

# Supplementary Information

## A House Divided: Cooperation, Polarization, and the Power of Reputation

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This supplementary information contains further technical details. These include previous and new work on reputation systems (Section 1), as well as a quantitative proof that **GANDHI** is an effective discriminator (Section 2),

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17 **1 Reputation Systems**

18 Formally, a *reputation system* determines a label “good” or “bad” for each individual, based on the history  
19 of interactions the individual was involved in. It is important to note that we allow for the possibility of  
20 including the reputation of former opponents as well, i.e., players have access to higher-order information.  
21 For example, the reputation system may rate defection against good or bad players differently.

22 In the base model, we initially assume that an individual’s reputation is globally agreed upon and  
23 based on public information; the later discussion of polarization and tribalism hinges on divergence  
24 from this appraisal. To model the equivalence in the parallel interaction with all neighbors, we update  
25 reputation only *after* all eight neighbor duels of one propagation round have taken place. This also  
26 accounts for a delay in the exchange of information between neighbors until more tangible outcomes are  
27 visible; more responsive update rules only enhance the advantage of discriminator systems.

28 **1.1 Previous Related Work**

29 A discriminating strategy is only successful if its underlying reputation system provides useful guidance.  
30 To this end, a considerable variety of functions have been proposed. In some settings, simple reputation  
31 systems may suffice<sup>1,2</sup>, but often they are not successful under all circumstances<sup>3,4</sup>. This observation  
32 led to the study of more advanced reputation systems that are often able to overcome shortcomings of  
33 simpler ones<sup>4–7</sup>, frequently at the expense of using a larger amount of input data. In the following, we  
34 review the most important previously proposed reputation systems.

35 **1.1.1 Image Scoring**

36 The seminal work of Nowak and Sigmund<sup>1,2</sup> popularized investigation of indirect reciprocity in an  
37 evolutionary setting. The reputation system studied seems intuitive: IMAGE SCORING rewards cooperative  
38 actions and penalizes defection. It keeps a *score* per player from the fixed discrete interval  $\{b, \dots, g\}$   
39 ( $b, g \in \mathbb{Z}$  with  $b < g$ ). Each game yields a score change of +1 or -1 if the player in question cooperates  
40 or defects, respectively—ignoring updates that leave the range  $\{b, \dots, g\}$ . Players with positive score  
41 have good reputation, all others are bad. The binary case  $b = 0, g = 1$  was investigated in great detail<sup>2</sup>,  
42 as its simplicity facilitates the use of analytical tools. In our experiments, we also considered the case  
43  $b = -1$  and  $g = 1$ . Both variants yield identical results.

44 Using IMAGE SCORING, a player can extrapolate past actions to future behavior. However, using this  
45 knowledge comes at a price: If the other player is likely to defect, the best response is to defect as well,  
46 which in turn causes a loss in the player’s own reputation. This makes punishment of uncooperative  
47 behavior costly.

48 **1.1.2 Good Standing**

49 Leimar and Hammerstein investigate the deficiency of IMAGE SCORING and propose that STANDING—as  
50 initially suggested by Sugden<sup>8</sup>—should be used instead<sup>3</sup>. All players are initially good. After each duel,  
51 reputation is updated as shown in Table S1. The row shows the *opponent’s* reputation, columns indicate  
52 the chosen action. The entries in the table show the new reputation resulting from the player’s action.  
53 Several update rules for actions against bad players are referred to as “Standing” reputation systems in

	cooperate	defect
vs. good	good	bad
vs. bad	good or no change	no change

**Table S1:** Reputation update rules for STANDING and STRICT STANDING.

	cooperate	defect
vs. good	good	bad
vs. bad	bad	good

**Table S2:** Reputation update rules for the KANDORI system with  $T = 1$ .

54 the literature. We refer to the variant with good in the lower left cell as STANDING and with “no change”  
 55 as STRICT STANDING. The latter is stricter in the sense that it requires more to regain good standing.

56 All of them allow non-costly or even beneficial punishment of defectors. However, this is not enough  
 57 to maintain stable cooperation over time. Tolerated ALLC’s can soften up the population and subsequently  
 58 allow defectors to take over<sup>1,9,10</sup>. This makes it desirable to also discriminate between “justified” and  
 59 “blind” cooperation.

### 60 1.1.3 The “Kandori” Reputation

61 Kandori<sup>11</sup> showed that mutual cooperation can always be established as a *sequential equilibrium* by  
 62 choosing a suitable reputation system in a repeated random matching game. One such system is proposed  
 63 by the author, which we refer to as KANDORI reputation.

64 For some fixed  $T \in \mathbb{N}$ , a player’s *score* is a number in  $\{-T, \dots, -1, 0\}$ , with only score 0 being  
 65 regarded as good. After each duel, we increment the score by 1 if the player acted “compliant”, i.e.,  
 66 cooperated with a good player or defected against a bad one. If she acted differently, her score is *reset*  
 67 to  $-T$ . This means a dissenter will undergo  $T$  rounds of punishment during which she is considered  
 68 bad and receives defecting treatment by the community. If  $T$  is chosen large enough, any immediate  
 69 incentive to deviate is overcompensated by imminent outcasting. This mechanism has the drawback  
 70 that excessively long “rehabilitation phases” make the system vulnerable to errors: If there is some  
 71 small probability that players are wrongfully perceived as acting non-compliant, accidental punishment  
 72 is amplified excessively. Keeping track of all scores also poses a memory demand on involved players  
 73 (KANDORI requires  $\lceil \log_2(T + 1) \rceil$  bits of memory per player).

74 We considered KANDORI for values  $T \in \{1, 2, 3, 8, 9\}$ . The simplest choice  $T = 1$  gives the reputation  
 75 system shown in Table S2.

### 76 1.1.4 The Leading Eight

77 The reputation systems described above were mostly motivated by common sense. Ohtsuki and Iwasa took  
 78 a more comprehensive approach. In<sup>5</sup>, they studied the PD with reputation and considered *all* possible  
 79 reputation systems that compute the new reputation deterministically from only the old reputation of  
 80 both players and the chosen action. To judge their quality, the authors combined reputation systems  
 81 with all possible (pure) strategies; for each of those pairs they determined whether it is an *evolutionary*  
 82 *stable strategy* in the sense of classical evolutionary game theory; see<sup>12</sup>. Of the considerable number

		cooperate	defect
		good	bad
		flip	no change
LEADING 2:	vs. good	cooperate	defect
	vs. bad	good	bad
LEADING 3:	vs. good	cooperate	defect
	vs. bad	good	good
LEADING 4:	vs. good	cooperate	defect
	vs. bad	good	bad
LEADING 5:	vs. good	no change	good
	vs. bad	good	bad
LEADING 8:	vs. good	flip	good
	vs. bad	good	bad
	vs. good	cooperate	defect
	vs. bad	bad	no change

**Table S3:** Reputation update rules for LEADING 2, 3, 4, 5 and 8.

83 of 4096 pairs, many were evolutionary stable, but only eight pairs yielded consistently highest payoffs  
 84 under varying cost/benefit ratios. A main contribution of Ohtsuki and Iwasa was the identification of  
 85 common features shared among all those stable pairs: Both (a) cooperating with good players and (b)  
 86 defecting against bad players must be considered as good. Of these eight pairs, only two different  
 87 strategies for selecting the next action are used. In fact, all but the first two pairs use the DISC strategy  
 88 (with varying reputation mechanisms): Cooperate if and only if your duel partner is good according to  
 89 the corresponding reputation system.

90 In the following, “LEADING  $i$ ” refers to the pair in the  $i$ th line of Table 4 of Ohtsuki and Iwasa<sup>5</sup>. For  
 91 LEADING 1 and LEADING 2, the so-called OR strategy is used instead, which cooperates if the opponent  
 92 is good *or* if we ourselves are seen as bad. This behavior can be seen as the plausible incentive of a bad  
 93 player to cooperate with just *anybody* to escape ostracism as fast as possible. OR is thus a less strictly  
 94 discriminating strategy. It turns out that three of the leading eight pairs in fact use reputation strategies  
 95 we already described under a different name:

96 • LEADING 1 uses STANDING reputation system,  
 97 • LEADING 6 is equivalent to KANDORI with  $T = 1$  and  
 98 • LEADING 7 employs STRICT STANDING.

99 For the remaining pairs, the reputation system is given in Table S3, where the row indicates the  
 100 reputation of the opponent, the column gives the action the current player used against this opponent and  
 101 the cell entry then describes the action corresponding to this player’s reputation: An entry good or bad  
 102 simply requires the reputation to be set to good or bad, “no change” leaves the reputation unchanged,

		last action		defected	cooperated
		vs. bad	vs. good		
vs. bad	defected	bad	good		
	cooperated	bad	bad		

**Table S4:** Computation of reputation in GANDHI.

103 and “flip” inverts the reputation: If the player is *good* at the moment, it becomes *bad*, and if it was *bad*,  
 104 it now becomes *good*.

## 105 1.2 The GANDHI Reputation

106 All reputation systems described so far only make use of a single piece of information per player.  
 107 Observing defection, this makes it hard to distinguish between unconditional defection and rightful  
 108 punishment. Similarly, a single cooperative action cannot be used to tell ALLC and Disc apart.

109 We address this issue by introducing a new reputation system, called GANDHI, which only uses *two*  
 110 *bits* of memory; the name is based on a well-known quote by Mahatma Gandhi: “Non-cooperation with  
 111 evil is as much a duty as is cooperation with good.”<sup>13</sup>. To the best of our knowledge, GANDHI has not  
 112 been described in the study of reputation systems for indirect reciprocity. Other reputation systems, e. g.  
 113 KANDORI with large  $T$ , achieve similar discrimination, but they only do it implicitly over time (leading  
 114 to inferior replicator dynamics), and by utilizing more memory.

115 GANDHI remembers for each individual *two* actions played: *the last action against a bad opponent*  
 116 and *the last action against a good opponent*. A player is only regarded as *good* if its last action against a  
 117 *good* opponent was *cooperate* and the last action against a *bad* opponent was *defect*. The other (three)  
 118 combinations yield the label *bad*.

119 This self-referential aspect of the GANDHI reputation system hinges on updating preexisting values,  
 120 hence on an initial state. There are different possibilities for initialization; for our base model, we initially  
 121 consider all players to have cooperated with everybody. Accordingly, all players start out *bad*, and they  
 122 can only turn *good* by defecting against a *bad* player.

## 123 1.3 Hidden Information and Perfect Group Cohesion: The MAFIA Reputation

124 When studying cooperation within a group, a perfect mechanism for group cooperation would make  
 125 group members always cooperate with other group members and defect against all outsiders, without  
 126 giving away group membership to outsiders. This kind of strategy can be based on a hidden “membership  
 127 bit” that is passed on to newly acquired group members, invisible to outsiders. We refer to this strategy as  
 128 MAFIA. Such a mechanism is not available in systems based on only public information, making MAFIA  
 129 a strong benchmark for measuring the ability of a discriminating strategy, i.e., by evaluating how close  
 130 systems can get to MAFIA’s performance when only publicly available information can be used.

## 131 2 Quantitative Proof: GANDHI Is an Effective Discriminator

132 The two-dimensional spatial model used in the experiments exhibits rich and complex dynamics that  
 133 are hard to predict analytically. In spatial settings without reputation, *pair approximation*<sup>14</sup> is usually

...	$G$	$G$	$G/B$	$G/B$	$B$	$B$	...
	B	B	B	A	A	A	

**Figure S1:** The setup: good ( $G$ ) GANDHI (B) (respectively MAFIA) on the left side, bad ( $B$ ) ALLD (A) players on the right.

134 the method of choice to predict the model’s long-term behavior or to study the evolution of certain  
 135 parameters<sup>15</sup>. However, pair approximation is not well suited for analyzing our spatial setting augmented  
 136 with reputation, for the following reasons.

137

- 138 • The number of differential equations needed to describe the state of the system grows large (it  
 doubles, even if one considers only binary reputations).

139

- 140 • The bookkeeping when deriving the equations by hand gets quite complicated.
- 141 • Pair approximation is in general not very precise and only predicts the *qualitative* behavior well.

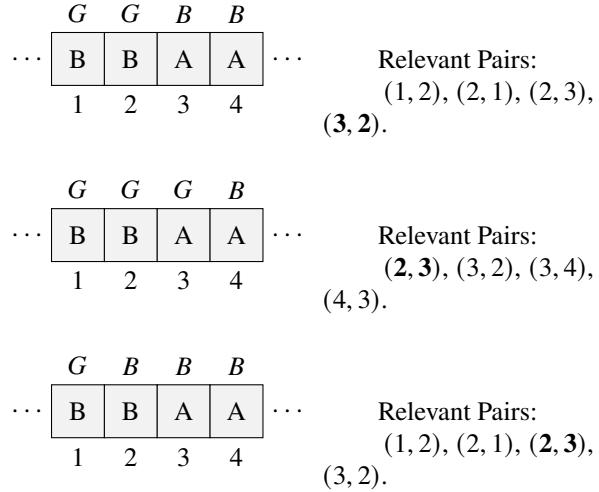
141 As we are interested in a specific parameter (i.e., *invasion speed*), we have developed a Markov chain  
 142 model that turns out to be both surprisingly accurate and relatively simple to analyze. We carry out  
 143 our theoretical analysis for a *one-dimensional* spatial setting, as opposed to our two-dimensional model.  
 144 We could empirically validate that the analytical invasion speeds derived in 1D fit the 2D experimental  
 145 results very accurately. These observations suggest a general method to analyze suitable parameters (like  
 146 invasion speed) of evolutionary spatial 2D models via a simpler 1D model.

## 147 2.1 One-Dimensional Approximation and Results

148 We consider a simple 1D model in which two homogeneous populations with different strategies face  
 149 each other at a boundary (cf. Figure S1). The region left of the boundary is occupied by the GANDHI or  
 150 MAFIA players, the right region by ALLD players. We then analyze how the boundary moves over time.  
 151 Here we only discuss the situation of GANDHI (resp. MAFIA) versus ALLD, because the analysis versus  
 152 ALLC is considerably simpler.

153 The process of duel selection, strategy and reputation updating is analogous to the 2D setting. Note,  
 154 however, that we consider an infinite one-dimensional chain of players, so we ignore any boundary effects.

155 It is not hard to see that there can never be a case in which a player is isolated from the other players  
 156 of its strategy population. Hence, the strategy configuration can be fully described by the position of  
 157 the boundary  $n \in \mathbb{Z}$ . In addition, one can easily show (for both GANDHI and MAFIA) that the reputation  
 158 configuration is fully determined by the reputation of the two players left and right of the boundary, which  
 159 we denote by  $XY$ , where  $X, Y \in \{G, B\}$ . Because a defector will never be considered good after a game  
 160 it participated in (as *focal* or as *opponent*), the combination  $BG$  can never occur. Therefore, the tuple  
 161  $(n, XY)$ , where  $XY \in \{GG, GB, BB\}$ , describes the current state of the process. Also, it fully encodes  
 162 the information that is relevant for performing the next round—the dynamics of  $(n, XY)$  over time is  
 163 therefore a Markov process, and completely described by the transition probabilities between two such  
 164 tuples.



**Figure S2:** The three possible configurations of the boundary along with the relevant (*focal, opponent*) pairs. In the bottom two cases, a pair is defined as “relevant” if its choice can lead to a change in the configuration; in the first case, we arbitrarily define the above four pairs as “relevant” in order to generate an equal number of pairs as in the other two cases (only (3,2) is crucial here, the other pairs could be chosen differently). Of these, only the pairs in boldface can lead to a change in strategies — all other pairs will lead to the “standard” reputation configuration *GB*.

165 Analyzing the speed of the (reputation-free) setting MAFIA vs. ALLD is relatively straightforward, as  
 166 the boundary can only move to the right. The mathematical analysis of Section 2.2 yields

$$\psi_+ = \frac{1}{8} \frac{1-u}{1+u}$$

167 for the drift speed of the boundary.

168 The invasion speed of GANDHI vs. ALLD can be analyzed by solving a recurrence equation for the  
 169 expected time to go from state (BB,  $n-1$ ) to (BB,  $n$ ) (see below for details). We obtain

$$T^{-1} = \frac{-5u^2 - 3u + 8}{41u^2 + 111u + 72}$$

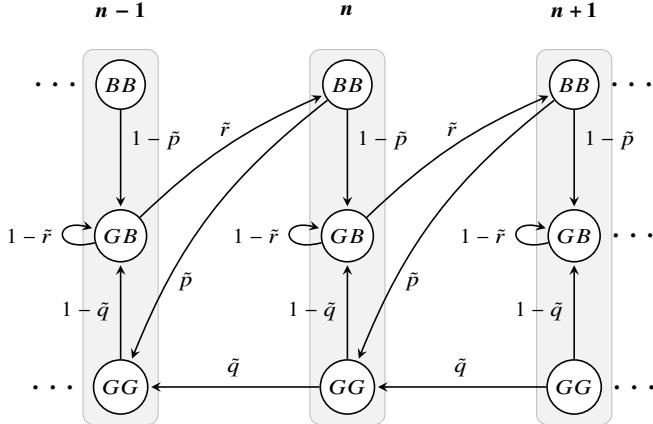
170 for the drift speed. This can be well approximated by 8/9 of that of the (optimal) MAFIA vs. ALLD drift  
 171 (cf. Extended Data Fig. 2a), as follows.

$$T^{-1} \approx \frac{1}{9} \frac{1-u}{1+u}.$$

172 There is a simple intuitive explanation for this factor: After defeating an opponent and extending the  
 173 boundary of GANDHI, one in eight cases requires an additional round at the boundary for updating the  
 174 reputation; this is not necessary for MAFIA, as it uses hidden information that is updated instantaneously.

## 175 2.2 Mathematical Analysis

176 For easier exposition, we only consider situations from which a change in strategies or reputations can  
 177 result. It suffices to consider four pairs of players for that (see Figure S2); when we report probabilities



**Figure S3:** Transition probabilities for GANDHI vs. ALLD (PD), where  $\tilde{p} = p/4$ ,  $\tilde{q} = q/4$  and  $\tilde{r} = r/4$ .

178 in this section, they are always meant *conditional* to one of these four pairs being chosen. (Note that the  
179 pairs change over time, but there are always four of them.)

180 There are the following different *focal/opponent* combinations in which the boundary can move with  
181 the given probabilities, conditional to the pair being selected in this particular *focal  $\leftarrow$  opponent* order:

$$\begin{array}{ll}
 \begin{array}{c} B \\ \text{GANDHI} \leftarrow \text{ALLD} \end{array} & \text{with prob. } p = \frac{u}{2(1+u)} \\
 \begin{array}{c} G \\ \text{GANDHI} \leftarrow \text{ALLD} \end{array} & \text{with prob. } q = \frac{2u}{2(1+u)} \\
 \begin{array}{c} G \\ \text{GANDHI} \rightarrow \text{ALLD} \end{array} & \text{with prob. } r = \frac{1-u}{2(1+u)} \\
 \begin{array}{c} B \\ \text{MAFIA} \rightarrow \text{ALLD} \end{array} & \text{with prob. } r = \frac{1-u}{2(1+u)}
 \end{array}$$

182 For MAFIA playing Prisoner's Dilemma against ALLD, reputation does not play a role. The only possible  
183 transition is

$$\text{MAFIA} \rightarrow \text{ALLD},$$

184 which has (conditional) probability  $r$ . Hence the probability of the boundary moving from  $n-1$  to  $n$  is

$$\psi_+ = \frac{1}{4}r = \frac{1}{8} \frac{1-u}{1+u},$$

185 where we have re-scaled to match our time normalization.

186 For GANDHI playing Prisoner's Dilemma against ALLD, the situation is more involved, because it is  
187 now possible that the boundary moves left as well as right. The transition probabilities are now as shown  
188 in Figure S3. While these probabilities define the Markov chain completely, we proceed to provide a  
189 more analytic measure for the overall drift of the boundary, i.e., the probability of the boundary moving

190 left or right. We analyze the infinite 1-dimensional Markov chain by a recursion that yields the *expected*  
 191 *time* for reaching  $n$  from  $n - 1$ . The inverse of this time serves as an estimate of the drift speed.

192 Note that moving the boundary from  $n - 1$  to  $n$  requires going through the state  $(BB, n)$ . This motivates  
 193 the following definition: Denote by  $T_n(XY, k)$  the expected time to reach  $(BB, n)$  from  $(XY, k)$ , where  
 194  $XY \in \{GG, GB, BB\}$ . Conversely, every transition from  $n$  to  $n - 1$  has to go through  $(GG, n - 1)$ , so we  
 195 are particularly interested in  $t_n = T_n(GG, n - 1)$ .

196 First, we find that

$$\begin{aligned} t_n &= T_n(GG, n - 1) \\ &= \frac{q}{4}(1 + T_n(GG, n - 2)) + \left(1 - \frac{q}{4}\right)(1 + T_n(GB, n - 1)). \end{aligned} \quad (1)$$

197 The only transition away from  $(GB, n - 1)$  leads to  $(BB, n)$  and is taken with probability  $r/4$ . So we will  
 198 eventually reach  $(BB, n)$  and the number of steps needed is geometrically distributed with parameter  $r/4$ .  
 199 The expectation is then given by the inverse of this parameter:

$$T_n(GB, n - 1) = 4/r. \quad (2)$$

200 Also, we have that

$$\begin{aligned} T_n(GG, n - 2) &= T_{n-1}(GG, n - 2) + T_n(BB, n - 1) \\ &= t_{n-1} + \frac{p}{4}(1 + T_n(GG, n - 2)) + \left(1 - \frac{p}{4}\right) \underbrace{(1 + T_n(GB, n - 1))}_{=4/r \text{ by (2)}} \\ &= t_{n-1} + 1 + \frac{p}{4}T_n(GG, n - 2) + \left(1 - \frac{p}{4}\right) \frac{4}{r}. \end{aligned}$$

201 Rearranging the terms yields

$$T_n(GG, n - 2) = \frac{t_{n-1} + 1}{1 - p/4} + \frac{4}{r}. \quad (3)$$

202 Substituting back into (1) results in

$$t_n = \frac{q}{4} \left(1 + \frac{t_{n-1} + 1}{1 - p/4} + \frac{4}{r}\right) + \left(1 - \frac{q}{4}\right) \left(1 + \frac{4}{r}\right).$$

203 Because there is no boundary, we have  $t_n = t_{n-1} =: t$  by symmetry. Hence,

$$t = \frac{4 - p + 4 \frac{4-p}{r} + q}{4 - p - q}.$$

204 Then, the expected time it takes from  $(BB, n - 1)$  to  $(BB, n)$  is

$$\begin{aligned} T &= T_n(BB, n - 1) \\ &= \frac{p}{4} \underbrace{(1 + T_n(GG, n - 2))}_{=\frac{t+1}{1-p/4}+4/r \text{ by (3)}} + \left(1 - \frac{p}{4}\right) \underbrace{(1 + T_n(GB, n - 1))}_{=4/r \text{ by (2)}} \\ &= 1 + p \frac{t + 1}{4 - p} + \frac{4}{r} \\ &= \left(1 + \frac{4}{r}\right)(1 + p) + p \frac{q + 1}{4 - p}. \end{aligned}$$

205 By substituting  $u$  in, we obtain

$$T^{-1} = \frac{-5u^2 - 3u + 8}{41u^2 + 111u + 72}$$

206 as an estimate for the drift speed.

207 Our analysis suggests that the drift of the 1-dimensional Markov chain for GANDHI vs. ALLD can be  
208 approximated by  $\frac{8}{9}$  of that of the (optimal) MAFIA vs. ALLD drift. Hence,

$$T^{-1} \approx \frac{1}{9} \frac{1-u}{1+u}$$

209 appears to be a good estimate for the invasion speed.

210 As we show in the following Section 2.2.1, data from two-dimensional simulation and from this  
211 one-dimensional analysis match extremely well. This is no coincidence: a strongly invading population  
212 will tend to form a large shape that is close to being convex, resulting in a well-focused, uniform average  
213 degree with respect to the own subpopulation for individuals along the boundary. (In a grid setting, this  
214 average degree very rapidly converges to five for large clusters.) Thus, we get the same fundamental  
215 behavior as in the one-dimensional case, subject to some scaling to account for different normalization.

### 216 2.2.1 Validation of the 1D Model on 2D Data

217 If we compare the experimental invasion speed plots from Figure 2b to the functions from above, we  
218 see that their qualitative agreement is excellent. More precisely, if  $M(u)$ ,  $u \in \{0.1, 0.2, \dots, 0.9\}$ , is the  
219 vector of experimental MAFIA speeds and  $f(u)$  is the analytically derived speed, we see that  $\frac{M(u)}{f(u)}$  is  
220 (almost) constant. Because we count time steps differently in our 1D analysis and in order to adjust for  
221 geometric effects of dimensionality, we scale the functions by this constant (which we call  $c$ ), which turns  
222 out to be  $c = 4.8167$ .

223 Because we only use MAFIA in the PD to determine  $c$ , we can use the exact same scaling for the  
224 GANDHI speeds in order to validate our claim that  $c$  only captures the effects of dimensionality and  
225 the different counting of timesteps. A plot of these scaled functions together with the respective data  
226 and figures from the main paper shows that the 1D analysis matches the 2D data remarkably well; see  
227 Extended Data Fig. 2b.

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