Regeneration in Seasonal Organizations: 
A Case Study of the Seasonal (re)creation of Astrid Lindgren’s World as “the same”

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Abstract

Title
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Date
May 25th 2015

Background
Explore the mystery of seasonal organizations and how they are able to (re)create themselves as “the same” after a period of dormancy.

Aim
To find out the organizational mechanisms that enables such (re)creation.

Methodology
This qualitative study was done at Astrid Lindgren’s World, a seasonal organization open from mid-May until the beginning of November. The study conducted ten interviews with both permanent and seasonal employees to find out how a year in the organization looked like to later be able to identify the seasonal mechanism.

Findings
This study has provided seven organizational mechanisms that are vital for Astrid Lindgren’s World to (re)create itself as “the same” from season to season.

Concepts
Regeneration: the process of reproducing a seasonal organization as “the same” from season to season.

(Re)create: The creation of an organization that has previously been existent.

“The same”: Due to individuals being subjective an organization cannot completely be (re)created as exactly the same, but rather very similar.

Keywords: Regeneration, seasonal organizations, organizational character
Acknowledgements

This thesis is the final part in getting our MSc in Business Administration – Strategy and Management in International Organizations, the most significant academic challenge we have ever had to face. It has been a long and unforgettable journey to conduct this thesis since it has been hard work and sometimes a struggle. However, it is important to also mention that most of the time the writing of this thesis has been interesting since we got to learn all there is to learn about the subject, hence the excitement and feeling of achieving something meaningful was prominent. Therefore it relies in our deepest interest to give our sincerest gratitude to the people who have helped us during this semester to being able to conduct this thesis.

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1. Introduction

Many of us are visiting the same amusement parks and ski resorts every year simply because we like and are satisfied with the experience it provides. Mostly that is because the experience provided is recognizable and we know what to expect. Even though the personnel providing this experience is changed and new staff come along every year the experience will most often still be equally great and recognizable. These amusement parks and ski resorts are able to (re)create this great, recognizable experience every year due to the process of regeneration.

All organizations in today’s business environment are perpetually changing (March, 1981; Tsoukas & Chia, 2002; Birnholtz, Cohen & Hoch., 2007; Helfat & Winter, 2011), and around the world there are thousands of companies that eventually experience this change in terms of the loss of existing employees and the addition of new employees (McNeil & Thompson, 1971). However, albeit this change, these organizations are able to function as a social unit and this is done through a process of regeneration. Regeneration can be defined as reproducing an organization, meaning that they are able to incorporate new members while they are concurrently losing existing employees (McNeil & Thompson, 1971; Birnholtz et al., 2007) and at the same time act as “the same” organization (Birnholtz et al., 2007). Through the introduction of these new employees an introduction of different abilities, attitudes and goals takes place as well (March, 1981). As all organizations today are changing, all organizations are hence also confronted with regeneration (McNeil & Thompson, 1971).

In addition to having to cope with change, some organizations further experience a period of dormancy that they need to activate from again for a shorter period of time each year (Birnholtz et al., 2007; Abfalter, Stadler & Müller, 2012). These organizations are referred to as seasonal organizations (Birnholtz et al., 2007; Abfalter et al., 2012), and this is perhaps a more common type of organization than one would think. For instance, ski-resorts, outside theme parks and summer camps are all considered to be seasonal organizations, since they do experience dormancy for parts of the year. In these types of organizations, the phenomenon of regeneration is
mostly detectable, and thus the definition of regeneration could be further extended by suggesting that the regenerative process involves reproducing an organization after a period of dormancy (Birnholtz et al., 2007). Hence, when the seasonal organizations begin to activate and wake up from this period of dormancy the regenerative process of (re)creating themselves as “the same” takes place. The brackets in (re)create emphasizes that the organization is not new, it does not cease to exist during the period of dormancy, rather it is newly created every season as it wakes up. “The same” therefore refers to that there ought to be a similarity and coherence of action in the (re)creation so that the visitors have a recognizable experience every time it (re)creates itself (Birnholtz et al., 2007). In order to manage this process, the seasonal organization relies on their employees, however, the group of employees in this type of organization is not identical to the group of employees in other organizations. In a seasonal organization, there is a smaller group of permanent employees working year round, however during the active part, this groups increases and becomes larger (Birnholtz et al., 2007; Abfalter et al., 2012). This extended group of employees are referred to as seasonal employees (Reynolds, Merritt & Gladstein, 2004; Abfalter et al., 2012) and subsequent to the period for dormancy, the action of (re)creating the seasonal organization as “the same” lies in the hands of this extended group of seasonal employees.

In the small town of Vimmerby in southern Sweden we can find one example of such an organization, namely the theater park Astrid Lindgren’s Värld (from here on referred to as ALV). Astrid Lindgren is a famous Swedish author of children’s books, and through her 34 books, which have been translated into more than 90 languages, she has introduced the world to characters such as Pippi Longstocking, Emil of Lönneberga and Ronia the Robber’s Daughter. In the park the children can watch performances of their favorite Astrid Lindgren stories, visit the homes of the famous characters, and also meet and interact with them. ALV experiences a period of dormancy for a large part of the year, and is active during the summer months where the climate is warmer, and thus they can be characterized as a seasonal organization. This implies that every year they fulfill the mission of bringing ALV back to life, and hence ALV is a great example of a regenerative seasonal organization that each season has to (re)create itself as “the same”.

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1.1 Problem Discussion
There is existing literature within the field of regeneration (e.g. McNeil & Thompson, 1971; Birnholtz et al., 2007), and within the field of seasonal organizations (e.g. Birnholtz et al., 2007; Abfalter et al., 2012). Despite this, there is not much research done on how the process works in a seasonal organization, where regeneration is, as mentioned, most visible. Nevertheless, one study that has been conducted, and thus has shed some light on the topic, is a case study at a summer camp called Camp Poplar Grove (Birnholtz et al., 2007). The findings obtained through this case provided the authors with the possibility of mapping out processes that are referred to as regenerative processes, meaning that they assist in the regeneration of an organization, and thus in the (re)creation of the camp as “the same” after its period of dormancy (ibid). However, one study at one specific organization does not provide the research area with information that can be generalized in a broader sense. For this reason, further research at another seasonal organization ought to be executed in order to give additional clarity regarding how seasonal organizations manages to (re)create themselves as “the same” from season to season, and thus add to the findings of the regenerative processes at Camp Poplar Grove.

1.2 Purpose
Given the information above, the aim of this thesis is to contribute to the area of regeneration in seasonal organizations by comparing and adding information to the contributions of Birnholtz et al. (2007) by conducting a case study at ALV. The purpose is thus to investigate how ALV as a regenerative, seasonal organization, is able to (re)create itself as “the same” every season.

Therefore, the research question is as follows:

What are the organizational mechanisms that enables a seasonal organization to (re)create itself as “the same” after a period of dormancy?
1.3 Structure of Thesis

Figure 1. Overall structure of thesis
2. Theoretical Framework

In this chapter previous research and studies of the area relevant for this particular research is presented. First regeneration of organizations will be explained, followed by seasonal organizations which leads into their ability to (re)create themselves as “the same”. Subsequently, organizational character is presented and last regenerative processes to obtain organizational character are brought forward.

2.1 Regeneration of Organizations
An organization, no matter how complex, can experience the loss of original employees and yet be able to function as an ongoing social unit with new employees (McNeil & Thompson, 1971). This turnover of employees introduces new individuals to the organization who thus contribute with different abilities, different goals, and different attitudes (March, 1981). This process can be referred to as regeneration, and can be described as the process of reproducing an organization and thus incorporating new members that are largely new to their organizational role, while at the same time losing veterans (McNeil & Thompson, 1971; Birnholtz et al., 2007). The definition could be further extended by suggesting that the regenerative process involves reproducing an organization after a period of dormancy (Birnholtz et al., 2007), and as a way for the organization to cope with its environment, and to adapt to it in an active manner (McNeil & Thompson, 1971).

Organizations are continuously changing (March, 1981; Tsoukas & Chia, 2002; Birnholtz et al., 2007; Helfat & Winter, 2011) and hence, all organizations face some sort of regeneration (McNeil & Thompson, 1971). However, regeneration involves more aspects than merely a simple turnover of employees. The rate of the regeneration also varies due to the fact that it is a function of three variables: attrition, growth, or shrinkage (ibid). Attrition refers to the attrition of labor force, in other words the natural retirement of the employed. It could also refer to employees of lower age that decide to leave the organization due to economic reasons and the fact that they have not developed a strong loyalty towards the employer (Droege & Hoobler, 2003). When these people leave the organization the organization do not only lose human capital but also accumulated knowledge that resides in these people
through their cognitive processes and actions (Droege & Hoobler, 2003). Growth then differs between organizations and would be considered as high when recruitment is high and attrition is low. Conceding this, growth do have the possibility to occur under circumstances of high attrition as well, and this would then make the process of regeneration faster, as that implies veterans leaving. Regarding shrinkage, it does not imply that recruitment is low in all cases and thus contributing to low regeneration (McNeil & Thompson, 1971). The reason for this is that if the attrition is high, personnel will still be needed for key positions regardless of the shrinkage of the organization and they therefore need to recruit for these positions (McNeil & Thompson, 1971).

Regeneration, might it be large or minor, is a common process in all organizations, and thus the consequences of it is of great importance (McNeil & Thompson, 1971). One of the most important consequences is the cooperation of newly hired employees (ibid), who requires assimilations to the, for them, new organization (Miller & Jablin, 1991). They might be able to learn the more formal practices rather fast, such as job descriptions and manuals, which can be regarded as explicit knowledge (Nonaka, Toyama & Konno, 2000; Yang, Zheng & Viere, 2009). However, the activities in certain processes, routines, informal aspects and the history of the organization is to a large extent more complicated to grasp (McNeil & Thompson, 1971), due to its tacit nature (Nonaka et al., 2000; Yang et al., 2009). In most organizations the effects of such gaps where tacit knowledge is not transferred are hard to discover until for example unexpected quality problems, mistakes or costly disruptions in performance or operations occur (DeLong, 2004). Thus, an additional important consequence is the need for socialization of new employees (McNeil & Thompson, 1971; Miller & Jablin, 1991). Socialization can be suggested as the process of where organizational members share their knowledge such as social norms, know-how and knowledge that has not yet been formalized from past experience and create new tacit knowledge in order to become fully participating and effective (Yang et al., 2009). As has been stated by previous researchers, new employees learn their jobs by watching and learning from more experienced members of the organization, both peers and supervisors (Bechky, 2003; Feldman, 1981; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Miller & Jablin, 1991). Therefore, in organizations where regeneration is high and rapid, a more deliberate strategy to incorporate and educate newcomers regarding the local norms
and knowledge is needed. However, it has been shown in previous research that some newcomers do not perceive the information they receive as enough, and this might thus eventually generate inadequacies in information (Miller & Jablin, 1991). Hence, this further puts a certain pressure on the veterans of the organization to manage the socialization of the new employees in order to effectively deal with regeneration (McNeil & Thompson, 1971). This process of regeneration will not generate identical results every time, however the regeneration are supposed to produce a result that can be seen as recognizable to the organization, so that it appears as what Birnholtz et al. (2007) refers to as “the same”.

2.1.1 Seasonal Organizations
Seasonal organizations such as summer camps and ski resorts are organizations where regeneration is most visible (Birnholtz et al., 2007). In seasonal organizations, the regeneration takes place when the organization starts to (re)activate and wake up after its period of dormancy (Birnholtz et al., 2007). This is most commonly done through the training and guidance of new employees whom might be returning or completely new to the organization as whole (Birnholtz et al., 2007; McNeil & Thompson, 1971). Seasonal organizations are most commonly identified as experiencing a longer period of dormancy than the actual active period which they every year needs to wake up for, and they can thus be considered a regenerating organization (Birnholtz et al., 2007; Abfalter et al., 2012). In many instances the dormancy period appears due to climate dependent factors and weather conditions inhibiting the organization from being open for customers (Baum & Hagen, 1999). One can for example consider a ski-resort, which would go into a period of low activity, when there is no snow. One can also consider an outside summer theme park, such as amusement parks, which goes into dormancy when the fall and winter approaches. During this period the organization consist of a rather small ensemble of permanent employees (Abfalter et al., 2012), and the economic activity is in many cases also significantly smaller (Ainsworth & Purss, 2009). However, when the organization becomes active and opens up to customers again, the nature of seasonal demand that is existent due to the main season being short-lived, has a large impact on human resources (Abfalter et al., 2012; Ainsworth & Purss, 2009). Thus the group of employees increases, now involving a larger group of seasonal employees as well (Abfalter et al., 2012). Seasonal employees are the
employees hired for a recurring, limited and similar time each year (Reynolds et al., 2004).

Due to its dormant character (Abfalter et al., 2012), and not having as much resemblance with a rigid institution as permanent organizations have, seasonal organizations do allow for more flexible, task-specific allocation of their resources (Grabher, 2004). This further gives them the opportunity of avoiding unnecessary slack (Grabher, 2004). Nevertheless, being flexible and temporary additionally means that these organizations cannot be a habitual social arena, such as permanent organizations becomes over time (Packendorff, 2004). Thus, there might be issues and complexities of creating loyalty between the organization and employees (Packendorff, 1994). Moreover, it also causes problems of sedimenting knowledge, and knowledge that is supposed to be accumulated in temporary organizations is at a risk of being lost and dispersed when the organizations are ceased and the members leave (Grabher, 2004).

During the mentioned active period, a seasonal organization works as a temporary organization, involving temporary employees, whose work is often defined as finite, with a short duration of time (Ainsworth & Purss, 2009; Lundin & Söderholm, 1994), hence the majority of the workers are temporary. Therefore it has been argued that the organization should be designed not only around, but also by those employees (Lundin & Söderholm, 1994). The workers are practically employed solely on having and portraying competences that is relevant to the task to be performed (Packendorff, 1994). Thus, the seasonal organization is dependent on those employees in terms of their dedication and abilities in order for the seasonal and temporary organization to be created, developed and eventually ceased (Lundin & Söderholm, 1994). The temporary employees in seasonal organizations are normally referred to as seasonal employees (e.g. Ainsworth & Purss, 2009; Ismert & Petrick, 2004). Due to their relevance to create, develop and terminate the temporary organization, the scope of their employment is in most instances time-limited and, thus, certain expectations are created on an individual level (Lundin & Söderholm, 1994).

In recent years there has been a larger preference for more flexible organizations as temporary or seasonal (Garsten, 1999), and hence the concept of temporary and
seasonal employees has evolved from only referring to them as a stand-in for permanent employees, into whole organizations being built around temporary employees (von Hippel, Mangum, Greenberger, Heneman & Skoglund, 1997). This further suggests that an increase in this type of employment has occurred, even though it often implies a lower job security (Garsten, 1999), and in seasonal organizations most often they are of younger age, which also in most cases contributes to faster personnel turnover (Ainsworth & Purss, 2009). However, one strategy to remedy this turnover is to ensure job satisfaction among the employees as that will increase the likelihood of them wanting to come back (Alverén, Andersson, Eriksson, Sandoff & Wikhamn, 2012). The issue of staffing and employment of these workers are therefore, perhaps self-evident, considered to be of importance for seasonal organizations (McCole, 2013; Ismert & Petrick, 2004).

As stated briefly above, personnel turnover is often higher in organizations where employees are younger, which is often the case of seasonal employees. This poses, not only challenges of regeneration, but it also pose a challenge of how to retain knowledge from season to season. The organization thus faces the risk of losing the value that relies in the tacit knowledge of their employees (Droege & Hoobler, 2003). This would then imply a larger need for the socialization of new employees, so that they have the possibility of learning this knowledge as well (McNeil & Thompson, 1971; Droege & Hoobler, 2003). Hence, the importance of knowledge sharing between old and new employees is of increased importance in this type of organization (Abfalter et al., 2012). However, knowledge cannot be shared from one season to another, if it has not been retained properly during the season (Liebowitz, 2011). Further, retention of knowledge could be the solution to possible knowledge loss however, they are not absolute opposites since all knowledge, relatively its possible loss, can never be retained (DeLong, 2004). This is due to the impossibility of transferring all tacit knowledge and hence the retention of all tacit knowledge (Martins & Meyer, 2012) which is important when the organization is going to (re)create itself as “the same”. 
2.1.2 (Re)creating as “the same”

The (re)creation of an organization as “the same” refers to the ability of creating a recognizable experience from season to season (Birnholtz et al., 2007). This ability relies in the employees’ ability to regenerate a coherent ecology (a complex system of interdependent activities) of action patterns that are recognizable as “the same” from previous seasons (Birnholtz et al., 2007). Therefore, it relies in the organizational members to collectively be able to repeatedly enact in line with the organization (Orlikowski, 2002). This is the process of generating recurring behaviors through institutionalized cognitive representations, to reduce differences among actors (Weick, 1979). However, in the study of recurring action patterns by Pentland and Feldman (2005) is argued that there is an essential truth in the following proverbs as is also emphasized by Birnholtz et al. (2007):

1. One does not step into the same river twice (Heraclitus)
2. There is no new thing under the sun (Ecclesiastes)

From the first perspective “no situation of action repeats itself identically” and from the second “every action situation appears as but a variant on, or recombination of, some predecessors or known general types of actions” (Birnholtz et al., 2007 p. 316). This is what Birnholtz et al., (2007) refers to as the (n)ever-changing world. Since seasonal organizations experience a longer period of dormancy, hence activity is interrupted, and employees coming for the next season are mainly inexperienced in their roles or are completely new for the organization, there are many “things under the sun” that seem new when they gather to (re)create the organization (Birnholtz et al., 2007). However, in their study, Birnholtz et al. (2007) found that only a few weeks sufficed to regenerate a complex system of interdependent activity which is recognizable as “the same” organization as previous year. Hence, the brackets in (re)create refers to that the organization is newly created in line with Heraclitus, but nevertheless, it is recreated in the sense of Ecclesiastes since not everything is new. For this reason, there are quotation marks around the same, to emphasize that the organizations is different every year, however, it is still a recognizable unit and thus it is “the same” (Birnholtz et al., 2007).

Regeneration implies sameness, but in what sense is a seasonal organization “the same” as previous year? (Birnholtz et al., 2007). Even though the environment is the same in terms of a set of buildings and the physical surroundings, it is not enough to
regenerate the organization as “the same” (Birnholtz et al., 2007). Instead, as the outcome of individual behavior and attitude is very concrete (Schein, 2004), it relies in the employees to produce an experience that is perceived as the same, in other words quite similar and valued (Birnholtz et al., 2007). Through the capability of organizing action and experience, members of the organization can coherently generate values and expectations (Hatch, 1993). These expectations of “how it should be” are produced through perceptions grounded in assumptions of the organizational culture (Hatch, 1993). It also relies in the organizational members to realize values by transforming expectations into social or material reality (Hatch, 1993). This enactment of values however demand a possibility of being put into action, through for example an image of action, a mental picture of possible action (Czarniawska-Joerges & Joerges, 1990). Further, the production of actions can be seen as organizational symbols together with for example slogans, stories and visual images (Gioia, 1986). Therefore it relies in the organizational members ability to produce and use these symbols (Ortner, 1973) and supply part of their meaning (Cohen, 1985). A distinction can be made to the symbols full meaning and its literal meaning whereas the difference is the surplus of meaning (Ricoeur, 1976). This surplus of meaning is the organizational members ability to transform objects, words and actions (Hatch, 1993) to regenerate the organization as similar and valued. However, referring to the Heraclitan view, an organization cannot be identical year after year due to heavy turnover in staff, different visitors and weather conditions (Birnholtz et al., 2007). In seasonal organizations the notion of regeneration is of large importance, which Birnholtz et al (2007) refer to as acting in character.

2.1.2.1 Organizational Character
Nonidentical sameness can actually be achieved, and to mediate such sort Birnholtz et al. (2007) have introduced organizational character. The term is used to “denote the coherent content of the ensemble of dispositions that generates the distinctive actions of the organization” (ibid, p. 317). It is further argued that “this ensemble of dispositions resides in the individual procedural memories of organizational participants, and is coherent, persistent and regenerative” (ibid), which one can connect to Schein’s (2004) argument regarding culture; that the coherent whole of the organization resides in the rituals, values and behaviors of participants which are tied together as patterns. However, here it should be pointed out that having an
organizational culture does not necessarily mean that you have an organizational character (Birnholtz et al., 2007). Rather it is the coherence of the whole organization and the dispositions that constitutes the character, and therefore one might say that the organizational character facilitates the transmission of the organizational culture (ibid). For this reason, organizational culture will still be a part of the upcoming sections. Compare also with Orlikowski (2002) who in her study identified that there is a notion of doing things in the “organizational way” which refers to the organizational members’ ability to routinely and repeatedly enact a collective competence. However, acting in a certain way identified with the organization can rather be seen as recognizable qualities than a coherent ensemble of action dispositions (Birnholtz et al., 2007).

Just as individual character and personality guide and constrain behavior, so does culture through the shared norms that are held in the behavior of members of a group (Schein, 2004). Action dispositions are used as a general term by Birnholtz et al. (2007), however other authors (see e.g. Nonaka et al., 2000; Feldman & Pentland, 2003) discuss these as traits, habits, or even skills. Birnholtz et al. (2007 p. 317) regard an individual as “developing over time a coherent ensemble of dispositions to act in certain ways in certain situations—i.e., a persistent collection of premises, response tendencies, and structural capabilities that produce action with recognizable character”. Moreover, Schein (2004) argues that individual character is the accumulation of cultural learning from past experience. Birnholtz et al. (2007 p. 317) further elaborate on this: “because these action patterns are typically acquired and enacted without high levels of self-conscious analysis, and because each is to some degree coadapted to other dispositions already developed, they normally form a quite durable and interdependent system”. In addition to this, it has been argued that individual actions resides below the surface of the visible character of the organization, and are powerful in their impact as well as to a considerable degree unconscious (Schein, 2004).

Organizational character is equal to when an individual act in character, in other words, when they act as we expect them to (Schein, 2004; Birnholtz et al., 2007). Thus, the same applies to organizations, where they can be seen as systems of interacting dispositions that acts in a certain way (Birnholtz et al., 2007). In other
words, organizations are systems of interacting dispositions in the same way as individual habits cohere in the character of an individual that allows for recognition and prediction of future behavior (Birnholtz et al., 2007). These action dispositions contain the mutually adapted content of this group of employees, and constitute what they present as organizational character. A distinction can be made as to the ones who know the organization or person as those who can determine whether it is “the same” or not (Birnholtz et al., 2007). Moreover, it is suggested that for a person or organization to be out of character, their (re)actions should be perceived as unexpected in situations judged to be “the same”. The human need is to make his or her environment as sensible and orderly as possible and hence relies as the source of patterns (Weick, 1995). The characteristics of a certain person or organization are the specific actions that most strongly suggest the distinctive broader patterns of a behavior (Birnholtz et al., 2007). So in order to reduce senselessness and disorder individuals will work hard to develop a more consistent and predictable view of how things are and how they should be (Schein, 2004). Further since actions are institutionalized the behavior of organizational members become more predictable (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002). Therefore, there is an opportunity and an ability to predict the future behavior of a person, and hence in the same way, we can predict an organization as a coherent bundle of action dispositions (Birnholtz et al., 2007). There is, however, no presumption that perceptions of character are always correct. Rather, they can only provide us a certain guidance to what actions, based on experience can guide behavior in the future (Birnholtz et al., 2007). Squire and Kandel (1999) argue that individuals’ action dispositions such as habits and skills are retained in their procedural memory. Other evidence suggests that the role of individuals in organizational routines is stored in the participants’ procedural memory (Birnholtz et al., 2007). Birnholtz et al. (2007) further argue that some of these properties in the individuals’ procedural memory then contribute to the collective action dispositions such as routines and practices.

2.1.2.1.1 Role of Employees
It should be noted that individuals are highly subjective, and therefore an action can never be fully performed in the same way by two different individuals (Feldman & Pentland, 2003). Feldman and Pentland (2003) argues that this is due to that the context of the performance is dependent on the specific people at specific times in
specific places performing the action. Emirbayers and Mische (1998) further argues that the reason for people performing the same action differently depends on their ability to remember the past, imagine the future and respond to present circumstances. Further, individual knowledge about how things are to be done often resides in the tacit pattern of action, and mostly this is not reflective upon, whereas individuals behave in a certain way dependent on their predictions of effective action (Schön, 1983). Hence, the organizational performance can never be exactly the same in any two years when personnel are exchanged (Feldman & Pentland, 2003) and the organization regenerates (Birnholtz et al., 2007).

Nevertheless, if the aim of the organization is to stay in character and thus remain recognizable season after season, the personnel that is hired has to be able to contribute to achieving at least a very similar organizational performance. Due to this situation, temporary workers are being employed to a large extent on the basis of task-relevant competence (Packendorff, 1994), meaning that they should have appropriate abilities and experiences to perform the tasks that are assigned to them (Bechky, 2006). Employing workers with the right skills and experiences is vital, since the seasonal organization rely on those workers, and the aim is to capitalize on those specialized skills, and at the same time keep costs of coordination to a minimum (Bechky, 2006). Hence, finding the right people that understand and portray the organizational character, and therefore also the organizational culture is important (Jacobs, 2002). Suggestions of how this might be done have been presented in the setting of camps as seasonal organizations, and it begins with planting a seed in the staff as early as in the job advertisement, as it is important to already from the beginning establish a proper tone that describes the culture properly (Jacobs, 2002). This should then influence the interviews and the training of staff, to ensure that by the time the organization wakes up from its dormancy, every action and every move they make should be in accordance with the culture of the organization (ibid). Nevertheless, it is the organizational character, in other words the underlying coherence of the habitual dispositions that in the end produce the organizational action, that ease the transmission of culture (Birnholtz et al., 2007).
2.1.2.2 Processes of Regeneration in order to Obtain Organizational Character

Building and fostering organizational character is not something that is achieved easily in any organization, and especially not in a regenerative organization. However, organizations manage to achieve this anyway, and several aspects that have an impact on it are discussed above. Nevertheless, there are specific processes at Camp Poplar Grove, referred to as regenerative processes, which assists in the regeneration of the coherent systems of action dispositions that were discussed previously (Birnholtz et al., 2007). The means by how these processes are assisting in the regeneration is by transferring the knowledge, experience and the practices from the seasonal employees with more experience, to the new seasonal employees with less experience (ibid). Through this, Camp Poplar Grove is able to maintain organizational character, and thus regenerate the organization to appear recognizable for the upcoming season.

One of the processes identified was regarding demonstration. Demonstrations appeared to be tactics to transfer the skills from experienced workers to the newcomers, while still keep in character. Those demonstrations were repetitive in a way that they, during the training week to the arrival of campers, became increasingly more a representation of the organization in a full-scale (Birnholtz, et al., 2007). As the demonstration was repetitive, it was also multi staged, meaning that it incorporated more and more organizational levels, beginning with the experienced staff. Since the more experienced staff were the one initiating demonstrations from the beginning, many of the demonstrations relied on the memory of those workers and what they remember from previous seasons (ibid).

Furthermore, a second process detected at Camp Poplar Grove was the strategy of guidance cascade. Cascading of guidance means that rather than for new workers to obtain information according to the hierarchy of the organization, they would gain advice from the experienced workers, at any level (Birnholtz et al., 2007). These experienced workers are able to rely on previous memories in order to provide the appropriate guidance for the situation and thus the guidance is not mere communication, but rather advice on how things were done in the past. For this reason, the advice is not detailed, it relies in the memory of the experienced worker and the cascades were nearly constant, especially during the beginning of the season.
With these cascades any employee, with even the smallest additional experience, were able to serve as a valuable source of information. However, when employees are able to seek information at any level, and at any source, and the advisers are also the co-workers, new employees might receive conflicting advice to what they themselves regard as the appropriate thing to do. In these situations, where the new employee follow their own opinions due to the advisers being co-workers without any significant authority, new patterns can start to evolve and thus the organizational character is facing the risk of disappearing. However, when there was conflicting advice, the new employees made efforts to make decisions that were in line with the character as Camp Poplar Grove (ibid).

A further process that assisted in the regeneration were the type of communication, which at Camp Poplar Grove was referred to as bursty, meaning that it was not frequent, rather it occurred at specific occasions. Birnholtz et al. (2007) identified both collective bursts of communication and individual bursts. The former implies that communication occurred when everyone was gathered at one location, and this information was often fast and very broad. The latter refers to communication that was targeted at specific individuals that needed specific information.

Lastly, the case study of Camp Poplar Grove found the critical process of “individuals mapping the generic skills and experience from a range of settings onto specific situations at Poplar Grove” (Birnholtz et al., 2007, p. 326). These type of employees are hired on experience and ability (Packendorff, 1994; Birnholtz et al., 2007), and thus all of them have some extent of generic skills that they need to figure out how to use in the character of Camp Poplar Grove (ibid). Two strategies for improvising resolutions to this were found; asking experienced staff, and use the combination of knowledge they have at Poplar Grove, their prior experience and the immediate environment. If these solutions then took hold at the camp, they were dependent on the domain credibility of the improviser, the visibility of the action there were improvised, and the degree of risk and external standardization, such as laws and regulations.
3. Methodology

This chapter aims at explaining the process of how this research was done in order to answer the research question. The interest in the subject chosen has been longstanding for the authors of this thesis, and it has increased with time. As might have become evident from previous sections, Birnholtz et al. (2007) is of great importance for this study and was the source of interest to initiate this study.

Prior to ending up at the specific topic of seasonal organizations and this particular research, different angels and aspects of the area where discussed. However, the ability of (re)creating the seasonal organization as “the same” became the final point. One organization in this organizational area that, after some initial research, appeared interesting was ALV, a theater park and a seasonal organization located in Vimmerby, Småland, Sweden. As ALV fits the description of a seasonal organization as being dormant for a major part of the year and then regenerating itself for the coming season, the empirical findings provided the material needed in order to answer the research question. ALV is open from May until the beginning of October, and during this part of the year there is activity involving external visitors. When the park closes it goes into a period of dormancy until May next year when it is regenerating again.

ALV is a theater park where the characters and their environments from the books written by the Swedish Author Astrid Lindgren come to life. She has written 34 books that has been translated to over 90 languages, and many of the books have been turned into movies (astridlindgren.se) and she has made several famous characters such as Pippi Longstocking, Emil of Lönneberga, Karlsson-on-the-roof and Ronia the Robber’s Daughter. In the park visitors get the possibility of walking around, seeing the homes of the characters and watching performances made by them. Furthermore, the visitors have the opportunity to meet and interact with the characters. During the high season, approximately during July, the park offers 50 scripted performances along with the possibility of playing with the characters like e.g. help Pippi Longstocking and her friends go looking for things at her home Villekulla Cottage.
Moreover, the park offers several places to eat, such as cafés and restaurants. In these places the focus of the employees relies on seeing the children before anything else and giving the visitor a feeling of being in the 1950’s, which is done through their clothes, language and behavior. This implies keeping some sort of character, even though not being in any of the scripted performances, and avoiding words that were not used during this period of time. However, what could be argued to be the most important task is to put focus on the children. As stated by one of the seasonal employees during an interview, the employees should always turn to the children first, no matter if it is in a shop, in a restaurant or a kiosk.

ALV is of course a place for people of all ages to enjoy themselves, however, as it is a children’s theater park, the employees are there for the sake of the children and the children are the most important people in the whole world of Astrid Lindgren. Therefore the park is strongly run by the influence of what Astrid Lindgren aspired it to be. Every decision that involves the park has to go through an advisory board consisting of Astrid’s family and friends. It was really important for Astrid to let children be children and therefore the theme of the park is “play” which is permeating ALV. ALV does not describe themselves as an amusement park but rather a theater park where Astrid’s stories come to life. Every year ALV employs 420 seasonal employees in addition to their 40 permanent employees, which gives them a personnel turnover of 91%, a high number that is common in seasonal organizations. The park has every year 475 000 visitors mainly from Sweden, but other countries as well.
In this thesis a whole year at ALV was studied in order to identify the different phases that take place during a year, to eventually identify patterns in how they are able to regenerate themselves. By mapping the whole year it gave the opportunity of seeing the full picture, while at the same time finding the parts of the whole. Therefore, this thesis has the hermeneutic approach, as “the part can only be understood from the whole and the whole only from the parts” (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009 p. 92). To understand how ALV is able to regenerate year after year the whole picture of how a year in the organization was designed was necessary, while at the same time the parts underlying the ability of generating a full year was equally necessary. In other words it was vital to understand how the whole year functioned to get the overview of the organization and at the same time understand how the phases during a year emerged and simultaneously worked together to create a coherent organization able to regenerate from season to season.
3.1 Research Design
This section of research design covers the logical flow and process of how the research was conducted (Yin, 2013), and thus has the aim of explaining and bringing clarity of this process for the reader. As an initial step the decision to make a case study was done. This was due to the importance of getting deep knowledge about how one seasonal organization functions and what is happening in the organization during one year. As opposite a multiple case study would have been the option, but that is a reason for collecting data from same levels of several organization in order to compare results (Eisenhardt, 1989) and find results more generalizable than from a single case study (Blumberg, Cooper & Schindler, 2005). By using a case study we could get unique access to data and potential participants, which can according to Yin (2013) provide new information in a new context. Also to get a deep understanding of how the mechanisms work in order to create the whole organization a single case study was necessary as it gave the opportunity of digging deep into the sources of how that organization was able to regenerate. Information gathering about one organization gives the opportunity to get just enough information to effectively understand the operation and function of the subject (Berg, 2004). One of the most prominent benefits with using a case study is that data can be collected with the opportunity to find pattern deviations not possible to find out in other methods (Berg, 2004).

The strategy for this research was to use qualitative methods and that for two prominent reasons. First and foremost there has not yet been a distinctive amount of research on seasonal organizations and especially their ability to regenerate therefore the aim is not to test theory and find relations. Rather the focus relied in finding what the organizational mechanisms were that drove a seasonal organization to regenerate. The aim was to further extend the processes of such regeneration identified by Birnholtz et al. (2007) by broaden the scope to not only focus on transfer of knowledge, experience and practices. Hence, the aim was to generate theory in addition to what already exist, thus a qualitative method was beneficial (Bryman & Bell, 2013). Secondly, in order to understand how the organizational mechanisms work and what was underlying driving them as sources of regeneration from season to season a detailed focus on what was happening at ALV was important. By focusing on getting the details of what was happening in every part of the year at ALV the
mapping of the mechanisms could be done. However, sometimes the amount of details might work as hurdles in the analysis but are still necessary for the contextual understanding of the events (Bryman & Bell, 2013). In addition when doing qualitative research is also the question of why, the explanations of the events and their reasons as being part of the mechanisms. Therefore, by doing qualitative research one can find the details necessary to understand what is happening and their explanations (Bryman & Bell, 2013) to why they are the sources of driving the organizational mechanisms.

In this qualitative research the decision was made to have interviews with the respondents as it gave us the possibility of collecting broad and deep information. The interviews were semi-structured which means that the template of questions was prepared on before hand with a structured and logical flow in how the questions were asked. Therefore the interview guide was structured in such way that it would cover all the relevant areas to be studied: the whole year at ALV. This approach also gave the respondents the possibility of speaking freely (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009) in order to gain unexpected information that would not have been gained otherwise and result in unanticipated findings. Further, it enables the researcher with the possibility of shifting the questions around as well as adding additional questions (Saunders et al., 2009). According to Bryman and Bell (2013) this way of collecting qualitative data enables a collection of more detailed information. Since the interviews were guided by the researchers, the possibility of bias due to poorly constructed questions, inaccuracies due to poor recall and answers matching what the interviewer wants to hear could be reduced, as the researchers could steer and control the questions if answers were given in such way.

3.1.1 Sample Selection
First and foremost ALV was chosen as the setting for the study, due to that the organization fit the description of being seasonal. Second, as ALV is a theatrical park where stories come to life, stories that both authors have grown up with the selection of the organization seemed obvious.

Regarding which people among the personnel to interview, Becker (1998) has been taken into consideration. He argues that managers or other high level employees often
want to put their organization in good light, and thus they might be biased and attempt to hide certain information for this purpose. For this reason, the interviews in this study will be multiple; interviews will be held with different employees at ALV. To get as much detailed and broad information as possible the decision was to have interviews with initially nine people with different amounts of seasons spent in the park as well as permanent employees. The thought that the amounts of seasons spent in the park would increase the knowledge of the organization and shift in focus on details it was decided to interview six seasonal employees with one, three and five or more seasons spent at the park respectively. Meaning that two interviews were held with two people that had worked one season previously, two interviews were held with two people whom had spent three seasons in the park and lastly two interviews were held with two people whom had worked five or more seasons at ALV. This since they have different experiences and knowledge which were believed to be beneficial for the research. In addition, two interviews were held with two permanent employees who are department managers at two different departments to get information about what is happening throughout the whole year. Additionally, one interview was held with an HR assistant since that were believed to provide an even better overview of the organization as a whole. As mentioned, initially the decision was to have nine interviews but as extra information was needed from one of the permanent department managers, it became apparent that the employee was no longer in the organization, and therefore a colleague assisted with the clarification. Hence, in the end this study had ten sources of information at ALV.

To reduce bias and directed information, respondents should be chosen by the authors (Becker, 1998), this was however not the case. At the initial contact with ALV a request was made for respondents who fitted our criteria for seasons at the park as well as permanent employees and hence relied as the source of which people to interview. However, during the interviews it became apparent that some of the answers contained information the interviewers believe could not have been directed by anyone and were truly the experiences of each individual. Therefore, the conclusion is that the information in the data collected is not biased.
3.1.2 Data Collection Method and Process
The data were primarily collected through face-to-face interviews with both the authors were one put focus on asking the questions from the interview guide and steer the interview. Whereas the other person had a more observing role with focus on taking additional notes and ask follow-up questions. This is an approach that Eisenhardt (1989) find beneficial. According to Yin (2013) the face-to-face interviews increased the validity of the research. Furthermore, in agreement with the interviewees the interviews were recorded. This contributed the study with two main benefits; (1) the interviewers were given the possibility of being present, to not have to put focus on getting everything down in text and (2) it provided the possibility of transcribing everything to text which was beneficial when doing the coding and analysis (Bryman & Bell, 2013). In order to make the respondents feel comfortable each interview started with some small talk, and then some basic information were requested in order to increase the flow in the interview and get the interviewee talking. Thereafter the respondent was asked to draw on a paper how a year at ALV looked like. This was done in order to, as mentioned earlier, reach unexpected data that would not had come through otherwise. This then was used together with the interview questions as the source of guiding the interview. The questions were also asked sometimes multiple times with different angles to get as much detailed information as possible.

Since two of the seasonal employees were located in other cities in Sweden these interviews were held over Skype. However, the same process as described above were used in these interviews. The last pieces of information we got was from a tenth person due to, as mentioned earlier, that one of the respondents left the organization. This data was collected in an email sent from the respondent, clarifying one detail of the data collected. As complement to interviews, additional information were gathered from several other sources; a handbook for the personnel that described the organization and its role, a handbook on how the actors are to go about bringing the stories to life, and the ALV website. During the visit at the organization an opportunity was given to walk around the park to see what was going on in the organization in the end of March, which could also confirm some of the points that was made during interviews.
The interviews with the seasonal employees and the HR assistant lasted for about one hour respectively, and with the department responsible year-round workers the interviews lasted for around 1,5 hours. During the initial contact with the employees, the time for the interview was not completely set, in agreement with the interviewees, in order to avoid a time constraint limiting the information given. Instead, it was the semi-structured interview guide in combination with additional questions that set the duration of the interviews.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Type of Employee</th>
<th>No. Of Seasons</th>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Interview type</th>
<th>Interview Length</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lena Sandberg</td>
<td>Permanent</td>
<td>9 years</td>
<td>HR department</td>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
<td>58 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisam Salim</td>
<td>Permanent</td>
<td>11 years</td>
<td>Restaurant &amp; café</td>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
<td>76 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sara Hedbom</td>
<td>Permanent</td>
<td></td>
<td>Restaurant &amp; café</td>
<td>Extra information via e-mail, due to Wisam leaving</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pernilla Björling</td>
<td>Seasonal</td>
<td>6 seasons</td>
<td>Theater and restaurant</td>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
<td>63 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Sonesson</td>
<td>Seasonal</td>
<td>3 seasons</td>
<td>Restaurant &amp; café</td>
<td>Skype</td>
<td>59 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mickaela Carlsson</td>
<td>Seasonal</td>
<td>1 season</td>
<td>Restaurant &amp; café</td>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
<td>54 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simon Parlebro</td>
<td>Permanent</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>Theater</td>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
<td>83 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simon Karlsson</td>
<td>Seasonal</td>
<td>9 seasons</td>
<td>Theater</td>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
<td>77 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacob Ollander</td>
<td>Seasonal</td>
<td>4 seasons</td>
<td>Theater</td>
<td>Skype</td>
<td>60 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catrin Åhlén</td>
<td>Seasonal</td>
<td>1 season</td>
<td>Theater</td>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
<td>42 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Overview of the conducted interviews

As mentioned previously some quality assurances were done in order to increase the internal validity of the research such as face-to-face interviews. One such further issue is the issue of language. In order to make sure that there would be no misinterpretations or misunderstandings the interviews were conducted in Swedish, as
it is the native language of both the authors and all the respondents. By constructing the interview questions in Swedish the interviews could be easier guided by us as the natural flow of the conversation would be better. It also made it possible for the respondents to answer in such way that they could express without any hurdles in their information to us. It also gave this research a benefit in terms of context, by having the interviews in Swedish the contextual translating was done better as the words were not directly translated per se but they were put in a context to find the more appropriate translation reflecting the answers given by the respondents.

3.1.3 Coding and Analysis
The data collected comprised information of what was going on at ALV during one year, at each different part of the year. Coding more or less meant figuring out how to manage all the data that were collected throughout the interviews. Therefore the transcribed documents were used as the source of discussing each part of the year and mapping the patterns into themes representing different parts of the year at ALV. By evaluating and comparing the different data from the interviewees we could map and find patterns that represented a year. Furthermore, notes taken during the interviews, and the interviewees’ drawings of a year at ALV were used for clarification of certain aspects. Moreover, while evaluating what information that were relevant and not, the case at Poplar Grove and its processes of regeneration (Birnholtz et al., 2007) were reflected on as well. This in order to ease the upcoming analysis, when comparisons and additions to their case was to be made. However, a distinction could be made from the findings in this study and the ones by Birnholtz et al. (2007) as their focus relied on the transfer of knowledge, experience and practice from experienced workers to less experienced workers. These processes became a part of the upcoming analysis but in order to extend the ability of regeneration and identification of further mechanisms other aspects were taken into account as well. Furthermore, in order to ease the presentation and the understanding of the findings, they were categorized into four phases that were considered to be the pieces of the puzzle that is ALV. The phases that were found were season, de-escalation, preparation and start-up, and they are what constitute a year at the park.
The purpose of this chapter is to provide the reader with all the relevant information from the case, to eventually lead into the analysis and conclusion of this study. First, a brief background to the theater park of this case study and its setting will be presented. Subsequently, a separate section will be devoted to how ALV disseminates the vision of Astrid Lindgren. Lastly, the empirical findings from the ten conducted interviews at ALV will be presented according to the phases that were found. Those phases are season, de-escalation, preparation and start-up. However, it should be noted that the phases are not completely separate, rather many of them are intertwined. Astrid’s vision has not and cannot be categorized into one of the phases due to its continuous importance throughout every phase of the year.

4.1 The Theater Park
As previously stated, Astrid Lindgren has written 34 books and out of these books many have been turned into movies. Nevertheless, the artistic ambition of ALV as a theater park is to stay as close to the authorship as possible, and hence the park is built upon the books, not the movies (alv.se). This can be seen in some of the settings, for instance one home of a character does not have the same color as in the movie, instead it has the color that were described of the home in the book. In the theater park the most famous settings of Astrid Lindgren’s stories can be found, and all except from one are built in 1:3 sizes. The reason behind this one setting being built in real life size is since it was the actual location for filming one of the movies.

Upon entering the park, the visitors, and thus first and foremost the children, are supposed to leave the sometimes boring and dull things behind, and instead enter the world of Astrid Lindgren. Entering her world equals entering the world where all her stories take place, meaning that this is the actual homes of Pippi, Emil, Madicken, Karlsson, Rasmus, Ronia and all the other characters. What is more, when entering, spending time, and eventually, sad as it is, leaving Astrid Lindgren’s theater park, every single child should be joyful, since this is what Astrid strived for.
4.2 Spreading the Vision of Astrid Lindgren

“There can be things in a book that only children find funny, there can also with an advantage exist things that both children and adults find funny, but in a children’s book there can absolutely not be things that only adults find funny, because that would be rude to the child – who are the one what will read the book.”

- Astrid Lindgren

The vision of Astrid Lindgren was to continuously entertain children through her stories. In ALV’s personnel manual they explain that she believed that is was unjust for children to always have to live by rules made up by adults and thus she was persistent in not treating children as smaller or any less important persons than adults. Instead children should feel loved and they should always be put in focus and be given a lot of attention. Since ALV after all is Astrid’s park, the park does not only carry her name, it should also carry and spread her vision. This vision is not something that Astrid developed with a theater park in mind, rather it is about her personal vision and goal with writing stories for children.

Picture 2. Astrid Lindgren
Copyright Astrid Lindgrens Värld
“I am not more of an expert on children because I write children’s books. I simply believe that you should treat children as people.”

- Astrid Lindgren in “Astrids Visdomsbok”, written by Margareta Strömstedt

The vision of the theater park is therefore to follow Astrid Lindgren’s spirit and vision. No matter in which department you work “the meeting [between employee and child] is really important, and it is Astrid’s vision to recognize the children and put them into focus”\(^1\). The introduction of this vision to the employees begins during the recruitment process, which are to be further elaborated on in the forthcoming start-up phase. During the start-up phase the seasonal employees have to attend a four hour long presentation about Astrid Lindgren and Saltkråkan AB, the owner of the park. One might think that it is only the newly recruited employees that have to attend this presentation, but that is not the case at ALV. Everyone, old and new, have to show up and take part in listening to it every year, no matter how many years you have been employed at the park. The vision of Astrid Lindgren is after the introduction of it, continuously permeating the organization and the employees “continuously hear about it from the beginning of the start-up”\(^2\). Furthermore, ALV “has the whole artistic process of Astrid in their back bones, and her word and her opinions around what it [ALV] should be”\(^3\).

ALV emphasizes that they are to “put their focus on the children at all times”\(^4\), and one employee explained that “this is something that they remind us of everyday”\(^5\). Those reminders can occur at the weekly meetings at the departments among others, but most importantly the permanent employees and supervisors “communicate this by acting that way”\(^6\) everyday throughout the year, especially during the hectic open season. One employee gave a great, word-painting example of how the CEO attempts to communicate the vision of Astrid throughout the season; “The CEO usually does something that Astrid Lindgren did in a photo once, [putting the thumb and index

\(^1\) Pernilla Björling
\(^2\) Pernilla Björling
\(^3\) Simon Palerbro
\(^4\) Pernilla Björling
\(^5\) Pernilla Björling
\(^6\) Simon Palerbro
finger together forming a circle around the eyes, making it look like glasses], and if he sees that you are stressed, he does this to make you smile [...] and you realize that you should smile a little extra even though there is a lot to do. The photo of Astrid doing this face (it cannot be shown here due to copyrights) is shown during the first days of introduction and collation, which will also be further explained in the start-up phase, and the CEO explains that “if you see someone that looks stressed, do this so that they can be reminded that they should be happy.” Thus, it becomes apparent that the CEO as well, puts effort into communicating the vision by making himself visible and portraying the behavior that he wishes for the employees to portray to visitors.

Even though the vision of Astrid is most visible to outsiders and, thus to visitors, during the actual open season, her vision is continuously present in every decision and strategic move that the organization makes. For instance, finding the appropriate employees for working with children and writing manuscripts that portrays the stories in her manner. Hence the vision is an important part of all the phases, which will be described below, at ALV. When you are employed at ALV, no matter if you are permanent or seasonal, you should at all times remember that you are carrying the name of Astrid Lindgren, and the employees seem to put a lot of pride in this. Everything that the employees do in the park should be done in a way that would make Astrid proud.

### 4.3 Season

It is mid May and the day is finally here. Children from all over Sweden, and most certainly other countries, are on their way to Vimmerby to meet their favorite characters and visit their homes. Pippi, Emil and the rest are prepared and eager to meet their fans and soon-to-become friends, and this can only mean one thing. It is time for the premiere of the theater park.

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7 Mickaela Carlsson
8 Mickaela Carlsson
The park opens and children are running through the gates. There is a tension lying over the park. Many of the characters are nervously waiting by their homes. After all, this is the first time that Pippi and Emil and the other characters will show the children their houses, and that might be nerve wrecking. “It is jittery, and wonderful, after all it’s the premiere, will everything work as planned?”

The park opens in May, however, ALV does not only have one premiere day, it has two. The first one is when the park opens in May, and the second premiere is set in mid June. However, both those ensembles work until September. When you, as an actor start your season depend on which performances will premiere when, and this in turn is dependent on the children. The theater department is aware of that in the early season, many younger children of ages three to five are visiting the park, and thus they have to adapt the choice of performances to that, as “some things are hard to discuss, as the death in Lion Heart”. Therefore, the first premiere often involves less

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9 Simon Palerbro
10 Simon Palerbro
heavy and dark performances such as “Villekulla and Katthult, so that the younger children can meet Pippi and Emil”\textsuperscript{11}.

In June, the pressure and the amount of visitors are not as high as in July, which is considered to be the high season. Nevertheless, no matter if you premiere in May or mid June, many actors in the ensemble are nervous, since it might be the first time that they will bring their character to life in front of all the excited children. By now, through the collation and rehearsal period that are to be elaborated on later, the actors have gotten to know each other. The chemistry between the actors is of great importance for them and their memories of the summer. After all, if you are playing one of the police officers in Pippi, you will have to spend time with the actor that is playing Miss Pruselius, and if those actors do not get along there could be complications and “the summer might all of a sudden appear very, very long”\textsuperscript{12}.

\textbf{Picture 4. Performance of Pippi Longstocking.}

\textit{Copyright Astrid Lindgrens Värld}

\textsuperscript{11} Simon Palerbro
\textsuperscript{12} Simon Karlsson
To calm the nerves and ease the premiere and the season, they actors have a daily schedule that is planned by the minute, which they need to follow. However, it has been pointed out that it is almost impossible to know and remember everything that you are supposed to do the first day, but a common mantra is that “it will sort itself out, and it always does”\textsuperscript{13}. Most of the questions that the ensemble might have regarding the premiere day should be sorted out by then, and if you do not know, someone else most likely does.

Regarding the permanent year-round staff, the first days of the season, right after the premiere day, “is very intense and jittery, it’s a lot of discussions, hugs and adjustments that needs to be done”\textsuperscript{14} and emphasis is put on “bracing the actors, assuring them of how good they are, and making them feel comfortable”\textsuperscript{15}. However, once the high season begins in July, the seasonal employees do not have the same need for information, and thus, the permanent staff can focus on other aspects, such as starting to think about next season. This will however be further elaborated on in the forthcoming phase of preparation. Other aspects of their work is regarding making sure that everything is up and running smoothly, not saying that it is any less important, so that the seasonal employees can focus on giving the children a day to remember\textsuperscript{16, 17}.

\textsuperscript{13} Jacob Ollander
\textsuperscript{14} Simon Palerbro
\textsuperscript{15} Simon Palerbro
\textsuperscript{16} Wisam Salim
\textsuperscript{17} Simon Parlebro
In the restaurant department you could feel the nervousness as well. The first day of
the season, the seasonal employees are all met and greeted by a leader, often their
team leader, when they enter the park for their first workday. They are briefly
introduced, welcomed, and then handed over to the area manager. The work of the
area managers is of great importance and there is a follow up to ensure that they set
aside time for the newly arrivals. They are then introduced to the team leader, who
then stays with them for the first half of the day. This is when the team leader uses the
education he or she received earlier and educates the new employee about the duties
and responsibilities that they have at the specific workplace. This is a way to imbed
self-esteem in the employee. Furthermore, regarding the restaurant department, the
beginning of the season is somewhat slower than for the theater department. The
theater department has a premiere date, and they have to deliver instantly. However,
the restaurant areas are calmer, and you still have time to learn. How every employee
handles their first day at ALV is to a large extent individual, however, they do see
themselves as competent recruiters that are able to identify the persons that are
qualified to handle this. It was stated that it might be harder for employees starting in
June, rather than in May, “since then the employees are already in a sort of bubble,
and then a new person comes along that does not know anything which might make you feel less ready mentally”\textsuperscript{18}. They attempt to remedy this by initiating additional meetings with area managers to inform them “next week we have two new employees […] so make sure someone else is working in your place if the newcomer needs additional support”\textsuperscript{19}.

### 4.3.1 Interaction with Children

“We played and played and played, so it is strange that we did not play ourselves to death.”

- Astrid Lindgren

It is one thing watching your idols from afar, but how many gets to actually meet their idols? And even better, how many gets to walk into their homes and play with them? This opportunity is given to all the children of all ages that enter ALV during the season.

Thousands of children come to ALV everyday during the summer. They are not travelling for hours to only walk around in a park looking at the settings of their favorite stories. No, they are there to meet and play with their favorite characters from their favorite stories. In order for every child to have the opportunity of going on a treasure hunt with Pippi, Pippi needs to have a time slot in her busy daily schedule to do this. Therefore, all the characters from the stories have empty blocks in their schedules where they can play and go on adventures with their newfound friends.

\textsuperscript{18} Wisam Salim
\textsuperscript{19} Wisam Salim
If this interaction, and improvisation, are to work Pippi and the other characters needs to be easygoing and outgoing, and of course, they need to like children in general. They cannot be shy, rather they need to be “very outgoing since much relies on them making the first step, but they should also be able to make the child come to them, so they [actors] should be seeking contact and have a lot of positive charisma”\textsuperscript{20}. Astrid Lindgren wrote her stories for children, and she wanted to make children happy through them, and this is what should permeate the organization as mentioned before, and much potential of succeeding in this is through these interactions. Furthermore, there is an important aspect in knowing how to speak and how you use your body language. When there are hundreds of screaming children around you it might not be the easiest task to get their attention. Thus, “there are ways to get people to listen to you, and there are ways to get them not to listen to you. You have to make yourself large, there is no way you have the energy to walk around and scream the life out of you for a whole summer”\textsuperscript{21}, meaning that you need to be able to use your body language and your voice effectively. This large focus on interacting and putting focus

\textsuperscript{20} Pernilla Björling
\textsuperscript{21} Simon Karlsson

\textit{Picture 6. Interaction between improvising characters and children}
\textit{Copyright Astrid Lindgrens Värld}
on children even effects the employees’ private life, as one employee explains “I notice when I changed to my normal clothes and go to the grocery store, I still look at the children and say ‘hi’ to all of them, even though I am there as a private person [not as an actor]”\textsuperscript{22}.

Even though the restaurant department does not impersonate any of Astrid Lindgren’s characters, they still interact with the children during their visit to the restaurants and cafés in the park. When a child and his or her family is entering a restaurant the employees should “turn to the child first […] and not look at the parents all the time and asking what they want. Instead you should ask the child what they want to have”\textsuperscript{23}. Thereby, the interaction between the restaurant employees and the children is of equal importance.

\subsection*{4.3.2 Seeking Information and Asking Questions}

So, what happens if one of the employees does not know how to handle a certain situation, where a piece of a setting breaks, or if someone forgot in which order they are supposed to perform the tasks to close the café?

The actors at ALV are performing in a special environment, since the people they perform for are mainly children and the performances take place outside in front of a moving audience. In these situations, at some point you will face a situation where you have no idea what to do or how to react, and when working this way with children there is always a high level of uncertainty involved. However, this appears to be what some of the actors really enjoy and think highly of while being an improvising actor at ALV\textsuperscript{24}, even if you have been there for several years. As one employee phrased it “when you have worked for this long and you find yourself in this situation [of uncertainty] and realize that this has never happened before.. I think that that is amazing.”\textsuperscript{25}

\begin{footnotesize}\footnotesuperscript{22} Simon Karlsson
\footnotesuperscript{23} Pernilla Björling
\footnotesuperscript{24} Simon Karlsson
\footnotesuperscript{25} Simon Karlsson\end{footnotesize}
The permanent employees put much effort into preparing the seasonal employees for uncertainties and the aim is that “every new employee should gain as much information as an employee that has been working at ALV for ten years”\textsuperscript{26}. One permanent employee explained that “everything is hopefully well planned, however, some things always happens that need to be adjusted, for example regarding time schedules or that something is just not working out”\textsuperscript{27}. Hence, regarding seasonal employees as well “there are things that you cannot influence, and things that you cannot know before arriving on the first day”\textsuperscript{28}, and thus uncertainties will occur.

When an actor is in doubt, the most common way of seeking information is to turn to one of the other, perhaps more experienced, actors. Some of them have been at ALV for many years and they have thus faced many challenges and can share their experience with suggestions on how to deal with it. Hence, these more experienced actors figure as “informal mentors that take care of the new employees”\textsuperscript{29}. Working at ALV making the same stories coming to life every year is “sort of as re-inventing the wheel every year, but still making it appear original”\textsuperscript{30}, and thus the experienced actors often have answers to the questions that new employees might have. If one of their colleagues that are at hand does not know what to do either, there is always to possibility of asking supervisors, such as the producer and producer assistants, and they have walkie-talkies at hand to ease the communication.

There are of course uncertainties and challenges in the restaurant department as well. The same principal seem to be present there; whenever you have a question you can turn to the colleague closest to you at that time, but who you turn to also “depends on the degree of difficulty of the issue”\textsuperscript{31}. If there is a more complex issue for example, there is the option of contacting the area manager, and the reason for contacting them and not the team leaders is that the team leaders are usually very busy, since they have more areas in total to cover. However, if you are not able to get in contact with or if the area manager is busy, you always have the possibility of contacting the team.

\textsuperscript{26} Simon Palerbro
\textsuperscript{27} Simon Parlebro
\textsuperscript{28} Jacob Ollander
\textsuperscript{29} Simon Palerbro
\textsuperscript{30} Jacob Ollander
\textsuperscript{31} Robban Sonesson
leader, and if you do “they are usually at your work place very fast”\textsuperscript{32}. To provide further help, there is a binder in every workplace that contains the routines for opening, closing, the cashier and tasks on daily, weekly and monthly basis.

Moreover, there are TV screens at several places in the employee areas that contain information and updates throughout the day, so that every employee always is up to date with the latest information about what is going on in the park, or if something particular is about to happen. The CEO of ALV also has a weekly note, where he can express his feelings or tell information that he believes is of relevance for his employees. Furthermore, as the organization appears to be relatively flat, you can turn to anyone with questions no matter which position he or she have and this can be done at any time. Both the theater and the restaurants have weekly meetings during the summer, where they can express concerns about issues or such, which assists them in dealing with problems if they occur again. Additionally, everyone included in this case study appeared to be very eager to help and assist others. It has been mentioned several times that the employees at ALV, both seasonal and permanent, are recruited much depending on the personality, and they are thus considered to be easy going and there is “no prestige [in a way that there are certain things that you just will not do]”\textsuperscript{33}. And this contributes to the common firm belief in that no issues are too complicated to be solved.

### 4.3.3 Improvements

Running around the park playing with your new friends, will sooner or later make even the most excited child hungry and when there is a lot of children in the park, getting something to eat might take a while. Imagine if one child does not get his or hers ice cream fast enough to see Emil hoist Ida up to the top of the flagpole?

When working in an environment as ALV things can change fast, and the predetermined way of doing things might not always be the best way. Concerning the previous paragraph, examples have been mentioned where the fridge was located in a manner that did not make sense for the distribution of the ice cream in one of the

\textsuperscript{32} Mickaela Carlsson
\textsuperscript{33} Catrin Åhlén
cafés. The employees at the café therefore made a suggestion to move the fridge to a place that would ease the distribution, and hence speed up the process, which eventually would give children more time to spend time with Emil and Pippi and the rest. However, even though suggestions for improvements are being repeated, as the one above, it does not necessarily mean they will be solved as priorities has to be made in terms of possibility, time and necessity.

Employees are encouraged to make suggestions for improvements, and the supervisors appear to be confident in that the ones who actually perform the work in their specific workplace are most capable of knowing how to perform tasks in the most efficient manner. Those suggestions can be raised at any time, but there are weekly meetings for both departments where they can raise any potential concerns and also suggest improvements that they think would be beneficial. At the end of the season the employees are encouraged to fill in at least one evaluation. In these evaluations they can express freely what they “think and opine and what can be improved and changed”\textsuperscript{34}, and thus it provides a further opportunity to contribute to the improvements in different levels of the organization. These evaluations will be discussed later on in a separate section.

However, it is pointed out by permanent employees at the theater department that they “cannot take all suggestions into consideration”\textsuperscript{35}, and that they “always have the last call on whether to go through with it or not”\textsuperscript{36}. Regarding the director of the theaters, it is simply impossible for them to go through with every suggestion and improvement that the actors might come up with. In fact “the best directors are those that allows a lot of ideas but almost never uses any of them, since if they would use everything you suggest then we [the actors] have to carefully think about the suggestions before making them and that might lead to suffering for a not so well-thought idea that occurred in April”\textsuperscript{37}. Nevertheless, employees at both the theater and the restaurant department declare that they are of the opinion that their supervisors definitely listen to their suggestions.

\textsuperscript{34} Jacob Ollander
\textsuperscript{35} Simon Palerbro
\textsuperscript{36} Simon Palerbro
\textsuperscript{37} Simon Karlsson
4.3.4 Informal Activities

Spending time with the visiting children at ALV is perhaps Pippi’s and Emil’s favorite thing to do, but sometimes even the characters and other seasonal employees need a day off where they can meet and spend time with each other away from work.

At ALV there is a personnel club, provided by the organization, that organizes several activities throughout the season, approximately once a week, and almost every single one is for free. These activities could be almost anything, for instance a trip to another seasonal organization, such as the amusement park Liseberg or the zoo Kolmården. It could be to go on a moose safari in the woods of Småland, where Astrid Lindgren grew up, or it could be any sport activity, such as bowling, kayaking or a soccer tournament.

What is of interest is that from the information received through the interviews, the theater department does not appear to take part in many, if any, of these activities. At least you “could say that they are very much underrepresented”38. When asked about why they think this is so, the most common reply was that the actors work in such a unique way so they “get to know each other the wrong way around”39, meaning that they play scenes that they might never even experiences with their closest friends, and thus they get to know each other fast, and spend a lot of time together by themselves. Another reply was that theater people are perhaps even more outgoing than others and thus they do not feel the need to have activities planned for them, they rather plan activities amongst themselves.

Therefore, not only for the theater department, but the restaurant department as well, much of the interaction and getting to know each other take place outside the workplace, and since many people live in the housing provided by ALV, there is no real obstacle to get together and do stuff, once they need a break. However, since

38 Jacob Ollander
39 Simon Karlsson
“much personnel work so closely with each other much of what is talked about is regarding what happened at work, so you never really leave ALV”\textsuperscript{40}.

\section*{4.4 De-escalation}

We are now in the middle of August. Many children have had their dreams come true this summer, and some still are. However, there are less and less children coming to visit Pippi and Emil, meaning that it is soon time for the characters to say goodbye for this season. As all people, these heroes and heroines need their beauty sleep as well, after a busy, but fantastic, summer. As will be evident, the phase of de-escalation and the next phase, the preparation phase, are largely intertwined. They cannot be completely separated, since the story at ALV “almost starts before it even ends”\textsuperscript{41}.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{image7.jpg}
\caption{An empty theater park}
\end{figure}

\textit{Copyright Astrid Lindgrens Värld}

\textit{The Last Days}

\textsuperscript{40} Jacob Ollander
\textsuperscript{41} Pernilla Björling
In August you can sense that a change is happening. Every day there are fewer and fewer visitors, and in mid August, the amount of employees in the restaurant department decreases as well. For the theater department, however, all employees are present throughout August and the “work is now more on routine and you also start feeling a bit nostalgic over the fact that it is only two weeks left”\textsuperscript{42}. Moreover, during this period the actors might be a bit tired of working, and they might already be thinking about what they are going to do in the fall. Therefore, there can be a tendency to not take their performances as serious as they did during the high season in July and thus the motivation might decrease, since they often feel like they are not as good at performing anymore. However, they are aware of that this is not due to their abilities and skills, it is rather an effect of performing in front of a smaller audience, and hence not “receiving the same response and the same laughter at the jokes”\textsuperscript{43}. Moreover, there are a larger group of visitors that are not Swedish speaking, which complicates the performances since everything is not “humoristic performances that the audience can find funny […], Lion Heart for example is dark and dramatic and performing this for people who are not speaking the language is complicated”\textsuperscript{44}. Therefore, when the motivation is running short, there are more practical jokes, and more moving away from the initial manuscript to the extent that the actors perceive the performance as “a new performance in the end, since it develops”\textsuperscript{45}.

This decrease in motivation is not an aspect that the permanent employees, such as producer assistants, are unaware of. They work with this proactively and they are prepared in the sense that they spend more time in the actual park, close to the employees, giving them positive feedback and encourage them even more. Usually “snacks are offered behind the scenes to push the actors to do their best even though there are only a few people in the audience”\textsuperscript{46}. Furthermore, it is important that they prepare the actors for what is coming, the fact that there will be fewer children in the park and that perhaps there are not 300 children wanting to play with Pippi at the

\textsuperscript{42} Jacob Ollander
\textsuperscript{43} Jacob Ollander
\textsuperscript{44} Jacob Ollander
\textsuperscript{45} Jacob Ollander
\textsuperscript{46} Simon Parlebro
same time, but Pippi needs to know that this is not her fault in any way. Rather, this happens every year.

Regarding the restaurant department, employees are leaving as early as in mid August, and some shops and cafés are closing, and “the employees start to relax” after a hectic and intense summer. The work is phased out by decreasing orders of supplies, start planning inventory for the fall openings by figuring out where to move unused inventory and move equipment, and then finally by cleaning out the restaurants, shops, and cafés. Hence, there are routines that should be followed for these days as well as under the season, but with fewer customers come more time to do those, and in many cases those routines are finished in a short amount of time. Furthermore, ”Moving from the fast paced tempo [to the slow tempo] makes you tired and slow” in August and September where not much is going on and lack of motivation might increase. Therefore it happens that employees “can be found at places that are not their workplace […] and they are at times more careless about their uniforms”.

Furthermore, as with the actors, the lack of motivation might increase, and employees are not as tense anymore and can therefore be found at places that are not their workplace, and they are at times more careless about their uniforms. The permanent personnel at the restaurant department try to remedy this in several ways. For instance, they too are more present in the park, visiting the different restaurants and cafés. The attempt to make lists, but as mentioned, the employees usually finish those very early. Moreover, during this time, the employees are able to rotate, to limit the demotivation they might experience from being alone in the same empty café for a whole day.

While the de-escalation is happening in the park, the permanent employees in the offices leave the calmer routinized work that they have done during the open season, and move in to the most hectic part of the year. The permanent employees seem to relax a bit during this period as well, since when they were asked what characterize those last days of the season in August, the word “victory” was brought up. The

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47 Wisam Salim
48 Wisam Salim
explanation behind this was that “before the summer there are so many preparations and you need to know as much as possible about the opponents, the visitors, […] and you have to actualize their expectations, and I see this as a battle and you have to deliver a hundred per cent, and then in the end it feels like you have won the battle”49. Walking around the park at this time “it looks like a ghost town, when going from 460 employees to almost zero. It is kind of a nice feeling walking around, it is still beautiful and green, but it is kind of lonely and empty without the seasonal workers. It is a bit sad as well, since you created a relationship with everyone”50. Once “the battle” is won and the park is almost empty, the planning for the fall begins once again, and thus, the cycle continues.

However, as was mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, the park does not close completely in August. It is open during Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays in September and during a weeklong fall market in October. During this time, there are not as many employees working, and the number of visitors is also lower, but nevertheless, the children that arrive should still be able to meet some of the characters and play with them. The goal of these days during the fall is to provide a “cozy fall atmosphere”51 and has been described as a “fantastic period, since the park is different at this time”52, due to exhibitions and people showing there craftsmanship and thus “you are no longer the main attraction in the same way”53.

4.4.1 Save the Information Gathered
Once the theater park has closed, the information gained throughout the season needs to be gathered so that they are able to deliver the same, and maybe even better, experience for children next year.

The theater department “tries to document as much as they can, since they will never be able to remember every detail”54. Important discussions and things that were unfolded during the summer are documented and stored, so that they can go through

49 Wisam Salim
50 Wisam Salim
51 Simon Palerbro
52 Simon Karlsson
53 Simon Karlsson
54 Simon Palerbro
Furthermore, throughout the season they make sure that as many visitors as possible fill in the Gallup so that they can gather all of them in once when the park is closed, at the same time as they gather the evaluations made by the employees. However, employees have explained that everything is not possible to put in the evaluation, since some of the information is kept in their own heads until a possible future season. As soon as the park close, the permanent staff have evaluation days where they can discuss all aspects, and identify the most important parts that can be used in the upcoming season. Some things are of course let behind, but if the permanent staff can trace a red thread through the evaluation, this will most definitely be brought forward.

Regarding the restaurant department, they too use the evaluations and put a lot of effort in analyzing those by also putting days aside for this after the park is closed, and it is pointed out that the aim is that all the leaders within the department are supposed to have read the evaluations. Much of the additional information is gathered in the binders that are used throughout the summer, however much of the information is kept in the minds of both permanent personnel and seasonal employees. The belief is that this information that returning employees obtain and all the things they learn during a season is what makes ALV such a “popular and loved park”.

4.5 Preparation

As will be evident and therefore worth noting, is that the preparation phase starts before the de-escalation phase ends, and thus they are very much intertwined and overlapping. The preparation for next season slowly but steady, starts already in July, as mentioned earlier. The park is still open at this point. There are still children going on treasure hunts and adventures with Pippi Longstocking. There are still children playing with Emil and Ida in Katthult, and Karlsson-on-the-roof is still teasing and entertaining children of all ages. Even if there are not as many children visiting as earlier during the summer, the theatre park is still filled with laughter and excitement of meeting what might be the children’s biggest idol. Nevertheless, while the stories and the excitement are going on, something else starts to smolder behind the scenes.

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55 Wisam Salim
4.5.1 Retention of Existing Employees

First and foremost, in July, still during high season, the persons behind the scenes, the theatre department with all its producers and such, are not needed as much out in the park, and instead they start planning for which employees that should work during the fall market and the open weekends in September. As one permanent employee said “we start planning so early that we barely have time to start [the season]”\(^{56}\). Which actors that gets to work for the fall market is, perhaps self-evident, dependent upon which of the characters the children are able to meet, in other words, which stories that will be acted out for those weeks.

Subsequently, approaching late August, it is time to find Pippi, Emil, Ida, Karlsson and all the other characters from Astrid Lindgren’s stories for next season. Therefore, with children, unknowing of the work behind the scenes, are playing with their favorite characters, the theater department attempts to tie up as many of the actors from this season as they can. An e-mail is sent out to all the employees, asking them about next season. This is done with the hope of them wanting to come back next year to give the visitors a memory for the rest of their life. The theater department has 55 places to employ in order to achieve this, and around ten out of these places are filled with actors that already in August sign a contract for the upcoming season. These ten actors can be early recruited for several reasons. One, they often play a “carrying role, meaning that they are supposed to carry the whole setting of the story they are in”\(^{57}\). Two, they often play a character that is very hard to find the appropriate actor for. One example is the character of Pippi where it is “hard to find a grown up woman that can look like nine years old, that has a thick skin and is easy to work with”\(^{58}\). For this reason, those ten actors know which character they are bringing to life next season, which of course, makes them experts in providing the experience of ALV to the children every year. Nevertheless, even if you are not one of those ten actors that are recruited in August, almost every member of the theater department that does want to come back for next season is allowed to. However, they have to be rather patient with their contracts, since the recruiters want to see what kind of personalities they are able to find at the auditions. This means that if you played Sturgas in Ronia the Robber’s

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\(^{56}\) Simon Palerbro  
\(^{57}\) Simon Parlerbro  
\(^{58}\) Jacob Ollander
Daughter one season that does not necessarily mean that this is the role you will bring to life next year.

The same process of tying up employees for next year, and finding people to work during the fall, takes place in the restaurant department. The seasonal employees currently working in this department also receives an e-mail asking about next season, giving everyone the opportunity to express if they would like to come back or not. Hence, ALV tries to retain as many seasonal employees as they can from year to year. One position was mentioned to be of large importance, acting as a middle hand between seasonal employees and the permanent staff, and is thus handpicked. That is the position of the area manager, and that is always a person that has worked at ALV previously. The reasoning behind this is to reassure that the employee has the relevant knowledge and personality to be able to take on that responsibility.

4.5.2 Recruitment of New Employees
The job advertisements for the theater department are released on the ALV website and on job platforms in October. Actors that are eager to be a part of retelling the stories of Astrid Lindgren for thousands of curious children are thus welcomed to apply, and are then invited to attend an audition where their abilities as an actor and their personalities will be thoroughly assessed. The audition is not only one of showing your acting skills, but in addition to this there is an improvisation audition and an opportunity to showcase your skills in dancing and singing.

Although there several steps in the audition, what is in fact considered to be the most important is the personality of the actors. ALV is not what can be perceived as a “normal” theater, where you do your scenes in front of an audience and that is it. At ALV an actor spend around two hours of his or her day performing their scenes, however, here it is done in front of hundreds or even thousands of children, meaning that anything can happen. Once the children have seen the performance, the mentioned opportunity to interact with their newfound friends occur, and hence, the improvisation that the actors take part in are of importance for the children’s experience. Therefore, ALV needs to be able to ensure that they employ people with
the appropriate personality, and this is mentioned by almost every employee that has taken part in this case study.

One way that ALV attempts to ensure this is by “having a lot of eyes in the lounge area” during the auditions to see how they act and “if they keep to themselves, or if you are very outgoing, and most importantly if you are a person that seeks contact with others”, which might give ALV the potential to gain a relatively accurate picture of the applicants and thus ensure that the right person is eventually hired. Furthermore, the interview template that is used during the interview contains certain key questions that are asked in order to get a notion of how they are as a person. These questions are regarding their feelings towards working close to children, and other personality related topics. Through these tactics, the recruitment of the right person becomes less complex, and according to the assistant producer, “you can quickly see who will fit into the ensemble and not”.

The recruitment process of the restaurant is somewhat dissimilar, due to the less complex, but definitely not less important, setting of their work place. The search for new seasonal employees begins in December by posting job advertisements on their own website and on other job platforms. The next step for the recruiters is a trip to Sälen, which is a village in the middle of Sweden, with several ski-resorts grouped around it. ALV has collaboration with those ski-resorts and the recruitment team from the restaurant department makes this trip to find new seasonal employees that already has the experience of seasonal work. This collaboration means that some employees work at the ski-resorts during the winter seasons, and at ALV for the summer seasons. Furthermore, the restaurant department travels around to different restaurant schools to promote themselves in order to find potential employees. Whilst, the potential employees gathered from the job advertisements and the schools has to take part in team building exercises so that ALV can see “them in action […] see who takes up a lot of space, and who is more laid back” before the in-depth interview, the persons at the ski-resorts are invited straight to the interviews. The reasoning behind this is

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59 Simon Palerbro  
60 Simon Palerbro  
61 Simon Palerbro  
62 Wisam Salim
that since they are currently working at a seasonal organization that ALV is collaborating with, they know that they have already been through those types of exercises and tests.

However, for the persons applying through the job advertisements and at the schools, team building exercises and interviews are not the only things that are required of them to go through in order to be a part of a summers among Astrid Lindgren’s characters. They are further required to prepare a presentation of themselves in front of 15 other people. This is an additional way for ALV to ensure that they employ people with the right personality in the restaurant department as well. Emphasis is put on hiring people with the right attitude rather than previous experience as tasks can be learned but attitude cannot. These exercises, presentations and interviews take place during four days in the end of February and beginning of March. What is common for both the theater and restaurant department, and thus the whole park, is that they need to sell themselves in order to reach out to the potential employees that they want. They do this by, among other things, attending conventions and visiting schools, and every employee that were a part of this case study agrees that this is something that ALV is extremely good at.

4.5.3 Evaluation
Simultaneously to the September weekends, the fall market and the beginning of the recruitment ALV starts to go through the evaluations that have been mentioned in the previous phases. There are evaluations that the visitors are encouraged to fill in after the visit at the park to get their point of view, and there are also evaluations for the seasonal employees to fill out after the season. The evaluation that the customers have the opportunity to fill in when leaving their newfound friends at ALV is called a Gallup and this involves questions about, among others, their overall experience, about how they perceived the park. This is then put together by ALV, and they use this information when preparing for next year. However, the seasonal employees do not really get to see the results of the Gallup. Part of it is shown to them during the introduction days.
The evaluations that are done by the staff involve one from the HR department, and one, sometimes two, from the department they work in. They regard how the employees perceived the season at ALV, and they get to express freely what they “think and opine and what can be improved and changed”\(^{63}\), which provides a further opportunity to contribute to the organization. However, it is pointed out by permanent employees at the theater department that they “cannot take all suggestions into consideration”\(^{64}\), and that they “always have the last call on whether to go through with it or not”\(^{65}\), and in some instances, the suggestions will not make it to the list cause it is not possible to achieve. The permanent staff then gathers to discuss the evaluations. They discuss all areas of the organization and see what they can do about the different requests and opinions, in order to improve and make adjustments for upcoming seasons.

### 4.5.4 Preparing for the Season

In the theater park, the children are supposed to experience the stories from Astrid Lindgren’s books in real life. This cannot happen to its fullest potential without manuscripts, thus they need to be written and gone through thoroughly. This takes place at what is referred to as a technical collation in March every year, where everything practical takes place. This is for example the printing of the finished manuscripts and sending out e-mails with information. Along with the restaurant department in which testing of menus takes place at this part of the year, menus that need to represent the park and the vision of Astrid Lindgren.

Other preparations that also takes place during this phase are of course the planning of schedules and which theater should start when. Moreover, there is an ongoing maintenance of the theater park during this period, and this is mostly done according to a sort of priority list, and is based on the opinions of seasonal workers and permanent employees. This could involve anything from fixing props that are broken to building a new fence or a new road.

\(^{63}\) Jacob Ollander
\(^{64}\) Simon Palerbro
\(^{65}\) Simon Palerbro
The mere acting as Pippi or Emil, or not using words as “okay” to strengthen the 1950s environment of the park is not enough. To further improve this aspect the employees, not only the actors, but also all seasonal employees, need different sort of costumes. The actors, of course, have more detailed costumes that are adapted to the specific character, while the restaurant and shop staff wears clothing that could have been worn during the 1950s. These costumes are being sewed approximately between February and the premiere date, where the children are yet to come see their future friends of ALV. All these aspects are done in order to not break the illusion at ALV.

4.5.5 Individual Preparations of Seasonal Employees

The actors and employees are now hired. This means that we are now one step closer to the opening of the park and the day where all the characters from the stories are finally coming alive. However, there are still some preparations that need to be done by each and every employee in order to give the children the feeling of travelling back in time to the decades where most of the stories take place, the 1950s.

For the actors, this preparation are mostly regarding reading and learning the manuscript for the character, or sometimes characters, that they are impersonating for the season. However, the manuscript is not sufficient enough to carry the role of Pippi, Emil and the others. The actors need to ensure that they know the stories as they are told in the book, not in the movies. Children are not in any ways stupid or less informed than adults; they are much better informed than some of us would think. One anecdote by one of the more experienced actors illustrates this in perfect manner. There is one character in one of the stories that is shot by an arrow, and thus has a scar on his neck. During one of the pre-openings they did not have time to make the scar since it was very time consuming, and they made the decision that no one would notice. They were wrong, completely wrong. After the performance, a child comes forward, asking “who are you?”. The actor replies, and the child looks at him with a confused face and says “But, were you not shot by an arrow? Where’s your scar?”.

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66 Simon Karlsson
This shows the importance of always having at least as much knowledge and information of the stories as the children does. Also, bear in mind that these stories most often contains the children’s idols, persons that they know close to everything about, which further increase the importance of preparations made by the actors. Furthermore, it has been pointed out that personal preparations such as keeping in good shape and working out is of importance, due to the fast pace of a working day, where you sometimes have to run between different settings several times a day. Regarding the restaurant department, there is not much preparation to be done individually, instead close to everything is taught during the introduction and during the first days of the season.

4.6 Start-up
The arrival of the first group of excited children is approaching, and it is time to start up everything again, so that everyone together is able to create the experience that the children wishes for. This start up occurs just days before the empty park is transformed into the world of Astrid Lindgren’s stories.

In mid April, the second collation takes place that involves everyone at the theater department, actors, technicians and permanent employees, which are approximately 100-140 people. For many of them, it is the first time they meet each other and get to see with whom they will bring the stories back to life with. During this collation everyone also has to attend a four hour lecture on Astrid Lindgren, containing information about who she was, what her values were, and what she stood for, and also information about Saltkråkan AB, which is the company that owns the rights to her stories. The permanent staff attempt to prepare the actors as much as they can, however, there is “a fine line between pushing too much information to the employees and giving just enough”\(^\text{67}\). Immediately after the collation, in April, the rehearsal period begins for the part of the ensemble that is working from the premiere in May until September. For the ones that premiere in June, the rehearsal period starts in mid May. During this period the actors also have the opportunity of meeting an improvisation consultant, which will, as much as he can, prepare them for the upcoming challenge of interacting with children in the park.

\(^{67}\) Simon Parlebro

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In a similar way that the theater department has its collation, the other employees have an introduction day, which takes place a weekend in May right before the theater park and all the characters come alive. The introduction day is done for one half of the seasonal employees on the Saturday, and the other half on the Sunday due to the large amount of seasonal employees they employ. During this day the seasonal employees are further and more thoroughly introduced to the organization in several ways. They discuss how they should behave towards each other, how they should interact with the characters that the actors impersonate and about their efforts in the food. However, they also discuss the importance of not breaking the illusion. In only a few days, thousands of children will arrive, and they should in no way be able to tell that this is not the place where all these characters live, and thus also the other employees need to act like it. For example, as mentioned slightly above, there are words that you are not allowed to say, since they simply did not exist during the time period of Astrid’s stories, and you are not supposed to use your mobile phone for the same reason. Furthermore, they attend a tour around the park, to gain a perspective on how everything looks like. Once this is done, they are divided into smaller groups depending on where they are going to work, so that they can receive more detailed information about their specific working place. This is supposed to make them feel comfortable and calm, since some people are more nervous than others. What is also worth mentioning is that they are currently developing this introduction, by introducing an online education that the employees have to do before they arrive to the park.

Moreover, every area manager arrives one week before the park opens up for visitors. During this week they receive all the information and education they need in order for them to in turn educate the seasonal employees when they finally arrive. This involves everything from daily routines and duties to how much one scoop of ice cream should weigh, how to use the coffee machine and where the coffee comes from. The employees should not only know the brand of the coffee, but they should know its origin, that there are farmers that put their whole lives into growing the coffee beans for this specific coffee etcetera. The education regarding aspects such as coffee and ice cream are done with external sources from the actual companies, however, daily routines and duties are taught internally. The team leaders are also
welcomed to join this week if they want to refresh their minds about how things are to be done.

The thought behind educating the area managers for a whole week before the park opens is that the information and knowledge the seasonal employees need should not come from higher up in the hierarchy, it should come from the actual area managers that also are seasonal employees. This in order to reduce unnecessary time spent on passing on information and also to enhance the relationship between the area managers and the ordinary seasonal employees. The area managers act as the middle hand between the permanent staff and the seasonal employees therefore they need from the very beginning have the information and knowledge enough to pursue such relationships. This period of educating both team leaders and area managers and then finally other seasonal employees, is very intense and the restaurant department attempts to divide the tasks as strategically as possible between them so that everyone is prepared for the opening day and to help making dreams come true. As put by one permanent employee “the key to making this happen is to make sure that through the education, give seasonal employees the feeling of constant support of a team leader and area manager that firmly believes in the vision of ALV”68.

68 Sara Hedbom
5. Analysis and Discussion

In this chapter the empirical findings will be analyzed in order to map out the organizational mechanisms that occurs throughout the different phases. The analysis will be presented in different categories, and each category will eventually lead the to presentation of the mechanisms that is used by seasonal organization to be able to retain knowledge and (re)create themselves as “the same” from season to season. Thus, the research question will also receive its answer.

There are specific processes at Camp Poplar Grove, referred to as regenerative processes, which assists in the regeneration of the coherent systems of action dispositions that were presented in chapter 2, a short reminder of those will be presented below. However, the study in this thesis those processes have been used as part of the regeneration at ALV. Therefore, a more extended focus has been taken into account regarding the regeneration of ALV, where the processes identified by Birnholtz et al. (2007) has significance, but the findings of other mechanisms that also drive the regeneration has been as prominent as the processes by Birnholtz et al. (2007).

The first one of the processes identified by Birnholtz et al. (2007) regards demonstration. Demonstrations appeared to be a tactic to transfer the skills from experienced workers to the newcomers, while still remaining in character. Furthermore, the second process detected at Camp Poplar Grove was using a strategy of guidance cascade. Cascading of guidance refers to that rather than for new workers to obtain information according to the hierarchy of the organization, they were able to gain advice from the experienced workers at any level (Birnholtz et al., 2007).

The third process that assisted in the regeneration were the type of communication, which at Camp Poplar Grove was referred to as bursty, meaning that it was not frequent, rather it occurred at specific occasions, both at a collective and an individual level. Lastly, the case study of Camp Poplar Grove suggests that individuals have generic skills and then they should have the ability of applying them into the context of Camp Poplar Grove (Birnholtz et al., 2007). These type of employees are hired on
experience and ability (Packendorff, 1994; Birnholtz et al., 2007), and thus all of them have some extent of generic skills that they need to figure out how to use in the character of Camp Poplar Grove (Birnholtz et al., 2007).

5.1 Vision of Astrid Lindgren

Previous research has shown that temporary, and thus seasonal, organizations, are created to fulfill a certain purpose (Lundin & Söderholm, 1994). In the case study at ALV it became evident that what can be regarded as the most important aspect of the organization is to follow, bear in mind and spread the vision of Astrid Lindgren. Therefore the goal every season is to be Astrid Lindgren’s Värld, with much emphasis on the Astrid Lindgren part. It is after all her world, and her vision and purpose that should permeate the organization. However, seasonal organizations only have a few months to (re)create themselves as “the same” and communicate this vision to its visitors. Thus, in agreement with Packendorff (1994), ALV has to recruit and employ seasonal employees based on having competences that are relevant to the task of portraying the vision of Astrid Lindgren during the short amount of time they have to their disposal. Hence, the employees need appropriate abilities to perform this (Bechky, 2006), and as have been presented in the empirical chapter, this is an aspect that the recruiters take very seriously and put a lot of effort into ensuring. However, previous researchers refer merely to the efforts of the seasonal employees, and so does the Camp Poplar Grove case. Instead at ALV the personality of the seasonal employees can be considered more important at times, than the actual ability to perform the actual task.

What Astrid Lindgren wanted was to entertain and make children happy, and that is what the theater park is about. The children should always be in focus, and they should be treated as human beings. Thus, the vision of Astrid Lindgren can be seen as the organizational culture and hence also the organizational character, as was discussed by Birnholtz et al. (2007). In other words the vision of Astrid Lindgren is how ALV is perceived to act. Even though her vision is the most important mechanism for ALV in order to regenerate the organization, this mechanism is built on the continuity and interdependence of the other mechanisms elaborated on further in this chapter. This is based on the assumption that the organizational character is the
coherent bundle of actions residing in the minds of the organizational members (Schein, 2004; Birnholtz et al., 2007) where the mechanisms further described act as the action dispositions making it possible to regenerate the character of ALV.

Moreover, at ALV the dissemination of the vision does not only take part in the acts and the personality of its seasonal employees, rather it is an ongoing task throughout the year for the whole organization, including its permanent employees. Referring back to the example made of the CEO trying to cheer up employees by doing funny faces inspired by Astrid, it is clear that the vision is being spread at all levels of the organization, rather than only on at a seasonal level. Therefore, the employees’ ability to disseminate the vision represents the organizational character of ALV, and thus is the first organizational mechanism identified.

5.2 Sharing of Information

When employees are new to an organization they experience an encounter phase where they are to be assimilated with the organization (Miller & Jablin, 1991). At ALV this occurs to some extent during the first days of the season, however, information is also given to them during the preparation phase through the interviews, and during the start-up phase through the introduction day and the collation. When experiencing the encounter during the start-up phase the information is largely focused on the employees gaining a sense of the role they are supposed to take in the organization. This information however, is many times dependent on others (Miller & Jablin, 1991), and during the introduction day and the collation it is mostly dependent specifically on the supervisors and permanent employees on a higher level. Furthermore, there are meetings during the season that take place approximately one time per week where necessary information is being shared and in addition there are information screens in the personnel areas where daily information is being shared. In these personnel areas an information board can also be found where additional information can be accessed together with the word of the CEO, which is a note updates every week by the CEO, containing information he believes is of relevance for his employees. Those sources of information can be related to what Birnholtz et al., (2007) refer to as collective bursts. It can also be regarded as more of a top-down communication.
However, as have become apparent from the case study, ALV is not an organization that prioritize hierarchy among their employees. Even though some information comes from the top down to the seasonal employees, during the season you are allowed, and even encouraged, to communicate up to your supervisors regarding improvements or other suggestions. If seasonal employees have questions or are unsure about how to act or what to do in a certain situation, they most often ask the person that are there at that moment, which is in line with the findings of Miller and Jablin (1991), however what is significant at ALV is that the employees turn to the closest person regardless of position in the organization, which is dissimilar from those findings. This is mostly done on an individual level, and can hence be compared to what Birnholtz et al., (2007) refer to as individual bursts. These situations occur when individual members at ALV do not know what to do in a certain situation and since none of the employees expressed that they are in any regard reluctant to turn to employees at other levels in the organization when they need information, problems can be solved rather fast. Furthermore, the employees at ALV are provided with the necessary tools so that they are always able to communicate with each other at all levels. As mentioned in the empirical chapter, every setting in the theater part of the park has a communication device to have the possibility of communicating when they have to. At Camp Poplar Grove the same tools were not provided and their communication devices were only for certain levels of the staff, and thus much of the communication comes from higher levels during the occasional interactions (Birnholtz et al., 2007). Therefore, at ALV there is great emphasis on interactive communication in order to regenerate the organization every season, and thus is one of the mechanisms.

5.3 Sharing of Knowledge
A distinction can be made from the previous part where information is seen as relevant when communicating in order for improvements and updates about what is going on in the park. Instead this part focuses on the sharing of knowledge in terms of know-how, experiences and such, in other words how tasks are supposed to be done while at the same time keep in character. Birnholtz et al. (2007) presents two different processes of knowledge sharing: demonstration and cascading of guidance. At ALV
these two has merged into one explaining the knowledge sharing and transfer between employees. As tacit knowledge is shared in interaction among employees, and more prominently between old and new employees the organization has to prepare for activities where such knowledge sharing can take place. McNeil and Thompson (1971) emphasize that this puts pressure on veterans to share their tacit knowledge such as local norms and knowledge to the newly hired employees. Therefore it is important to make sure that new employees get the opportunity of learning this tacit knowledge to prevent the loss of valuable knowledge (McNeil & Thompson, 1971) and reinventing the wheel over and over again (Martins & Meyer, 2012). This is most commonly done through processes of socialization (Miller & Jablin, 1991) where new employees learn from the more experienced ones by watching them (Bechky, 2003; Feldman, 1981; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Miller & Jablin, 1991). At ALV this is ensured by always recruiting veterans to work as team leaders and area managers, as they have experience from the park, and thus as Birnholtz et al. (2007) states, have the organizational routines stored in their procedural memory. The socialization of employees refers to the veterans’ responsibility in sharing the vision and illusion of ALV every day. At ALV however this is not a task that is done solely on weekly meetings, but through the assurance of hiring the right personality, meaning a personality of being helpful and having the right attitude towards the job. Referring back to the processes identified by Birnholtz et al. (2007) as demonstration and guidance cascading skills and advices are transferred continuously throughout the season, not only from supervisors but from workers at all levels of ALV. In addition the vision of what ALV is supposed to radiate is continuously being reminded of throughout the season. The socialization between veterans and new employees is further something that is disseminated throughout the organization every day. Therefore one of the organizational mechanisms to regenerate ALV is the **sharing of knowledge**.

### 5.4 Recruitment

As the organizational character at ALV is considered the illusion and vision the children are supposed to experience, much of the character relies in their employees and their ability to deliver it. Therefore, as mentioned above, the team leaders and area managers are seasonal employees that have to have worked before and hence is a
vital and important factor for ALV to regenerate and thus make them heavily reliant on that seasonal employees come back. In addition ALV also make sure to retain key characters in the theater department as well, characters who are hard to find and need certain personalities. To ensure the retention of their employees ALV puts focus on early recruitment and tie up their personnel for the coming season directly after the one before ends. Therefore, one important step for ALV in order to not lose valuable tacit knowledge is to make sure that key people come back next season. This is done as a first initiative in offering an employment in the beginning of September for coming season. The next step is to send out an e-mail to everyone to map out which ones are interested in coming back and then eventually even tying these up as well. Furthermore, to retain employees ALV ensures that they have satisfied and happy employees, by encouraging them, planning activities for them, and cheering them up when they need it. Job satisfaction has by previous research been suggested as one of the key means to retain employees (Alverén et al., 2012), and that appears to be applicable to ALV as well, since they are able to retain many of their key employees. Moreover, through the efforts that ALV put into their employees, one can suggest that they do not merely see them as seasonal employees, rather they recognize that their organizations has to be built around them to a large extent, which is in line with arguments made by von Hippel et al. (1997). However, as most organizations experience regeneration (McNeil & Thompson, 1971) it is impossible for ALV to keep all of their seasonal employees, and hence a recruitment process in finding new ones has to start. In this process it is more important to find the right employees rather than their knowledge in performing the tasks.

Even though literature express that temporary workers are being employed to a large extent on the basis of task-relevant competence (Packendorff, 1994), meaning that they should have appropriate abilities and experiences to perform the tasks that are assigned to them (Bechky, 2006). Which can also be compared to one of the processes identified by Birnholtz et al. (2007) that seasonal members are hired based on experience and ability, which has to be adapted to the organizational character. However, at ALV this is not prominently the case as the personality of their employees is of more importance. As expressed by their HR assistant Lena, it is more important that the employees they are hiring for the season have the right attitude rather than the task knowledge, since this can be learned. Therefore, ALV is, as
mentioned, emphasizing the importance of the culture of the organization and the personalities that they want already in the beginning of the recruitment, as have been suggested by Jacobs (2002). Once the right employees to deliver the illusion of ALV is found the organization also have to find a way of keeping those. Therefore in order to be able to regenerate ALV from season to season the organization has to keep the employees that live and share their vision as this knowledge is tacit and hence cannot be transferred into explicit knowledge. Hence, it is possible to say that ALV is reliant on that some of their seasonal employees come back. Therefore one of the organizational mechanisms is the retention of key employees.

5.5 Knowledge Retention
As seasonal organizations are faced with high personnel turnover (Alverén et al., 2012) it has an impact on whether or not knowledge that resides in the minds of these people are retained or not. When personnel turnover is high the possibility of losing valuable knowledge is hence also high (Droege & Hoobler 2003). At ALV as in other seasonal organizations the rate of personnel turnover is high. Therefore knowledge that resides in these people has to be retained before the employees leave the organization at the end of each season. Even though there is an active task of trying to keep the knowledge that resides in the minds of these people before leaving ALV, it has to be a process that is continuously ongoing from day one of employment (Liebowitz, 2011). As expressed in previous chapter this is a process that is actively worked with throughout the season as improvements and updates of explicit knowledge is continuously encouraged in order to ease the introduction of all new employees next season to make sure tasks are as clear as possible. In addition at the end of each season the organization also collects explicit knowledge through evaluations. However, all tacit knowledge can never be retained in comparison to its potential loss (DeLong, 2004) as is the case at ALV as expressed by their employees that certain task they just know how to do, tasks that cannot be learned from explicit knowledge and are hence information that is not being transferred before leaving. Therefore a certain amount of tacit knowledge will always be kept in the minds of veterans. Such knowledge can only be transferred to newly employed through socialization and hence puts a certain pressure on veterans (McNeil & Thompson, 1971). As ALV is an organization where focus is put on deliver an illusion and a
vision to the children much of the knowledge necessary is tacit and can hence only be transferred from permanent and recurrent seasonal employees. A task that is necessary but still dangerous as much of the knowledge and conditions for regenerating the park resides in the minds of their employees. However, still the retention of all explicit knowledge is worked with as mentioned continuously and therefore relies as an organizational mechanism in order to regenerate ALV.

5.6 Informal Activities
At ALV one can also find more informal activities taking place during the seasonal employee’s spare time. As more informal activities there is a personnel club with activities for all employees at least two times per week. These activities are free of charge and seek to improve relationships among employees and spread the vision of ALV in a more informal way. As these activities are hosted by the organization they might become more formal in terms of sharing knowledge and experiences. On the other hand the seasonal employees have on their own initiative even more informal activities as well where they can meet and talk about work without any manager being present. It gives them an opportunity of talking freely and getting to know each other, which also benefits the processes of more formal socialization. The seasonal employees all agree that this helps them in their everyday work in the park as once you get to know each other the socialization process and the sharing of tacit knowledge becomes more prominent. Referring to the organizational character (Birnholtz et al., 2007), this could be argued that through this sharing of tacit knowledge, newcomers gain the ability to further grasp what being in character at ALV implies. Therefore one of the organizational mechanisms to regenerate ALV is informal activities as described above.

5.7 Dormancy
Seasonal organizations are entering a longer period of dormancy, meaning that the organization appears to be awake only for a few months or weeks (Abfalter et al., 2012; Birnholtz et al., 2007). During this period there are only a few permanent employees working, but there are still activity going on, however it is low (ibid). At ALV the theater park is open from May until August as well as a few days during September and October, hence they are experiencing dormancy. However, at Camp
Poplar Grove the activity during the period of dormancy is low, whereas at ALV it is higher since as mentioned there are tasks vital for the preparation and start-up phases in order for the regeneration to be possible.

The period that previous literature has referred to as dormancy, could be comparable to what the empirical chapter in this study refer to as the periods of preparation and start-up. These periods occur largely, as mentioned, between late August until the opening of the theater park in mid May. During this period the permanent employees, who can be referred to as the internal part of the organization, are as busy as any other time of the year. When coming to terms with how vast the importance of the preparation and start-up phases are at ALV, it further provides reasons for the dormancy period. If there were no period of dormancy, where the park is closed to the public there would not be any time to for instance repair settings that needs fixing. Since there are thousand of children visiting the park every day during the season, one could draw the conclusion that it is complicated to repair things continuously. As have been stated, priorities have to be made, and during the preparation and start-up phases the maintenance workers have time to repair everything, so that it appears as it should for the next season. Therefore we draw the difference between external dormancy as referred to by Birnholtz et al. (2007) and Abfalter et al. (2012) with internal dormancy in order to emphasize the relevance of this mechanism. Even though the park is closed for the major part of the year there is still internal activity in terms planning and preparing for the coming season. Hence, seasonal organizations are internally active which is vital for regenerating ALV and this is thus one of the organizational mechanisms.
6. Conclusion

In this part of the thesis the conclusions are given in order to answer the research question to finally fulfill the purpose of this study. Furthermore, the managerial implications, implications for future research and limitations are to be presented in this chapter.

6.1 Mechanisms

In order to answer the research question; what are the organizational mechanisms that enable a seasonal organization to (re)create itself as “the same” after a period of dormancy? we have with basis from the two previous chapters, come to the conclusion that there are organizational mechanism that lies as sources for a seasonal organization and its ability to (re)create itself as “the same” after a period of dormancy. And these can be added to the contributions of Birnholtz et al. (2007).

For seasonal organizations the most prominent organizational mechanism to regenerate the organization is the dissemination of the vision. This vision and the employees’ ability to share it can be considered as the organizational character, which in order to spread and share as recognized relies on the further explained mechanisms. In other words the organizational mechanisms identified below rely as continuous and interdependent sources for being able to (re)create a recognizable pattern of actions. Therefore the dissemination of the vision is considered the most important mechanisms and hence only works as a recognizable experience if the other mechanisms work successfully, that is to (re)create a recognizable pattern of actions. By sharing the vision and encouraging improvements throughout the season the employees, both permanent and seasonal, are allowed and encouraged to communicate with each other on all levels. By having such interactive communication the organization benefits in its (re)creation and hence the second organizational mechanism is identified. The third organizational mechanism then is the sharing of knowledge, which differs in terms of its sharing of tacit knowledge such as technical skills, know-how, experiences and so on. By doing so pressure is put on the more experienced staff to teach and share their knowledge to the less experienced, of how it was done in the past by relying on memories but still ensure to
keep in character. This is mostly done through socialization where tacit knowledge is disseminated throughout the season. However, even though it is a source of regeneration, it forces the organization to rely on that previous employed seasonal employees come back. Even though we would consider it as dangerous to rely on the seasonal employees come back is here argued in accordance with DeLong (2004) that not all tacit knowledge can be retained and hence in order to (re)create the organization as “the same” it is necessary that certain key employees come back. It is therefore necessary for seasonal organizations to retain employees who play a vital role for the organization, and thus retaining key employees is the fourth mechanism. It is however not to say that only if they come back the seasonal organization will operate as “the same”, this also the key employees to share and transfer the tacit knowledge that resides in the minds of these people. Tacit knowledge is, as mentioned, hard to retain outside the minds of the organizational members from season to season, but as is not the case for explicit knowledge. Seasonal employees are therefore encouraged to update explicit information and suggest for improvements throughout the season, hence they are to be working with the retention of explicit knowledge as much as possible, to ease the introduction of new employees next season which therefore rely as the fifth organizational mechanism. Another way of encouraging socialization is done by the organization through formal as well as informal activities outside work hours. This helps the employees in getting to know each other and share experiences on a more informal level, and thus help them in their everyday work. Hence the sixth organizational mechanism identified is the need for informal activities. The last and seventh organizational mechanism found was there is activity throughout the whole year, and as was expressed by a respondent in this thesis “it almost starts before it even ends”, thus the period of dormancy as expressed by Birnholtz et al. (2007) and Abfalter et al. (2012) is only external. Meaning that the park from outside looks like it is experiencing a period of dormancy, however, behind the curtains there is no internal dormancy as the organization is active during the whole year where parts of the year intertwine with each other. Therefore one can separate internal and external dormancy with the claim that the internal dormancy is non-existent. Hence, the last mechanism can be identified as internal activity. As this year round activity is vital for the organization to (re)create itself as “the same” the preparation and making sure employees come back are important as well.
6.2 Managerial Implications
The most prominent implications for management in seasonal organizations that can be found subsequently to this study is that there are a few areas where managers could be suggested to put extra focus. These are the mechanisms that were presented after analyzing the findings at ALV. Managing organizations that work under these circumstances, experiencing dormancy periods and thus the need for (re)creation after this, are advised to ensure the efficiency of those mechanisms. The manager needs to emphasize to all employees, at all levels, that even though there is a period of external dormancy and it, from an outsider perspective might be seen as a sleeping organization, the organization is in fact active in other areas, such as preparation and start-up.

Furthermore, as there appear to be somewhat complicated finding appropriate employees, the manager should put effort into retaining these key employees when
they are finally found and recruited. Retaining employees that has experience from seasonal organizations, and thus an understanding of them, will most likely be beneficial for the organization in (re)creating itself every season. Even though they have experience from seasonal organization they also have experience and knowledge of one certain seasonal organization, and might therefore be considered as key seasonal employees and are hence necessary to retain in order to regenerate the organization next season as they know how the organization is perceived and thus how it need to act in order to act in character.

Related to the same issues of employees, the organization needs to ensure that they are all socialized into the organization and socializing while working for the organization, since this is evidently a prominent and efficient way of transferring and sharing the tacit knowledge between the employees both experienced and inexperienced. This tacit knowledge is of large importance for the regeneration as it resides in the minds of the organizational members and thus the experienced employees are the ones who know how the organization need to act to act in character.

As have been stated a temporary organization such as a seasonal organization most often have a clear focus, and this focus often implies the dissemination of the vision. If the managers are able to communicate this vision through all levels and to all employees, everyone is aware of what is expected from them, and from the organization as a whole in order to give the visitors a recognizable experience, that is regarded as “the same” every year.

Last, but not least, the organization needs to communicate interactively at all levels. Only top-down or bottom-up communication is not sufficient, instead both should be actively encouraged. The communication has to be ongoing as well, in order to get all employees on-board with fulfilling the purpose of the seasonal organization.

6.3 Suggestions for Future Research
If there is an interest in pursuing research within this same area, the authors of this thesis regard the topic of seasonal organizations on a more generalized level as one of
high interest. This particular study refers to a seasonal organization in Sweden, but it would be of interest, and most certainly beneficial for organizations, if research were done both on a general level in Sweden, and on a general level in other geographic areas. Furthermore, an interesting aspect would be to bring in the opinions of the visitors and customers of seasonal organizations and investigating their part in the (re)creation of the organization as “the same”.

6.4 Limitations
As with most research being conducted, certain influences that the authors were not able to control are factors that needs to be taken into consideration in this specific study as well. These limitations will be developed in this section in order to give the reader an understanding of those factors and its effect on the study. First, the study was conducted within a limited time frame of approximately five months, meaning that there was a challenge of dealing with time constraints. This could be considered the most vital limitation, and not being able to control this factor, implied adaption of processes in order to in the end of those months present a valid study, giving new insights into the topic of seasonal organizations. A further limitation that should be brought to light is the risk of biased interviews. All interviews were conducted within the same company, and despite the interviewees being from several levels of the organizations, it is very complicated for the interviewers, hence the authors, to determine and evaluate the information as biased or not. After all, employees most probably feel much loyalty towards the organization they work in, and thus, there is always a risk of being biased in giving answers regarding the work place. Lastly, it should be said that when conducting interviews at one organization, the findings cannot be generalized for all seasonal organizations. Furthermore, it should be noted that ALV is a Swedish organization with Swedish values and thus the findings might not be applicable to seasonal organizations in other parts of the world.
7. References


Appendix 1

Intervjuguide
Hur ser ett år på Astrid Lindgrens värld ut?

Namn: 
Ålder: 
Heltid/säsongsanställd: 
Antal säsonger/år: 
Hur kommer det sig att du började jobba här? 
Är du uppvuxen i Vimmerby? 
Har du tillbringat mycket tid på ALV i ung ålder/innan du började arbeta här? 
Rita upp ett år på ALV (på ett tomt papper) beskriv de olika faserna.

Fas I - Uppstart?
- När börjar ni rekryterar? 
- Hur ser den processen ut? 
- Hur säkerställer ni rätt kompetens/personlighet? 
- Vad sker i organisationen under den här perioden? reparationer etc? 
- Hur ser ni till att allt är i skick inför säsongen? 
- Vad gör du i uppstartfasen? Har du ansvar för något speciellt?

Fas II - Socialisering/Utbildning/Förberedelse?
- Finns det någon utbildning för säsongsanställda? Hur ser den ut? 
- Finns det utbildning/förberedelse dokument att tillgå för de säsongsanställda? 
- Vad gör du för att förbereda för säsongen? 
- Improvisationsprov? 
- Vem vänder du dig till för att söka information om ditt arbete? 
- Vad skulle du säga är det allra viktigaste under förberedelserna? 
- Vad gör ni för att lära känna alla medarbetare? 
- S: hur stor del angör pengarna till varför du sommarjobbar här? 
- Hur intresserad är du av organisationens utveckling långsiktigt? vision/mål

Fas III - Öppnat/Säsong?
- Hur ser de första dagarna på säsongen ut? Skiljer de sig från övriga säsongen? 
- Hur visste du vad du skulle göra första dagen? 
- Finns det någonting du önskar att du vetat första dagen? 
- TS: Har ni någon slags riktlinje för att veta hur man ska agera i interaktion med publiken? 
- Är du uppmuntradt att förändra i teoretisk info? (pärmar på arbetsplatsen) 
- Tar du ofta initiativ till att hjälpa andra? Varför/varför inte? 
- Vad händer om du inte vet vad du ska göra i en viss situation? 
- Känner du att din chef lyssnar på dig? 
- Uppmuntras du att komma med utvecklings idéer? hur då? hur delar du med dig av det?

Fas IV – Utfasning?
- Vad sker de sista veckorna på säsongen? Finns det något som utmärker den här perioden?
S: Vad gör du för att lämna över det du gjort under säsongen?
H: Hur tar du tillvara på saker/arbetsuppgifter som utförts under säsongen?
Finns det någonting (kunskap?) som oroar dig som trilla mellan stolarna när du slutar?

**Fas V – Stängning?**
- Vad gör ni när ni stänger?
- Finns det något specifikt som karaktäriserar stängningsperioden? ge exempel
- Gör du något för att lämna vidare det du gjort under sommaren?
- Hur ser ALV ut när det precis har stängt?

**Fas VI – Sömn?**
- Vad händer under denna period?
- Vad gör de olika avdelningarna?
- Vad är det viktigaste du gör under den här perioden?
- ledningsgruppen anser att nyckeln till återskapande är rutinerat arbete utan utveckling.
Appendix 2

Interview guide - translated
How does a year at Astrid Lindgren’s world look like?

Name:
Age:
Permanent/seasonal employed:
Amount of years/seasons in the organization:
How was it that you started working here?
Did you grow up in Vimmerby?
Did you spend time at ALV when you were young/before you started working here?
Draw how a year at ALV looks like and describe the different phases that occur.

Phase I - Start-up?
- When do you start to recruit?
- How does that process look like?
- How do you ensure the right skills/personality?
- What is happening in the organization during this period? reparations etc?
- How do you make sure that everything is in working condition before the season?
- What do you do during start-up? Are you responsible for anything?

Phase II - Socialization/Education/Preparation?
- Is there any education for the seasonal employees? How does it look like?
- Are there any educational/preparational documents available for the seasonal employees?
- What do you do to prepare for the season?
- Are there any tests for ability to improvise?
- Who do you turn to to seek information about your work?
- What would you say is most important during preparation?
- What do you do to get to know all employees?
- Seasonal employees: How big part does the money play to why you work here?
- How interested are you about the long-term organizational development?

Phase III - Open/Season?
- How does the first days of the season look like? Are they different from the rest of the season?
- How did you know what you were supposed to do your first day at work?
- Is there anything you wish you knew your first day?
- Seasonal employees: Do you have any guidelines for how to know how to act in interaction with the audience?
- Are you encouraged to change and update theoretical information?
- Do you often take initiative to help others? Why/why not?
- What happens if you do not know what to do in a certain situation?
- Do you think that your supervisor is listening to what you have to say?
• Are you encouraged to share ideas of development? How? How do you share it?

**Phase IV - Phase out?**

• Vad sker de sista veckorna på säsongen? Finns det något som utmärker den här perioden?
• What is happening during the last weeks of the season? Is there anything distinguishing this period?
• Seasonal employees: What do you do to turn in what you have done during the season?
• Permanent employees: How do you seize what has been done during the season?
• Are you worried that not everything that you have been done during the season will be seized?

**Phase V - Closing?**

• What do you do when you close?
• Is there anything special characterizing this period? Do you have any examples?
• Do you do anything to transfer what you have done during the summer?
• How does ALV look like the minute or day after closing?

**Fas VI - Dormancy?**

• What is happening during this period?
• What are the different departments doing?
• What is the most important thing you are doing during this period?
• Are you doing anything to seize the previous season? How? Give an example of how seized something/did not seize anything?
• Are there any statistics from previous year about customer experiences? Do you know how it looks like? If yes, do you work with it? Give examples. Where is the focus when you work with customer experiences?
“Om ni skulle ta och gå hem nu”, sa Pippi, “så att ni kan komma tillbaka igen imorgon. För att om ni inte går hem så kan ni ju inte komma tillbaka. Och det vore synd” - Pippi Långstrump

“Now you should go home”, Pippi said, “so that you can come back again tomorrow. Because if you do not go home then you cannot come back. And that would be a shame” – Pippi Longstocking