

1 Defocus Corrected Large Area Cryo-EM (DeCo-LACE) for
2 Label-Free Detection of Molecules across Entire Cell Sections

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21 **Abstract**

22 A major goal of biological imaging is localization of biomolecules inside a cell. Fluorescence microscopy can lo-
23 calize biomolecules inside whole cells and tissues, but its ability to count biomolecules and accuracy of the spatial

24 coordinates is limited by the wavelength of visible light. Cryo-electron microscopy (cryo-EM) provides highly
25 accurate position and orientation information of biomolecules but is often confined to small fields of view inside
26 a cell, limiting biological context. In this study we use a new data-acquisition scheme called “Defocus-Corrected
27 Large-Area cryo-EM” (DeCo-LACE) to collect high-resolution images of entire sections (100 – 200 nm thick lamel-
28 lae) of neutrophil-like mouse cells, representing 1-2% of the total cellular volume. We use 2D template matching
29 (2DTM) to determine localization and orientation of the large ribosomal subunit in these sections. These data
30 provide “maps” of ribosomes across entire sections of mammalian cells. This high-throughput cryo-EM data col-
31 lection approach together with 2DTM will advance visual proteomics and provide biological insight that cannot
32 be obtained by other methods.

33 Introduction

34 A major goal in understanding cellular processes is the knowledge of the amounts, location, interactions, and con-
35 formations of biomolecules inside the cell. This knowledge can be obtained by approaches broadly divided into
36 label- and label-free techniques. In label-dependent techniques a probe is physically attached to a molecule of in-
37 terest that is able to be detected by its strong signal, such as a fluorescent molecule. In label-free techniques, the
38 physical properties of molecules themselves are used for detection. An example for this is proteomics using mass-
39 spectrometry [1]. The advantage of label-free techniques is that they can provide information over thousands of
40 molecules, while label-dependent techniques offer highly specific information for a few molecules. in particular,
41 spatial information is primarily achieved using label-dependent techniques, such as fluorescence microscopy [2].

42 Cryo-electron microscopy (cryo-EM) has the potential to directly visualize the arrangement of atoms that compose
43 biomolecules inside of cells, thereby allowing label-free detection with high spatial accuracy. This has been called
44 “visual proteomics” [3]. Since cryo-EM requires thin samples (<500nm), imaging of biomolecules inside cells is
45 restricted to small organisms, thin regions of cells, or samples that have been suitably thinned. Thinning can be
46 achieved either by mechanical sectioning [4] or by milling using a focused ion beam (FIB) [5]. This complex work-
47 flow leads to a low throughput of cryo-EM imaging of cells and is further limited by the fact that at the required
48 magnifications, typical fields of view (FOV) are very small compared to mammalian cells, and the FOV achieved
49 by label-dependent techniques such as fluorescence light microscopy. The predominant cryo-EM technique for the
50 localization of biomolecules of defined size and shape inside cells is cryo-electron tomography [6]. However, the re-
51 quirement of a tilt series at every imaged location and subsequent image alignment, severely limits the throughput
52 for molecular localization.

53 An alternative approach is to identify molecules by their structural “fingerprint” in single projection using “2D
54 template-matching” (2DTM) [7,8,9]. In this method, a 3D model of a biomolecule is used as a template to find 2D
55 projections that match the molecules visible in the electron micrographs. This method requires a projection search

56 on a fine angular grid, and the projections are used to find local cross-correlation peaks with the micrograph. Since
57 the location of a biomolecule in the z-direction causes predictable aberrations to the projection image, this method
58 can be used to calculate complete 3D coordinates and orientations of a biomolecule in a cellular sample [8].

59 Here we apply 2DTM of the ribosome large subunit (LSU) to a conditionally immortalized *mus musculus* (mouse)
60 cell line that gives rise to functional mature neutrophils [10]. We chose these cells because genetic defects in the
61 ribosome machinery often leads to hematopoietic disease [11] and direct quantification of ribosome location, num-
62 ber and conformational states in hematopoietic cells could lead to new insight into hematopoietic disease [12]. To
63 increase the amount of collected data and to provide unbiased sampling of the whole lamella, we devised a new
64 data-acquisition scheme, "Defocus-Corrected Large Area Cryo-Electron microscopy" (DeCo-LACE). 2DTM allows
65 us to test whether aberrations caused by large beam-image shifts and highly condensed beams deteriorate the high-
66 resolution signal. We find that these aberrations do not impede LSU detection by 2DTM. The resulting data provide
67 a description of ribosome distribution in an entire lamella, which represent 1-2% of the cellular volume. We find
68 a highly heterogeneous density of ribosomes within the cell. Analysis of the throughput in this method suggests
69 that for the foreseeable future computation will be the bottleneck for visual proteomics.

70 Results

71 2DTM detects large ribosomal subunits in cryo-FIB lamellae of mammalian cells

72 FIB-milled *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* (yeast) cells are sufficiently well preserved to permit localization of 60S riboso-
73 mal subunits with 2DTM [13]. Due to the larger size of mammalian cells compared to yeast cells, it was unclear
74 whether plunge freezing would be adequate to produce vitreous ice across the whole volume of the cell. To test
75 this we prepared cryo-lamellae of mouse neutrophil cells. A low magnification image of a representative lamella
76 clearly shows cellular features consistent with a neutrophile-like phenotype, mainly a segmented nucleus and a
77 plethora of membrane-organelles, corresponding to the granules and secretory vesicles of neutrophils (Fig. [1]A).
78 We then proceeded to acquire micrographs on this lamella with a defocus of 0.5-1.0 μm , $30 \text{ e}^-/\text{\AA}^2/\text{s}$ exposure and
79 1.76 \AA pixel size. We manually selected multiple locations in the lamella and acquired micrographs using standard
80 low-dose techniques where focusing is performed on a sacrificial area. The resulting micrographs showed smooth
81 bilayered membranes and no signs of crystalline ice (Fig. [1]C,D), indicating successful vitrification throughout
82 the lamella.

83 We used an atomic model of the 60S mouse ribosomal subunit (6SWA) for 2DTM [14]. In a subset of images,
84 the distribution of cross-correlation scores significantly exceeded the distribution expected from images devoid of
85 detectable targets. In the resulting scaled maximum-intensity projections (MIPs), clear peaks with SNR values up
86 to 10 were apparent (Fig. [2 - figure supplement 1]A). Using a threshold criterion to select significant targets (see
87 Methods), we found that in images of cytosolic compartments there were 10-500 ribosomes within one micrograph

88 (Fig. [1]B-E). Notably, we found no targets in areas corresponding to the nucleus (Fig. [1]B) or mitochondria (Fig.
89 1D). In the cytoplasm, we found a highly variable number of targets, only ~ 50 in some exposures (Fig. [1]E) and up
90 to 500 in others (Fig. [1]C). However, it is unclear whether this ten-fold difference in local ribosome concentration
91 is due to technical variation, such as sample thickness, or biological variation. To differentiate between the two
92 we reasoned it was important to not manually choose imaging regions and to collect larger amounts of data. We
93 therefore set out to collect cryo-EM data for 2DTM from mammalian cell lamellae in a high-throughput unbiased
94 fashion.

95 **DeCo-LACE for 2D imaging of whole lamellae**

96 In order to obtain high-resolution data from complete lamellae, we developed a new approach for data collection.
97 This approach uses three key strategies: (1) every electron that exposes a fresh area of the sample is collected on
98 the camera (2) image shift is used to precisely and quickly raster the surface of a lamella and (3) focusing is done
99 without using a sacrificial area (Fig. [2]A).

100 To ensure that every electron exposing a fresh area of the sample is captured by the detector, we adjusted the
101 electron beam size to be entirely contained by the detector area. During canonical low-dose imaging, the microscope
102 is configured so that the focal plane is identical to the eucentric plane of the specimen stage. This leaves the C2
103 aperture out of focus, resulting in ripples at the edge of the beam (Fig. [2]D). While these ripples are low-resolution
104 features that likely do not interfere with 2DTM [7], we also tested data collection under conditions where the C2
105 aperture is in focus ("fringe-free", Fig. [2]E) [15].

106 We then centered a lamella on the optical axis of the microscope and used the image shift controls of the microscope
107 to systematically scan the whole surface of the lamella in a hexagonal pattern (Fig. [2]A,C). Instead of focusing
108 on a sacrificial area, we determined the defocus from every exposure after it was taken. The defocus was then
109 adjusted based on the difference between desired and measured defocus (Fig. [2]B). Since we used a serpentine
110 pattern for data collection, every exposure was close to the previous exposure, making large changes in the defocus
111 unlikely. Furthermore, we started our acquisition pattern on the platinum deposition edge to make sure that the
112 initial exposure where the defocus was not yet adjusted did not contain any biologically relevant information.

113 We used this strategy to collect data on eight lamellae, four using the eucentric focus condition, hereafter referred
114 to as Lamella_{EUC}, and four using the fringe-free condition, hereafter referred to as Lamella_{FFF} (Fig. [3] A+D, Fig. [4
115 - figure supplement 4]A). We were able to collect data with a highly consistent defocus of 800 nm (Fig. [2]F), both
116 in the eucentric focus and fringe-free focus condition. To ensure that data were collected consistently, we mapped
117 defocus values as a function of the applied image shift (Fig. [3 - figure supplement 1]A). This demonstrated that
118 the defocus was consistent across a lamella, except for rare outliers and in images containing contamination. We
119 also plotted the measured objective astigmatism of each lamella and found that it varies with the applied image

shift, becoming more astigmatic mostly due to image shift in the x direction (Fig. [3 - figure supplement 1]B). While approaches exist to correct for this during the data collection [16], we opted to not use these approaches in our initial experiments. We reasoned that because 2DTM depends on high-resolution information, this would be an excellent test of how much these aberration affect imaging.

We assembled the tile micrographs into a montage using the image-shift values and the SerialEM calibration followed by cross-correlation based refinement (see Methods). In the resulting montages, the same cellular features visible in the overview images are apparent (Fig. [3]B+E, Fig. [4 - figure supplement 4]B), however due to the high magnification and low defocus many more details, such as the membrane bilayer separation, can be observed (Fig. [3]C+F). For montages collected using the eucentric condition, there are clearly visible fringes at the edges between the tiles (Fig. [3]C), which are absent in the fringe-free focus montages (Fig. [3]F). In our analysis below, we show that these fringes do not impede target detection by 2DTM, making them primarily an aesthetic issue. We also note that the tiling pattern is visible in the montages (Fig. [3]B+E), which we believe is due to the non-linear behavior of the K3 camera since we can observe these shading artifacts in micrographs of a condensed beam over vacuum (Fig. [4 - figure supplement 3]).

The montages show membrane vesicles and granules with highly variable sizes and density. We found that a substantial number of granules, which are characterized by higher density inside the the surrounding cytosol [17], seemed to contain a membrane-enclosed inclusion with density similar to the surrounding cytosol (Fig. [4 - figure supplement 4]C) and could therefore be formed by inward budding of the granule membrane. These granules were 150-300 nm in diameter and the inclusions were 100-200 nm in diameter. Based on these dimensions the granules are either azurophil or specific granules [17]. To our knowledge, these inclusion have not been described in granulocytes and are further described and discussed below.

2DTM of DeCo-LACE data reveals large ribosomal subunit distribution in cellular cross-sections

In our initial attempts of using 2DTM on micrographs acquired with the DeCo-LACE protocol, we did not observe any SNR peaks above threshold using the large subunit of the mouse ribosome (Fig. [4 - figure supplement 1]A). We reasoned that the edges of the beam might interfere with motion-correction of the movies as they represent strong low-resolution features that do not move with the sample. When we cropped the movie frames to exclude the beam edges, the estimated amount of motion increased (Fig. [4 - figure supplement 1]B), consistent with successful tracking of sample motion. Furthermore, in the motion-corrected average we could identify significant SNR peaks (Fig. [4 - figure supplement 1]B), confirming the high sensitivity of 2DTM to the presence of high-resolution signal preserved in the images by the motion correction. To streamline data processing, we implemented a function in unblur to consider only a defined central area of a movie for estimation of sample motion, while still averaging the complete movie frames (Fig. [4 - figure supplement 1]C). Using this approach, we motion-corrected all tiles in the

152 eight lamellae and found consistently total motion below 1 Å per frame (Fig. [4 - figure supplement 2] A). In some
153 lamellae we found increased motion in the lamella center, which indicates areas of variable mechanical stability
154 within FIB-milled lamellae. In some micrographs we also observed that the beam edges gave rise to artifacts in
155 the MIP and numerous false-positive detections at the edge of the illuminated area (Fig. [4 - figure supplement
156 1]D). A similar phenomenon was observed on isolated “hot” pixels in unilluminated areas. To overcome this issue
157 we implemented a function in unblur to replace dark areas in the micrograph with Gaussian noise (see Methods),
158 with mean and standard deviation matching the illuminated portion of the micrograph (Fig. [4 - figure supplement
159 1]D+E). Together, these pre-processing steps enabled us to perform 2DTM on all tiles of the eight lamellae.

160 We used the tile positions to calculate the positions of the detected LSUs in the lamellae (Fig. [4]A, Fig. [5]A,
161 Movie 1, Movie 2). Overlaying these positions of the lamellae montages reveals LSU distribution throughout the
162 FIB-milled slices of individual cells. Consistent with prior observations imaging selected views in yeast [13], or-
163 ganelles like the nucleus and mitochondria only showed sporadic targets detected with low SNRs, consistent with
164 the estimated false-positive rate of one per tile. For each detected target we also calculated the Z positions from
165 the individual estimated defocus and defocus offset for each tile. When viewed from the side, the ribosome po-
166 sitions therefore show the slight tilts of the lamellae relative to the microscope frame of reference (Fig. [4]B, Fig.
167 [5]B, Movie 1, Movie 2). Furthermore, the side views indicated that lamellae were thinner at the leading edge.
168 Indeed, when plotting the transmitted beam intensities in individual tiles as a function of beam image-shift, we
169 observed substantially higher intensities at the leading edge (Fig. [4 - figure supplement 2]B), which in energy-
170 filtered TEM indicates a thinner sample [18]. Even though we prepared the lamellae with the “overtilt” approach
171 [19], this means that LSU densities across the lamellae can be skewed by a change in thickness, and better sample
172 preparation methods are needed to generate more even samples.

173 As described in [7] the 2DTM SNR threshold for detecting a target is chosen to result in one false positive detection
174 per image searched. We would therefore expect to find one false positive detection per tile. We reasoned that the
175 large nuclear area imaged by DeCo-LACE could be used to test whether this assumption is true. In the 670 tiles
176 containing exclusively nucleus (as manually annotated from the overview image) we detected 247 targets, making
177 the false-positive rate more than twofold lower than expected. Since earlier work shows that 2DTM with the LSU
178 can produce matches to nuclear ribosome biogenesis intermediates [13], this could even be an overestimate of the
179 false-positive rate. This suggests that the detection threshold could be even lower, which is an area of ongoing
180 research.

181 Close inspection of the LSU positions in the lamellae revealed several interesting features. LSUs could be seen asso-
182 ciating with membranes, in patterns reminiscent of the rough endoplasmic reticulum (Fig. [4]C, Fig. [5]C) or the
183 outer nuclear membrane (Fig. [4]D). We also observed LSUs forming ring-like structures (Fig. [4]E), potentially
184 indicating circularized mRNAs [20]. While ribosomes were for the most part excluded from the numerous gran-

185 rules observed in the cytoplasm, in some cases we observed clusters of LSUs in the inclusions of double-membraned
186 granules described earlier (Fig. [4]F, Fig. [5]D,E). It is, in principle, possible that these targets are situated above or
187 below the imaged granules, since the granule positions in z cannot be determined using 2D projections. However,
188 in the case of Fig. [5]E, the detected LSUs span the whole lamella in the z direction (Fig. [5]F), while positions
189 above or below a granule would result in LSUs situated exclusively at the top or bottom of the lamella. This is
190 consistent with the earlier hypothesis that the inclusions are of cytoplasmic origin.

191 Does DeCo-LACE induce aberrations that affect 2DTM?

192 Within the eight lamellae we found different numbers of detected targets, ranging from 1089 to 6433 per lamella (Fig.
193 [6]A). Lamella_{EUC} 1 had the most detected targets, but also has the largest surface area and contained cytoplasm
194 from two cells. Lamella_{FFF} 4 had the fewest detected targets, but this particular lamella was dominated by a circular
195 section of the nucleus, with only small pockets of cytoplasm (Fig. [4 - figure supplement 4]). In an attempt to
196 normalize for these differences in area containing cytoplasm, we compared the number of detected targets per tile
197 in tiles that contained more than one target, which should exclude tiles with non-cytosolic content (Fig. [6]B).
198 While this measure had less variability, there were still differences. Lamella_{EUC} 4 had not only the fewest targets,
199 but also the lowest density, which could be due to this lamella being the thinnest, or due to it sectioning the cell in an
200 area with a lower concentration of ribosomes. Lamella_{FFF} 3 had a substantially higher number of ribosomes per tile.
201 Since all of these lamellae were made from a cell-line under identical conditions, this underscores the necessity to
202 collect data from large numbers of lamellae to overcome the inherent variability. When comparing the distribution
203 of scores between lamellae, we found them to be fairly comparable with median SNRs ranging from 8.7 to 9.7 (Fig.
204 [6]C). Lamella_{EUC} 1 had slightly lower scores compared to the rest, potentially due to its large size and connected
205 mechanical instability during imaging. Overall, we did not observe differences in the number or SNR of detected
206 targets between eucentric or fringe-free illumination conditions that were bigger than the observed inter-lamella
207 variability.

208 Since the SNR values of 2DTM are highly sensitive to image quality, we reasoned we could use them to verify
209 that DeCo-LACE does not introduce a systematic loss of image quality. We considered non-parallel illumination
210 introduced by the unusually condensed beam and uncharacterized aberrations near the beam periphery. When
211 plotting the SNR values of detected targets in all eight lamellae as a function of their location in the tiles, we found
212 uniformly high SNR values throughout the illuminated areas for both eucentric and fringe-free focus illumination,
213 demonstrating that both illumination schemes are suitable for DeCo-LACE (Fig. [6]D).

214 We also wondered whether large image shifts would lead to aberrations due to astigmatism or beam tilt [16]. We
215 reasoned that if that was the case the number of detected targets should be highest in the center of the lamella where
216 the applied beam image-shift is 0. Instead, we observed that in both eucentric and fringe-free focus conditions more

targets were detected at the “back” edge of the lamella (Fig. [6]E]). This may be due to the center of the cell being predominantly occupied by the nucleus, despite its segmentation in neutrophil-like cells. The increase in matches at the “back” of the lamellae compared to the “front” can also be explained by the thickness gradient of the lamellae (Fig. [4 - figure supplement 2]B, Fig. [4]B, Fig. [5]B). In addition, aberrations would be expected to cause average 2DTM SNRs to be higher when beam-image shift values are small. Instead, we found that SNRs were on average the highest at the “front” edge of the lamellae, presumably due to the thinner sample. We therefore conclude that factors other than beam image-shift or beam condensation aberrations are limiting 2DTM SNRs, predominantly the thickness of the lamellae.

Computation is the bottleneck of visual proteomics

All lamellae described above were derived from a clonal cell line under identical condition and thinned with the same parameters. This means that the substantial variability of detected targets between the lamellae must be due to technical variability, including area, thickness, mechanical stability, and location of the section within the cell. We therefore predict that further studies that want to draw quantitative and statistically relevant conclusions about the number and location of molecules under different experimental conditions, will require collection of orders of magnitude more data than in this study to gain enough statistical power given this variability. The samples used were prepared in two 24 h sessions on a FIB/SEM instrument, and imaging was performed during another two 24h session on the TEM microscope. Inspections of the timestamps of the raw data files revealed that the milling time per lamella was ~30 minutes and TEM imaging was accomplished in ~10 seconds per tile or 90 minutes for a ~6x6 μm lamella. Processing of the data, however, took substantially longer. Specifically, 2DTM of all tiles took approximately one week per lamella on 32 Nvidia A6000 GPUs. Computation is therefore a bottleneck in our current workflow, and further optimizations of the algorithm may be necessary increase throughput. Alternatively, this bottleneck could be reduced by increasing the number of processing units.

Discussion

In this study we developed an approach to image entire cellular cross-section using cryo-EM at high enough resolution to allow for 2DTM detection of the LSU. The two main advantages compared to previous approaches are high throughput of imaging and biological context for detected molecules. The requirement to increase throughput in cryo-EM data collection of cellular samples has been recognized in the recent literature. Most approaches described so far are tailored towards tomography. Peck et al. [21] and Yang et al. [22] developed approaches to increase the FOV of tomogram data-collection by using a montaging technique. Peck et al. used a similar “condensed-beam” approach as described here. However, the montages are substantially smaller in scope, covering carbon film holes of 2 μm diameter. Bouvette et al. [23] and Eisenstein et al. [24] are using beam image-shift to collect tilt-series in multiple locations in parallel to increase throughput. However, none of these approaches provide the full coverage

249 of a cellular cross-section that can be achieved using DeCo-LACE.

250 We observed granules containing a vesicle of putative cytosolic origin. We speculate that upon degranulation, the
251 process in which granules fuse with the plasma membrane, these vesicles would be released into the extracellular
252 space. The main types of extracellular vesicles of this size are exosomes, up to 100 nm large vesicles derived from
253 fusion of multivesicular bodies with the plasma membrane, and microvesicles, which are derived from direct bud-
254 ding of the plasma membrane [25]. We suggest that granulocytes could release a third type of extracellular vesicle,
255 granule-derived vesicles (GDV), into the extracellular space. 2DTM showed that a subset of GDVs can contain ribo-
256 somes (Fig. [4]F, Fig. [5]D,E). This could indicate that these vesicles are transporting translation-capable mRNAs,
257 as has been described for exosomes [26]. Further studies will be necessary to confirm the existence of GDVs in
258 granulocytes isolated from mammals and to understand their functional significance.

259 As mentioned in the results, we found a consistent shading artifact pattern in our montages, that we believe is the
260 result of non-linear behavior of the K3 camera. Indeed, when we average images with a condensed beam taken
261 over vacuum we found in both focus conditions a consistent background pattern with a brighter region on the
262 periphery of the illuminated area (Fig [4 - figure supplement 3]). This might be caused by dynamic adjustment
263 of the internal camera counting threshold which expects columns of the sensor to be evenly illuminated as is the
264 case for SPA applications. Since the signal of this pattern has mainly low-resolution components it is unlikely to
265 affect 2DTM. However, it highlights that the non-linear behavior of the camera has to be taken into account when
266 imaging samples with strongly varying density and unusual illumination schemes.

267 We found that even though we used beam image-shift extensively (up to 7 um), we did not see substantially reduced
268 2DTM SNR values in tiles acquired at high beam image-shift compared to tiles acquired with low or no beam image-
269 shift. This is in contrast to reports in single-particle analysis (SPA) [27] where the induced beam tilt substantially
270 reduced the resolution if it was not corrected during processing. It is possible that 2DTM is less sensitive to beam-
271 tilt aberrations, since the template is free of any aberration and only the image is distorted, while in SPA the beam
272 tilt will affect both the images and the reconstructed template.

273 Since we observed substantial variation in LSU density within and between lamellae, visual proteomics studies that
274 use cryo-EM to establish changes in molecular organization within cells will require orders of magnitude more data
275 than used in this study. One milestone would be to image enough data to represent one cellular volume, which
276 for a small eukaryotic cells requires imaging approximately 100 lamellae. While data collection throughput on the
277 TEM is fundamentally limited by the exposure time, this amount of data could be collected within 12 hours by
278 improving the data acquisition scheme to perform all necessary calculations in parallel with actual exposure of the
279 camera. Sample preparation using a FIB/SEM is also currently a bottleneck, but preparation of large lamellae with
280 multiple cellular cross-sections using methods like WAFFLE [28] might allow sufficient throughput. As stated in
281 the results, at least for 2DTM computation will remain challenging and approximately 17,000 GPU hours would be

282 required for a 100 lamellae dataset.

283 Materials and Methods

284 Grid preparation

285 ER-HoxB8 cells were maintained in RPMI medium supplemented with 10% FBS, penicillin/streptomycin, SCF, and
286 estrogen [10] at 37 °C and 5% CO₂. 120 h prior to grid preparation, cells were washed twice in PBS and cultured in
287 the same medium except without estrogen. Differentiation was verified by staining with Hoechst-dye and inspec-
288 tion of nuclear morphology. Cells were then counted and diluted to 1 · 10⁶ cells/ml. Grids (either 200 mesh copper
289 grids, with a silicone-oxide and 2 µm holes with a 2 µm spacing or 200 mesh gold grids with a thin gold film and 2
290 µm holes in 2 µm spacing) were glow-discharged from both sides using a 15 mA for 45 s. 3.5 µl of cell suspension
291 was added to grids on the thin-film side and grids were blotted from the back side using a GP2 cryoplunger (Leica,
292 Wetzlar, Germany) for 8 s and rapidly plunged into liquid ethane at -185 °C.

293 FIB-milling

294 Grids were loaded into an Aquilos 2 FIB/SEM (Thermo Fisher, Waltham, MA) instrument with a stage cooled
295 to -190 °C. Grids were sputter-coated with platinum for 15 s at 45 mA and then coated with a layer of platinum-
296 precursor by opening the GIS-valve for 45 s. An overview of the grid was created by montaging SEM images and
297 isolated cells at the center of gridsquares were selected for FIB-milling. Lamellae were generated automatically
298 using the AutoTEM software (Thermo Fisher), with the following parameters:

- 299 • Milling angle: 20°
- 300 • Rough milling: 3.2 µm thickness, 0.5 nA current
- 301 • Medium milling: 1.8 µm thickness, 0.3 nA current, 1.0° overtilt
- 302 • Fine milling: 1.0 µm thickness, 0.1 nA current, 0.5° overtilt
- 303 • Finer milling: 700 nm thickness, 0.1 nA current, 0.2° overtilt
- 304 • Polish 1: 450 nm thickness, 50 pA current
- 305 • Polish 2: 200 nm thickness, 30 pA current

306 This resulted in 6-10 µm wide lamella with 150-250 nm thickness as determined by FIB-imaging of the lamella
307 edges.

308 Data collection

309 Grids were loaded into a Titan Krios TEM (Thermo Fisher) operated at 300 keV and equipped with a BioQuantum
310 energy filter (Gatan, Pleasanton, CA) and K3 camera (Gatan). The microscope was aligned using a cross-grating
311 grid on the stage. Prior to each session, we carefully performed the “Image/Beam” calibration in nanoprobe. We set

312 the magnification to a pixel size of 1.76 \AA and condensed the beam to $\sim 900 \text{ nm}$ diameter, resulting in the beam being
313 completely visible on the camera. To establish fringe-free conditions, the “Fine eucentric” procedure of SerialEM
314 [29] was used to move a square of the cross-grating grid to the eucentric position of the microscope. The effective
315 defocus was then set to $2 \mu\text{m}$, using the “autofocus” routine of SerialEM. The objective focus of the microscope was
316 changed until no fringes were visible. The stage was then moved in Z until images had an apparent defocus of 2
317 μm . The difference in stage Z-position between the eucentric and fringe-free conditions was used to move other
318 areas into fringe-free condition.

319 Low magnification montages were used to find lamellae and lamellae that were sufficiently thin and free of con-
320 tamination were selected for automated data collection. Overview images of each lamella were taken at 2250x
321 magnification (38 \AA pixel size). The corners of the lamella in the overview image were manually annotated in
322 SerialEM and translated into beam image-shift values using SerialEM’s calibration. A hexagonal pattern of beam
323 image-shift positions was calculated that covered the area between the four corners in a serpentine way, with a
324 $\sqrt{3} \cdot 425 \text{ nm}$ horizontal spacing and $3/4 \cdot 850 \text{ nm}$ vertical spacing. Exposures were taken at each position with a
325 $30 \text{ e}^-/\text{\AA}^2$ total dose. After each exposure, the defocus was estimated using the ctffind function of SerialEM and the
326 focus for the next exposure was corrected by the difference between the estimated focus and the desired defocus of
327 800 nm . Furthermore, after each exposure the deviation of the beam from the center of the camera was measured
328 and corrected using the “CenterBeamFromImage” command of SerialEM.

329 After data collection, a 20 s exposure at 2250x magnification of the lamella at $200 \mu\text{m}$ defocus was taken for visual-
330 ization purposes. A Python script implementing this procedure is available at https://github.com/jojoelfe/deco_1
331 ace_template_matching_manuscript.

332 DeCo-LACE data processing

333 An overview of the data analysis pipeline is shown in Fig. 7.

334 **Pre-processing** Motion-correction, dose weighting and other preprocessing as detailed below was performed
335 using *cisTEM* [30]. To avoid influence of the beam-edge on motion-correction, only a quarter of the movie in the
336 center of the camera was considered for calculation of the estimated motion. After movie frames were aligned and
337 summed, a mask for the illuminated area was calculated by lowpass filtering the image with a 100 \AA resolution
338 cutoff, thresholding the image at 10% of the maximal value and then lowpass filtering the mask again with a 100 \AA
339 resolution cutoff to smooth the mask edges. This mask was then used to select dark areas in the image and fill the
340 pixels with Gaussian noise, with the same mean and standard deviation as the illuminated area. A custom version
341 of the unblur program [31] implementing this procedure is available at [link to decolace branch]. During motion
342 correction images were resampled to a pixel size of 1.5 \AA . The contrast-transfer function (CTF) was estimated using
343 ctffind [32], searching between 0.2 and $2 \mu\text{m}$ defocus.

344 **2DTM** The search template was generated from the atomic model of the mouse LSU (PDB 6SWA, excluding the
 345 Epb1 subunit) using the cryo-EM simulator implemented in *cisTEM* [33]. The match_template program [9] was
 346 used to search for this template in the movie-aligned, exposure-filtered and masked images, using a 1.5° angular
 347 step in out-of-plane angles and a 1.0° angular step in-plane. 11 defocus planes in 20 nm steps centered around the
 348 ctffind-determined defocus were searched. Targets were defined as detected when their matches with the template
 349 produced peaks with a signal-to-noise ratio (SNR) above a threshold of 7.75, which was chosen based on the one-
 350 false-positive-per-tile criterion [7].

351 **Montage assembly** The coordinates of each tile i , \mathbf{c}_i [2D Vector in pixels] were initialized using beam image-shift
 352 of the tile, \mathbf{b}_i [2D Vector in μm], and the ISToCamera matrix \mathbf{IC} , as calibrated by SerialEM:

$$\mathbf{c}_i = \mathbf{IC} \cdot \mathbf{b}_i$$

353 A list of tile pairs i, j that overlap were assembled by selecting images where $|\mathbf{c}_i - \mathbf{c}_j| < D_{Beam}$. In order to calculate
 354 the precise offset between tiles i and j , $\mathbf{r}_{i,j}$, we calculated the cross-correlation between the two tiles, masked to
 355 the overlapping illuminated area using the scikit-image package [34] was used to calculate refined offsets . The
 356 coordinates \mathbf{c}_i were then refined by a least-square minimization against $\mathbf{r}_{i,j}$:

$$\min_{\mathbf{c}} \sum_{pairs} (\mathbf{r}_{i,j} - (\mathbf{c}_i - \mathbf{c}_j))^2$$

357 using the scipy package [35]. The masked cross-correlation and the least-square minimization was repeated once
 358 more to arrive at the final tile alignment.

359 The x,y coordinates of target n detected by 2DTM in the tile i , $\mathbf{m}_{n,i}^T$, was transformed into the montage frame by
 360 adding the coordinate of the tile.

$$\mathbf{m}_n^M = \mathbf{m}_{n,i}^T + \mathbf{c}_i$$

361 The z coordinate of each target was calculated as the sum of the defocus offset for the target, the estimated defocus
 362 of the tile, and the nominal defocus of the microscope when the tile was acquired.

363 Images were rendered using UCSF ChimeraX [36] using a custom extension to render 2DTM results available at
 364 <https://github.com/jojoelfe/tempest>. The Python scripts used for data processing are available under https://github.com/jojoelfe/deco_lace_template_matching_manuscript.

³⁶⁶ **Acknowledgments**

³⁶⁷ The authors would like to thank Bronwyn Lucas, Carsten Sachse, and Chen Xu for helpful suggestions and careful
³⁶⁸ reading of the manuscriptas as well as members of the Grigorieff lab for helpful discussions. Data was collected at
³⁶⁹ the UMass Chan Medical School Cryo-EM core with help by Kankang Song, Christna Ouch, and Chen Xu.

³⁷⁰ **Data availability**

³⁷¹ Cryo-EM movies, motion-corrected images and 2DTM results have been deposited in EMPIAR under accession
³⁷² code [will be inserted]. The custom cisTEM version is available under <https://github.com/jojoelfe/cisTEM/tree/2574dbdf6161658fd177660b3a841100a792f61b> until features have been integrated into a cisTEM release. The
³⁷³ ChimeraX extension for rendering is available under <https://github.com/jojoelfe/tempest>. This manuscript was
³⁷⁴ prepared using the manubot package [37] . The corresponding repository containing all scripts used for figure
³⁷⁵ generation can be found under https://github.com/jojoelfe/deco_lace_template_matching_manuscript.

³⁷⁷ **Conflicts of interest**

³⁷⁸ The Authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

379 **Figures**

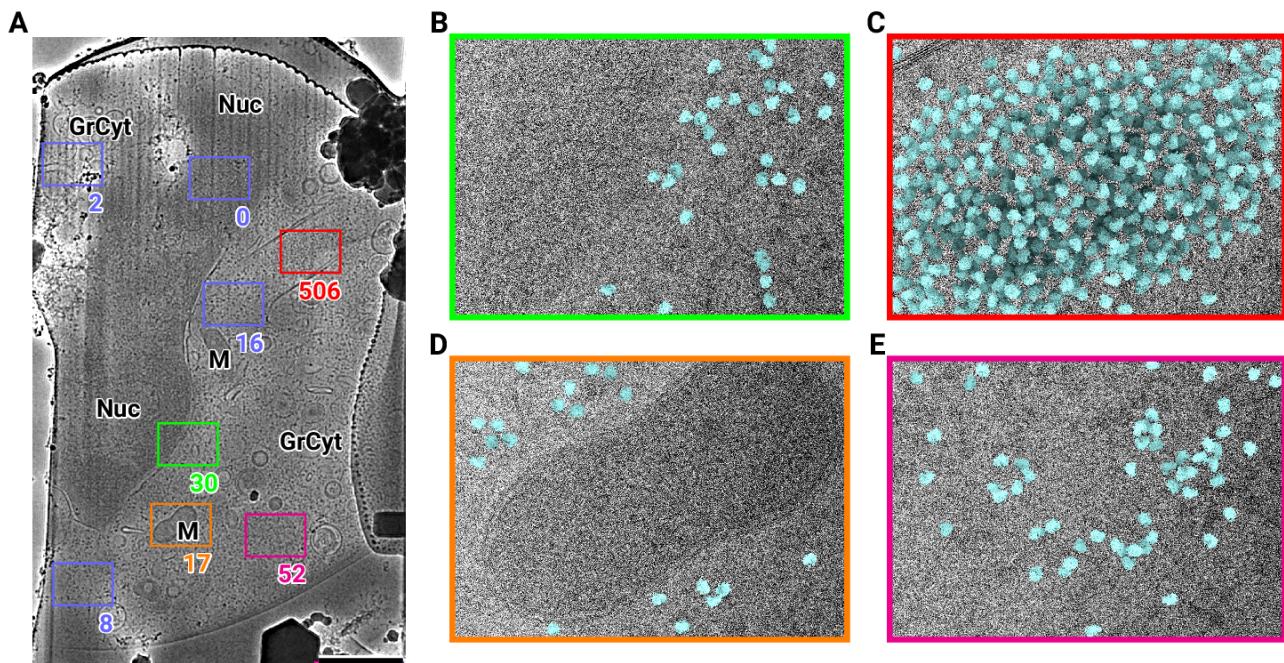


Figure 1: 2D template matching of the large subunit of the ribosome in fib-milled neutrophil-like cells (A) Overview image of the lamella. Major cellular regions are labeled, as Nucleus (Nuc), Mitochondria (M), and granular cytoplasm (GrCyt). FOVs where high-magnification images for template matching where acquired are indicated as boxes with the number of detected targets indicated on the bottom right. FOVs displayed in Panels B-E are color-coded. Scalebar corresponds to 1 μm . (B-E) FOVs with projection of detected LSUs shown in cyan. (B) Perinuclear region, the only detected targets are in the cytoplasmic half. (C) Cytoplasmic region with high density of ribosomes (D) Mitochondrion, as expected there are only detected LSUs in the cytoplasmic region (E) Cytoplasm, with low density of ribosomes.

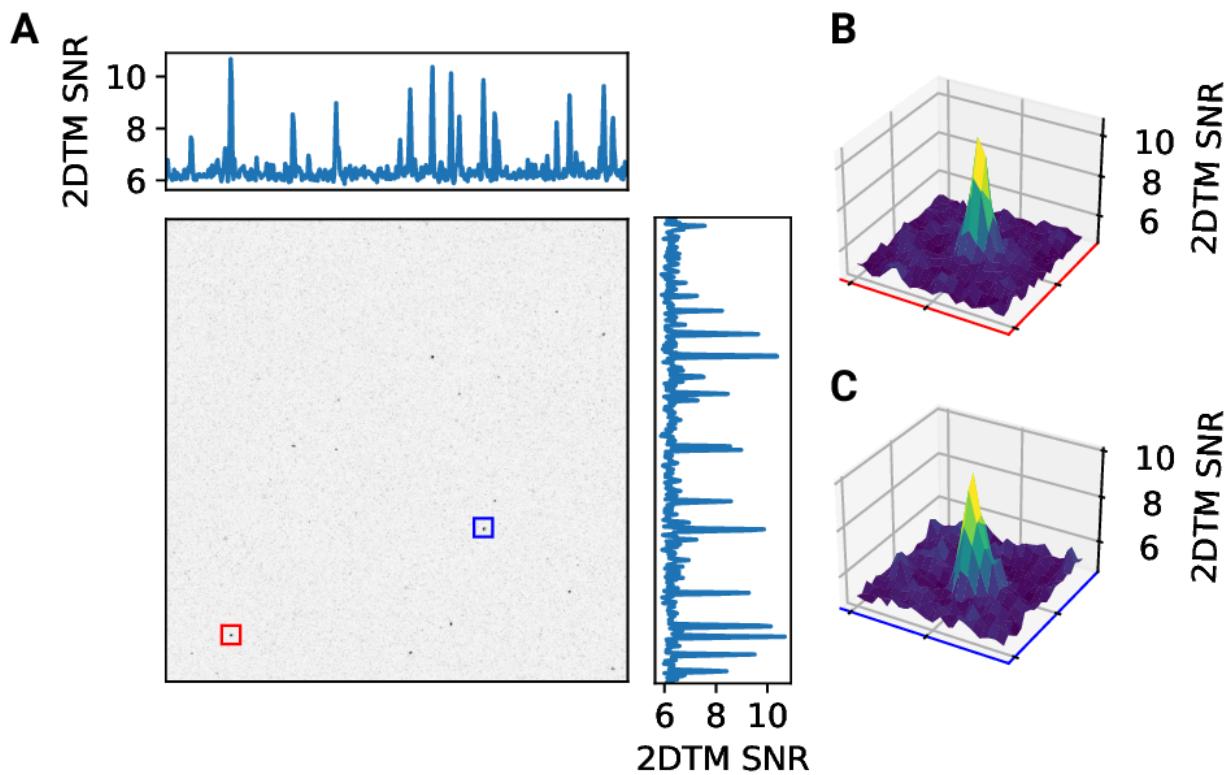


Figure 2 - figure supplement 1: 2D template matching of the large subunit of the ribosome in fib-milled neutrophil-like cells (A) Maximum intensity projection (MIP) cross-correlation map of micrograph shown in Figure 1 (B+C) 3D plot of MIP regions indicated by color boxes in Panel A

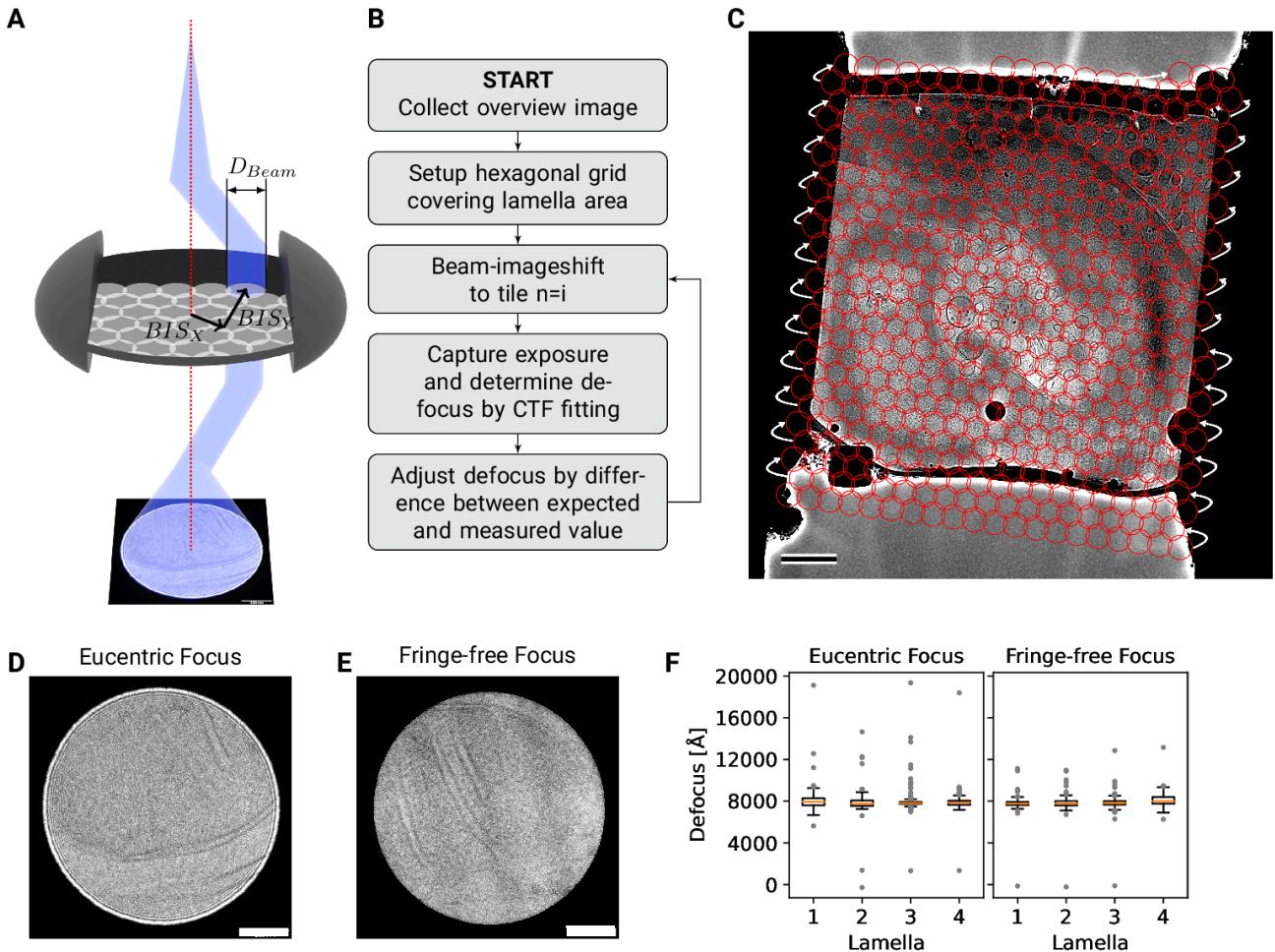


Figure 2: DeCo-LACE approach (A) Graphic demonstrating the data-collection strategy for DeCo-LACE. The electron beam is condensed to a diameter D_{Beam} that allows captured of the whole illuminated area on the camera. Beam-image shift along X and Y (BIS_X, BIS_Y) is used to scan the whole lamella (B) Diagram of the collection algorithm (C) Example overview image of a lamella with the designated acquisition positions and the used beam diameter indicated with red circles. Scalebar corresponds to 1 μm . (D+E) Representative micrographs taken with a condensed beam at eucentric focus (D) or fringe-free focus (E). Scalebar corresponds to 100 nm. (F) Boxplot of defocus measured by ctffind of micrographs taken by the DeCo-LACE approach on four lamellae images at eucentric focus and four lamellae imaged with fringe-free focus.

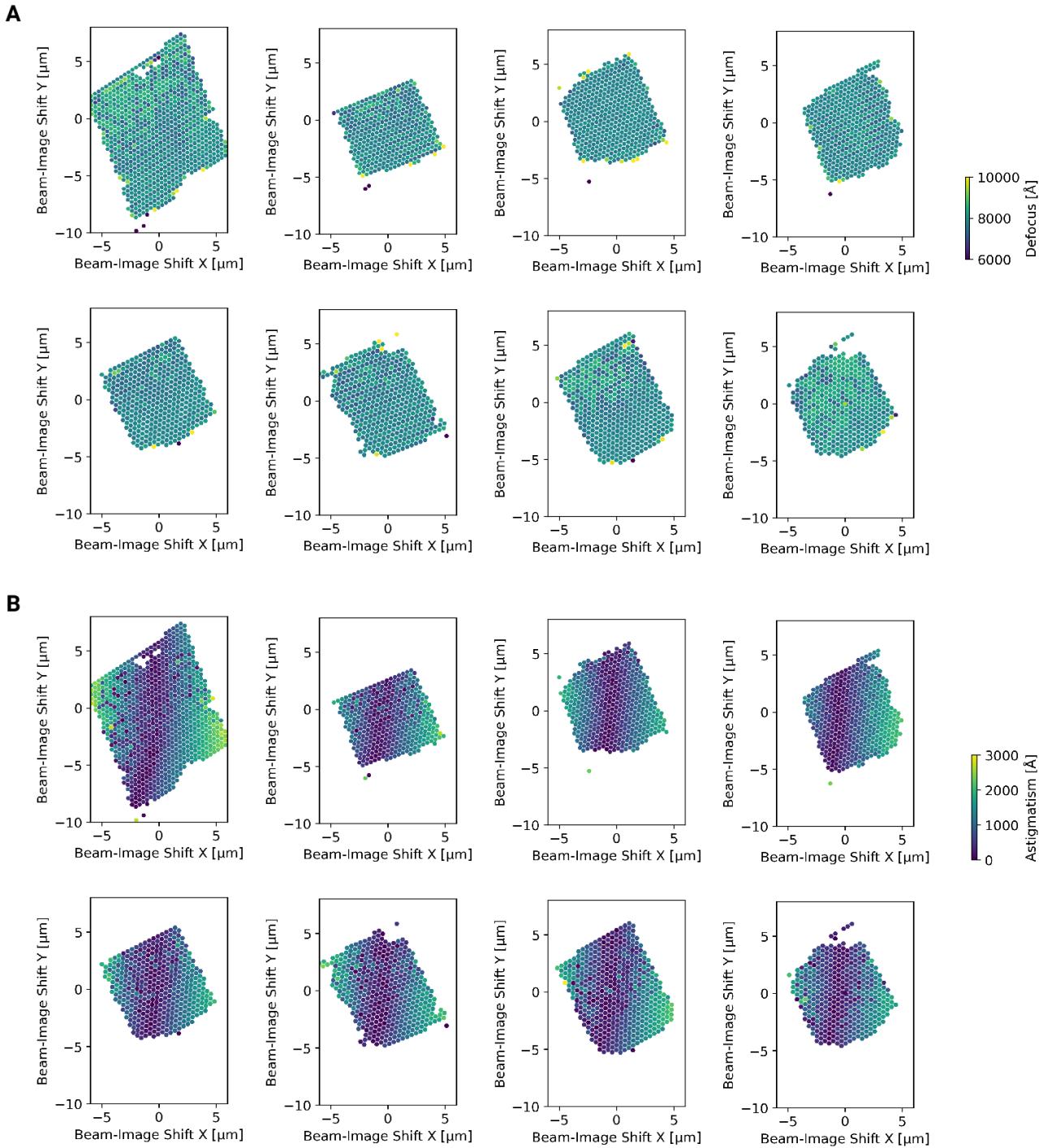


Figure 3 - figure supplement 1: Defocus estimation of individual tiles of DeCo-LACE montages (A) Defocus values of individual micrographs taken using the DeCo-LACE approach plotted as a function of the beam image-shift values. (B) Defocus astigmatism of individual micrographs taken using the DeCo-LACE approach plotted as a function of the beam image-shift values.

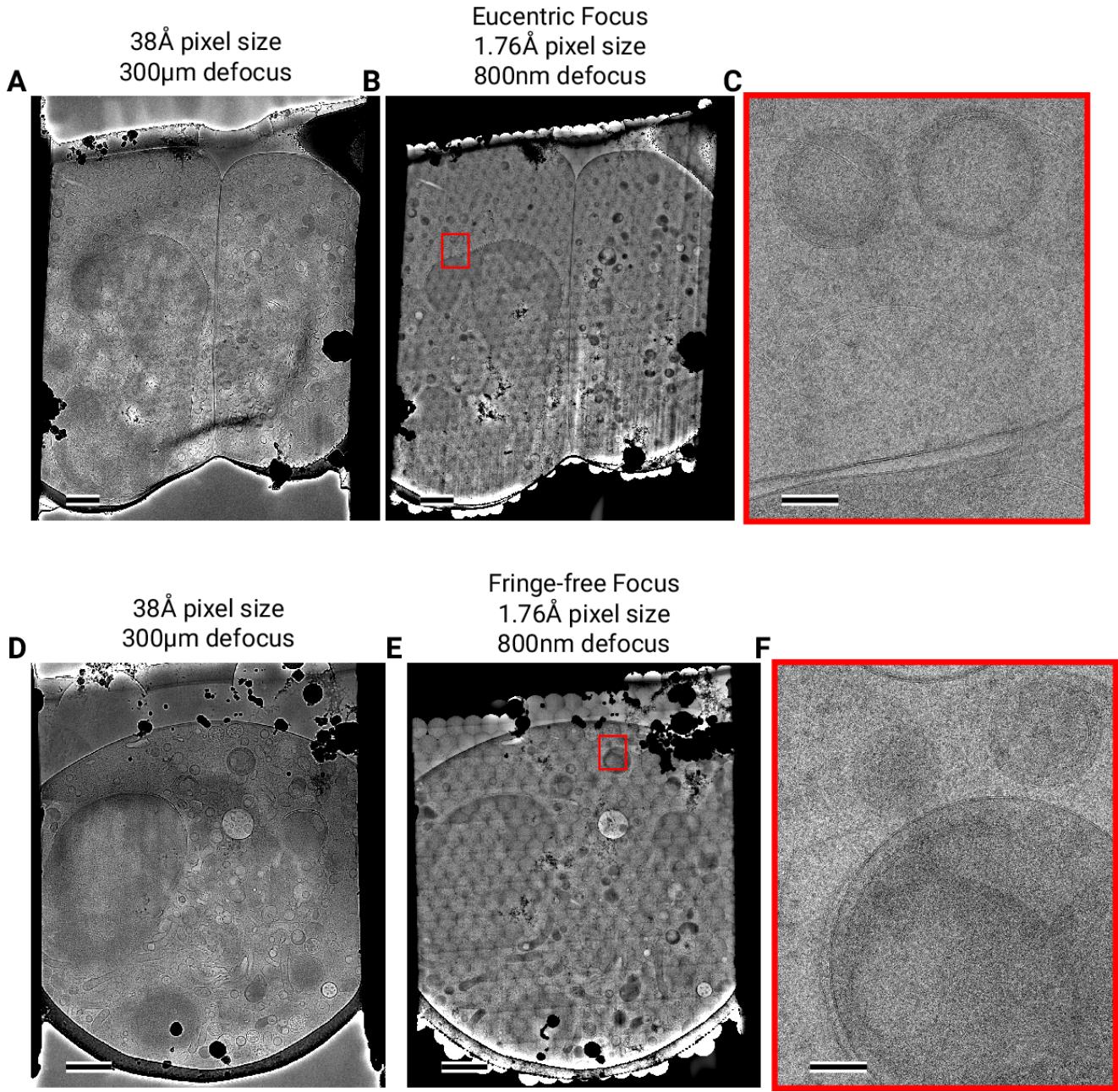


Figure 3: Assembling DeCo-LACE exposures into montages (A) Overview image of Lamella_{EUC} 1 taken at low magnification. Scalebar corresponds to 1 µm. (B) Overview of Lamella_{EUC} 1 created by montaging high magnification images taken with the DeCo-LACE approach. Scalebar corresponds to 1 µm. (C) Zoom-in into red box in panel B. Slight beam-fringe artifacts are visible. Scalebar corresponds to 100 nm. (D) Overview image of Lamella_{FFF} 4 taken at low magnification. Scalebar corresponds to 1 µm. (E) Overview of Lamella_{FFF} 4 created by montaging high magnification images taken with the DeCo-LACE approach. Scalebar corresponds to 1 µm. (F) Zoom-in into red box in panel E. No beam-fringe artifacts are visible. Scalebar corresponds to 100 nm.

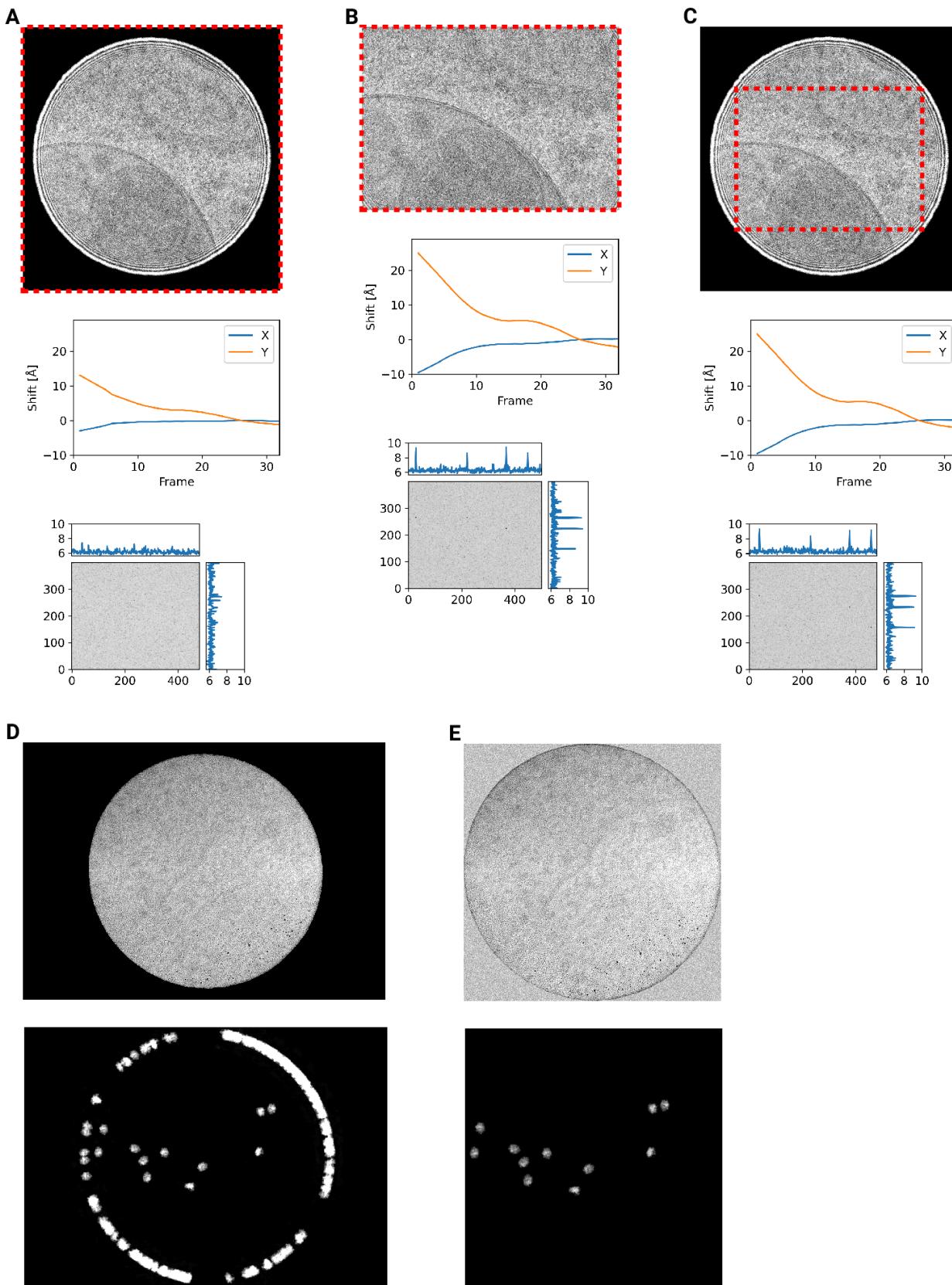


Figure 4 - figure supplement 1: Motion correction of movies with condensed beams. At the top of each panel is an average of the movie that was motion-corrected with a red dashed box indicating the region that was used to estimate shifts. Below is a graph indicating the estimated shifts of the individual frames of the movie. Below this is the MIP of 2DTM using the large subunit of the mouse ribosome. (A) Motion correction of the whole movie (B) Notion correction of a cropped region of the movie that eliminates the beam edges (C) Motion correction of the whole movie, using only the central region to estimate the shifts

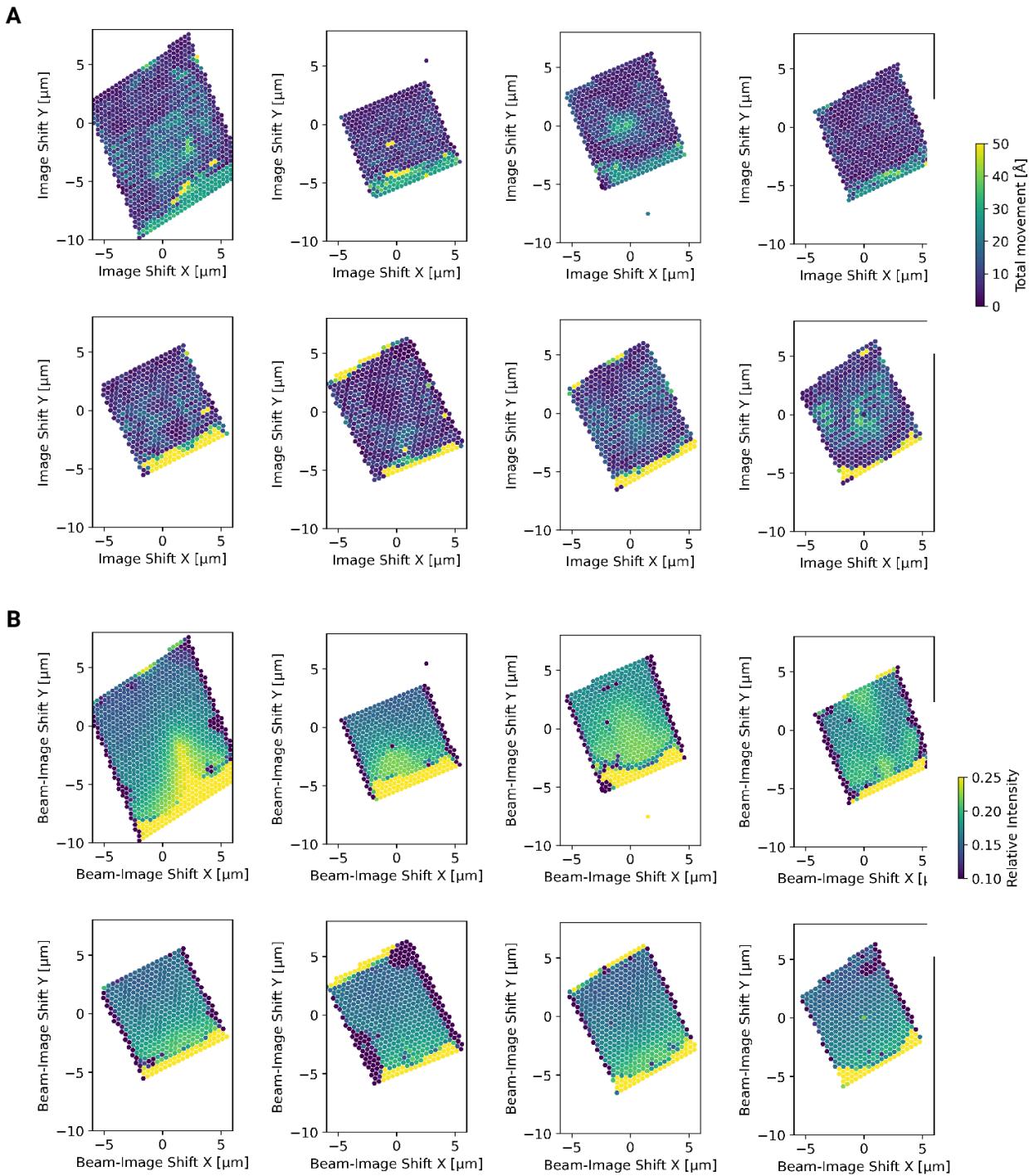


Figure 4 - figure supplement 2: Motion correction of individual tiles imaged using the DeCo-LACE approach (A) Total estimated motion of individual micrographs taken using the DeCo-LACE approach plotted as a function of the beam image-shift values. (B) Electron intensity of individual micrographs taken using the DeCo-LACE approach plotted as a function of the beam image-shift values.

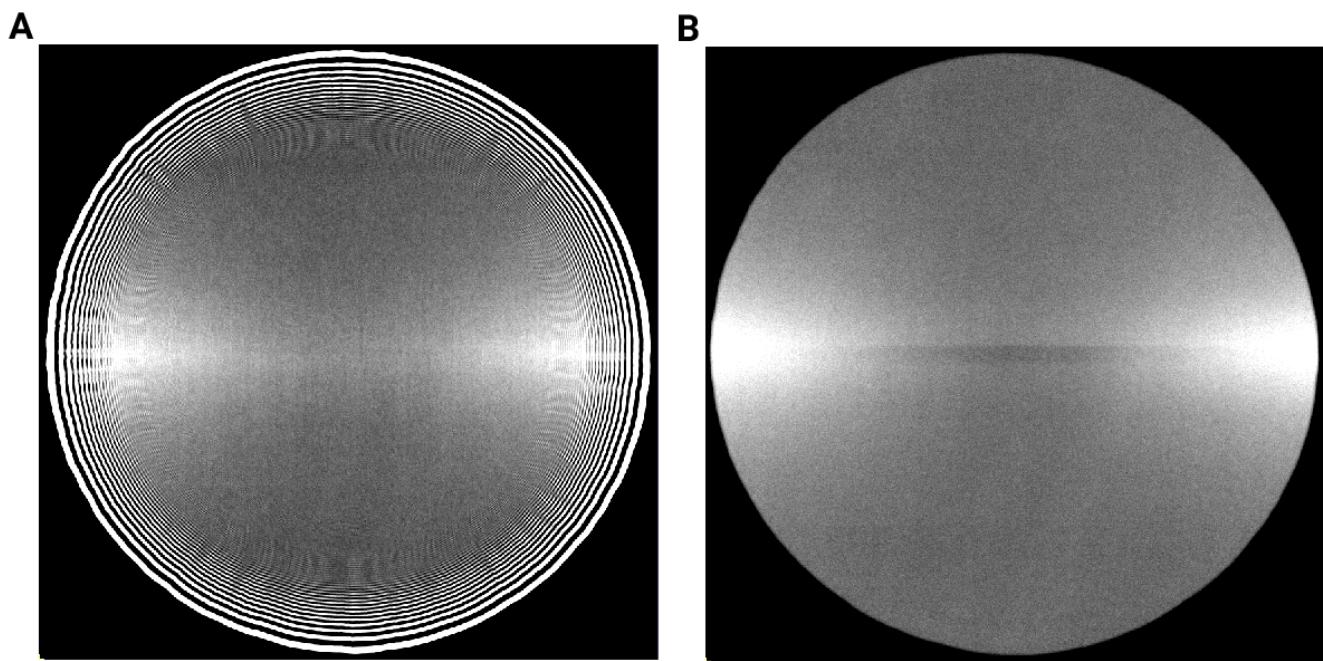


Figure 4 - figure supplement 3: Averages of micrographs taken with a condensed beam over vacuum using a Gatan K3 detector. Contrast and Brightness have been adjusted to highlight uneven dose response. (A) Eucentric Focus (B) Fringe-free Focus

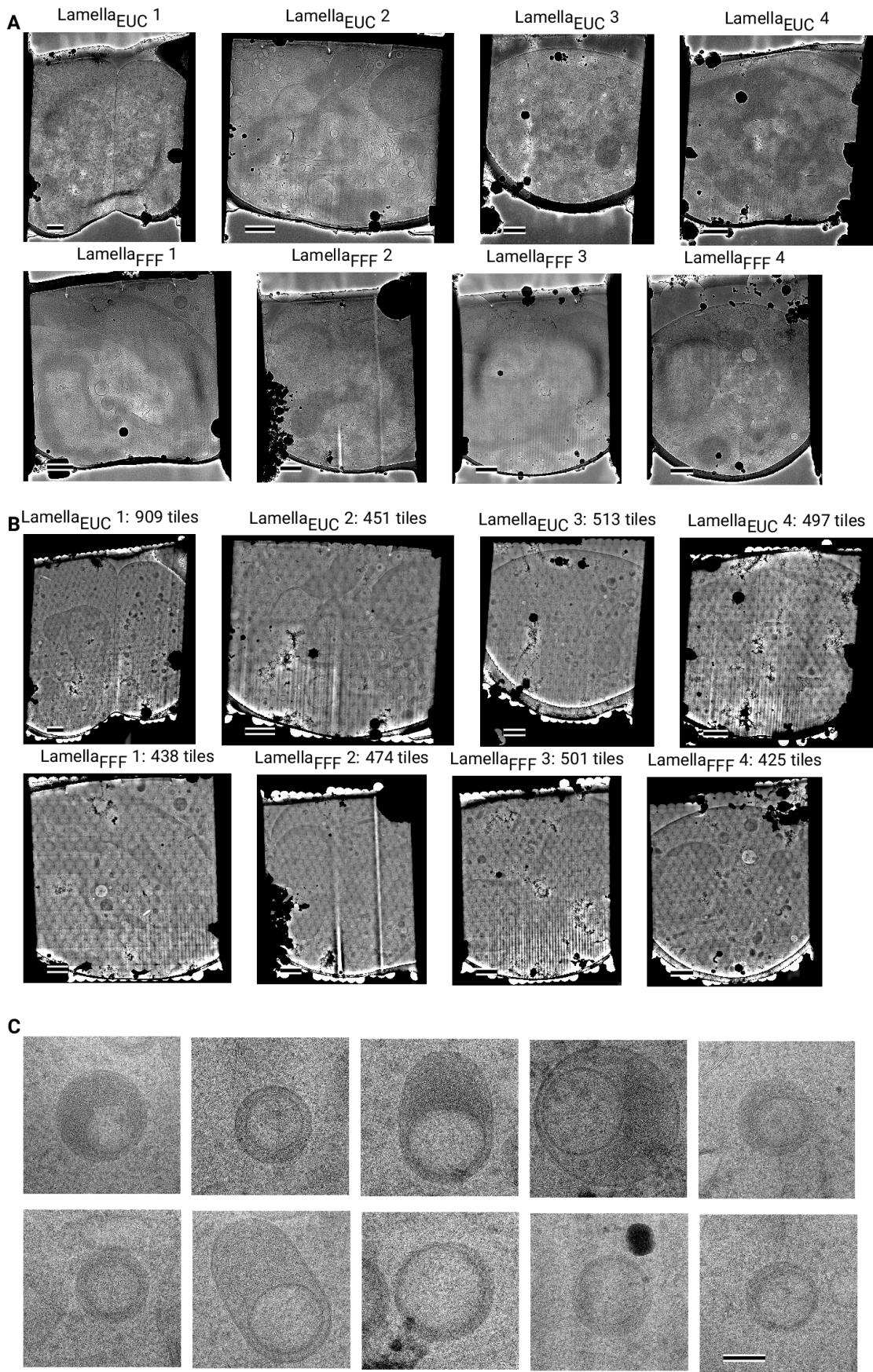


Figure 4 - figure supplement 4: Overview images of lamellae imaged using the DeCo-LACE approach taken at low-magnification (A) Overviews taken at low magnification. Scalebar corresponds to 1 μm . (B) Overviews assembled using the DeCo-LACE approach. Scalebar corresponds to 1 μm . (C) Representative examples of a class of granules containing a putatively cytosolic inclusion. Scalebar corresponds to 100 nm.

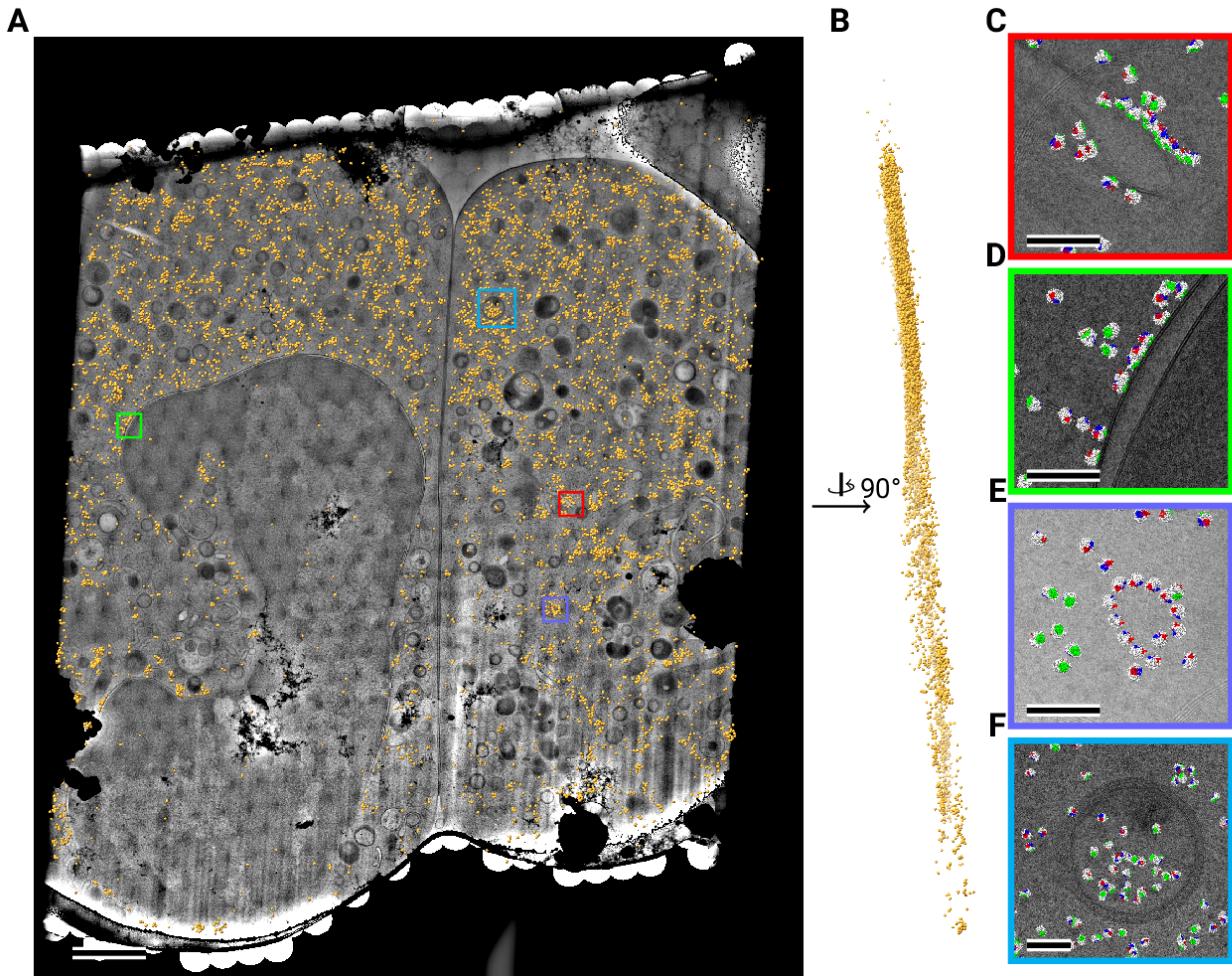


Figure 4: Template matching in lamella imaged using the DeCo-LACE approach at eucentric focus (A) Montage of Lamella_{EUC} 1 overlaid with detected targets colored in orange. Scalebar corresponds to 1 μm . (B) Side view of detected targets in the lamella, such that the direction of the electron beam is horizontal. (C-F) Magnified area of panel A showing rough ER with associated ribosomes (C), outer nuclear membrane with associated ribosomes (D), ribosomes arranged in a circular fashion (E), ribosomes enclosed in a less electron dense inclusion in a granule (F). Ribosomes are colored in white with the surface of the peptide exit tunnel colored in green and the A, P, and E sites colored in blue, purple, and red, respectively. Scalebar corresponds to 100 nm.

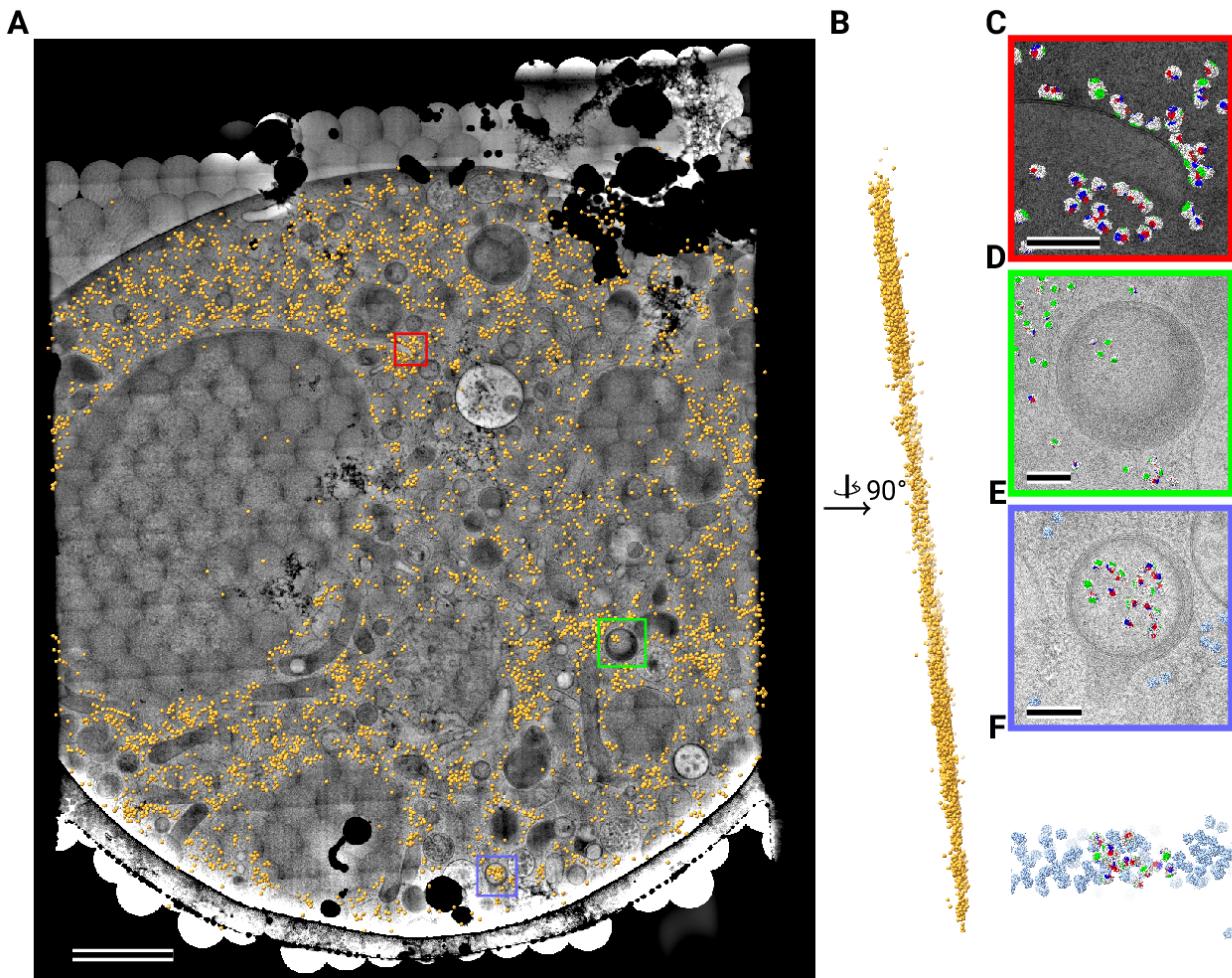


Figure 5: Template matching in lamella imaged using the DeCo-LACE approach at fringe-free focus (A) Montage of Lamella_{FFF} 4 overlaid with detected targets colored in orange. Scalebar corresponds to 1 μm . (B) Side view of detected targets in the lamella, such that the direction of the electron beam is horizontal. (C-E) Magnified area of panel A showing rough ER with associated ribosomes (C) and ribosomes enclosed in a less electron dense inclusion in a granule (D,E). (F) Side view of panel E. Ribosomes are colored in white with the surface of the peptide exit tunnel colored in green and the A, P, and E sites colored in blue, purple, and red, respectively. Scalebar corresponds to 100 nm.

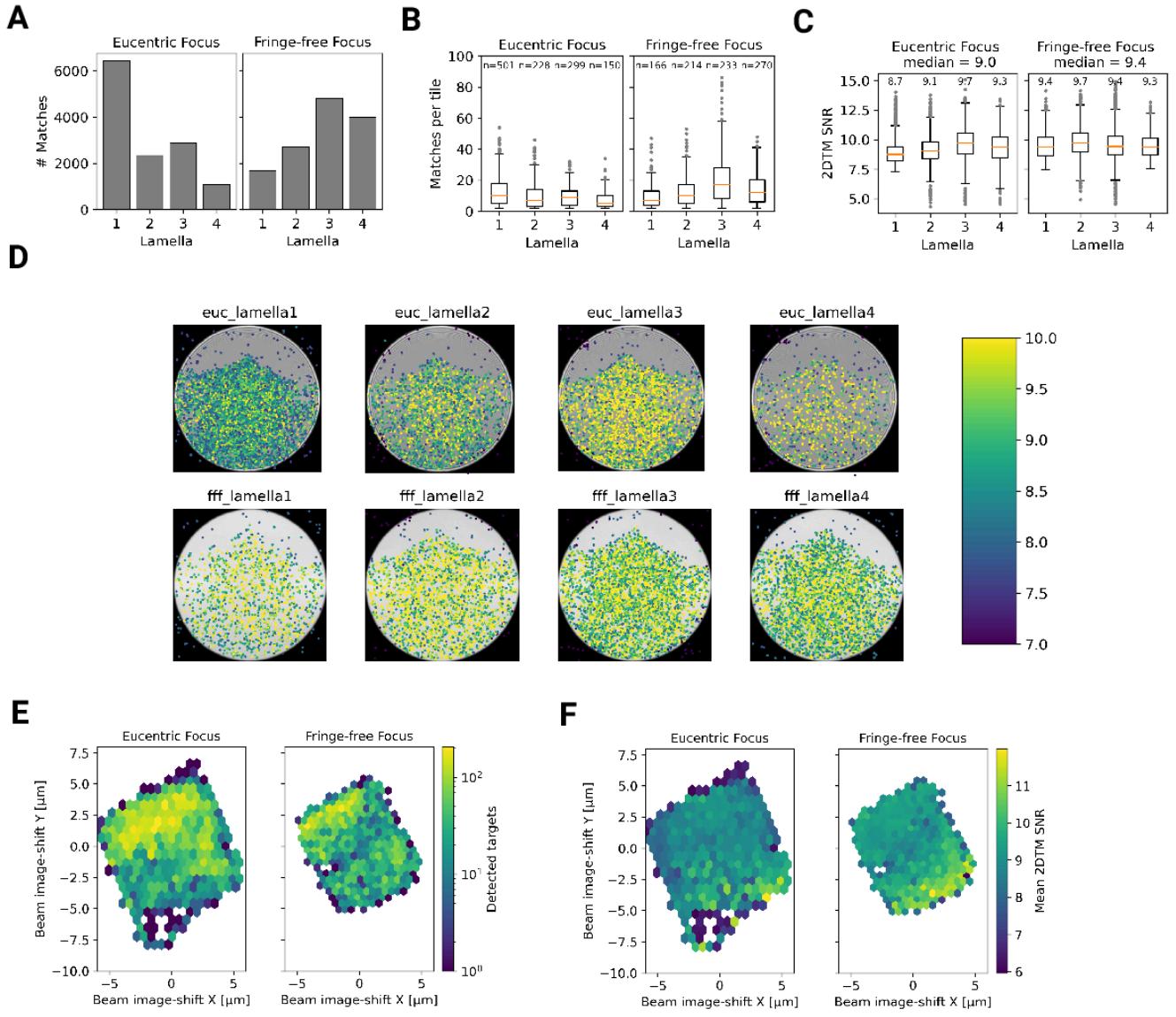


Figure 6: Statistics of 2DTM on lamella imaged using DeCo-LACE (A) Number of detected targets in each lamella (B) Distribution of targets per tile in each lamella. Only tiles with two or more detected targets were included (C) Distribution of SNRs in each lamella (D) For each lamella an average of all tiles is shown. Overlaid is a scatterplot of all detected targets in these tiles according to their in-tile coordinates. Scatterplot is colored according to the 2DTM SNR. There are no detected targets in the top circle-circle intersection due to radiation damage from previous exposures. (E) 2D histogram of number of detected targets as a function of beam-image shift (F) Mean 2DTM SNR as a function of beam-image shift

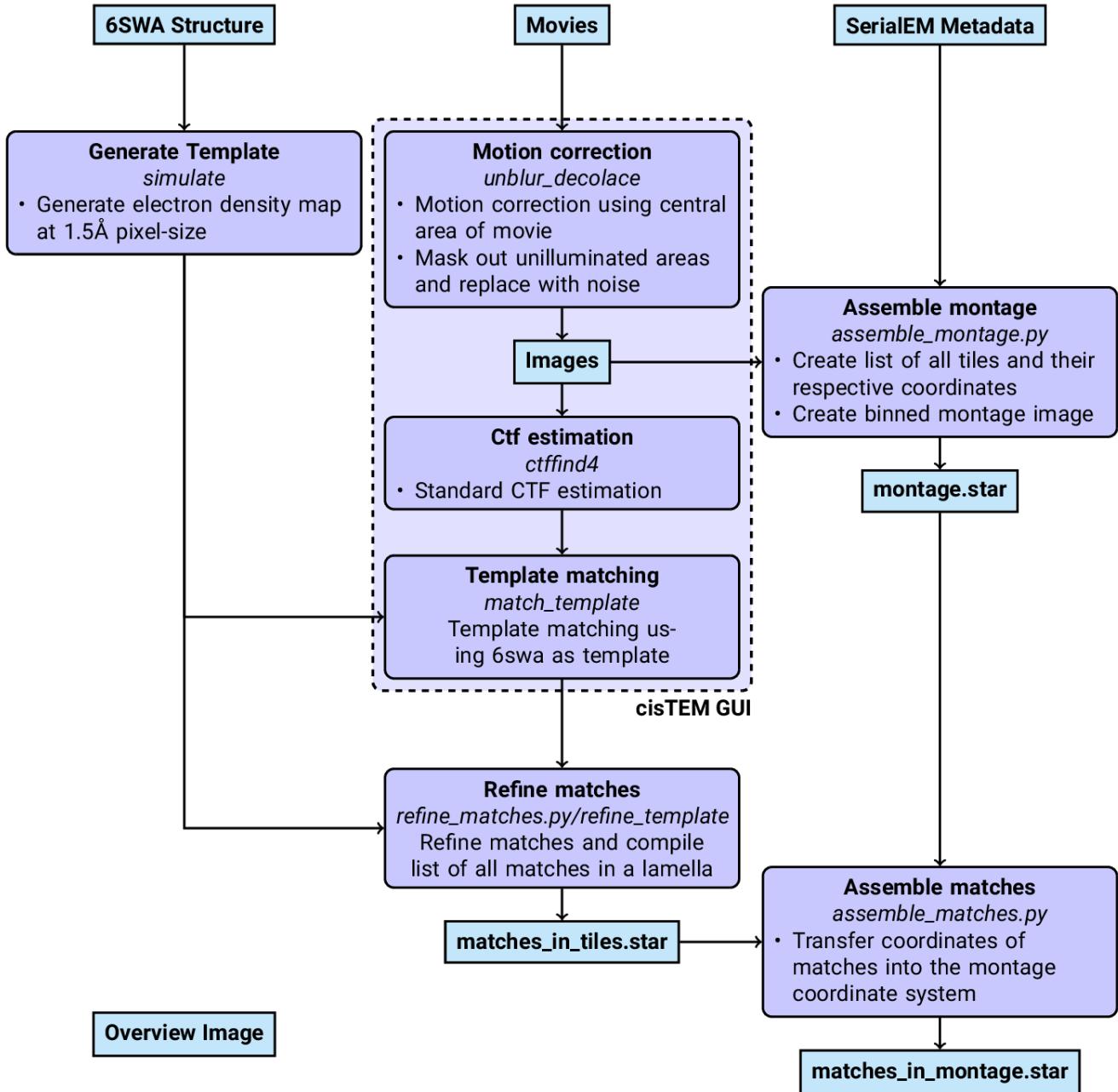


Figure 7: Workflow of DeCo-LACE processing

Figure Movie 1: Movie of detected LSU targets in Lamella_{EUC} 1, corresponding to Figure 5

Figure Movie 2: Movie of detected LSU targets in Lamella_{FFF} 4, corresponding to Figure 6

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