that should predominantly contain three DNA polymerases (fig. S6 and supporting methods). No appreciable differences were observed in either the efficiency, or kinetics, with which replication was reinitiated downstream of the CPD.

We next analyzed the products of bulk and column-isolated, Eco RI-dependent CPD-template reactions by two-dimensional gel electrophoresis to establish if the restart products detected in denaturing gels were associated with the transition from stalled fork to full-length duplex DNA (Fig. 2, A and B). As seen for both reactions, the stalled fork was composed of the 5.3-kb stall product and a smear of Okazaki fragments. Restart fragments were exclusively associated with full-length duplex products, supporting the hypothesis that restart-product formation is coupled to the transition from stalled fork to full-length DNA. Additionally, the putative uncoupled product of the CPD-template reaction was composed solely of leading-strand stall products (Fig. 2B), as would be predicted if, in some cases, template unwinding and lagging-strand synthesis continued to the end of the template but leading-strand reinitiation did not occur (7, 8).

To investigate whether restart products were the result of leading-strand synthesis, we exploited the manner in which the Tus-ter complex arrests replication by using DNA gyrase to relax positive supercoiling (fig. S7). Under these conditions, the clockwise moving fork is replicated to the Tus-ter complex. The leading strand will extend to the first nucleotide of terB, whereas the lagging strand terminates 50 to 100 bp upstream, generating a region of ssDNA specifically on the lagging-strand template (12). Postreplication Eco RI–Pvu I cleavage should therefore only release leading-strand products as full-length duplex DNA (Fig. 3A). Figure 3B shows that the full-length products of an undamaged-template replication reaction were composed exclusively of leading-strand products. The equivalent result was obtained with the CPD template, in both bulk (Fig. 3C) and column-isolated reactions (fig. S8). However, the full-length duplex products were composed of two nascent chains—the stall and restart—unequivocally showing that restart products were generated by leading-strand synthesis.

To determine if these products were primase dependent, column-isolated, replisome-associated ERIs were released by Eco RI cleavage in the presence or absence of DnaG. In the absence of DnaG, there was virtually no full-length duplex DNA generated (Fig. 4, native). The major reaction product migrated at the position of the uncleaved band and was resistant to Eag I cleavage, demonstrating that it was single stranded beyond the CPD. Consistent with these findings, the denaturing gel revealed that restart-product formation was entirely dependent on DnaG, supporting the finding that DnaG can reinitiate leading-strand synthesis by repriming the leading-strand template (10).

Our data show that the E. coli replisome can tolerate leading-strand template lesions by remaining associated with the DNA and reinitiating leading-strand synthesis downstream of the damage via DnaG-dependent leading-strand repriming. The reaction is independent of the replication restart proteins, demonstrating that it is an inherent property of the replisome. Bypass of lesions in this manner will generate ssDNA gaps behind the replication fork (6) that are predominantly repaired by the faithful process of RecA-dependent recombination (18). Because the SOS response will not be induced, this mechanism should be particularly advantageous under normal growth conditions when low levels of damage are present, thereby avoiding cell-division arrest and the induction of mutagenic translesion polymerases. However, the leading-strand reinitiation that we observe is not complete and therefore replisome dissociation may occur, the chances of which will be increased when there are multiple lesions in the template, such as under conditions of replication stress. Should the replisome dissociate, origin-independent replisome loading and SOS-inducible systems such as nuclear excision repair and translesion polymerases are likely to become central to cell survival.

References and Notes

Supporting Online Material
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References
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Sequential Establishment of Stripe Patterns in an Expanding Cell Population

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Periodic stripe patterns are ubiquitous in living organisms, yet the underlying developmental processes are complex and difficult to disentangle. We describe a synthetic genetic circuit that couples cell density and motility. This system enabled programmed Escherichia coli cells to form periodic stripes of high and low cell densities sequentially and autonomously. Theoretical and experimental analyses reveal that the spatial structure arises from a recurrent aggregation process at the front of the continuously expanding cell population. The number of stripes formed could be tuned by modulating the basal expression of a single gene. The results establish motility control as a simple route to establishing recurrent structures without requiring an extrinsic pacemaker.

Living organisms display an amazing array of regular spatial patterns (1–4). Traditionally, elucidation of their developmental mechanisms has been pursued through forward or reverse genetics (3, 5). However, essential components required for pattern formation and control are often buried in the overwhelmingly complex physiological context. Synthetic biology provides an engineering approach to examine strategies of pattern formation (6–8). Recently, efforts have been made to emulate patterning systems with preprogrammed positional cues (9, 10). These studies do not address spatial or temporal self-organization, which is key to morphogenesis. Indeed, coordinated cell movement in response to self-generated cues is important in embryonic development (11–13). Here, we investigate striking patterns that emerge in growing bacterial...
populations when cell motility is controlled by cell density, construed as one of the simplest examples of morphogenetic cues (14).

We constructed a genetic circuit to suppress the motility of *Escherichia coli* cells at high cell densities (Fig. 1A). The circuit is composed of two modules: a density-sensing module and a motility-control module (Fig. 1B). The quorum-sensing system in *Vibrio fischeri* was adopted as the density-sensing module to signal the local cell density. This system synthesizes and excretes a small-molecule acyl-homoserine lactone (AHL), which, at high extracellular concentrations (reflecting high cell density), accumulates intracellularly and activates a constitutively expressed regulator, LuxR (15). The motility-control module was devised to modify bacterial motility by regulating the transcription of cheZ. cheZ deletion causes cells to tumble incessantly, resulting in a nonmotile phenotype in semisolid agar (16). Reintroducing cheZ restores cell motility (17). In our circuit, coupling of the two modules was achieved via the lambda repressor (CI): The LuxR-AHL complex drove the expression of CI that in turn repressed cheZ transcription (Fig. 1B). On the basis of this design, we created an engineered strain, CL3 (18).

Gene expression of the strain CL3 at various cell densities was quantitatively characterized with quantitative reverse transcription–polymerase chain reaction (qRT-PCR). As designed, cheZ expression level (red) increased more than 40-fold as cell density increased, whereas cheZ expression (blue) decreased sharply to 5% of the peak level (Fig. 1C). Cell motility was measured in semisolid agar with a modified continuous fluorescence photobleaching (CPB) method (18). It dropped abruptly at a density of ~4 × 10^8 cells ml^{-1} (Fig. 1D, purple symbols).

When a suspension of exponentially growing CL3 cells was inoculated at the center of a 8.5-cm Petri dish containing 10 ml of LB medium and 0.25% agar, a pattern of alternating white (high cell density) and dark (low cell density) stripes developed overnight (Fig. 1E and movie S2). The stripes formed sequentially, at a spacing of ~0.5 cm once every ~2 hours. These stripes were stable for days until the agar completely dried up. As a control, strain CL4 (carrying the density-sensing module but with the native cheZ regulation) (18). Relative diffusion coefficient values are normalized by the mean value of CL3GFP at 0.4 × 10^8 cells ml^{-1}. Results are representative data from three independent experiments. Error bars represent the SD of three replicates. Time-lapsed photographs of typical patterns obtained for the engineered strain CL3 (E) and the control strain CL4 (F); see also movies S1 and S2. (G) Spatiotemporal diagram of (E). All experiments were carried out at 37°C. Scale bars, 1 cm.
We also surveyed the effect of nutrient content, agar thickness, humidity, starting cell number, volume, and growth phase, and found the pattern to be robust to most conditions tested (fig. S2). Notably, the stripe pattern persists even in cheR cheR double mutants incapable of chemotaxis (fig. S2J (19)) but still able to swim and tumble randomly, indicating that the stripes are not a result of chemotactic signaling (20). Also, no stripe pattern resulted if CL3 cells were spotted on agar premixed with a low level of CL3 cells in otherwise identical conditions (fig. S2K), indicating that the pattern is not a result of spontaneous amplification of density fluctuations, as would follow from the paradigm of Turing instability (21, 22).

We monitored the spatiotemporal cell density profiles from optical absorbance of the plates [fig. S3 and (18)]. Figure 1G displays the time course of light intensities along a diagonal that goes through the inoculum, with the color codes indicating the intensity as in Fig. 1E. It shows that once formed, the pattern of low and high cell densities was frozen in space. Furthermore, new stripes of high cell density emerged at regular time and distance intervals. The same phenomenon was observed in a rectangular geometry when bacterial growth was initiated along a thin line in the middle of the plate (18). Stripes developed and propagated toward the opposite edges for CL3 (fig. S4A and movie S3) but not for the wild type or CL4 cells. Fourier analysis revealed high spatial periodicity, with a wavelength of 0.5 cm (fig. S4B).

To gain a quantitative understanding of the patterning process, we developed a mathematical model based on the characterized properties of the engineered circuit (Fig. 2) (18). The stochastic swim-and-tumble motion of bacterial cells is described at the population level by a diffusion-like equation (Eq. S1) for the cell density $r(x, t)$. The synthesis, diffusion, and turnover of AHL are described by Eq. S2, while the consumption and diffusion of the nutrient $n(x, t)$ are described by Eq. S3. The AHL-dependent motility enters through a phenomenological diffusion coefficient $\mu(h)$ that drops abruptly where the local AHL concentration $h(x, t)$ exceeds a threshold level $K_\mu$ (Fig. 2A). Numerical simulations of Eqs. S1 to S3 (23) with realistic parameter values (table S3) (18) generated patterns similar to the experimental observations in both one- and two-dimensional geometries (figs. S5 and S20). The model also captures the more elaborate patterns formed by multiple seeding (fig. S6).

The mathematical model reveals an intriguing sequence of events at the propagating front (Fig. 2B and movie S4). Early on ($T = 150$ min), cell density (blue line) grows and propagates laterally just as the Fisher wave front (2) because the AHL concentration (red line) is uniformly below the threshold level $K_\mu$ (gray dashed line) due to the low initial cell density. A while later ($T = 300$ min), the AHL level exceeds the threshold in a region behind the front owing to local cell proliferation: There, a “bud” (marked by B) shoots up in the density profile. Meanwhile, the front (marked by F), which is unaffected by what happens behind because of its low density, continues to propagate laterally at the same speed. Later ($T = 450$ min), the bud in the density profile grows into a “mound” (marked by M), separated from the frontal region by a “clef” (marked by C). The continued cell proliferation in the region just behind the front drives up the AHL level and subsequently produces a new bud (B’ at $T = 600$ min), while the lateral movement of the mound and cleft eventually stops (M and C at $T = 600$ min). The new bud starts a new stripe of low-motility cells, which again expands into a mound (M’ at $T = 750$ min) delimited by a cleft (C’ at $T = 750$ min) from the propagating front, and the process repeats itself. Well behind the front, cell proliferation in both the mound and cleft eventually stops as the nutrient is depleted (height of green shade).

The development of a cleft that separates the propagating front from the dense zone of cells behind, and the budding within the frontal region, result from an aggregation phenomenon driven by density-dependent motility discussed in recent theoretical studies (21, 24) and illustrated in Fig. 3A. Cells can diffuse freely in semisolid agar when the cell density is low (top panel). As cells proliferate and the local AHL level exceeds the threshold, cell motility slows down as programmed (middle panel, with the nonmotile cells in teal). These cells cannot move away, but neighboring cells may continue to move into this high-density region and become nonmotile (bottom panel), leading to a net cell flow toward the high-density region.

Wild-type E. coli cells may aggregate when grown in specific poor-nutrient media owing to the secretion of potent chemotactic signals (25). To show that cell aggregation in our system is controlled by the synthetic circuit, we created two strains: the senders (CL6) that synthesize AHL but are nonmotile, and the receivers (CL8), capable of receiving AHL and regulating motility but incapable of AHL synthesis. The receiver cells expressing were spotted at the center of receiver-cell–agar mixture, followed by 12-hours’ incubation at 37°C. See (18) for details. (Upper panels) Strain CL8 (carrying the entire genetic circuit but lacking the AHL-producing gene) as receiver (movie S5). (Lower panels) Strain CL10 (CL8 lacking $cI$) as receiver. (Right panels) Fluorescence photographs indicate the positions of the sender cells.
were uniformly mixed with semisolid agar. Subsequently, a drop of sender cells was spotted at the center of the hardened cell-agar mixture. The non-motile sender cells could not move away from where they were spotted, but were expected to synthesize and excrete AHL as they proliferated at the center of the plate. After a 12-hour incubation, a high-density stripe of receiver cells aggregated around the spotted sender cells (Fig. 3B, upper panels, and movie S5). No aggregation was observed in a control with receiver cells incapable of reducing motility in response to high AHL concentration (CL10) (Fig. 3B, lower panels), or in other controls (fig. S7). Thus, an effective aggregation phenomenon was mediated by density-dependent motility.

Detailed analysis of the mathematical model indicates that the aggregation effect alone is not sufficient to generate stripes. Budding in the frontal region requires the AHL level to exhibit a local maximum, which can happen only when the diffusion length of AHL molecules is sufficiently short (so that the AHL profile closely follows the cell density profile) and the cleft in the cell density profile just behind the front is sufficiently deep. The latter is determined in turn by the parameters, such as the maximum cell motility (18, 26). A key output of the model is summarized by the phase diagram (Fig. 4A), which predicts that in addition to the periodic stripe phase, the engineered strain may exhibit a qualitatively different behavior with no stripes, by passing through a transition region exhibiting a limited number of stripes. A direct test of the occurrence of the phase transition predicted by the phase diagram (Fig. 4A) is to vary the maximum cell motility ($D_o$ in Fig. 2A), thereby changing the number of stripes. Within our experimental design in which motility is set by cheZ expression, tuning of $D_o$ can be implemented by adding a second $cI$ gene, whose expression is titratable in an AHL-independent manner (Fig. 4B). This is implemented in strain CLS (18). Figure 4C shows that the basal $cI$ expression level of CLS cells could indeed be smoothly tuned by adjusting the dosage of an inducer, anhydrotetracycline (aTc), at a fixed cell density (red symbols). Corresponding suppression of cheZ expression at low cell density was also observed (blue symbols). For a fixed aTc level, the density dependence of cheZ expression remained (fig. S8). When strain CLS was spotted at the center of semisolid agar, consistent with the model predictions, the number of stripes decreased gradually as the aTc concentration increased from 0.1 to 3.0 ng ml$^{-1}$ (Fig. 4D). As a control, the pattern of strain CL3 did not change even when the aTc concentration was increased to 100 ng ml$^{-1}$ (fig. S2G).

Natural occurrences of well-coordinated spatial and/or temporal patterns are abundant in developmental systems and are believed to involve elaborate control mechanisms (3, 5). Similarly, stripe formation in various bacterial systems (27–29) has been attributed to complex effects involving chemotaxis, swarming, and differentiation (4). Using synthetic circuits, we demonstrate that precise and robust spatiotemporal patterns can be generated autonomously from a very simple interaction—motility control by density. A recurrent mechanism enables structures to form periodically and sequentially. Important features of the pattern such as the number of stripes can be manipulated by tuning components of the circuit, such as the basal expression level of a single gene.

The strategy of sequential stripe formation is likely not limited to cellular motility control. In the kinetic equations S1 to S3 that generated the stripe patterns, the cell density $c(x, t)$ is merely an example of a space- and time-dependent variable. Another example could be the concentration of a diffusible molecule, which stimulates its own synthesis to mimic the effect of "cell growth." Thus, Eqs. 1 to 3 may be taken as a generalized reaction-diffusion system with the key feature that the mobility or transport of one of the regulators between adjacent cells is regulated by another mobile regulator. As regulated mobility of signaling molecules is a common strategy in metazoan development (30, 31), the lessons from this work may stimulate new insights and inspire new directions in the studies of developmental systems. For example, the sequential establishment of a periodic somite structure during vertebrate embryonic development is commonly assumed to be controlled by an enabling clock coupled to a sweeping morphogen gradient (32). Our results suggest that a spatially periodic structure can be formed autonomously without the need for a clock.

References and Notes

18. Materials and methods are available as supporting material on Science Online.

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Supporting Online Material

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Methods

SOM Text

Table S1 to S3

References (32–63)

Movies S1 to S5

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