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EDU-LARP TO IT

USER MANUAL FOR TRAINERS

Project Edu-larp to IT Educational live action role play to Italy Turkey n° 2023-2-IT01-KA210-VET-000180963



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THE PROJECT
MEIN THE COMPANY



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When we wrote this project, we thought of us and the times we listened to some boring lecturer or some complicated lecture that automatically shifted our attention to the activities we were going to do on the way out of school. For me I think of chemistry and physics for my colleagues I don't know. When I was studying there were no role-playing games, let alone would they have been used in high school science to replace boring or complicated lecturers... but we are fortunately in the year 2025 and if you want to make a subject or a module or a training unit more attractive and/or lighter, you have so many methodologies at your disposal... We discovered edu-larp during the covid period and it was an enlightenment!!!

This is the second time that Studio L&P has decided to plan an Edu-larp, but above all, it is the umpteenth time that Studio L&P has sought methodologies and/or ideas to attract young people, to contain dispersion, to make young people understand that only "knowledge makes you free"... only study can disarm arrogance and only the ability to fully exploit one's personal resources makes people more self-confident. Self-esteem is built, says and teaches Giorgio Nardone.[1]

Role-playing puts you in a context and makes you an integral part of it, but it also asks you to find the resources you possess to adapt to the role, solve problems, find compromises and/or despair, shout out all your anger because you can't or because someone has been unfair to you (another function of the Edu-larp) it allows you to express opinions, feelings, to be another person behind whom I can also hide my person but not my personality. The real challenge was to get the Turkish partner to accept the experimentation of an Edu-larp as a business incubator and as an alternative teaching methodology... they were so pragmatic and concrete that they said yes out of trust and curiosity, but with the condition that we would go to them and explain what they would have to do... and so we did.

[1] Giorgio Nardone, psychologist, psychotherapist, and student of P. Watzlawick, with whom he founded the Strategic Therapy Center in Arezzo in 1987. He is the author of numerous books.





SHARING WITH TURKISH COLLEAGUES

Learning by doing... we played with them with the Edu-larp "Julia'lost treasures" [2]: this game consists of reconstructing the life of a person who helped shape yours. "Although now grown up, as children you were all orphans, entrusted to her care. You have all lived in and out of Julia's home at different times in your lives and she played a key role in your becoming who you are today. But who was she? And above all, who were you? What emotions bound you to her" We have not been educated to show our emotions and if others ask us to do so, even if it is for fun, we do not always succeed. The fear of denuding ourselves and/or looking ridiculous overwhelms us and I realised that in this all peoples are similar.

After the game, we talked about how an Edu-larp is made, what rules have to be respected, what characteristics the characters must have, the reason for certain choices that are often also linked to the educational theme one wishes to convey.





Our experience

THE SCHOOL IN ANKARA THAT HOSTED US FOR THE COOKING COMPETITION



CONTESTANTS AND JUDGES FOR THE "CHEFS OF ANKARA" COMPETITION



1.1 WHAT IS EDU-LARP?

Educational live **a**ction **r**ole **p**laying is a role-playing game for educational and training purposes that has been used in Italy since the 1990s, unlike in Nordic countries where it has been in use for longer.

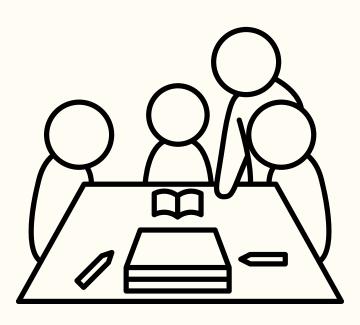
The first experiments took place in the 2000s, thanks to a number of educators, entertainers and recreational associations who began to introduce elements of live role-playing into school and youth contexts, often without explicitly using the label "edu-larp".

Since 2010, there has been a more conscious use of edu-larp, especially in schools, universities, extracurricular educational activities and vocational training in some Italian regions where the choice of teaching methods is much more flexible than in traditional schools.

In recent years, particularly since 2015, several Italian associations and groups have begun collaborating with international networks, participating in conferences such as "Nordic Larp Talks" and adapting Scandinavian formats to the Italian context.

In 2021, two members of Studio L&P (Learning & Progress) participated in a training session on Edu-larp organised by Epale/Indire. Following that specific seminar, a strong interest in the Edularp tool emerged, leading to several experiments on existing Edu-larps and three new Edu-larp designs thanks to the contribution of Erasmus+.

Today, although Edu-larp is not yet widely known, it is used in some schools and in social and cultural projects, with growing interest from educators and game designers.



1.2 WHY USE IT IN TRAINING?

(EDUCATIONAL VALUES, POTENTIAL, DIFFERENCES FROM TRADITIONAL ROLE-PLAY)

It is well known that play is a powerful form of social sharing and entertainment, fundamental to life and growth. Conveying educational objectives through play is a way to actively engage young people, especially those who are more reticent and wary of studying, so that they learn without even realising it. It is no coincidence that we wanted to test this tool to involve NEET in training processes. Assigning roles and tasks in order to perform a role adequately is different from doing "homework" to be tested in a particular subject. In our model, Edu-larp is preceded by preparatory workshops. We realised that if people do not take the preparatory workshops as "study" but as a convivial moment to understand what they will have to deal with or what role they can or must play, they manage to remain more focused, take fewer absences and experience the moment as "leisure".

1.3 WHO IS THIS MANUAL AIMED AT?

(TEACHERS, TRAINERS, FACILITATORS, EDUCATORS, YOUTH WORKERS)

These guidelines are aimed at anyone who wishes to try their hand at using Edu-larp within a specific disciplinary field or in a social integration project. If they understand that this is a working method that suits them, they can also consider designing one specifically for their needs and/or objectives.



2.1 PEDAGOGY OF EDU-LARP

(EDUCATIONAL APPROACHES, CONSTRUCTIVISM, EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING)

At the heart of Edu-larp is play and doing, acting. Training is not something you undergo but something you experience through the interpretation of roles with characteristics that are very similar to our own or completely different. Edu-larp allows individuals to express themselves without renouncing their image (whether constructed or simply acted out over the years), enabling them to express parts of themselves that would not otherwise emerge. Edu-larp facilitates feelings and learning. I learn history not by studying it but by acting it out through characters and situations that not only allow me to experience it deeply but also to understand it through contemporary eyes. It also responds to the most direct mode of learning, especially for those who have difficulty concentrating or following traditional lessons, as it has a very strong basis in learning by doing.

Edu-larp is part of constructivism, one of the most influential educational approaches of the 20th century and still the basis of many innovative teaching practices today. In short, it starts from the idea that "learning is not simply the transmission of knowledge from teacher to student", but an active process in which the student "constructs" their own knowledge through experience, interaction and reflection.

FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF CONSTRUCTIVISM

- Active learning: the student is the protagonist: they learn by doing, experimenting and solving real problems.
- Knowledge as construction: knowledge is not a copy of reality, but a personal and social construction. Each individual attributes meaning to new information by connecting it to their prior knowledge.
- Contextualisation: learning is more effective when it takes place in a meaningful and realistic context, close to the situations that students encounter in life.
- Social interaction: learning is not only individual; interaction with peers and teachers is essential for developing and reworking one's ideas.
- Role of the teacher/trainer/educator: no longer a "transmitter of content", but a "facilitator" or "mediator" who guides, supports and stimulates students in the process of knowledge construction.

In practice, they use active methodologies (workshops, problem solving, project work, cooperative learning); the activities carried out are based on authentic tasks and real situations.

2.2 BENEFITS: DEVELOPMENT OF TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

(COLLABORATION, PROBLEM SOLVING, EMPATHY, CREATIVITY)

Playing games activates all the abilities and skills that every human being possesses because, as a game, it frees you from social and conventional rules, allowing your normally acted self to emerge, but also your unconscious and/or unexpressed self to come out into the open. In some games, if a person gets involved, all their resources emerge, either to win or not to succumb. In Edu-larp, someone also gives tasks and roles that inevitably lead the person to want to act them out without making a "bad impression". Play as a non-judgmental free field gives voice to what we often have but do not have the courage to bring out for fear of making a bad impression, for fear of social rules, for fear of... The game gives you a T-shirt to wear and justifies why you have to play a role. It is a game and you often have to collaborate with someone, you may even have to resolve a situation, you have to try to understand who you are dealing with and perhaps you also have to try to empathise with who you are dealing with... the power of the game, the strength of Edu-larp.

Imagine creating bullying scenarios to make bullies understand the effect it has... or to make those who praise war and racism[3] understand what it means to live in poverty, misery and despair. Or if you want to convey the frustration felt by many people who feel marginalised because they are different. What could be better than letting them experience it for themselves? Play is a powerful tool for working on soft skills, not only with NEET but with anyone who has mental blocks or difficulties.



2.3 LIMITS AND CONSIDERATIONS

(EMOTIONAL SAFETY, INCLUSIVITY, CONFLICT MANAGEMENT)

The game itself must be treated as such, so where tensions or emotions arise that you are not sure you can contain, it is essential to intervene and restore balance, taking every opportunity to convey values and considerations that lead to respect for human beings.

Edu-larp can be particularly effective for many people, both young and old, who avoid certain situations because they feel they cannot cope with them or who "simply" want to avoid conflict and/or emotional distress. The nature of the game, like theatre or acting in a broad sense, allows for free self-expression, but this must always be done with respect for others and, above all, where there may be sensitive situations, with the presence not only of facilitators but also of psychologists who can "realign" emotions and bring everything back to "normality".

Edu-larp is extremely inclusive because it allows people to free themselves from all social roles, returning to being individuals with different clothes and roles from those they play every day. It creates neutral contexts in which people are not who they think they are every day, but the person they are at that moment in that particular role. Edu-larp allows you to dream and imagine yourself beyond any problems in scenarios that you never even dreamed of being able to tread before. It could therefore also have a strong aspect of personal recovery because it applies one of Giorgio Nardone's rules relating to his strategic dialogue model: think about how you would behave if... if you were the person you would like to be but cannot be; if you were free to decide your own life... with imagination and thought, we can go beyond our problems and build a new person, closer to what we would like to be. Edu-larp therefore allows us to act "as if" and, if we wish, gives people the opportunity to act out a part of themselves that they are unable to act out in normal life.



3.1 REQUIRED SKILLS

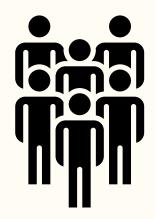
(FACILITATION, GROUP MANAGEMENT, DEBRIEFING)

The facilitator must be someone who understands human beings. For some, this may mean empathy [4], for others synergy, and for others still human interaction.

You cannot improvise. To work with people, you need to know them, be used to doing so, and be able to perceive what is happening before it even happens. You must always suspend judgement and try to understand what, how and whether to intervene. Everyone must participate, and everyone must feel empowered to do so.

3.2 DIFFERENCE BETWEEN "EDUCATOR" AND "GAME MASTER"

The design and management of an Edu-larp requires the collaboration of several figures. The game master (GM) is undoubtedly important, but the educator/trainer is equally important. The educator can also act as a facilitator if they feel capable, but they are undoubtedly the person who identifies the educational objectives within a story they want to create, outlining the broad strokes, while it is the game master's job to create scenarios and contexts to narrate it. The GM interprets the imaginary world, events and non-player characters (NPCs) for the players. Their main tasks include creating and guiding the narrative, managing the rules and interpreting the roles. The GM can also act as a referee, ensuring the immersion and enjoyment of the players, balancing challenges and rewards to create an engaging gaming experience. In some cases, the educator and the game master may also be the same person, in the sense that one person may possess the skills of both roles. In any case, it is always best for the "game" to be analysed by several people in order to obtain as much feedback as possible.





4.1 DEFINITION OF "EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES"

When a trainer and/or educator considers implementing an Edu-larp, they do so because they believe that different teaching methods are needed to convey knowledge and/or skills to a group of students who would not be able to acquire them using traditional methods. In fact, the content and educational objectives are shared by a pool of educators and/or course or project managers in order to obtain everyone's contribution and also to encourage sharing.

4.2 CHOICE OF THEME AND NARRATIVE FRAMEWORK

The theme and narrative framework are the result of meetings between a group of trainers and/or teachers who, for a difficult or boring subject and/or topic, or simply because they realise that the group needs to be livened up and/or supported with alternative activities, decide what should be "taught" through that specific Edu-larp.

The choice to work on existing Edu-larps and/or design a new one depends solely and exclusively on whether or not there are already established Edu-larps on that specific topic.

4.3 THE EDU-LARPS CREATED AS PART OF THE EDU-LARP TO IT PROJECT: "TRAMAS AGENCY"[5] AND "THE CHEFS OF ANKARA"

It should be noted that our Edu-larps were created to serve as a sort of "business incubator". The need was to develop an educational role-playing game that would give our young NEET the opportunity to experience the role of a worker in a company: to help each of them understand how work is done and what kind of skills, including transferable skills, are necessary to perform certain roles. The idea was to make them understand the importance of taking action, that in a company, every role has responsibilities and tasks, to make them understand that an organisation works well if there is interconnection and the ability to support each other and get involved. To help them focus their talents on aspects of work that are more suited to them and/or give them the opportunity to express personal and character traits that, even if not previously evaluated, could be an important asset for their future careers.

We wanted to decide with them on the theme of the company, the sector. To understand what would intrigue them enough to "get involved". After a few workshops, we realised that one thing that definitely interested them was the opportunity to get to know their Turkish peers, about whom they knew almost nothing, and they were also interested in travelling to Turkey (a country they had never considered as a travel destination before). So, based on what we learned about them, we decided to shift to the tourism sector, also because of the opportunity to use a well-known hotel in a tourist resort in Sardinia, where the real employees would play along and give us the opportunity to create a real scenario for the Edu-larp and in the restaurant, as it is connected to tourism and interesting for the group dynamics and cultural syncretism it could create.

Once this decision had been made, the pre-Edu-Larp workshops were geared towards imparting knowledge and skills in the sector to the students and reinforcing useful language skills, not only to enable them to communicate with the Turks, but also because the foreign language, English par excellence, is a sine qua non for working in the sector.

4.4 CHARACTER HISTORY AND CREATION

(ARCHETYPES, PROFILES, ROLE DISTRIBUTION)

First, we shared the idea, then we moved on to the story, then we defined a character sheet for each character and decided that we would choose who would do what. This is also an approach that needs to be defined because you can decide to give people roles that they would never choose to play in real life in order to test their potential, or, conversely, roles that are more suited to them and that respect their skills and characteristics (implicit and/or explicit). In this case, we chose to define and assign roles close to what people had conveyed to us during the workshops in the first Edu-larp, while in the second we tried to push for roles and activities that the group was not at all predisposed to.



4.5 SUSPENSE AS A LEVER TO KEEP MOTIVATION HIGH

We considered Edu-larp to be a good way of working to engage NEET and/or, in any case, a good way to convey complex or boring topics, or topics perceived as such by young people, but we felt that it was not only necessary to find new alternatives to teaching, but also to find something that would motivate them to attend. How could we ensure that they would follow the lessons and attend our workshops for 6/7 months?

The answer we came up with was, for us, a winning one. Create suspense, create anticipation. We didn't give them too much information about what an Edu-larp was or how they would do it, but left them curious until a few days before, "training" them and preparing them by giving them the right skills to do the Edu-larp without telling them what they would be doing, what role they would play or where they would go.



ITALIAN GROUP DURING THE PRE-EDU-LARP WORKSHOP

When we noticed slight declines and/or less interest, we devised new workshop activities to adequately prepare them for the work they would have to do without them realising it. In fact, they studied the history and culture of Cagliari thoroughly so that they could talk about it with their Turkish colleagues, they took photographs to create a brochure about Cagliari so that they could also describe it through images, and they conducted interviews about Europe to begin to take on the role of young Europeans. In fact, by conducting interviews about Europe and its institutional functions, they also learned something about why it was established and what its functions are.

A week before the Turks arrived, we assigned roles and tasks to manage the Turks' two-day holiday in Sant'Antioco (in the case of the Edu-larp Tramas).



PHOTO OF THE ITALIAN GROUP THAT WAS INFORMED OF THE COMPANY NAME AND ROLES

Two days before leaving for Turkey, I told them what they would have to do and what roles they would play in the Edu-larp "The Chefs of Ankara".

It was a wonderful experience that gave us satisfaction because our strategies worked even better than expected, and gave them satisfaction because they had fun and learned several things:

- They learned more about the history of Cagliari
- They learned more about the European system
- They understood how a tourist package is put together
- They understood how to manage a company's accounts
- They understood the importance of having a logo and promoting their brand in order to work. In fact, they created one and also activated social media channels to make themselves known
- They learned about the history of Sant'Antioco and appreciated all the museums, starting with the Christian period and ending with current traditions
- They learned that gastronomy also has its own history and importance because they were able to taste its importance and goodness (they learned that tomato bread in Sulcis has its own history and importance and that spices, when used wisely, can create fabulous dishes)
- They understood the importance of intercultural dialogue and dispelled myths and prejudices that they unwittingly held
- They understood that every country has its own cuisine because it has different climatic and cultural conditions from ours, but that everything can become familiar and interesting
- They learned the importance of collaboration, mediation, problem solving and respect for differences
- They also realised that they are good people and a cohesive group

4.6 DURATION, SPACES

In Sardinia, the Edu-larp took place over two days, starting from Cagliari by public transport, with one night spent at a hotel, specifically the MuMA hotel in Sant'Antioco, which also houses the museum of the sea.



MIXED GROUP AT THE MUMA HOTEL IN SANT'ANTIOCO

In Turkey, it took two days to complete, as they first negotiated to share an Italian-Turkish menu to prepare, then went shopping in Ankara's supermarkets. The next day, in mixed[6] groups, they competed and prepared their menu with Italian-Turkish ingredients in well-equipped, functional kitchens.



PHOTO OF YOUNG PEOPLE AT A SUPERMARKET IN ANKARA

[6] We decided to avoid competition between nations in order to encourage collaboration and cohesion among mixed groups, which led them and also forced them to speak to each other in English and to make an effort to understand not only the language but also the methods. Furthermore, the common goal of winning created two teams of people, rather than nations, who "fought" to win.



PHOTO OF YOUNG PEOPLE AT A SUPERMARKET IN ANKARA

They were controlled and monitored from a distance in Sant'Antioco and in supermarkets, but closely where it was possible to stay in the same space without intruding, because we wanted to be able to intervene immediately if something went wrong. Filming took place and we all remained focused until the debriefing.



DEBRIEFING AT SANT'ANTIOCO

It was an exciting and extremely engaging experience for all of us. We all learned something and returned to Cagliari tired but happy.



DEBRIEFING AT ANKARA

4.7 NECESSARY MATERIALS AND RESOURCES

The necessary materials are listed in detail in the Edu-larp, but it can certainly be said that, apart from the hotel, museums and town to visit, no other materials were needed for the Edu-larp created in Sardinia because our Edu-larp is set in the present day. Everything we included was done solely to enrich the characters and/or make certain figures more difficult and/or intriguing (one of the characters, for example, had to find and buy a historical amulet that he never leaves home without when travelling because he is passionate about history). Others had to take photos, but a mobile phone was sufficient, and others had to keep the agency's accounts, but even in that case, an Excel spreadsheet on a PC was sufficient. Resources and materials must be defined and identified for each Edu-larp and can be useful for enriching and/or making some characters more distinctive.

With regard to the Edu-larp created in Turkey, the materials are easily available in supermarkets, and in this case too, the setting must clearly be specific: kitchens equipped for cooking at the same time.

The management of Edu-larp is very important; whoever starts it and follows its developments must never lose control of the situation. They must constantly remain focused until the game is over. They must convey the idea that it is not a game but a serious and important reality. It is necessary to maintain active involvement and control any emotions in order to set an example; losing the role and/or deviating in behaviour with jokes and/or laughter undermines the credibility of the action taking place. All those who participate in the Edu-larp in various capacities must play a character, a role, and only interrupt it at the moment of deroling.

Intervention is only necessary if conflicts arise for which no solution is apparent, but it is possible to intervene while remaining in character.

It is also very important to check that everyone is participating and to intervene if someone has stepped aside or ceased to perform their role, in order to understand the reasons why.

Edu-larp is a perpetual work in progress because it may work one way with one group, but with another group there may be variables that can provide new input, new ideas and/or new approaches. It is a permanent human laboratory.



6.1 WHY THEY ARE ESSENTIAL

DEROLING: DISIDENTIFICATION

Return to reality (participants tidy up the game set)

Physical deroling (shedding the character), step out (everyone stands in a circle and takes a step back from the character, physically shaking off the character).

Narrative deroling (for example, writing a letter to the character or, in small groups, talking about what the character has left us).

DEBRIEFING[7]: REPORTING BACK

This is the moment when trainers/educators need to really understand how the game went; beyond what you saw with your own eyes as a trainer and/or expert, what do the participants tell you? What did they experience? How did they experience it? What did they understand about their character? What did they learn?

It is a moment of cohesion and reflection for the group. For the participants, it is a moment of reflection and personal enrichment; for the trainers, it is a moment to acquire new input to ratify or rectify the work done. A real social laboratory with a huge impact.

No one should comment or challenge. To speak, you must wait until the other person has finished their reflection. You can also establish, before starting, that if someone wants to add something to a colleague's comment, they can show an object.

This can and should be done by those who know how to interact without taking over from others in their responses. Ask good questions without influencing others, but freeing everyone from preconceptions of right or wrong. Make it clear that there is a total suspension of judgement, only listening and understanding.



[7] It is curious that the origin of the name derives from military jargon, whereas we are talking about a game, albeit an educational one.

There are different types of Edu-larps, not only in terms of timing but also in terms of topics and objectives to be achieved. If you wish, you can also adapt some that have already been created to your own reality, because this means that they have already been tested and tried by other people. Some Edu-larps use settings that can be complicated to create in certain contexts, while others are so basic in terms of materials that you can place them in any context and create them in many places.

Our suggestion is to try them out before you start designing new ones. Try them out, play with them and reflect on them, because nothing should be left to chance and you need to be prepared.



WE IN TURKEY, AMONG TRAINERS, WHO ARE EXPERIMENTING WITH THE EDU-LARP "JULIAS LOST TREASURES"

Below are some types of Edu-larps:

- Mini-larps (20-40 minutes, quick objectives)
- Narrative larps (2-4 hours)
- Scenario larps (one or more days)

There is also a lot of flexibility in terms of the number of participants, because each Edu-larp requires a minimum number of players, but those who take it on to experiment with it can always add player sheets and increase the number to allow the whole group they had in mind to participate, or, conversely, eliminate characters, taking care that the eliminated sheet does not contain key elements and/or fundamental roles. But even in this case, what matters is the experience. Before creating new player sheets, it is essential to study, play and try.

Another important aspect is that Edu-larp can be useful in many contexts and for many objectives, from schools to businesses, including diverse and intercultural groups whose objectives can vary greatly, from socialising to overcoming prejudices.

To measure the impact of Edu-larp on the identified target audience, it is essential to share with the design team the objectives you want to achieve in a given situation, take measurements, identify indicators that describe the situation before the game, and use the same indicators at the end to measure the impact and understand whether there has been any growth.

Use foreign names because it helps to distance yourself.

Above all, it is important to let other adult trainers/educators experience Edu-larp for themselves in order to understand what it is for and how it works. Play with them. We cannot transfer a way of working to other people with words alone; we have to do it with emotions, and only by experiencing Edu-larp first-hand can this magic happen.

The methodological content and approaches described in this manual were the subject of training carried out in Turkey, involving staff from both organisations, who discussed the most effective methodologies used with young people up to that point. The transfer of the methodology most closely linked to the management and design of Edu-larp was carried out by Studio L&P and, in particular, by its general manager, G.Longu, who is also the author of this manual.



Andrea Marigliano, "EDU-LARP. Game Design per giochi di ruolo creativi", published by Franco Angeli.

AVAILABLE:

Edu-larp Io e l'impresa "Tramas agency"

Edu-larp Io e l'impresa "Gli chef di Ankara"



[8] The bibliography for writing about the educational impact of Edu-larps is so extensive that it is not easy to include it in this manual, which must demonstrate its usefulness precisely in its simplicity. It is clear that the author has 30 years of experience working with people and has studied psychology and human and social sciences. I therefore suggest that anyone who wishes to work with people should do the same and refer to the bibliography in Maragliano's book on games and, more generally, to Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky and enlightened scholars such as Massimo Bruscaglioni, Giorgio Nardone and Paolo Borzacchiello, who do not deal with Edu-larps but with everything that leads people to act in life.

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