Working Group 2 Meeting, Kapadokya, Türkiye, May 2024
Agreed activities and initiatives

- One of the key pieces of work that we agreed during the Kapadokya meeting was that we needed to collate the various research ideas we had generated and create a document summarising them so that we can follow up these leads. This document is the one you are reading right now, prepared by **Walter Crist** and **Tim Penn.** The list is non-exhaustive, but it may also turn out that we do not achieve *everything* on it — the key is that we keep the momentum and pursue as many as possible.
- One key idea that was floated is to build up a series of sub-working groups related to the activities outlined below to ensure effective delivery. This is really important because without buy-in from colleagues, all of these wonderful ideas will simply not move forward.
- One key outstanding question is *what we want to publish* — we still need to agree quite how much we think it is realistic to publish as a result GameTable and what we want to focus on.

Ludii database changes

- We discussed ways that the existing *Ludii* database (https://ludii.games) could be expanded and/or developed for new purposes more closely aligned with the interests and aims of GameTable. WG2 members expressed a wide range of different ideas about what changes might comprise, with suggestions including:
    - Breaking out games from *Ludii* as standalone, compact apps aimed at a contemporary audience (see further below).
    - Reusing *Ludii* as a database of images and Greek and Roman literary sources as a starting point for a database of literary quotations relating to games in antiquity. **Marco Tibaldi** advised he has a database containing most literary references, and that he may be able to share it. Marco pointed out that in *Ludii* it is currently impossible to split the original text from the translation, and there are also problems when we cannot be sure which game a given passage is referring to. **Walter Crist** advised that any solution would need more fields for accessibility (e.g. additional text boxes and materials); here, we need to try to find out what additions and modifications would be useful.
    - **Jacob Schmidt-Madsen** would like to see more schematic rules for games - beyond using *Ludemes*; can these be translated into some basic rule statements? i.e. how can we make sure that *Ludii* is comprehensible to not specialist audiences.
    - Several colleagues have signalled willingness to deposit data in *Ludii* if appropriate/useful.
- **Walter Crist** will take a lead on this area, given that he is responsible for the *Ludii* database as it stands.

Definitions Tim with a CS colleague

- One of the key challenges facing GameTable is the issue of communication between AI colleagues and heritage colleagues — it is essential that we make sure we are speaking the same language. One way to do this is for us to create a glossary of key terms and definitions. For example, **Mike Cosgrave** made the valuable point that we need to be clear about when we are talking about historical games versus when we are talking about games about historical processes**. Indre Jovaišaitė-Blaževičienė** also highlighted the importance of explain archaeological processes (and gaps in our archaeological/historical data) to AI specialists. There are numerous other challenges in relation to communication between to AI and heritage specialists; overcoming these is key to our success as a working group.
- **Tim Penn** will take the lead on this from the heritage side, drawing in the relevant expertise from across WG2 as needed, but it is important that we recruit at least one colleague with **expertise in Computer Science** and **another with expertise in Digital Humanities.** The aim of this work would be to create a concise document explaining key terms to one another, with a view to facilitating successful collaboration.
- It is also important to use this work as an opportunity to think about how we communicate with people beyond GameTable — what kind of information do we need to be able to convey to a wider audience in a way that is digestible and that they can understand?

“Speed networking”

- Another way to try to bridge the disciplinary divine between people working e.g. in heritage studies and in computer science is to arrange a “speed networking” event on a monthly basis, which puts two people from different working groups together for a virtual coffee. The aim of this initiative is to encourage people to talk to each other about their work with a view to developing synergies and future research pathways. **Vanessa Volz** both suggested this idea and is already taking some preliminary steps to make it happen. It may be worth involving **Summer Courts** in her capacity as Scientific Communications Co-Ordinator.

Monthly webinar

- There was appetite for a monthly WG2 webinar featuring research undertaken by members, including both work that includes AI components and more traditional heritage/archaeological research around boardgames. **Walter Crist** and **Tim Penn** agreed to coordinate this webinar; a call for papers has been circulated and a healthy number of responses have been received so far (though please do make a proposal if you have an idea). Some of the ideas we have received so far are closely aligned with the interests of WG5, so we make this a joint monthly webinar.

Game playing app

- Several colleagues expressed interest in developing apps which provide playable versions of historical boardgames (see above also in relation to *Ludii*), which could be a way to gather human playout/play trace data (overlap with WG1) and relate to dissemination (overlap with WG5). Any app should

have a plain language summary in order to maximise accessibility. **Rachael Banes** agreed to be a point of contact in relation to this; for it to be successful, we will need to recruit relevant computer science specialists.
- It is also worth noting that there may be a wider range of games that can be produced via apps, including medieval and early modern ones (i.e. we should not restrict ourselves to ancient games alone). It would be desirable to co-produce a list of good candidates for this.

Computer vision development
- Several colleagues at the meeting expressed a desire for developing a Computer Vision app able to identify e.g. graffiti games, and perhaps then link to a playable versions and/or established typologies. This initiative would a very exciting undertaking but would require considerable input from colleagues with Computer Vision expertise — we would need to recruit for this.

Exhibition and dissemination (in collaboration with WG5)
- Some colleagues also expressed enthusiasm for heavy WG2 contributions to the WG5 capstone exhibition. This may be a physical or digital or travelling physical exhibition, with the aim of sending it around interested museums. **Ilaria Truzzi, Rachael Banes** and **Fatih Parlak** all agreed to be involved in this, along with **Dorina Moullou** as WG5 lead. Some of the discussion at the meeting hinged on how we can give both WG5 colleagues and museum stakeholders more information about game design and the rules of games. Research around boardgames has a track record of collaboration with museums. For example, Digital Ludeme contributed to museum of World Culture (Gothenberg). Various gameboards were on display, but also included an adjacent touchscreen for playing games.
- It is important to emphasise that this may be an avenue for commercialisation if constructed appropriately.
- Boardgames are a great vehicle for teaching in schools — **Mike Cosgrave** and **Tim Penn** agreed to take the lead on this side because of their existing research interests and dissemination projects in this area.
- **Khalid Nafil** made the valuable point that we should think carefully about how to link cultural heritage and AI — this needs to be more explicit in the way we are selling what we will do. Further activities around engagement can include documentation, engaging with communities, museums etc. **Aslan Gasimov** among others noted that awareness of and regard for boardgames is very low in some countries, and this will be a challenge we need to overcome in any public engagement and dissemination initiatives we undertake.

Investigating the link between historical games and modern games.
- There is a correlation between traditional games and modern games, how traditional game design requires the need to understand which mechanics were available in a given time and place. **Jacob Schmid-Madsen** asked: “Can we discover what that toolbox is?” This does not need to be limited to formal rules but can also include social rules. Investigating these links may be a fruitful way to contribute to current game design practices.

AI gaming experiences

- We also discussed the idea of using AI to help us get an idea of the experiences which games provide. For example, can we pick a historical or archaeological case study of a gaming space with lots of board games and then think of it as a kind of casino? What are the different experiences that these gameboards provide? One way to explore this would be through the late Roman fort (with copious games) at Abu Sha'ar; **Jacob Schmidt-Madsen** has some ideas of places in other parts of the world too.

Programming player personalities

- Are there ways we can look at programming AI player personalities — with greater and lesser appetite for risk? Can this then be used to explore via reverse engineering whether games are better suited to low or higher risk styles of play etc? **Daniel Finnegan** suggested that there may be some possibility to reverse engineer play styles and how these fit with known historical games. This may provide opportunities to design new games. There was some debate about the scope and plausibility of this.

Using play traces from chess

- We could try to use play traces to explore social assumptions. For example, by comparing classes/nationality/gender/period and so on, and how this relates to social assumptions about play.
- **Fatih Parlak** suggested that we could compare and explore medieval (10^{th}-13^{th} century) Shatranj chess problems in comparison with European chess problems.

Games, life-stage, gender

- We also talked about games and gender — for example, there is lots of information from South Asia about games taught to children and cultured women (i.e., culturally prescribed knowledge). In many historical contexts these ideas have not yet been explored fully (e.g. the ancient Mediterranean), and work in this area may be fruitful.