

1 ***PIN* transcriptional regulation shapes root system architecture**

2 Julien Lavenus¹, Soazig Guyomarc'h² and Laurent Laplaze^{3,4,5}

3 ¹ Institute of Plant Sciences, University of Bern, Altenbergrain 21, 3013 Bern,
4 Switzerland

5 ²Université de Montpellier, UMR Diversité Adaptation et Développement des plantes
6 (DIADE), 911 Avenue Agropolis, 34394 Montpellier cedex 5, France

7 ³Institut de Recherche pour le Développement, UMR Diversité Adaptation et
8 Développement des plantes (DIADE), 911 Avenue Agropolis, 34394 Montpellier cedex 5,
9 France

10 ⁴Laboratoire mixte international Adaptation des Plantes et microorganismes associés
11 aux Stress Environnementaux (LAPSE), Centre de Recherche de Bel Air, BP 1386, Dakar,
12 Senegal

13 ⁵Laboratoire Commun de Microbiologie IRD/ISRA/UCAD, Centre de Recherche de Bel
14 Air, BP 1386, Dakar, Senegal

15 *Corresponding author:* Laplaze L. (Laurent.laplaze@ird.fr)

16 **Abstract**

17 Regulation of auxin distribution by PIN transporters is key in the dynamic modulation
18 of root growth and branching. Three novel papers shed light on an intricate network
19 through which several hormones and transcriptional regulators collectively fine-tune
20 the transcriptional level of these auxin transporters in the root.

21

22 **Main text**

23 Root system fulfils major nutritional and mechanical functions, and the dynamic
24 elaboration of its architecture is paramount to its efficiency and to plant adaptation to
25 environmental constraints [1]. Root system architecture results from three parameters:
26 branching rate, growth rate, and growth orientation, especially in response to gravity.
27 Two phytohormones, auxin and cytokinins, predominantly modulate these three
28 processes through a complex network of interactions [2,3]. Polar auxin transport
29 controlled by the plasma membrane-localized PIN-FORMED (PIN) family of auxin efflux
30 carriers regulates root tropism and branching. The dynamic modulation of *PIN*
31 expression and polar distribution produces auxin-signalling gradients that act as
32 positional information coordinating cell behaviour at the tissue scale [4]. So far, the
33 regulation of PIN polar distribution received most attention [5]. Three novel papers
34 [6,7,8] shed light on the gene regulatory network that fine-tunes the transcriptional
35 level of PINs in roots to modulate root system architecture (Figure 1).

36 Auxins and cytokinins are prominent players in the complex hormonal cross-talk
37 regulating plant cell behaviour. Transcriptional gene regulation by cytokinins is
38 mediated by two families of transcription factors, namely the type-B ARABIDOPSIS

39 RESPONSE REGULATORS (ARRs) and the CYTOKININ RESPONSE FACTORS (CRFs) [3].
40 The report by Šimášková *et al.* [7] reveals that cytokinins induce *PIN* expression
41 through the CRFs to modulate root system architecture. A promoter deletion identified
42 domains in the promoters of *PIN7* and *PIN1* called PCRE7 and PCRE1 respectively,
43 responsible for their cytokinin-inducibility. A yeast one-hybrid (Y1H) screen using
44 PCRE7 as a DNA-bait, combined with chromatin immunoprecipitation quantitative PCR
45 (ChIP-qPCR) and a protoplast-based luciferase assay demonstrate that the CRF2 and
46 CRF6 transcription factors are positive regulators of *PIN7* and *PIN1* expression.
47 Although CRF3 is able to bind to the PCRE7 fragment, it does not alter its transcription,
48 but might compete with other CRF factors when co-expressed. An analysis of *PIN7* and
49 *PIN1* expression in gain-of-function and loss-of-function *crf* mutants confirms the
50 relevance of these interactions *in planta*, although the resulting phenotypes suggest
51 complex interactions are at work. The triple *crf2,3,6* mutant phenocopies auxin
52 transport defective mutants confirming that PINs are targets of these transcription
53 factors. Hence, this study reveals for the first time the transcriptional complex that
54 directly control PIN transcription in response to cytokinins and could fine tune root
55 development in response to environmental signals.

56 Gravitropism relies on gravity perception in the root tip by columella cells that strongly
57 express *PIN3* and *PIN7* and redistribute shoot-derived auxin sideward to the
58 neighbouring lateral root cap cells [9]. Upon gravistimulation, *PIN3* and *PIN7* re-localize
59 to the lower cell membranes thus increasing auxin fluxes to the lower side of the root
60 and causing differential growth in the elongation zone and reorientation of the root
61 toward the gravity vector. Importantly, this mechanism of gravity-directed root tropism
62 through PIN-mediated auxin redistribution differs in lateral roots since *PIN3* is not

63 expressed from mature lateral root columella cells. In their study, Wang *et al.* [8]
64 identify two novel regulators of *PIN3* and *PIN7* involved in root gravitropism, The *flp-1*
65 loss-of-function mutant displays a decreased gravitropic response in the primary root
66 and an increased response in young LR, whereas in the *myb88* mutant background, only
67 mature LR showed an increased gravitropic response. *FOUR LIPS (FLP/MYB124)* and
68 *MYB88*, encode closely related MYB transcription factors acting together during
69 stomatal development. These two genes are also expressed in roots: *FLP* is expressed in
70 the primary root columella cells and in the tip of young LR, whereas *MYB88* is expressed
71 exclusively in the tip of mature LR. However, both *FLP* and *MYB88* are able to rescue the
72 *flp-1* primary root gravitropic defects when expressed under the control of the *FLP*
73 promoter, indicating that they share common targets. Y1H, ChIP-qPCR and
74 electrophoretic mobility shift assays (EMSA) indicate that *PIN3* and *PIN7* are direct
75 targets of *FLP* and *MYB88*. Although *PIN3* and *PIN7* are both involved in root
76 gravitropism, their expression patterns differ in primary and lateral roots. Expression
77 and genetic complementation analyses indicate that *FLP* predominantly controls *PIN3*
78 and *PIN7* expression in the primary root tip and in young LRs, whereas *MYB88* controls
79 *PIN7* expression in mature LRs. How these molecular pathways precisely fit into the
80 regulation of gravitropism in primary and lateral roots remains to be elucidated.
81 Importantly, although changes on overall *PIN3* expression was not detected upon
82 gravistimulation, *FLP* was shown to be required for auxin-mediated enhancement of
83 *PIN3* expression in the primary root.

84 Another study by Chen *et al.* [6] reports the regulation of *PIN3* by *FLP* in early stages of
85 LR development. In *Arabidopsis*, LRs initiate from xylem-pole pericycle cells some of
86 which are primed in the basal meristem to become LR founder cells [10]. Auxin

87 accumulation in LR founder cells triggers asymmetric divisions through an AUXIN
88 RESPONSE FACTOR 7 (ARF7)- dependent auxin-signalling pathway to generate a stage I
89 LR primordium [10]. Chen *et al.* [6] identify FLP as a direct target of ARF7. The *flp* loss-
90 of-function mutant shows a reduced number of lateral roots, and this phenotype is
91 enhanced in *flp myb88* double mutant. A more detailed analysis revealed that this
92 phenotype is not due to a defect in pericycle cells priming (founder cells formation
93 marked by *DR5-GFP* expression), but rather to a defect in lateral root initiation
94 (indicated by the asymmetric division of founder cells). Genetic analyses indicate that
95 *PIN3* and *FLP/MYB88* act in the same pathway. Indeed, the authors confirmed that *PIN3*
96 is a direct target of both ARF7 and FLP, and these three factors are co-expressed in stage
97 I LR primordia. Complementation of the *pin3* mutant by *PIN3* expression under the *PIN3*
98 promoter featuring either wild-type or mutated ARF7 and FLP binding sites further
99 demonstrate that *PIN3* regulation by ARF7 and FLP are both functionally important for
100 LR formation. Mathematical modelling suggests that this coherent feed-forward loop
101 topology could maintain a high level of *PIN3* expression after auxin level drops. In other
102 words, this particular topology could help LR founder cells reach a critical auxin level
103 threshold to induce lateral root initiation. However, previous studies have shown that
104 *PIN3* role during LRI is dependent on its expression in the endodermis rather than in
105 the pericycle [11]. As FLP does not seem to be expressed in the endodermis [6], it raises
106 the question of the origin of the LR initiation phenotype of the *flp* mutant and the
107 regulatory network controlling *PIN3* expression in the endodermis remains to be
108 identified.

109 In conclusion, these three recent studies identify several major transcriptional
110 regulators of *PIN* genes expression downstream of auxin and cytokinins in the root.

111 Together, they shed light on the complex integration of several cues to fine-tune a
112 common output, the transcriptional level of auxin-transport PIN proteins, to regulate
113 root system architecture. Additional levels of crosstalk are still waiting to be unravelled,
114 such as, for example, the auxin-inducibility of FLP expression. Systems biology
115 approaches will help to integrate these data and analyze the emerging properties of
116 such an intricate network.

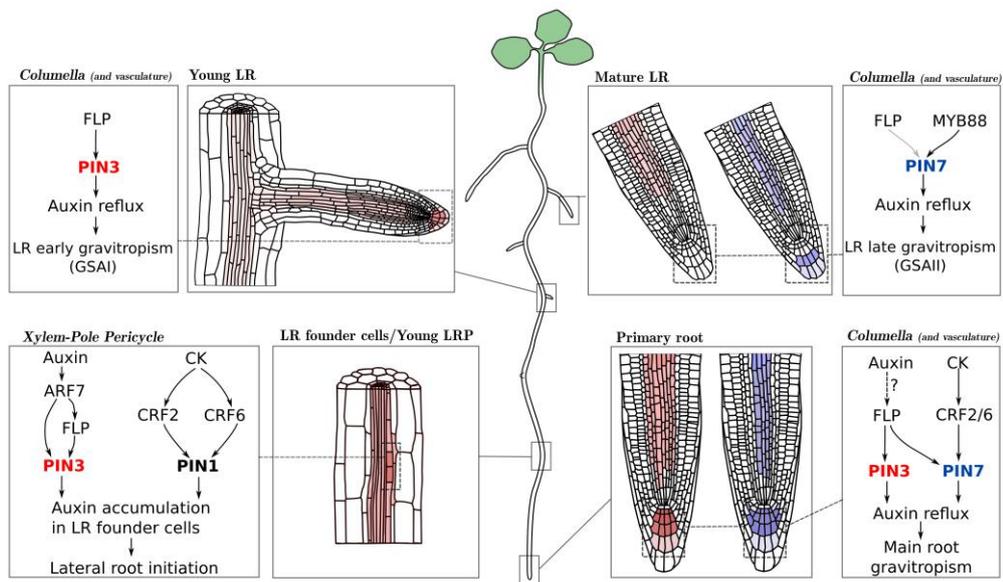
Kommentar [11]: ? FLP est une cible direct de ARF7 d'après Chen et al.

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 143 Figure 1. Transcriptional Regulation of PIN Genes in the Root Tip and Lateral Root
 144 Primordia in *Arabidopsis thaliana*. Red colour indicates PIN3 expression while blue
 145 colour corresponds PIN7 expression.