, 242–6.

real.³⁸ Arguably, in the age of social media, the collapse between simulation and reality is ever present and widespread hyperreality is inescapable, and, therefore, the “self” we perform online might be our true “self”. However, as Lonergan points out, there is still evidence that our online persona is different from the real “us”, which explains why it is easier, for example, targeting and shaming to happen online.³⁹ At the same time, Lonergan also argues that social media is not a simple term as any “user-generated” content, such as publicly distributed letters, could be included in the definition.⁴⁰ Furthermore, as the *Uppo-Nalle* case shows, the targeting and shaming also happened via phone calls not just on social media, and, thus, there is evidence in this case of online hate-speech seeping into the “real” world. To be able to look at what kind of role social media played in the case, it is, therefore, vital to define the term, as I will do in chapter two, where I determine it to be any platform that uses the internet to allow users to be in contact with each other.

The next step in my research was that I began to think whether the same principle of widespread hyperreality changing the world and individuals through social media could also apply to art and, therefore, started searching for examples of art changing after being made available/interacted on/with social media. In the end, I found an example from the cinema world: the 2019 *Sonic the Hedgehog* animation film controversy in which the movie trailer released in April 2019 received so much backlash from fans on social media that the filmmakers had to change the animation design of the main character.⁴¹ Originally, the film company *Paramount Pictures* planned to release the film in November 2019.⁴² However, when the trailer was released, it received harsh criticism on social media sites such as X(Twitter), where users criticised especially Sonic’s teeth in the animation, calling them “creepy” or “terrifyingly human”.⁴³ The trailer also received hundreds of thousands of dislikes on YouTube.⁴⁴ Due to this criticism, the film creators pushed back the release date and completely redesigned Sonic.⁴⁵ The final release date of the film was February 2020.⁴⁶ Although it is common nowadays to criticise art on social media, this discussion usually happens after the artist/s have published the final piece of art, not during the creation process. This case is, therefore, rather unique as the social media criticism occurred before the artwork was released, and the criticism was so intense that it eventually changed the artwork itself.

³⁸ Ibid., 242–6.

³⁹ Lonergan 2016, 31.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 8.

⁴¹ Lee 2020.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

After discovering that social media could change art, I began to search whether there had been any similar cases related to theatre and whether any research about them existed. After extensive research, I learned about the *Uppo-Nalle* case at Kivinokan kesäteatteri and the *Kaikki äidistäni* case at The Finnish National Theatre. However, although in both, there was strong criticism on social media about something related to the performance, in the latter social media did not end up changing the actual performance the way it did in the former.⁴⁷ Furthermore, a definite reason for choosing the *Uppo-Nalle* case was that while I was interviewing people related to it, it became evident that a strong theme, in this case, was online targeting and shaming, which was not the case in the *Kaikki äidistäni* incident. Thereby, I decided to focus my thesis on just the *Uppo-Nalle*. The case is also interesting concerning widespread hyperrealism because online targeting and shaming is an activity that works the way hyperrealism does: for example, a person sees a hate comment they agree with, and since they see other people leaving them, it becomes more acceptable behaviour in their mind, so they leave a comment as well. This comment then receives likes, so the commentator gets validation for their thoughts, so their thinking of the subject becomes more defined, and it changes them. As targeting and shaming is a form of affective polarisation, I decided to focus my research on this phenomenon instead of hyperrealism because it was more appropriate for this case.

Although I chose *Uppo-Nalle* as my research subject early on in my thesis project, it took me quite some time to further define the main research question “How can affective polarisation affect a theatre performance?”. For the longest time, my main research question was: “How can online targeting and shaming affect a theatre performance?”. However, while this thesis also answers this question, it was hard to find enough theoretical framework to support my arguments concerning this question. By expanding the question and statement to affective polarisation, which online targeting and shaming is a part of, I could use Saarinen and Koskinen’s research as my theoretical framework. However, since affective polarisation is a broad phenomenon, and this is a case study, this thesis will only analyse one way it affects theatre, hence why the article “a” appears in the research question and the thesis statement.⁴⁸ The *Uppo-Nalle* case works as an example of what can happen between theatre and affective polarisation and what kind

⁴⁷ When researching the *Kaikki äidistäni* case, it became clear early on that there was a misunderstanding on social media about the character of Agrado. Although there was an intense social media discussion about the casting, which led to Reinikainen being fired temporarily from the role, in this case, the social media discussion was arguably more two-sided and, in the end, the theatre did not change anything about the play so, in this case, social media did not change the art. Kansallisteatteri 2020.

⁴⁸ By this, I mean that the research question is “How can affective polarisation affect a theatre performance?” rather than “How can affective polarisation affect theatre performances?”

of further implications it has rather than as a definitive prototype of what will happen if something similar were to happen again. Although the research question is “How can affective polarisation affect a theatre performance?” I have included some other research questions in the following paragraphs as they were influential in my research work and helped me to choose this phenomenon to focus on. At some level, this thesis also answers all these questions, to some more definitive than others, so it was vital to include them for this reason alone.

So, there are multiple other questions behind my research that this thesis also answers to some degree. As mentioned above, one of these is “How can online targeting and shaming affect a theatre performance?” to which this thesis provides one answer. Along similar lines another question I will be looking at is: “How can social media affect finished/nearly finished theatre performances?”. The answer to this question is not straightforward since it is still a relatively unexplored topic. Most research about social media and theatre, such as Lonergan’s book, focus on wanted interactions between a theatre/performance and social media. These interactions are either present from the beginning or, on the contrary, happen after the performance. For example, a theatre may ask the audience to update their social media to advertise their experience after the show or to contribute to the creation by tweeting something. However, in this case, most of the interaction between the theatre and social media happened when they had nearly finished the rehearsal process, hence the emphasis on the word “finished” in this question. Although, as shall be explored later, the theatre had been present on social media from the beginning of their rehearsal process, most interaction between the theatre and people on social media did not happen until the rehearsal process was nearing the end. The case is, therefore, one answer to this question, but it is important to note that it is not a definite answer.

The last research question I will answer in this thesis is “How does social media affect theatre?” which was the basis on which I started my research. As this is a broad question, I later narrowed it to the issue of affective polarisation, and, therefore, it is not my main research question. However, it is still noteworthy that this is the underlying research question. Although some research does exist on this topic, such as Lonergan’s book, it mainly focuses on two things. The first are wanted interactions between theatre and its audience on social media, and the second is how social media seeps into the themes of plays and, especially, how playwrights find inspiration from the arguably more negative effects of social media, such as catfishing. For example, Paavolainen et al. have written a book about European theatre history with a short chapter about theatre and social media that is filled mainly with examples of plays that deal with catfishing and other harmful

internet phenomena as their subject matter.⁴⁹ However, as I was interested in other social media phenomena that were still quite unresearched, I decided to stay away from these subjects and look at different possible ways social media affects theatre which is why I landed on affective polarisation and its effects. Although this thesis is not an all-encompassing answer to the question of; “How does social media affect theatre?” it introduces a singular way that social media can affect theatre through which it is possible to look at the broader implications.

Lastly, in this introduction, I will present the research method. Although I arrived quickly to the conclusion that this thesis would be qualitative research, it took a while to decide which specific research type would best serve the purposes I wanted to achieve. For a while, I considered doing a historical study in which I would have detailed the *Uppo-Nalle* case in as much detail as possible, through which I could have concluded what phenomenon had caused it. However, as I started doing this, it soon became evident that I wanted to do the opposite; I wanted to use the *Uppo-Nalle* case to study a phenomenon instead, and here is where affective polarisation started to form as the focal point. Therefore, I decided that this thesis would be a *case study*. In a manual for qualitative research, Jaana Vuori states that a case study is a research method where the research design builds around a single case, called a *critical case*, which is representative of the phenomenon under study.⁵⁰ According to Vuori, case studies do not aim to make broad generalisations but rely on the fact that an accurate and illustrative description of the research subject offers the opportunity to learn new things about the phenomenon and to apply the knowledge in other contexts.⁵¹ Thus, this thesis is a case study of the *Uppo-Nalle* case through which I will exemplify how affective polarisation can affect a theatre performance.

Thus, in this introduction, I have presented my research subject and the reason for choosing it, my research questions, and my research method. The structure of the rest of the thesis will be the following: In chapter two, I will further examine the concepts of affective polarisation and social media and give further background information on Elina Karjalainen, Uppo-Nalle and Kivinokan kesäteatteri. This chapter is, thus, divided into four subsections. The first focuses on relevant information about Elina Karjalainen and Uppo-Nalle concerning the case. In this subsection, I will also exemplify the differences between Harjula’s dramatisation and the first Uppo-Nalle book. In the second subsection, I will dive more into the concept of affective polarisation and in the third, I will further define the term social media. I will end this chapter with

⁴⁹ Paavolainen, von Boehm and Makkonen 2016.

⁵⁰ Vuori 2024.

⁵¹ Ibid.

the fourth subsection, where I will give some necessary background information about Kivinokan kesäteatteri and their situation before the *Uppo-Nalle* case. In chapter three, I will analyse how affective polarisation can affect a theatre performance, meaning I will go over the *Uppo-Nalle* case of 2021. This chapter is, likewise, divided into subsections, and I will begin the chapter with subsection 3.1, in which I will detail the four catalysts behind the case, the municipal elections of 2021, the *Uppo-Nalle* advert by Kivinokan kesäteatteri, and Maria Nordin and Kirsi Kautiainen's Facebook posts about the play. In 3.2, I will go over the targeting and shaming of Kivinokan kesäteatteri. Finally, in 3.3, I will detail how the theatre tried to stop the targeting and shaming and then look at its consequences. Lastly, in chapter four, I will conclude my findings about the *Uppo-Nalle* case and look at the future implications that this case suggests concerning the relationships between theatre and social media and theatre and affective polarisation.

2. Important concepts and background information

In this chapter, I will first give more background information about Uppo-Nalle and Elina Karjalainen and examine the differences between Harjula's dramatisation and the first Uppo-Nalle book. I will then further define the concepts of affective polarisation and social media. Lastly, I will go over the situation of Kivinokan kesäteatteri before the Summer of 2021.

2.1 Elina Karjalainen and Uppo-Nalle

Arguably, Uppo-Nalle is quite a stable character in Finnish children's culture, and most people have at least some ideas about the bear and how its story goes, even if they have not read the books.

Uppo-Nalle might, therefore, cause what Koskinen calls affect memory, meaning that the encounter with the bear in a new context might bring up memories and affects similar to those that the person had the first time they encountered him.⁵² Thus, it is necessary to look briefly at both the author, Elina Karjalainen, and the character of Uppo-Nalle before diving into the case itself to understand what kind of memories people might have of them. It is also vital as people used arguments like "This is going too far! I wonder what Elina Karjalainen would think of this? – I don't remember these kinds of plot twists from the Uppo-Nalle books"⁵³ to justify the online targeting and shaming. By looking at both Karjalainen's life, especially concerning vaccinations, and the first Uppo-Nalle book, it is possible to debunk these kinds of arguments that suggest that she would not have approved of the vaccination scene. Furthermore, by comparing Harjula's dramatisation to both the first Uppo-Nalle book and Karjalainen's own dramatisation, it is possible to exemplify that the version Kivinokan kesäteatteri used is not far off from the original story created by Karjalainen. Thus, to decipher how much, for example, people's affect memory might have caused them to misremember things about the Uppo-Nalle, it is vital to look at facts about both the character and his author.

Although I will not go too deep into Karjalainen's life, it is crucial to mention just a few things about it here to understand what she most likely would have thought about the vaccination scene. So, Elina Karjalainen is the author behind the Uppo-Nalle books. She wrote over twenty Uppo-Nalle books between the years of 1977 and 2005.⁵⁴ About her relationship with Uppo-Nalle, it is worth noting that Karjalainen often found inspiration from her own life for the adventures and things that happened to the bear in the stories.⁵⁵ Therefore, as Tiina Ruotsalainen points out in *Keskipohjanmaa* newspaper, Karjalainen's positive attitude towards vaccinations in the

⁵² Koskinen 2019, 67.

⁵³ Translation of the comment created by the researcher. Kautiainen 2021.

⁵⁴ Kirjojen takana 2024.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

Uppo-Nalle books could have come from her mother dying from tuberculosis when she was only eleven-years-old in 1939.⁵⁶ The vaccinations for the disease in Finland began only a few years after this in 1941.⁵⁷ Although Karjalainen's daughter Outi Svoboda said in an interview with Anna-Maija Lippu, that the vaccination scene was not a political statement made by her mother, it is likely that Karjalainen was not anti-vaccinations and had at least neutral, if not encouraging attitude towards them, as exemplified by her books.⁵⁸ In another Uppo-Nalle story *Uppo-Nalle ja sukelluskello*, which was also later turned into a play, Uppo-Nalle marries Kumma-Nalle, who is of a different colour.⁵⁹ Concerning this, Svoboda said that tolerance and acceptance of others was, thus, an extremely significant theme for her mother.⁶⁰ Although it is impossible to know what exactly Karjalainen would have thought about the *Uppo-Nalle* case, the events of her own life and the themes she represented in her books discredit using the "what would have Elina Karjalainen thought about this" as an argument against Kivinokan kesäteatteri, as she most likely would not have minded nor would she have agreed with the threats of violence.

Next, it is necessary to look at especially the first Uppo-Nalle book, which, as the first in the series, is the one that introduced the character to the world and, therefore, is most likely the one that most Finns might have read or have at least some affect memory of. I will not, however, go over the entire plot of the book but have instead gathered here what the book says, especially about vaccines, police, and proof of vaccination, as they were the elements that people complained about in the advert of the play. So, at the beginning of the first book, the bear is owned by "a very angry little boy" who loses at a card game, and sour at this loss, he tosses the bear into the sea, where Uppo-Nalle spends a long time being sunken, swimming and stuck in the ocean.⁶¹ As a result of all this, he becomes permanently slightly wet and this is where his name, Uppo-Nalle, comes from as it translates to a "sunken" (Uppo) "bear" (Nalle). Finally, after being stuck on the ice for three weeks, he floats to the shore, where a girl named Reeta finds him and brings him home.⁶² Reeta is worried about Uppo-Nalle because of its wetness and his fear of chaffinches, so when they go to the vet to get the Singing Bird Dog vaccinated Reeta brings the bear along to be checked as well.⁶³ However, the vet only tells Reeta to keep him in drier and warmer environments and does not vaccinate him.⁶⁴

⁵⁶ Ruotsalainen 2021.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Lippu 2022.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Karjalainen and Taina 1984, 13–25.

⁶² Ibid., 13–27.

⁶³ Ibid., 55.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 55.

In the book, Uppto-Nalle also gets in trouble with the police because he illegally drives a steamroller.⁶⁵ His proof of vaccination is also questioned by a locomotive driver who will not let the bear drive the vehicle without a vaccination.⁶⁶ Thus, even though as shall be examined next, the elements of vaccination, police, and proof of vaccination, are not in the same context in the play as they are in book, they are still present already in the very first Uppto-Nalle book.

So next, it is relevant to look at the differences between the dramatisation made by Harjula in 1984, which is the one Kivinkanta kesäteatteri used, and especially the first Uppto-Nalle book, to see if this could have caused the *Uppto-Nalle* to cause such intense affects. So similarly to the book, at the beginning of this play, Uppto-Nalle is created, thrown by its first owner into the sea, spends a year there, and is found by Reeta.⁶⁷ However, this is where the plotlines begin to differ a little bit: in Harjula's dramatisation, soon after Reeta finds the bear, a police officer appears and starts asking questions about whether he has a passport, a tax book, a vaccination card and a birthday.⁶⁸ When the officer finds out that Uppto-Nalle has no birthday, he starts chasing the bear.⁶⁹ Because the bear is now scared of the police, Reeta comes up with the idea that it needs to go to the vet to get a "bravery vaccination".⁷⁰ If Uppto-Nalle does this, he can get a proof of vaccination card, and the police cannot chase it anymore.⁷¹ After getting the vaccination, similarly to the book, Uppto-Nalle also receives a birthday from Reeta's mother, who has made him a birthday cake.⁷² At the end of the play, when the police officer comes to search for the bear, the officer realises Uppto-Nalle has all the needed documents, gives up, retires on the spot, and starts collecting nursery rhymes.⁷³ So evidently the plot is slightly different from the book but as exemplified here, there are still many of the same elements just in a somewhat different order and context.

Lastly, it is also noteworthy that although the vaccination scene of Uppto-Nalle was not part of the original Uppto-Nalle book, it was part of Karjalainen's own dramatisation that she made in 1980, four years prior to Harjula's version.⁷⁴ Thereby, it is likely that when Harjula made his dramatisation, he took inspiration from this earlier dramatisation by the author herself. Strong evidence for this is that the vaccination scene is almost word-for-word the same in both

⁶⁵ Ibid., 87.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 98.

⁶⁷ Karjalainen and Harjula 1984, 4–11.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 12.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 14.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 18.

⁷¹ Ibid., 18.

⁷² Ibid., 20.

⁷³ Ibid., 20.

⁷⁴ Karjalainen 1980.

dramatisations, as can be seen from the images below, which depict the moment Upo-Nalle gets the bravery vaccination. In both versions, the vet vaccinates Upo-Nalle, recites a poem about this and charges them some money for it, after which Upo-Nalle claims he was not afraid of the vaccination. The only difference is that in Karjalainen's version, it is the Singing Bird Dog that reminds Upo-Nalle he was, in fact, afraid, whereas in Harjula's version, it is Reeta. Here are the pictures of the scripts:

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UPPO
 Ei minua! Etkö voisi antaa rokotustodistusta ilman rokotus-
 ta? Karhulle kuin karhulle on rokotus liikaa.
 ELÄINLÄÄKÄRI
 Rokotustodistukseen kuuluu ehdottomasti rokotus.
 Täten omi todistettu,
 että karhu ursus ursus
 joka kyynelittää pursus
 tänään omi rokotettu.
 Markka kolmekymmentä!
 UPPO
 Voi hullu hunajapurkki! Minut on rokotettu, kuuletteko!
 Olinhan urhea, enkö ollutkin? Hassuja sellaiset, jotka pel-
 käävät rokotusta.
 LAULAVA
 Sinä pelkäsit äsker ihan kamalasti, Upo. Olit pelkkänä hyy-
 telönä. Karhu kauhuissaan, nah hah!
 UPPO
 Minulla on voimaa tassuissani. Oikea etutassuni on vaaran
 koti ja vasen on iskun pesä. Takatassuillani potkin kuin
 kenguru.

FIGURE 1 A screenshot from Elina Karjalainen's 1980 dramatisation of Upo-Nalle. The figure depicts the exact moment Upo-Nalle is vaccinated.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ Ibid., 28.

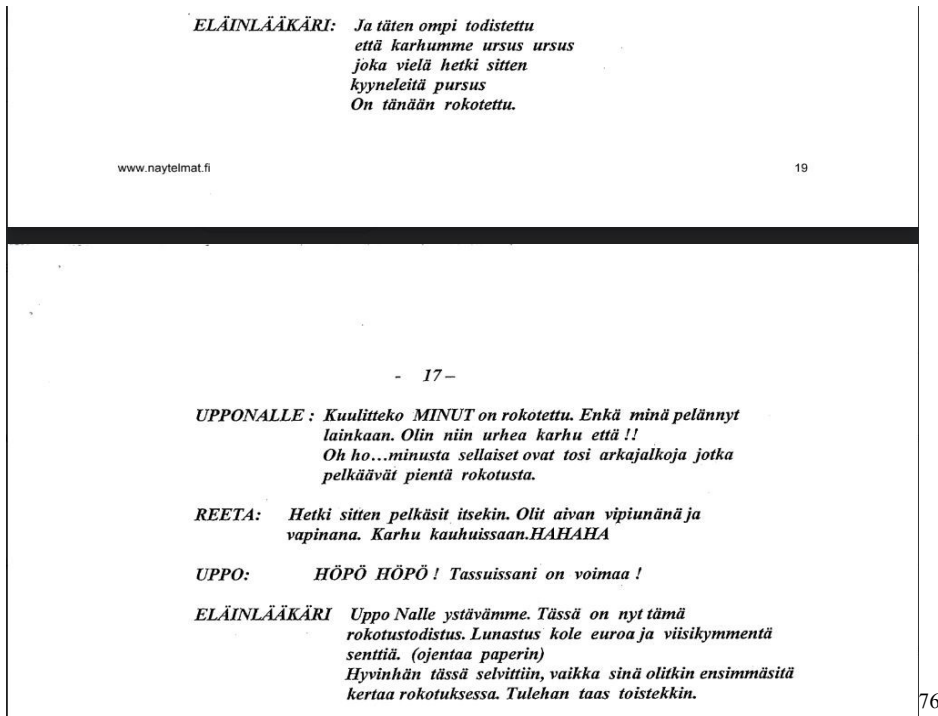


FIGURE 2 A screenshot from Jarmo Harjula's 1984 dramatisation of Uppe-Nalle. The figure depicts the exact moment Uppe-Nalle is vaccinated.

Thus, as figures 1 and 2 prove, the vaccination scene was not something Harjula added to the dramatisation himself but something that the author, Karjalainen, had already added to her version four years earlier.

It is evident that the original book and Harjula's dramatisation somewhat differ from each other, which, as Koskinen argues, is always likely to cause affects in people's minds, so it is not surprising that it did so in this case also.⁷⁷ However, what is more important to dismantle here are the arguments used against Kivinokan kesäteatteri, that Karjalainen would not approve these changes and that they were completely different from the books. As exemplified in this subsection, Karjalainen would probably not have had an issue with the vaccination scene as the theme of vaccination was a part of the original book, and a very similar scene also appeared in her own dramatisation of the first book. It is also noteworthy that under the Finnish Copyright Act of 1961, the copyrights of any original artistic work belong to the person who has created the work, and, therefore, they have "the exclusive right to control a work by reproducing it and by making it available to the public, in the original form or in an altered form, in translation or in adaptation, in another literary or artistic form, or by any other technique".⁷⁸ This means that any alterations that

⁷⁶ Karjalainen and Harjula 1984, 16–17.

⁷⁷ Koskinen 2020, 67.

⁷⁸ Finlex 2015, 1.

Harjula did in the dramatisation of *Uppo-Nalle*, would have had to have been accepted by Karjalainen. As Saarinen mentions about affective polarisation, especially on social media, posts that contain strong moral sentiments spread much faster than factual information.⁷⁹ To see how affective polarisation worked in the *Uppo-Nalle* case, it is, thus, necessary to depict what are the facts about the play, the book, and the author, and what are interpretations people made based on their affect memory for example.

2.2 Affective polarisation

To best determine and understand how affective polarisation can affect a theatre performance, it is necessary first to define what the term in question means. According to Saarinen, polarisation on its own refers to a conflictual situation where two groups have differing/opposing ideological views and, therefore, perceive their identities to be fundamentally different.⁸⁰ Saarinen further explains that, theoretically, one can approach the concept of polarisation through identification and alienation: it is a cycle in which alienation from one group reinforces identification with one's own group.⁸¹ As explained in the introduction, the term affect, or here affective, refers to the presence of emotion or a multitude of different emotions. According to Saarinen, in affective political polarisation, the alienation from other political groups is based on negative emotions.⁸² However, arguably, at least in the beginning, the affective valence, meaning the positive or negative emotional valence, towards the political issue can vary. So, for example, *Uppo-Nalle* and vaccinations do not simply cause positive or negative emotions but rather a cavalcade of emotions and feelings that fluctuate in their supposed neutrality. Both issues, therefore, have what Ahmed calls sticky affects rather than clear negative or positive affective valence.⁸³ It is then these affects that cause things such as *Uppo-Nalle* and vaccinations that are not inherently political to become political, and as they do so, their affective valence increases, which causes them to become subjects of affective polarisation. Thus, to say that affective polarisation refers to the prominence of emotions behind polarisation, it does not mean that it is a singular emotion such as hate that causes alienation from another group but rather a multitude of differing emotions that become more defined the further the affective polarisation goes.⁸⁴

⁷⁹ Saarinen 2022, 80.

⁸⁰ Saarinen 2021, 10.

⁸¹ Ibid., 10.

⁸² Ibid, 32.

⁸³ Ahmed 2014, 11.

⁸⁴ Saarinen 2021, 32.

In Finland, affective political polarisation has grown slowly, yet steadily, throughout the twenty-first century.⁸⁵ However, in Finland, the multiparty system has kept radical growth at bay as opposed to, for example, countries like the United States, whose two-party system has caused affective polarisation to flourish between the supporters of the Republican and the Democratic parties.⁸⁶ Even so, arguably, especially during and after corona, affective polarisation has continued to grow in Finland, as is evident by the parliamentary elections of 2023 and the presidential election of 2024, where there was at least talk about tactical voting, meaning that people did not necessarily vote based on their own political beliefs but rather against other political parties. Especially notable the growth of affective political polarisation has been on social media sites such as TikTok, where comments like “siksi PS”⁸⁷ are on almost every Finnish TikTok video regardless of the subject matter. According to Saarinen, although virtual platforms have enabled like-minded people to come together in a whole new way, they have simultaneously enabled the rapid growth of antagonism between different groups.⁸⁸ Saarinen also explains that social media has enabled people to group in an unprecedented new way, where an individual does not have to understand everything themselves as the group thinks for them.⁸⁹ For example, if a person is unsure about taking the coronavirus vaccination, and then they go to social media to look for information about it, their thinking can easily radicalise. As Saarinen explains, social media posts containing strong moral sentiments spread the most effectively.⁹⁰ So, it is likely that if one goes to, for instance, Facebook to find information about vaccinations, they will either find people that are totally against or for it; the neutral opinion either does not exist or gets shadowed by the louder ones.

According to Saarinen, one of the essential elements in the spread of affective polarisation are political online “ambassadors”.⁹¹ These people are highly active on social media, have many followers, and often take strong stances on political issues. A typical example of such a person would be a politician with a very active presence on some social media site, perhaps the most commonly X (former Twitter). However, an “ambassador” does not have to be an elected politician; they can also be a social media influencer, an artist, a business owner, or anyone else; the only requirement is an active social media presence. As shall be examined, in the *Uppo-Nalle* case,

⁸⁵ Suomen kansallinen vaalitutkimuskonsortio (FNES) 2023.

⁸⁶ Mäkinen 2022.

⁸⁷ “Siksi PS” meaning “and therefore the Finns Party” began to circulate on the social media platform TikTok sometime around 2023 before the parliamentary elections. Its purpose seems to be to cause an emotional reaction in the opposing site since it is often commented under the tiktoks of those who represent different political ideologies to those of the Finns Party.

⁸⁸ Saarinen 2022, 14.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 57–58.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 51.

⁹¹ Ibid., 79.

these “ambassadors” were arguably Maria Nordin and Kirsi Kautiainen, both of whom were running to be elected in the municipal elections of 2021 for the Crystal Party. It is especially Nordin who represents this kind of an online “ambassador” as she has, for instance, on Facebook 21k followers, and she posts regularly on things related to, for example, healthcare, offering alternative solutions to Western medicine.⁹² Alongside strongly moralised sentiments, according to Saarinen, emotions also control social media, which is why hate speech spreads faster than factual texts.⁹³ As shall be examined later in chapter 3, the post Nordin made about Kivinokan kesäteatteri contains both strong moral sentiments and appeals to emotions as she, for instance, says that the “medicalisation” of children’s culture is “shocking” and that “We are each so much stronger than we even think”.⁹⁴ As social media is predominantly emotion-based, these posts that appeal directly to feelings and morals are likely to spread fast on social media as their intended purpose is to cause strong emotions in the reader and either cause alienation or identification, which in turn causes affective polarisation.

Another thing Saarinen notes is that in affective political polarisation it is the hostile rhetoric of political party leaders that determines what is acceptable language for their followers to use.⁹⁵ Although she is not a party leader, Kirsi Kautiainen, in her post about the *Uppo-Nalle*, directly encouraged people to give Kivinokan kesäteatteri feedback.⁹⁶ Arguably, this may have caused people to be more eager to send the theatre online targeting and shaming as they now had “permission” to do so. Similarly, the Crystal Party leader Juho Lyytikäinen, in his Facebook post, which he directed to Aurora Rämö from the *Suomen Kuvalehti* magazine because she had asked to interview him about the case but he declined, said he gives his full support to the post Nordin made criticising the *Uppo-Nalle*.⁹⁷ Furthermore, Lyytikäinen also mentions in the post that he and the other Crystal Party board of directors hope that Nordin will keep posting similar texts.⁹⁸ Although Lyytikäinen seemed to be unaware of Kautiainen’s post about the *Uppo-Nalle*, as his post mentions that he went through all of the party candidates’ Facebook walls and did not see anyone else post about the case, her name does appear in his post.⁹⁹ In his *Uppo-Nalle* post, Lyytikäinen mentions that Kautiainen might be someone who he thinks would be able to answer questions related to the

⁹² Nordin Facebook-page 2024.

⁹³ Saarinen 2022, 80.

⁹⁴ Nordin 2021.

⁹⁵ Saarinen 2022, 40.

⁹⁶ Kautiainen 2021.

⁹⁷ Lyytikäinen 2021.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

Uppo-Nalle case because she has worked in the medical field.¹⁰⁰ Therefore, Lyytikäinen, who is already an authority figure for the party supporters as the Party leader, gives his approval to Kautiainen and Nordin and thus extends his authority to them. Arguably, then, the rhetoric Lyytikäinen, Nordin and Kautiainen used in the *Uppo-Nalle* case deemed what was an appropriate reaction for their followers.

Therefore, one of the potential reasons that might have caused people to target and shame Kivinokan kesäteatteri was the rhetoric in Kautiainen's post in which she directly encouraged people to send the theatre feedback. Arguably, online targeting and shaming which is a "phenomenon in which one or more persons or groups urge and incite a large number of people to attack one person in different ways, for example by sending hate messages by email or posting such on social media" is the most visible form of affective polarisation in the *Uppo-Nalle* case.¹⁰¹ Saarinen notes that public targeting and shaming is not a new phenomenon, but what is different in comparison to online targeting and shaming is the scale and impact of the negative discourse enabled by the rapid development of social media in the last two decades.¹⁰² Moreover, the discourse is often more personal, as is encouraged by the reactive and emotional nature of social media.¹⁰³ A typical example of online targeting and shaming is *doxing*, which is finding personal information about the person and bringing it up as a part of the conversation.¹⁰⁴ The goal of doxing is arguably to both cause direct harm to the person and to cause an emotional reaction in them. According to Saarinen, in social media, it is easier to insult another person with emotion-based words than in face-to-face interactions because the other person's physical and verbal reactions are not truly visible.¹⁰⁵ Contradictory, it is, therefore, easier to target people's emotions on social media because these emotions are not truly accessible. Online targeting and shaming is, thus, an extreme form that affective polarisation takes on social media.

To summarize, affective polarisation is, therefore, emotions-based polarisation in which the basis of alienation comes from identification with one's group rather than from differences in political ideologies with other groups. Affective polarisation heightens in social media where likes, shares, and hearts reaffirm the thought that our thinking of something is correct.¹⁰⁶ For those who are unsure about their opinions, in affective polarisation, social media

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ministry of the Interior Finland 2024.

¹⁰² Saarinen 2022, 128.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 128.

¹⁰⁴ Ministry of the Interior Finland 2024.

¹⁰⁵ Saarinen 2022, 37–8.

¹⁰⁶ Mäkinen 2022.

“ambassadors” offer a way to think and show what kind of language and rhetoric is acceptable. In social media, affective polarisation can more easily take radical forms, such as targeting and shaming, because the emotional reactions of other people are not truly accessible.

2.3 Social media

As most of the affective polarisation in the *Uppo-Nalle* case happened on social media, it is essential to define what this term means and entails to understand how social media can affect theatre. Although the term is perhaps part of common knowledge, Lonergan argues that there are still multiple definitions of social media, the main difference being what different researchers include in the definition. Firstly, what is commonly understood as social media began in the late 1990s with the development of WEB 2.0, which refers to the evolution of the internet that allowed users to interact with websites and other users and to create “user-generated content”.¹⁰⁷ These interactions and content can be anything from posting texts and pictures, commenting, and liking photos et cetera. WEB 2.0, therefore, differs from the previous phase of the internet, WEB 1.0, as it allows humans to interact with each other via the internet as opposed to its predecessor, where this was not possible.¹⁰⁸ The developments of WEB 2.0 especially in the last decade or so have led to the ever-growing amount of various social media platforms that allow all kinds of interactions between users.¹⁰⁹ Although the popularity and accessibility of these apps and platforms differ from country to country, most people are likely at least somewhat familiar with apps like Facebook, Instagram or TikTok, all of which are social networking services that allow users to post content and interact with each other. Compared to WEB 3.0, WEB 2.0 entails sociality because most sites are human-made and meant to be read and interacted with by humans. In WEB 3.0, also known as semantic web, “data in web pages is structured and tagged in such a way that it can be read directly by computers”.¹¹⁰ Thus, it is WEB 2.0 that can be understood as a synonym for social media because it is mainly humans interacting with each other/websites as opposed to its predecessor which does not entail this attribute and its successor which entails much more.

However, according to Lonergan, there are both narrower and broader definitions of social media than WEB 2.0. For example, Tom Standage argues that social media involves “the circulation of any semi-public ‘user-generated content’ through networks”.¹¹¹ Lonergan argues that by this definition, for example, the pamphlet wars in early eighteenth-century England could be

¹⁰⁷ Lonergan 2016, 7.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Lonergan 2016, 7.

¹¹⁰ Oxford English Dictionary March 2024: Semantic Web N.

¹¹¹ Lonergan 2016, 8.

understood as social media as they were user-generated content that was widely circulating within the public.¹¹² However, in general language when one refers to social media, it rarely means anything else besides “websites and applications which enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking”.¹¹³ Thus, typically, the involvement of computer networks is an integral part of the definition of social media. Nonetheless, as Lonergan examines, although most people agree that information technology is a crucial part of social media, there is some disgruntlement of whether “email, chatrooms, text and multimedia messages, and similar infrastructures for social interaction via the Internet” should also be included in the definition.¹¹⁴ Lonergan himself would incorporate these as even though they do not necessarily allow people to create content the same way platforms like Instagram or Facebook do, they still allow the most significant aspect of social media which is social interaction via the Internet. Thus, the definition of social media can be as narrow as a singular platform within WEB 2.0, such as Facebook, or as broad as any user-generated content in public circulation that does not even need the Internet, such as pamphlets in eighteenth-century England.

Therefore, the definition of social media is not as clear-cut as it might at first seem. For this thesis, I will use a similar definition of social media to Lonergan’s, meaning that I will include in my definition any platform on the Internet that allows users to interact with each other. Thus, I will exclude Standage’s suggestion that it could be just any user-generated publicly circulating content, but I will include things such as emails, which, according to Lonergan, are not always understood as social media the same way, for example, Facebook is. I will do this because, as shall be examined in chapter three, most of the contact between the public and Kivinokan kesäteatteri happened either on what is typically understood as social media, meaning Facebook and Instagram, but also a lot of the interaction with the two happened via email, so it is necessary to include these types of media as well.

2.4 Kivinokan kesäteatteri before the *Uppo-Nalle* case

To examine how affective polarisation can affect a theatre performance, it is necessary to also give some background information on the theatre, Kivinokan kesäteatteri, that produced the play to understand why and how the phenomenon was able to affect both the theatre and the performance. Thus, I will first go over the overall situation of the theatre before the Summer of 2021, then explain

¹¹² Ibid., 13.

¹¹³ Oxford English Dictionary March 2024: Social Media, N.

¹¹⁴ Lonergan 2016, 24.

why they chose to produce this exact play, and lastly, look at their social media presence leading up to the case.

So Kivinokan Kesäteatteri is a semi-professional summer theatre in Helsinki that produces roughly one to two performances a year and, additionally, they have some guest performances each Summer.¹¹⁵ The theatre was founded in 1993 but did not have systematic annual activities until 2009.¹¹⁶ The first thing to consider about the theatre before the *Uppo-Nalle* case is that their financial situation was not ideal. One of the founding members, the current director of the theatre, and the director of the 2021 *Uppo-Nalle* performance, Kari Kinnaslampi, revealed in an interview that 2021 was their first year in a new location at Kivinokka, where they had built new facilities for the theatre from the ground up themselves.¹¹⁷ Even though they had some sponsors, the theatre had not received any funding from the city of Helsinki.¹¹⁸ Therefore, according to Kinnaslampi, they had invested a lot of personal money into building the theatre.¹¹⁹ Altogether, the relocation had cost them tens of thousands of euros.¹²⁰ Therefore, the theatre and its founders were financially in a very vulnerable situation in 2021.

The second thing to consider about the situation of the theatre before the *Uppo-Nalle* case is that due to the move, they would have had to work on building their potential audience by making sure its location became known to, for example, local people and those who had been regulars in the previous location. In an interview, Kinnaslampi recalled that he had thought about how it takes some time for people to find new places, and, therefore, he had estimated that they would have been lucky to get 3000 people altogether in the audience the whole Summer season.¹²¹ From an advert of their 2021 performances, one can see that they had 48 performances during that Summer, so if they had had 3000 spectators the whole performance season, there would have been roughly 60 audience members per show.¹²² This number is not a lot, considering that in an interview with Ulla Wallinsalo, Kinnaslampi estimated that at its entire capacity, their auditorium could seat about 300 people.¹²³ This means that if each of the 48 performances they had that Summer would have been sold out, the theatre would have had roughly 14 400 spectators the whole season. Compared to this, the estimated 3000 is quite a modest number. It is also important to note that this

¹¹⁵ Kinnaslampi 2023, Personal interview.

¹¹⁶ Kivinokan kesäteatteri-website 2024.

¹¹⁷ Kinnaslampi 2023, Personal interview.

¹¹⁸ Eromäki 2021.

¹¹⁹ Kinnaslampi 2023, Personal interview.

¹²⁰ Eromäki 2021.

¹²¹ Kinnaslampi 2023, Personal interview.

¹²² RetroDigi Videopalvelu 2021.

¹²³ Wallinsalo 2020.

was the sort of “best-case scenario” that the theatre had in mind, so they were expecting an even smaller number of spectators. The theatre was, thus, in a vulnerable situation in terms of being able to find its new audience.

The last thing to consider about the overall situation of the theatre during 2021 is that it was still a year when coronavirus restrictions and caution about the virus hindered people’s ability/willingness to go to theatre. Although there were no restrictions related to theatre during the performance season of *Uppo-Nalle* between 8 June 2021 and 17 July 2021, most likely, people were still quite wary of attending live events such as theatre performances. For instance, the statistics published by *Theatre Info Finland* show that in the year 2019, the year before the coronavirus pandemic, professional summer theatres had 387 685 spectators per year, while in the year 2021, the number was 193 925, which was significantly lower by almost fifty per cent.¹²⁴ To put things more into a perspective: in the Summer of 2023 when there was no coronavirus restrictions and the location of the theatre was more widely known, Kivinokan kesäteatteri was expecting roughly 8000 spectators for their two shows, so the 3000 that they estimated for 2021 was nowhere near the capacity they could host.¹²⁵ Thus, the theatre was in a very vulnerable and unsure situation before the Summer of 2021 due to its new location and the fact that coronavirus was still taking its toll on theatre audience numbers in general. It is necessary to highlight this vulnerability to be able to analyse what were the consequences of the case.

Next, relating to Kivinokan kesäteatteri, it is also necessary to look at the timeline of the *Uppo-Nalle* performance before the Summer of 2021, meaning the reason behind choosing this play, the rehearsal period, and the early advertising of the play. Regarding why the play was chosen, Kinnaslampi said that during 2020 he had been reading a lot of children’s plays to decide which one to perform the following Summer, he said he was looking for a play with some pedagogical value and real thought behind it.¹²⁶ In an interview with Milka Rissanen, Kinnaslampi explained that the inspiration to choose *Uppo-Nalle* came during a library trip when a librarian told him that, at the time, the character of Uppo-Nalle was popular among children visiting the library.¹²⁷ Kinnaslampi also said that he chose the play in October of 2020, when there was no talk about children getting the coronavirus vaccination in Finland yet.¹²⁸ In fact, as it can be seen from the *Finnish institute of health and welfare* website, it was not until 17 June 2021 when it was recommended that the

¹²⁴ Theatre Info Finland 2022.

¹²⁵ Kinnaslampi 2023, Personal interview.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Rissanen 2021.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

vaccine should also be given to the first batch of children; to those aged 12-15 that belonged to the risk groups.¹²⁹ Of course, it is possible that there was some talk, for example, on social media, about children getting the coronavirus vaccination already in 2020 but it would be impossible to prove that Kinnaslampi knew about it. Kinnaslampi said that, in his opinion, the scene is supposed to ease the fear of doctors that children might have in general and that it is not about any specific vaccination, such as the coronavirus vaccination.¹³⁰ Arguably then, Kinnaslampi did not choose the play because he wanted to promote the coronavirus vaccination, as some of those who targeted and shamed the theatre suggested, but because it has, for example, good pedagogical elements in it and the character himself was popular at the time.

The second thing to consider relating to the timeline is when the rehearsals and the advertising for the play began. It is necessary to look at these as they both prove that the theatre had chosen *Uppo-Nalle* as their 2021 performance way before the coronavirus vaccinations for children began, and it also showcases the kind of presence the theatre had on social media. In an email, Kinnaslampi said that the rehearsal process for the play began in the Autumn of 2020, with some singing rehearsals that continued until 2021.¹³¹ Furthermore, he stated that the choreography rehearsals started in early 2021 and that the acting rehearsals began in April of 2021.¹³² Thus, the rehearsals were already in process before the *Finnish institute of health and welfare* recommended coronavirus vaccinations to any children. On the other hand, the earliest Instagram ad post for the performance is from 21 December 2020.¹³³ Likewise, the earliest Facebook post about the performance is from 9 December 2020.¹³⁴ These ads are simple in their content and do not tell a lot about the performance itself, but rather inform what Kivinokan kesäteatteri is going to perform and when. In all their simplicity, however, these ads further prove that the theatre had indeed decided already during the Autumn of 2020 to perform *Uppo-Nalle* in the Summer of 2021 as they would not have been able to advertise the performance if they did not know what play they were going to perform. Moreover, they also show that while the theatre was present on social media, their engagement there was minimal, focused on advertising, not on, for example, active engagement with their audience.

Thus, as explained in this subsection, Kivinokan kesäteatteri is a small theatre in Helsinki with annual performance activities. However, since the performance season is limited to

¹²⁹ Terveystieteiden tutkimuskeskus ja hyvinvoinnin laitos 2023.

¹³⁰ Rissanen 2021

¹³¹ Kinnaslampi 2023, Email interview.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Kivinokan kesäteatteri Instagram-page 2020.

¹³⁴ Kivinokan kesäteatteri Facebook-page 2020.

the Summer, with small audience numbers, their financial profits are not exceedingly big. Furthermore, as explained, before the 2021 *Uppo-Nalle* case, the situation of the theatre was uncertain due to the move to a new place, limited funding, and the coronavirus pandemic. The theatre was present on social media before the case, but it was mainly posting adverts for its shows and not going out of its way to engage with its potential audience there. Overall, the theatre was not in a powerful place where they would have had the proper capacity to handle the targeting and shaming caused by affective polarisation.

3. The *Uppo-Nalle* case of 2021

In this chapter, I will go over the *Uppo-Nalle* case of 2021, meaning I will detail how affective polarisation, in this case, affected a theatre performance and a theatre. I will begin this with subsection 3.1, which details the catalysts behind the affective polarisation in this case, meaning the municipal elections of 2021, the advertisement that Kivinokan kesäteatteri made which mentioned the vaccination scene, and the posts that Nordin and Kautiainen made about the play. I will then move on to subsection 3.2, where I will detail what forms affective polarisation took in this case, meaning the different forms of targeting and shaming, and what this included. Lastly, in subsection 3.3, I will go over the consequences of this case for the performance and the theatre.

3.1 The catalysts behind the case

In the *Uppo-Nalle* case, arguably, there are four catalysts behind the case: the Finnish municipal elections of 2021, the advertisement detailing the vaccination scene, Kirsi Kautiainen's Facebook post, and Maria Nordin's post on the same platform. As Saarinen argues, usually in affective polarisation, especially on social media, different kinds of "ambassadors" lead the conversation to various topics.¹³⁵ They do this because it fuels their agenda, for example, in this case, the need to get visibility in an election.¹³⁶ Thus, elections are likely to cause affective polarisation because they are a period when people such as these "ambassadors" are more likely to take stronger stances on issues as it helps them get visibility for themselves and their agenda. Therefore, arguably, in this case, the first catalyst is the 2021 municipal elections. These elections are usually held every four years on the third Sunday of April in Finland to choose the councillors of the municipalities.¹³⁷ However, in 2021, the election was held during a challenging time as there were a lot of coronavirus restrictions in place and because of them it was postponed by a couple months, the final election date was 13 June 2021.¹³⁸ The election, therefore, created a very fruitful situation for affective polarisation to happen, as the unprecedented circumstances of the coronavirus pandemic created a situation where many of the candidates and the parties, almost by default, had to take stances on issues such as coronavirus restrictions and vaccines, both issues that are very likely to cause affects in people's minds.

The fact that the municipal elections of 2021 was one of the catalysts behind the case was also brought up by Kinnaslampi in the interview I conducted with him as he said that he

¹³⁵ Saarinen 2022, 79.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 131.

¹³⁷ Ministry of Justice Elections-website 2024.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

believes the whole case was just about the Crystal Party members wanting visibility in this election.¹³⁹ Taking a stance about the coronavirus vaccination would have been something that would definitely appeal to the supporters of the Crystal Party as even though, there was nothing specific in the Crystal Party 2021 municipal elections party program about the coronavirus vaccination, in this program they do state that they believe Finland needs a wide range of complementary organic and naturopathic treatment options to complement current Western medicine and that they should be covered by state aid just like the various treatments of Western medicine.¹⁴⁰ Furthermore in an interview during the election, the party's leader Juho Lyytikäinen said that the party's opinion relating to corona vaccinations was a "strict no" or at least they do not recommend taking them.¹⁴¹ It also cannot be ignored that it was Kautiainen and Nordin, both of whom were Crystal Party candidates in this election in the Helsinki area, that brought up the *Uppo-Nalle* vaccination scene to their social media followers.¹⁴² Thus, the municipal elections of 2021 which happened during the height of coronavirus restrictions is arguably the first catalyst in the *Uppo-Nalle* case as it created a situation in which it was beneficial for candidates to take stances on issues, such as vaccines, which contain strong affects and usually have either positive or negative affective valence for many people.

The second catalyst in the case was arguably the advertisement of *Uppo-Nalle* that Kivinokan kesäteatteri made, which contained the description of the vaccination scene. This ad is the one that later started circulating among those who started targeting and shaming the theatre. According to Kinnaslampi, he made the ad in October/November 2020, when the vaccination debate was not what he called such a "hot topic" yet.¹⁴³ The ad was distributed as flyers, in newspapers, and online throughout the Spring of 2021. There are two pictures of the ad below. Although the text is the exact same in both, the source is different: the first is a picture of a flyer that Kivinokan kesäteatteri had saved in their archives, and the second is a screenshot of the online version that username "Lauri Nuutinen" had posted in the comment section of Maria Nordin's Facebook post about the play. Below the pictures is an English translation of the text in the ads.

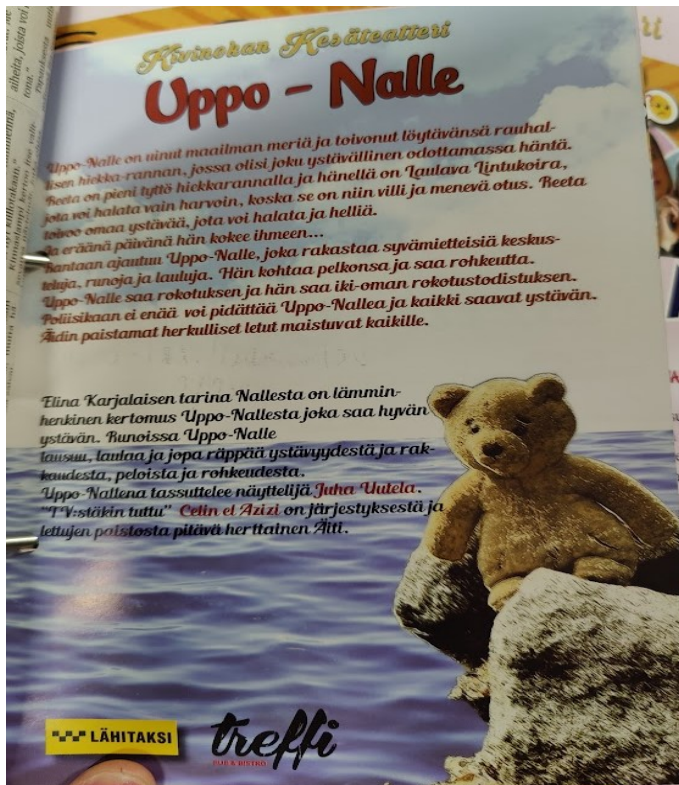
¹³⁹ Kinnaslampi 2023, Personal interview.

¹⁴⁰ Puolueohjelmien tietokanta POHTIVA 2021.

¹⁴¹ Kähkönen 2021.

¹⁴² Kristallipuolue Facebook-page 2021.

¹⁴³ Haapaniemi 2021.



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FIGURE 3 A picture of the Uppo-Nalle advertisement flyer that Kivinkokan kesäteatteri had in their archives.



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FIGURE 4 A screenshot of the Uppo-Nalle advertisement that the username "Lauri Nuutinen" had posted under Maria Nordin's Uppo-Nalle Facebook post.

¹⁴⁴ Kivinkokan kesäteatteri 2021, Uppo-Nalle advert.

¹⁴⁵ Nordin 2021.

The translation of the ad goes:

Kivinokan kesäteatteri – Uppo-Nalle

Uppo-Nalle has swam through the world's oceans, hoping to find a peaceful sandy beach where there would be someone friendly waiting for him. Reeta is a small girl on the sandy beach, and she has a Singing Bird Dog, which can only be hugged seldom because it is such a wild and outgoing creature. Reeta wishes to have her own friend whom she could cuddle and cherish. And one day, a miracle happens to her.... Uppo-Nalle, who loves deep conversations, poems and singing washes to the shore. He faces his fears and gains courage. Uppo-Nalle gets a vaccination and his own proof of vaccination card. Not even the police can arrest Uppo-Nalle anymore, and everyone gets a friend. The delicious pancakes made by mom are eaten by everyone. Elina Karjalainen's story of a bear is a warm-hearted tale of Uppo-Nalle who gets a good friend. In the poems Uppo-Nalle recites, sings, and even raps about friendship and love, fears and bravery. Juha Uutela plays Uppo-Nalle who pads along. "Known-from-TV" Celin El Azizi portrays the sweet order and pancake-baking loving mother.¹⁴⁶

Especially noteworthy from the ad are the two lines that mention the vaccination, proof of vaccination card and the police: "Uppo-Nalle gets a vaccination and his own proof of vaccination card. Not even the police can arrest Uppo-Nalle anymore, and everyone gets a friend". As shall be looked at next, this is the part that Nordin highlighted in her Facebook post of the performance, and, therefore, the part that then inspired people to target and shame the theatre as they took this line as coronavirus vaccination propaganda. However, if one looks at the plot of *Uppo-Nalle*, it is apparent that the vaccination scene is a part of it, just like everything else detailed in the ad. Nonetheless, even if the vaccination is in the ad because it is part of the plot, the ad itself is one of the catalysts behind the *Uppo-Nalle* case as it is what those who were online targeting and shaming to Kivinokan kesäteatteri highlighted.

¹⁴⁶ This translation is not an official translation. It was created by the researcher for this thesis. Kivinokan kesäteatteri 2021, *Uppo-Nalle* advert.

The third catalyst behind the *Uppo-Nalle* case is the post that Maria Nordin made on Facebook on 16 May 2021 about the performance.¹⁴⁷¹⁴⁸ A photo of this post and a translation of it can be seen below:

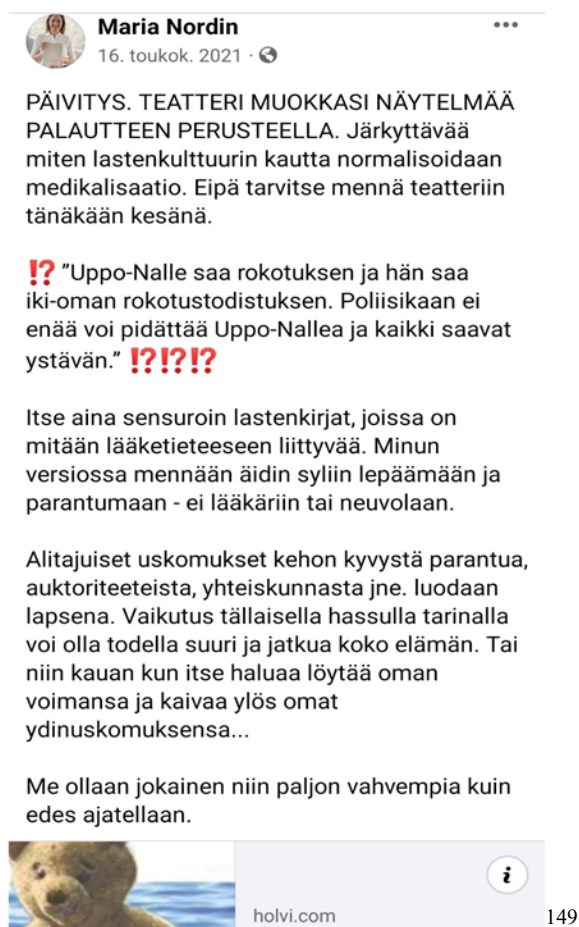


FIGURE 5 Maria Nordin's Facebook post about the *Uppo-Nalle* performance.

Here is a translation of the post:

UPDATE. THE THEATRE CHANGED THE PLAY BASED ON THE FEEDBACK. It's shocking how medicalisation is normalised through children's culture. No need to go to the theatre this summer. !?"Uppo-Nalle gets a vaccination and his own proof of vaccination card. Not even the police can arrest Uppo-Nalle anymore, and everyone gets a friend."!?!?!? Personally, I always censor children's books that deal with anything medicine-related. In my version, you go to your mother's arms to

¹⁴⁷ Nordin 2021.

¹⁴⁸ Nordin has since deleted the post, but it was still up on 28 September 2022 when I took a screenshot of it, which I have saved. It is also noteworthy that the post was updated sometime during May of 2021 when Nordin added a header in all caps, which lets the reader note that the theatre changed the play due to the criticism.

¹⁴⁹ Nordin 2021.

rest and heal - not to the doctor or the child health centre. Subconscious beliefs about the body's ability to heal, authority, society, etc. are created as a child. The impact of this kind of a silly story can be enormously powerful and last a lifetime. Or as long as you want to find your own power and dig up your own core beliefs... We are each so much stronger than we even think.¹⁵⁰

In the post, she critiques the fact that there is a vaccination scene in the *Uppo-Nalle*, which, according to her, is “medicalisation” of children’s culture.¹⁵¹ Notably, Nordin has quite a large following on social media and during the time she made the post she was still running as a candidate in the municipal elections. As Saarinen argues, in affective polarisation, it is typical that social media “ambassadors” lead the conversations towards various topics by taking stances on current issues.¹⁵² Although Nordin is not explicitly forbidding people to go see *Uppo-Nalle* in her post, nor is she telling people to go give the theatre online targeting and shaming, by bringing the performance into the awareness of her many thousands of followers, she is putting the theatre in a very vulnerable position. In the comment section, there is evidence that the post did encourage people to start giving feedback to the theatre as there is, for example, a comment from the username “Emma Kuu” that says “Järkyttävää! Tästä pitää laittaa palautetta” which translates to “Shocking! This calls for feedback”.¹⁵³ A strong evidence that the post was one of the catalysts behind the case was that Nordin made it on the same day that the online targeting and shaming started happening Sunday 16 May 2021.¹⁵⁴ This is evident from the interview that Kinnaslampi had with Tuomo Hyttinen where he reveals that the calls and emails containing targeting and shaming began on the morning of Sunday 16 May 2021.¹⁵⁵ Thus, it is evident that Nordin’s post was one of the four catalysts in the case.

The fourth and final catalyst in the case was the post that Kirsi Kautiainen made on her Facebook page sometime in May of 2021.¹⁵⁶¹⁵⁷ A picture of this post and a translation of it can be seen below:

¹⁵⁰ This translation is not an official translation. It was created by the researcher for this thesis. Nordin 2021.

¹⁵¹ Nordin 2021.

¹⁵² Saarinen 2022 79.

¹⁵³ Nordin 2021.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Hyttinen 2021.

¹⁵⁶ Kautiainen 2021.

¹⁵⁷ This post, like Nordin’s, has since been deleted. I received the photo of the post and its comments from Veera Tyhtilä, who works at PEN Finland. The exact date of the post is unknown.

and shocked/sad emojis do not exactly hint that the messages should be positive. In a comment under the same post, she also says: “Laittakaa jokainen palaute erikseen, niin saadaan paljon enemmän voimaa mukaan!” which translates to “Please everyone post your feedback separately so that we can get a lot more power on board!”.¹⁶⁰ This can be seen as a form of online targeting and shaming because if it was just about giving genuine feedback to the theatre, sending one post with multiple signatures, for example, should be enough. However, arguably, the need to flood the theatre’s social media with as much power as possible tells of a desire to shame Kivinokan kesäteatteri publicly. Nordin and Kautiainen, therefore, differ slightly in their position as social media “ambassadors”, not only because the latter has a significantly lower follower number but because, at least in this case, their approach is quite different.¹⁶¹ Kautiainen’s post tells people directly what they should do, whereas Nordin’s post contains what Saarinen calls “strong moral sentiments”, and it appeals to emotions.¹⁶² In her post, Nordin exemplifies what people should think about the performance, but she does not encourage people to send direct feedback to the theatre, unlike Kautiainen. Thus, although her approach differs from Nordin’s, Kautiainen’s Facebook post can be understood as the fourth catalyst in the *Uppo-Nalle* case.

Therefore, arguably, there are four catalysts behind why *Uppo-Nalle* became a site of affective polarisation: the municipal elections of 2021 that happened during the coronavirus pandemic, the ad that Kivinokan kesäteatteri made of the performance, which included the description of the plot that contains a vaccination scene, the post that Maria Nordin made, and lastly the post that Kirsi Kautiainen made.

3.2 The targeting and shaming of Kivinokan kesäteatteri

In this subsection, I will detail the height of affective polarisation in this case, meaning I will look at the different forms of online targeting and shaming that Kivinokan kesäteatteri received since the *Uppo-Nalle* became a sight of affectively polarised conversation. I have, however, titled this subsection “targeting and shaming” instead of “online targeting and shaming” as I will also be going over some threats that the theatre received outside social media, mainly in the form of phone calls.

So, although affective polarisation is not just an online phenomenon, it is often precisely the social media echo chamber where it happens and gets enforced nowadays. This was also true in the *Uppo-Nalle* case, as the most notable site of affective polarisation in this case, at

¹⁶⁰ Kautiainen 2021.

¹⁶¹ At the time of writing this thesis, Kautiainen has 3,9k followers on Facebook. Kautiainen Facebook-page 2024.

¹⁶² Saarinen 2022, 51.

least in the beginning, was Facebook. Firstly, as mentioned earlier, Facebook is where Kautiainen and Nordin posted their posts about the performance that worked as catalysts in the case. Secondly, it is also where the theatre first started receiving online targeting and shaming on its posts.

Unfortunately, for research purposes, the comments on Kivinokan kesäteatteri's Facebook wall are no longer visible since they were deleted by the theatre when they decided to restrict the commenting possibilities and neither were they saved or screenshotted by anyone.¹⁶³ However, some kind of picture of the magnitude of the targeting and shaming is still visible on comments under, for example, Kautiainen's Facebook post. One commentator under the post commented, for instance, that there were 160 comments under one post before the comment section was closed.¹⁶⁴ Even though it is not clear what these comments entailed, the nature of the content most likely was rather negative, as is suggested by the need to close the comment section, and by looking at what people commented under Kautiainen's post. For example, one commenter under Kautiainen's post said: "suora palaute heidän fb sivuille laitettu, oksettavaa [vihaemoji]" which translates to "direct feedback posted on their fb page, this is disgusting [angry emoji]".¹⁶⁵ As the word "disgusting" and the angry emoji have a rather negative connotation, this comment exemplifies that the "feedback" these commentators were giving was certainly not positive. Thus, the comments on Kivinokan kesäteatteri's Facebook wall were one of the first forms of affective polarisation in the *Uppo-Nalle* case. Although no record of them remains, the fact that the theatre had to close its comment section suggests that the content of the comments was exceedingly harsh.

Another form of online targeting and shaming often talked about concerning Facebook and the *Uppo-Nalle* is that there were threats online, particularly comments in a private Facebook group, in which people threatened to come to the theatre with baseball bats. According to *Finland's Ministry of the Interior*, sending direct threats is quite common in online targeting and shaming as the goal is to undermine the trust in an organisation.¹⁶⁶ Unfortunately, like the other comments, these threats that Kivinokan kesäteatteri received were not saved or screenshotted, so there is no photographic evidence of the baseball bat threats. When I asked Juha Uutela, who played Uppo-Nalle in the performance, whether he knew where I could find these comments, he said that he had seen them in a private Facebook group called "koronakapinalliset" which translates to "coronarebels".¹⁶⁷ The group has since been deleted or at least it was no longer active on Facebook.

¹⁶³ Hapuli and Åkman 2021.

¹⁶⁴ Kautiainen 2021.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Ministry of the Interior Finland 2024.

¹⁶⁷ Uutela 2023.

However, although these threats are no longer visible anywhere, many newspapers, such as *Ilta-lehti* and *Helsingin Uutiset*, reported on their contents at the time when the online targeting and shaming was happening.¹⁶⁸¹⁶⁹ These sources consistently report that many who were opposed to coronavirus vaccination commented in a private Facebook group how the *Uppo-Nalle* vaccination scene is an example of how pharmaceutical companies are feeding propaganda to children.¹⁷⁰ The same newspapers also reported that it was in this group that some of the commentators threatened to come to the theatre with baseball bats.¹⁷¹ In an interview, Uutela also revealed that he had joined the “koronakapinalliset” Facebook group to try and talk with those who were sending the hate to the theatre, so he had likewise seen these comments, which further proves that the comments and the group existed.¹⁷² So, the second way affective polarisation affected *Uppo-Nalle* and Kivinokan kesäteatteri, was thus, through actual threats of violence.

Lastly, relating to Facebook, even though most of the online targeting and shaming which took place there is no longer visible, one thing that remains of the harassment are the “angry” emoji reactions. On Facebook, it is possible to react to a post with an emoji, and one of these reaction buttons is an emoji that portrays an angry face. For example, at the time I am writing this thesis in 2024, there are still 30 “angry” emoji reactions on a Facebook ad made about the play on 25 April 2021.¹⁷³ The content of this ad is just a short clip of Uutela talking about his character in the play, and a brief text that tells when the premiere of the show is and a link to the ticket shop.¹⁷⁴ Nothing in the post, therefore, contains anything that could justify an angry reaction, so it is evident that these reactions were left by those who targeted and shamed the theatre in aims to create a negative image of the theatre.¹⁷⁵ In an interview, Uutela revealed that he asked in the “koronakapinalliset” group whether those who had put the “angry emoji” reactions on the theatre’s Facebook posts could delete them after the theatre had changed the vaccination scene as there was no apparent reason for them, for which he received a negative answer from some group members and, thus, the reactions are still visible on the Kivinokan kesäteatteri Facebook page.¹⁷⁶ Although the “angry” emojis are perhaps the least aggressive form of online targeting and shaming, at least compared to the baseball bat threats, it is important to mention them as they are the ones that there

¹⁶⁸ Pietiläinen 2021.

¹⁶⁹ Hyttinen 2021.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Uutela 2023.

¹⁷³ Kivinokan Kesäteatteri Facebook-page 2021.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Uutela 2023.

is still evidence of. Furthermore, the unwillingness to remove these reactions even after the theatre had deleted the vaccination scene proves that these reactions were not genuine feedback but rather online targeting and shaming where the goal is to undermine trust in an organisation by creating a negative image of them.

It is unclear whether Kivinokan kesäteatteri received online targeting and shaming on any other sites typically understood as social media. Although the commenting abilities on their Instagram account were closed for a while, none of the newspapers explicitly reported that there was any online targeting and shaming happening over in this app. However, many of the newspapers, such as *Ilta-Sanomat*, mention social media in general as the source of aggressive feedback and messages, so possibly there were some comments on Instagram as well.¹⁷⁷ However, evidently, in addition to Facebook, the theatre received online targeting and shaming also via email, which, as explained in chapter two, is also a part of social media. For example, in an interview with Tuomo Hyttinen for *Ilta-Sanomat*, Kinnaslampi said that when he opened his email on Sunday morning, the inbox was full of messages.¹⁷⁸ When I interviewed Kinnaslampi in June 2023, he revealed that, unfortunately, they had just deleted these emails a couple of months earlier.¹⁷⁹ However, fortunately, they had forwarded some emails to the Finnish writers' guild *SUNKLO*, which controls the rights to Harjula's dramatisation of *Uppo-Nalle*, and their contract coordinator, Mika Vainio, still had a few of them saved when I emailed him in 2023.¹⁸⁰ Here is an example of one of the emails:

Hei. Mitä ihmettä teillä on ohjelmistossa. Uppo Nalle saa rokotuksen ja poliisikaan ei voi puuttua. Lapsille syötetään tällaista. Koska poliisi on voinut puuttua siihen, ettei ole rokotettu. Lapsia pelotellaan tällaisilla jutuilla. Teen tästä rikosilmoituksen.

Which translates to:

Hey. What on earth do you have on your program. Uppo Nalle gets a vaccination, and not even the police can interfere. The children are fed this kind of thing. When has the police been able to intervene with not having a vaccination. The children are frightened by these kinds of things. I will report this to the police.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁷ Hapuli and Åkman 2021.

¹⁷⁸ Hyttinen 2021.

¹⁷⁹ Kinnaslampi 2023, Personal interview.

¹⁸⁰ Vainio, Mika 2023.

¹⁸¹ This translation is not an official translation. It was created by the researcher for this thesis. Vainio, Mika 2023.

Thereby, arguably, the online targeting and shaming that took place via email is perhaps the second most notable example of affective polarisation in the *Uppo-Nalle* case, as the volume of it was almost equally extensive to the harassment that happened on Facebook, and the evidence of it happening still exists.

In affective polarisation that happens on social media, the discourse is often more personal and things like doxing, in which people post details about a person's private life online to try and undermine their character, have become more and more common.¹⁸² Arguably, this also happened to some extent in the *Uppo-Nalle* case, as *UMVLehti*, a Finnish alternative media site, published an article about the *Uppo-Nalle* containing details about Kinnaslampi's personal life that were irrelevant to the case. So, on 19 May 2021 the alternative news magazine published an article about the theatre with the title "Uppo-Nalle saa koronapiikin ja suojautuu poliisilta – COVID-propagandaa lapsille Kivinokan Kesäteatterissa" which translates to "Uppo-Nalle gets a coronashot and protects itself from the police – COVID-propaganda for children at Kivinokan Kesäteatteri".¹⁸³ As the title reveals, the article is critical towards the theatre and suspects that the vaccination scene is propaganda and "coronavirus fuss".¹⁸⁴ As mentioned, in this article Kinnaslampi's past gets brought up as the article claims that Kinnaslampi made the headlines in 1998 when he was fired as a theatre director from Lohja due to the lack of confidence from the city's cultural committee and thus the theatre did not extend his contract.¹⁸⁵ However, an article by *Helsingin Sanomat* reveals that Kinnaslampi himself resigned after he found out his temporary contract was not going to be continued.¹⁸⁶ Thus, as bringing up Kinnaslampi's past with Lohjan teatteri is totally irrelevant and has nothing to do with the conversation about *Uppo-Nalle*, the *UMVLehti* article, or at least the part where Kinnaslampi is mentioned, can be understood as doxing, which is a form of online targeting and shaming, as the goal is clearly to undermine Kinnaslampi's character.

Although most of the targeting and shaming happened online, some did take place outside social media, and thus, the last thing to look at in this subsection are the phone calls that the theatre received. However, as shall be examined, the phone calls are also a direct causality of affective polarisation as they, like the emails and Facebook comments, were caused by the posts of the social media "ambassadors" Nordin and Kautiainen. So firstly, just like the emails and the comments, these calls also began on 16 May 2021, the same day that Nordin made her post about

¹⁸² Saarinen 2022, 128.

¹⁸³ *UMVLehti* 2021.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁶ Saavalainen 1998.

the play.¹⁸⁷ Secondly, the direct causation between the Facebook online shaming and targeting and the phone calls becomes further evident as one commentator on Kautiainen's post wrote:

Noniin. Juttelin äsken näyttelijä Kari Kinnaslammen kanssa puhelimesta, Kivinokan kesäteatterin johtaja. Ei ole ihan kaikki kunnossa siellä päässä. Hyvin epäasiallisesti käyttäytyi kun soitin sinne. Ei päästy alkua pidemmälle asiassa. Esittelin itseni Jenni nimellä. Tivasi sukunimeä vihaisesti.¹⁸⁸

Which translates to:

Alright. So, I just talked with the actor Kari Kinnaslampi on the phone, the director of Kivinokan kesäteatteri. Not all is well in that end. He behaved very inappropriately when I called him. We did not get any further than the beginning. I introduced myself as Jenni. He asked for my surname angrily.¹⁸⁹

Therefore, it is evident that although the phone calls did not happen online, they were a direct result of the online targeting and shaming happening in, for example, Facebook. Likewise, the contents of the phone calls were like those of the emails. In an interview, Kinnaslampi said that he received phone calls where people would say that he would be dying in two years because Kinnaslampi had taken the coronavirus vaccination.¹⁹⁰ He also mentioned that similarly to the emails, during the calls, people had threatened him and the theatre by saying things like that they would contact different authorities such as the ombudsman for children and the police if they performed the play.¹⁹¹ Thus, as their contents and start day was the same to the emails and other social media online targeting and shaming, the phone calls that Kivinokan kesäteatteri received are also a result of affective polarisation.

Therefore, as exemplified in this subsection, affective polarisation in the *Uppo-Nalle* case heightened down to the targeting and shaming of Kivinokan kesäteatteri. Most of this happened on social media, via Facebook and email, but some took place during the phone calls the theatre director, Kari Kinnaslampi, received. The link between the social media “ambassadors” posting their post about *Uppo-Nalle* and the theatre receiving targeting and shaming is apparent as it

¹⁸⁷ Hapuli and Åkman 2021.

¹⁸⁸ Kautiainen 2021.

¹⁸⁹ This translation is not an official translation. It was created by the researcher for this thesis. Kautiainen 2021.

¹⁹⁰ Kinnaslampi 2023, Personal interview.

¹⁹¹ Hapuli and Åkman 2021.

happened fast on the same day that Nordin made her post about the play, and many of the commenters on Kautiainen's post said that they had called the theatre or commented on their posts. Lastly, as is typical in affective polarisation, the volume of the harassment was so extensive that the theatre had to close its social media comment sections as it was impossible to reason with those targeting and shaming the theatre as, for example, they refused to remove the "angry emoji" reactions even after the theatre had deleted the vaccination scene, so it was more about them needing to express their emotions rather than about them wanting to send actual feedback.

3.3 How affective polarisation affected the *Uppo-Nalle* and Kivinokan kesäteatteri

In this subsection, I will first explain how Kivinokan kesäteatteri reacted to the targeting and shaming, meaning how they tried to prevent affective polarisation from affecting their performance. I will then detail how affective polarisation affected the *Uppo-Nalle* performance as the theatre had to change the vaccination scene. After this, I will examine some other major and minor negative impacts the case had on the theatre and the performance. Lastly, I will look at some surprisingly positive side effects that affective polarisation had in this case.

So, there are some initial actions that the theatre tried to prevent affective polarisation from affecting their performance. For example, one of the first actions that the theatre did regarding online targeting and shaming was to close off the comment sections on all their social media pages. Unfortunately, this did not stop the social media harassment, as people were still reacting with "angry emojis" to their posts and sending threatening emails to the theatre. Furthermore, the targeting and shaming continued offline as phone calls, which Kinnaslampi tried to prevent by closing off his phone.¹⁹² Therefore, the next step that the theatre, especially Uutela, tried was to try and prove to those who were sending the theatre hate that the vaccination scene had been a part of the original script of the play already in 1984.¹⁹³ To do this, Uutela joined the "koronakapinalliset" Facebook group and posted a photo of the script there.¹⁹⁴ However, when he did this, some group members claimed it was an edited picture and did not believe him.¹⁹⁵ As Saarinen mentions, in affective polarisation, it is impossible to try and reason with people with facts, especially when the overpowering emotion behind, for example, targeting and shaming, is hate or other negative emotion, the person becomes sort of "blind and deaf" to any reasonable conversation.¹⁹⁶ Therefore,

¹⁹² Kinnaslampi 2023, Personal interview.

¹⁹³ Hyttinen 2021.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Saarinen 2022, 50–1.

as exemplified, there are some initial actions that the theatre tried to stop affective polarisation from affecting them, but they proved ineffective as the targeting and shaming continued.

After trying to stop the online targeting and shaming themselves, the theatre tried to get help by contacting a few different places and authorities.¹⁹⁷ So, first, on the same day the targeting and shaming started, 16 May 2021, Kinnaslampi contacted SUNKLO who controls the rights to the play, to ask them what they should and could do.¹⁹⁸ From there he was instructed not to give into the targeting and shaming and was encouraged to perform the script as it is.¹⁹⁹ Alongside SUNKLO, the theatre was also in contact with *PENFinland*, which is an international association that promotes writers' freedom of expression, who put them into contact with a lawyer and the police.²⁰⁰ Although Kinnaslampi considered making a police report of the baseball bat and other threats, in the end, he chose not to do it.²⁰¹ Similarly, Kinnaslampi decided not to ask the police to attend the performances.²⁰² However, later the Helsinki police department contacted him again and said that they would come to the premiere to ensure that everything went smoothly.²⁰³ In the end there were two bicycle police officers in the premiere to observe the situation.²⁰⁴ Therefore, alongside trying to prevent the targeting and shaming themselves, Kivinokan kesäteatteri also contacted different places and authorities, SUNKLO, PENFinland, and the police, to try figure out how prevent affective polarisation from affecting the *Uppo-Nalle* performance.

After trying to stop the targeting and shaming through these few different ways, on 17 May 2021, Kinnaslampi decided that they would delete the vaccination scene and replace it with another scene that takes place in a marketplace.²⁰⁵ However, before they made these changes they made sure to approve them with the estates of both Harjula and Karjalainen.²⁰⁶ Undoubtedly, this seems like a quick decision, given that the online targeting and shaming had only begun a day earlier on 16 May 2021. However, according to Kinnaslampi, there were two reasons for deleting the scene. Firstly, he said that he wanted to ensure that everyone, both the actors and the audience, would feel safe to come to the theatre without the threat of violence.²⁰⁷ Furthermore, regarding this, Kinnaslampi said that some of the child actors had expressed to him that they were afraid to

¹⁹⁷ Hapuli and Åkman 2021.

¹⁹⁸ Hyttinen 2021.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Tyhtilä 2023.

²⁰¹ Hyttinen 2021.

²⁰² Vainio, Olli 2021.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Rissanen 2021.

²⁰⁶ Hyttinen 2021.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

perform due to the threats which made him more convinced it would be best to delete the scene.²⁰⁸ Secondly, financially the theatre was not in an ideal position due to the move to a new place. Therefore, according to Kinnaslampi, the second reason for replacing the scene was financial, as the theatre needed to ensure that they got enough ticket sales to be able to cover the bare minimum of expenses and make sure the staff members got paid.²⁰⁹ By deleting the scene, Kinnaslampi made sure that the threat of violence would not hinder people's willingness to buy tickets. Furthermore, in an interview with Veikko Eromäki, Kinnaslampi said that by deleting the scene, he also got thanks from the people who had been upset about the vaccination scene as they had said they would now come to see the performance, which for Kinnaslampi was not an issue since they were paying customers.²¹⁰ However, there is no proof whether any of these people actually came to see the show. Thus, in this case, the first negative consequence of affective polarisation on a theatre performance was that the theatre had to delete a scene and replace it with another due to fear of violence and financial reasons.

Another negative consequence of affective polarisation in the *Uppo-Nalle* case was that the freedom of arts of Kivinokan kesäteatteri and its potential audience was restricted by those who targeted and shamed the theatre. In a video interview with Jussi Eskola for *Ilta-lehti*, Uutela made clear that even though he understands the deletion of the vaccination scene from the safety perspective, for him, the fact that they had to change the scene due to the targeting and shaming was a violation of his right to freedom of expression as he said:

Näyttelijänä niinku siihen, että mun vapautta ilmaista asioita siihen puututaan niin siitä mä en todellakaa oo mitenkään mielissäni. Et se aiheuttaa mussa enemmän kyllä semmosta, en mä tiedä oonks mä ihan vihanen mutta ärtyny mä siitä oon, et kyl mä huomaan semmost itestäni semmosen ärtyneisyyden, että tänään juttelin erään ystäväni kanssa puhelimessa, että huomasin ääneni hiukan kohoavan puhelimessa kun puhuin tästä, että mihin tässä on niinku päädytty nyt täs asiassa.²¹¹

Which translates to:

As an actor, I am totally not pleased with my freedom of expression being interfered with. I do not know if I call it anger, but I am definitely

²⁰⁸ Kinnaslampi 2023, Personal interview.

²⁰⁹ Hyttinen 2021.

²¹⁰ Eromäki 2021.

²¹¹ Eskola 2022.

annoyed about it as I noticed a bit of irritation in myself today when talking to a friend of mine on the phone, and I noticed I was raising my voice a bit when talking about the end result of all of this.²¹²

Arguably, it is true that at least the freedom of arts for the theatre was compromised as in the Constitution of Finland under “Chapter 2 - Basic rights and liberties” in section 16.3 it states that in Finland “The freedom of science, the arts and higher education is guaranteed”.²¹³ As Pentti Arajärvi explains in the *Helsinki Term bank for the Arts and Sciences* website, this section of the Finnish constitution means that everyone should have the right to choose their own subject matter, methods and means of expression for their art without any outside interference and that everyone should have the right to enjoy art without anyone trying to prevent it.²¹⁴ As the threats that Kivinokan kesäteatteri received made the theatre have to change the scene and possibly made some potential audience members too scared to come to the theatre, arguably it is true that in this case affective polarisation caused interference with freedom of arts. Thus, the negative effects of affective polarisation on the performance and the theatre are more complicated than just a simple deletion of the vaccination scene.

Regarding the negative effects, in addition to the deletion of the scene and the restriction of freedom of arts, affective polarisation affected *Uppo-Nalle* and Kivinokan kesäteatteri in a few more minor ways. Firstly, although Kinnaslampi said that he does not believe any of those who were sending threats to the theatre came to see the show, he suspected that perhaps there could have been some audience members who did not come to see the performance in fear of violence.²¹⁵ Thus, affective polarisation possibly affected negatively who the audience consisted of in a sense that it perhaps limited the ability of some people to come to see the performance as they might have been too afraid. Secondly, although Kinnaslampi said that the targeting and shaming ended a few days after they had deleted the scene, he now started receiving criticism from, for example, his directing colleagues.²¹⁶ However, he did say that it was a lot easier to have a conversation with these people than with those who had been targeting and shaming the theatre and in the end, Kinnaslampi was able to explain to at least most of them why they had chosen to change the

²¹² This translation is not an official translation. It was created by the researcher for this thesis. Eskola 2022.

²¹³ Finlex 1999.

²¹⁴ Tieteen termipankki 2024.

²¹⁵ Kinnaslampi 2023, Personal interview.

²¹⁶ Hyttinen 2021.

scene.²¹⁷ Therefore, affective polarisation put especially Kinnaslampi in line of criticism from his peers that he would not have faced otherwise.

Lastly, a more far-reaching possible consequence is that the *Uppo-Nalle* case has now the potential to be one of the first things that comes up if someone researches, for example, the theatre or Uppo-Nalle, or a thing that gets brought up if, for example, the theatre finds itself in another similar scenario. An example of this happening is the 2022 interview with Outi Svoboda, Elina Karjalainen's daughter, which was supposed to be just about the Uppo-Nalle character turning 45 years old and about the character's history.²¹⁸ However, the *Uppo-Nalle* case is mentioned already in the title: "Rakastettu Uppo-Nalle 45 vuotta: kirjailijan tytär kertoo, ottiko nalle kantaa rasismiin ja rokotteisiin jo vuosikymmeniä sitten" which translates to: "The beloved Uppo-Nalle is 45-years-old: the daughter of the author tells whether the bear took stances on racism and vaccinations decades ago".²¹⁹ Furthermore, Svoboda, who was in no way part of the *Uppo-Nalle* case, is asked to comment on the case and whether the vaccination in the original book was a statement made by her mother, to which she replies that it was not, it was just a fairy tale vaccination for a fairy tale bear.²²⁰ Thus, alongside the deletion of the vaccination scene, there are possibly far-reaching consequences for the theatre that affective polarisation through the *Uppo-Nalle* case has caused.

However, although most of the effects of affective polarisation on the theatre and the performance were negative, surprisingly, there were some, at least financially, positive side effects. Firstly, although it was not for a wanted reason, the theatre got a lot of free publicity that they would not have been able to afford otherwise.²²¹ Secondly, in an interview, Kinnaslampi said that a lot of people all around Finland contacted them and said that even though they cannot come to Helsinki to watch the show they had bought tickets in support.²²² Furthermore, Kinnaslampi explained that some people had called him and said that they would come and watch the performance from Rovaniemi which is on the other side of Finland.²²³ Although the baseball threats might have scared some customers away, the theatre was, therefore, able to sell perhaps a little more tickets than Summer than would have been possible without the free publicity. In the end, the theatre had altogether 3000 audience members in the Summer of 2021, which was the best-case-scenario

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Lippu 2022.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Kinnaslampi 2023, Personal interview.

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Ibid.

that they had hoped for.²²⁴ The last positive side effect that Kinnaaslampi mentioned was that the theatre got a lot of in-person positive feedback both after shows and from people passing by the theatre when they were rehearsing, which according to him is not typical in Finland as people are often somewhat reserved.²²⁵ Although the effects of affective polarisation on the theatre and the performance were quite taxing, surprisingly this specific case also positively affected the theatre because they got free publicity which made many people want to support the theatre in different ways.

Therefore, as examined in this subsection, affective polarisation affected the *Uppo-Nalle* performance and the theatre positively and negatively. The most obvious effect was that the theatre had to change the vaccination scene due to targeting and shaming. Deleting the scene was not a simple decision, as is exemplified by the fact that the theatre tried a few different ways to try and stop the harassment, such as contacting different authorities and places, but in the end, they chose this way, and it proved effective as the targeting and shaming stopped in a few days. However, because they had to do this, arguably, the freedom of arts of both them and their potential audience members was compromised. Furthermore, the deletion of the scene now exposed the theatre vulnerable to criticism from their peers, and this case now has the potential to be forever associated with them. Surprisingly, the case also had some positive side effects for the theatre, such as free publicity and financial benefits due to people wanting to support them. However, although affective polarisation affected the theatre in this case also positively, if similar cases become more common, it is not a good sign for theatre, especially regarding freedom of arts.

²²⁴ Kinnaaslampi 2023, Email interview.

²²⁵ Kinnaaslampi 2023, Personal interview.

4. Conclusion

To conclude, in this thesis, I have proved that affective polarisation can affect a theatre performance. In the *Uppo-Nalle* case, the most concrete effect was that Kivinokan kesäteatteri had to change a scene in their children's theatre performance due to targeting and shaming they received mainly on social media and via phone calls. Arguably, this means that the freedom of arts of the theatre was compromised as there was no desire from the theatre to change the scene before the external pressure from the targeting and shaming entered the picture. The targeting and shaming happened very late in the process of making *Uppo-Nalle*, only a few weeks before the premiere and, arguably, there were four main catalysts as to why this specific performance became the sight of affectively polarised discussion: the municipal elections of 2021, which was postponed by a couple of months due to coronavirus restrictions, the advert made by Kivinokan kesäteatteri which informed the potential audience members that the play contained a vaccination scene, the post made by Maria Nordin on Facebook, and lastly the post made by Kirsi Kautiainen on the same platform. As in many other affectively polarised conversations online, similarly, in this case, the conversation was started by two social media “ambassadors”, Nordin and Kautiainen, both of whom were candidates for the Crystal Party in the municipal elections and both of whom have a decent social media following. Even though there were some positive side effects in the case for the theatre, for example, free publicity from the news articles, which led to them receiving a lot of support from people who were against the targeting and shaming, regardless, the people from the theatre made it very clear that there was no desire for this to happen ever again.²²⁶ For example, Kinnaslampi said that for him the case was an unfortunate and unprecedented occurrence in his then 35-years-long career.²²⁷ Therefore, even though the *Uppo-Nalle* case had some positive side effects, the overall impact of affective polarisation on the theatre and the performance was negative.

As this is a case study, the *Uppo-Nalle* case only shows one way the growth of affective polarisation can affect a theatre performance. Furthermore, although affective polarisation has continued to grow in Finland throughout the twenty-first century, the growth has remained moderate, so there have not been other cases like the *Uppo-Nalle*.²²⁸ Importantly, when the case happened, the theatre was in quite an unusual position, as they had just moved to a new location and were, therefore, at least financially, in a very vulnerable situation. It is, thereby, unlikely that these kinds of cases will rapidly grow in numbers any time soon, at least in Finland. Furthermore,

²²⁶ Kinnaslampi 2023, Personal interview.

²²⁷ Vainio, Olli 2021.

²²⁸ Suomen kansallinen vaalitutkimuskonsortio (FNES) 2023.

according to Minna Tawast, during the Summer of 2021, *Teatteri&Tanssi+Sirkus* magazine made a query to artists about whether they had been subjects of targeting and shaming, and, as a result, they had only received one other story about this.²²⁹ However, Tawast does mention that Veera Tyhtilä from PENFinlad had told them that their organisation gets regularly contacted by different artists in other countries regarding targeting and shaming that has led to actual acts of violence.²³⁰ The article does not, however, mention whether in these cases in the other countries the targeting and shaming affected the art.²³¹ Thus, as the *Uppo-Nalle* case is unique in Finland it works like any other critical case in a case study; broad generalisations are not possible but, through it, it is possible to see different implications of how affective polarisation can affect a theatre performance and theatre in general.

However, even if affective polarisation in Finland has remained moderate, it has not shown any signs of stopping in the twenty-first century.²³² The presence of affective polarisation is most visible on social media. Likely a potent reason for this, as Saarinen explains, is that social media reinforces rather than challenges our thinking.²³³ In a discussion panel at the theatre of Oulu titled “Miksi hyvät ihmiset torkeilevät somessa?”, which translates to “Why do good people misbehave online?”, Veli-Markus Tapio, who at the time worked at the Finnish cultural foundation, said that in social media it is not possible to always reason with people as they often have gathered there to feel a certain feeling and thus, social media reinforces the biases in our thinking.²³⁴ Therefore, in social media it is easier for the affective valence of an issue such as vaccinations to become stronger in our minds in either positive or negative direction as the neutral opinion in online conversations either does not exist or is more difficult to find among the more radicalised opinions. As social media does not show any signs of disappearing alongside affective polarisation, it is possible for similar cases to *Uppo-Nalle* to happen in the future if, for example, a theatre chooses a subject that is or becomes fruitful for affectively polarised conversation.

As the *Uppo-Nalle* case has exemplified, social media “ambassadors” are highly impactful in the spread of affective polarisation on social media. “Ambassadors” like Nordin and Kautiainen stir the conversation to topics and issues they find meaningful and encourage their followers to behave or think a certain way. By displaying intense emotions or affects in their posts, they can even affect how their followers feel about these issues and turn the affective valence of a

²²⁹ Tawast 2021.

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Suomen kansallinen vaalitutkimuskonsortio (FNES) 2023.

²³³ Saarinen 2022, 81.

²³⁴ Mun Oulu kaupunkimedia 2022.

subject, for example, a vaccination, to more negative in their followers' minds. A growing phenomenon regarding the "ambassador" culture is that sometimes followers will call upon, for example, an influencer to ask them how to feel about an issue. They do this by, for instance, tagging the "ambassadors" under a post they want them to comment on. An example of this happening in the theatre context was when Mona Bling, a social media influencer, was asked to comment by the username pikedipik on a *Helsinki City Theatre* Instagram post about a casting call for an actor to play a 50–65-year-old transwoman character.²³⁵ The previous year Bling had been someone who had been actively commenting on the *Kaikki äidistäni* case at the Finnish National Theatre as she had a multi-part long Instagram story about the case where she was commenting on the casting issue in that case.²³⁶ If affective polarisation continues to grow, one impact could be that social media "ambassadors" are more often called to comment on different things to help their followers decide what to think of an issue or for example a performance even before the performance has ever reached a stage or even been cast.

In his book, Saarinen concludes that affective polarisation and the political rhetoric that goes with it, in which insulting others is normalised, can harmfully affect democracy.²³⁷ Indeed, as the *Uppo-Nalle* case proves, affective polarisation can also negatively affect art forms like theatre, which are vulnerable to societal changes. As the case exemplifies, if affective polarisation is allowed to flourish, it can, for example, affect nearly finished/finished performances if they must, for instance, change scenes or subjects due to the fear of violence. However, as the *Uppo-Nalle* case is still a unique instance in Finland, it is not sure what the overall consequences of the growing spread of affective polarisation for art are. Regardless, the case suggests that if affective polarisation is allowed to flourish unstoppably, it would not mean good for the freedom of the arts. What the case also suggests is that social media can affect art. In this case, the impact was straightforward and mainly negative. As mentioned in the introduction, there is still very little research regarding the influence of social media on theatre, apart from books like Lonergan's *Theatre & Social Media*, which focus mainly on wanted marketing interactions between theatre and their audiences and on what kind of themes arise from social media for play texts.²³⁸ A possible interesting future research subject could be whether social media could affect theatre performances in a positive/wanted way, where social media would be actively present already in the creation process, not just as a marketing place after the performance is ready.

²³⁵ hktfi Helsinki City Theatre Instagram-page 2021.

²³⁶ This story is no longer visible, but the researcher has screenshots of it saved. Mona Bling Instagram-page 2022.

²³⁷ Saarinen 2022, 165.

²³⁸ Lonergan 2016.

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