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Trafficking routes to the Plant Vacuole: connecting alternative and classical pathways.

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running title: *Alternative pathways to the vacuole.*

Highlights: Recent discoveries have found uncharacterised trafficking pathways to the plant vacuole. Soon, these alternative routes might become classical routes. This review aims at summarising our general understanding in this field.

Abstract

Due to the numerous roles plant vacuoles play in cell homeostasis, detoxification and protein storage, the trafficking pathways to this organelle have been extensively studied. Recent evidence however suggests that our vision of transport to the vacuole is not as simple as previously imagined. Alternative routes have been identified and are being characterised. Intricate interconnections between routes seem to occur in various cases, complicating the interpretation of data. In this review, we aim to summarise the published evidence and linking the emerging data with previous findings. We give the current state of information on alternative and classical trafficking routes to the Plant vacuole.

32 **Key words:** Alternative routes, Membrane protein, Multivesicular bodies, Protein sorting,
33 Trafficking pathways, Vacuole, VSR,

34

35 **Abbreviations:** VSR (Vacuolar Sorting Receptor), MVB (MultiVesicular Bodies), PVC
36 (PreVacuolar Compartment), LPVC (Late PreVacuolar Compartment), ER (endoplasmic
37 reticulum), AP (Adaptor Complex), PSV (Protein Storage Vacuole), DVs (Dense Vesicles),
38 PAC (Precursor Accumulating Vesicles), PB (Protein Bodies).

39

40 **Introduction:**

41 Describing vacuolar sorting mechanisms is a difficult task especially because
42 vacuolar organization is far from well understood. The topic is often associated with the
43 trafficking of vacuolar sorting receptors but some vacuolar proteins, in particular membrane
44 proteins, escape this association. This review summarizes recent advances in vacuolar sorting
45 characterization, highlighting the knowledge gaps.

46

47 [1. CLASSICAL ROUTE TO THE VACUOLE: VSR as a model](#)

48

49 **1a. Vacuolar sorting receptors.**

50 Transport of soluble vacuolar cargo to the vacuole is commonly described using the
51 conventional pathway involving Vacuolar Sorting Receptor (VSR) (De Marcos Lousa *et al.*,
52 2012). Plant VSRs are type I transmembrane proteins which appear to have evolved
53 independently from the widespread sortilin/vps10 class of receptors and the mammalian
54 mannose 6 phosphate receptor family (de Marcos Lousa and Denecke, 2016). VSRs are
55 typically found in plants including green algae as well as the supergroup of Stramenopiles,
56 Alveolates and Rhizaria (SAR). Similar to the other two classes, VSRs bind and release cargo
57 with their large luminal domains whilst their cytosolic C-terminus controls the trafficking of
58 the receptor to and from prevacuoles.

59 Although the C-terminal part of VSRs has been well studied and motifs important for
60 trafficking of the receptor have been identified (see below), the characteristics of N-terminal
61 luminal domain of VSRs are still unclear. The interaction between vacuolar cargo and the
62 receptor is affected by calcium concentrations, oxidising conditions and pH *in vitro*.
63 Experimental evidence to support their relevance *in vivo* however remains to be established.
64 The luminal domain of VSRs has been shown to bind to a specific NPIR motif found in the N-

65 terminus of many soluble vacuolar cargo. In addition to this NPIR motif, different sorting
66 signals, such as C-terminal and internal motifs, were also found in various other types of
67 soluble cargo. Therefore, the VSR luminal domain can recognise a range of vacuolar sorting
68 signals, all of which have yet to be identified. To understand the mechanism of cargo-receptor
69 interaction, elucidation of the crystal structure of the luminal domain of VSR1 was attempted
70 after overexpression in bacteria (Luo et al., 2014). It revealed a folding mechanism between
71 two sub-domains, triggered by ligand binding. Despite identifying some important amino
72 acids, only a portion of the luminal domain has been crystallised, unfortunately missing the
73 real binding site of the NPIR motif. Therefore, further investigation is still needed to
74 understand the real mechanism allowing the VSR luminal domain to bind a diversity of
75 vacuolar cargoes. One possibility would be that various vacuolar cargo are transported by
76 different isoforms of VSRs. Indeed, seven isoforms have been identified in *A.thaliana* which
77 have been classified in three groups. While group 1 and 2 can complement each-other in
78 knockout mutants, group 3 appears to be different (Zouhar et al., 2010) and could possibly
79 represent receptors for new types of vacuolar cargo.

80 Efforts to understand the trafficking of vacuolar receptors, rather than the binding to
81 the cargo, have been much more conclusive. Many studies have led to the identification of two
82 major signals in the cytosolic tail of vacuolar sorting receptors the YxxΦ motif and the
83 dileucine motif (Braulte and Bonifacino, 2009; de Marcos Lousa and Denecke, 2016).
84 Surprisingly, despite the structural differences between plant, yeast and mammalian
85 homologous lysosomal/vacuolar receptors, these two motifs are well conserved across these
86 organisms (de Marcos Lousa et al., 2016). The YxxΦ motif is mostly based on the presence
87 of a tyrosine residue and a hydrophobic residue in position +3 of the tyrosine, both of which
88 are essential for anterograde trafficking of lysosomal/vacuolar receptors to the prevacuolar
89 compartment (PVC) (daSilva *et al.*, 2006). However, in plant VSRs, the hydrophobic residue
90 (in this case a leucine in the YMPL motif of plant receptors) has a dominant role in retrograde
91 trafficking to rescue VSRs from degradation in the vacuole (Foresti *et al.*, 2010). Indeed, a
92 leucine mutant of VSR2 is still able to traffic to the late compartments (anterograde
93 trafficking), but is unable to recycle and thus reaches a more distal compartment (termed late
94 prevacuole or LPVC) as well as the central vacuole itself (Foresti *et al.*, 2010). Although this
95 does not exclude a minor role in anterograde trafficking, it demonstrates that anterograde and
96 retrograde trafficking are controlled by different machineries that are connected by at least one
97 motif YxxΦ.

98 Until now, the function of the N-terminal (luminal) and C-terminal (tail) domains of VSRs
99 have been studied independently and the signal transduction between the two domains remains
100 elusive. It is not clear how the binding of cargo to the N-terminal domain of VSRs triggers the
101 trafficking cycle of VSRs from early to late compartments. Dimerisation of the receptors has
102 been proposed to be a prerequisite for the trafficking of VSRs but not for binding to the cargo
103 (Kim *et al.*, 2010). This suggests that cargo binding might lead to a dimerization of the receptor
104 which would be the signal for VSRs to start trafficking. Although this represents an attractive
105 hypothesis, evidence shows that fluorescent fusions devoid of a luminal VSR domain can still
106 complete a full VSR transport cycle, indicating that the tail may exhibit an autonomous
107 function in trafficking. Therefore, it is still unclear whether VSRs continuously traffic between
108 early and late organelles, or if binding to vacuolar cargo is required prior to trafficking being
109 initiated. Despite this uncertainty, studying the C-terminal tail of VSR has shed light on
110 specific events of transport cycle that can now be mapped, as outlined below.

111

112

113 **1b. Stage 1: early steps of transport to the vacuole**

114 The classical route to the vacuole involves binding of the soluble cargo in early compartments
115 and release in late compartments. Upon cargo release, the receptors are recycled to early
116 compartments for a new round of binding while vacuolar cargo proceeds to the vacuole.

117 At early stages, VSRs are transported from the ER to the Golgi in a COPII-dependent route, as
118 VSR trafficking can be inhibited by a GTP-restricted mutant of Sar1 (H71L) or overexpression
119 of the guanine nucleotide exchange factor Sec12, both indicative of a canonical COPII-
120 mediated ER to Golgi transport (Gershlick *et al.*, 2014).

121 Despite this simple model being established and accepted, the compartment where VSRs bind
122 their cargo is still controversial. Due to the accumulation of proteins in ER protein bodies, it
123 was first assumed that receptors start their journey by binding their cargo in the ER. In
124 agreement with this hypothesis, a trapped VSR luminal domain fused to an ER retention signal
125 can also retain vacuolar cargo in the ER (Watanabe *et al.*, 2004; daSilva *et al.*, 2005; Niemes
126 *et al.*, 2010a). However, since ER retention signals are thought to be retrieval signals capturing
127 proteins from the Golgi cisternae (Pelham *et al.*, 1988), VSR-ligand binding could either occur
128 in the ER, the Golgi or in both compartments. Recent experiments suggest that sorting occurs
129 mostly in the Golgi cisternae (Gershlick *et al.*, 2014). When a vacuolar sorting signal and an
130 ER retention signal were placed on two different cargo molecules, the fusion proteins were

131 partially found in the ER and in the vacuole and the function of both signals was compromised.
132 This can only be explained by the presence of mutually exclusive binding to either vacuolar
133 and ER receptors (VSR or ERD2) in the same compartment. Most likely, the cis-Golgi would
134 be a good candidate as HDEL-cargo can also be detected in this compartment in electron
135 microscopy (Phillipson *et al.*, 2001). However the results do not rule out that low affinity
136 ligand-VSR binding might be happening in the ER lumen (Künzl *et al.*, 2016). A recent report
137 showing that glycosylation of the VSR luminal domain is crucial for cargo-receptor interaction
138 (Shen *et al.*, 2014) adds to the growing list of conditions that affect ligand-binding, but it is
139 unclear how glycans contribute to the binding pocket of the receptor.

140

141

142 **1c. Stage 2: Trafficking from post-golgi organelles.**

143 There is currently great uncertainty and disagreement in the field about how VSRs proceed
144 after ligand-binding. Results obtained from VSR sorting mutants strongly suggest that ligand-
145 release takes place at the PVC, from which receptors recycle whilst cargo moves on to the
146 LPVC which is a mature version of PVC depleted for VSRs (Foresti *et al.*, 2010). However,
147 the route taken to and from the PVC is subject to debate. The involvement of the TGN (*trans*-
148 Golgi network) and the PVC in vacuolar sorting have been discussed at various levels and two
149 models have been proposed (discussed in Kang and Hwang, 2014).

150 One model suggests that VSRs are selectively recruited at the TGN via AP-1 and AP-
151 4 complexes and this would depend on the presence of the Yxx Φ motif. This is supported by
152 various evidence including *ap-1* and *ap-4* knockouts affecting vacuolar sorting as well as the
153 VSR tyrosine mutant (in the Yxx Φ motif) being unable to traffic in the TGN (Foresti *et al.*,
154 2010). In addition, direct interaction between VSR tails and both AP-1 and AP-4 mu subunits
155 has been shown (Oliviusson *et al.*, 2006; Gershlick *et al.*, 2014; Nishimura *et al.*, 2016).
156 Therefore, the first model suggests that VSR molecules are transported from the TGN to the
157 PVC via clathrin coated vesicles using AP-1/AP-4 adaptor complexes (Fuji *et al.*, 2016). In the
158 PVC, VSR and cargo dissociate and VSR recycle to earlier compartments via the retromer
159 complex. Further supporting this model, Vps29 recycling mutants accumulate VSRs in the
160 PVC (Kang *et al.*, 2012). The recycling stages of VSRs appear to be limiting steps of the
161 trafficking cycle, as VSRs accumulate in the PVC at steady state (daSilva *et al.*, 2005;
162 Oliviusson *et al.*, 2006; Shen *et al.*, 2014).

163 The alternative model proposes that VSRs steady state is found at the TGN instead of
164 the PVC (Niemes *et al.*, 2010b). In this model, only the cargo proceeds to post TGN organelles
165 whilst the receptor is recycled at the TGN (Niemes *et al.*, 2010b; Künzl *et al.*, 2016). This
166 cargo transport is mediated by maturation of the TGN into the PVC and therefore excludes
167 active transport of vacuolar proteins (both cargo and receptor) from the TGN. To support this
168 model, retromer components such as sorting nexins were found to be located at the TGN
169 instead of the PVC in tobacco protoplasts (Niemes *et al.*, 2010; Scheuring *et al.*, 2011; Stierhof
170 *et al.*, 2013). Additionally, using FRET-FLIM experiments with nanobody epitope interaction,
171 VSRs were found to bind the cargo only in the ER and Golgi, but not in post-Golgi organelles
172 (Künzl *et al.*, 2016). Despite its attractiveness, the model cannot explain the segregation of
173 secretory bulk flow of soluble proteins from that of soluble vacuolar proteins (Dorel *et al.*,
174 1989; Denecke *et al.*, 1990), and neither does it give a role for AP complexes in vacuolar
175 trafficking. Finally, the effect of selective VSR tail mutants in the YxxΦ motif can also not be
176 explained using this model.

177 Discrepancy between these two models could reflect the use of various models
178 (knockout in *A.thaliana* vs overexpression in Tobacco protoplast...) but nevertheless requires
179 further investigation to establish the so-called vacuolar trafficking pathway.

180

181 **1d. Stage 3: fusion with the vacuole : LPVC and vacuolinos and other small vacuoles.**

182 Whether VSRs reach the PVC or not (model I or II respectively), vacuolar cargo do
183 reach the prevacuolar compartment and are delivered to the vacuole by fusion with this
184 compartment. The mechanism of fusion involves a cascade of Rab5 and Rab7 GTPases (Cui
185 *et al.*, 2014; Singh *et al.*, 2014). Interestingly, growing evidence shows that fluorescent
186 vacuolar cargo accumulates in discrete punctate structures prior to fusion with the vacuole.
187 Their visualisation can be enhanced using a Rab7NI mutant, demonstrating that fusion of these
188 structures to the vacuole is dependent on an active Rab7GTPase (Bottanelli *et al.*, 2012). In
189 normal conditions, comparable structures have been seen upon expression of Aleurain-GFP
190 marker in *A.thaliana* roots (Fluckiger *et al.*, 2003; Jaillais and Gaude, 2007; Gendre *et al.*,
191 2011), *Arabidospis* protoplasts (Miao *et al.*, 2008) as well as tobacco protoplasts (Scheuring *et*
192 *al.*, 2012). Initially, these structures were described as colocalising with markers of the
193 PVC/MVBs such as VSR2 and SNX1 and sensitive to wortmanin and overexpression of
194 Ara7QL (Jaillais *et al.*, 2007; Miao *et al.*, 2008; Jia *et al.*, 2013). However, by refining the
195 analysis using weak expression of similar markers, these structures were found to label the

196 LPVC (Foresti *et al.*, 2010). In contrast to the classical PVC that is enriched in VSRs
197 (schematic 1), the LPVC is depleted in VSRs but enriched in Rab5 small GTPases. Weak
198 expression of organelle markers are essential to visualise the LPVC as their overexpression
199 lead to organelle fusion events similar to those observed upon treatment with wortmannin or
200 expression of constitutively active mutant Ara7QL (Bottanelli *et al.*, 2012; Jia *et al.*, 2013).
201 Most studies however use strong promoters to express and visualise these organelle markers,
202 which results in mislabelling organelles. Therefore, establishing lines that express PVC and
203 LPVC markers at low levels will allow distinction between these two organelles (PVC and
204 LPVCs) in current models, leading to meaningful conclusions on vacuolar sorting pathways.

205

206 The existence of this new organelle is not trivial as it sheds light on the late steps of vacuolar
207 delivery. The LPVC is formed by selective retrieval of VSRs from the PVC and accumulation
208 of cargo molecules. Consistent with this hypothesis, a VSR recycling defective mutant in the
209 YxxΦ motif of VSRs (L615A) is now found to accumulate in the LPVC instead of the PVC
210 (Foresti *et al.*, 2010). Interestingly, the presence of PVC and LPVC organelles is comparable
211 to early endosome (EE) and late endosomes (LE) described for the mammalian lysosomal field
212 and would be consistent with a cascade of Rab5-Rab7 progressing from the PVC to the LPVC
213 before fusing to the vacuole. This model is not without challenges as it is unclear how
214 membranes would be recycled from the central vacuole and how new PVCs would be
215 replenished after they mature into LPVCs. The mechanisms of vacuolar fusion seem to be more
216 complex than expected and the role of the LPVC as an intermediate organelle between the PVC
217 and the vacuole needs to be further evaluated.

218 Other types of punctate structures accumulating vacuolar cargo have been described in
219 petunia petal epidermis. These structures accumulating Aleu-GFP are completely separated
220 from the anthocyanins-rich central vacuole and do not share markers with the tonoplast
221 (Verweij *et al.*, 2008; Faraco *et al.*, 2017). Due to their resemblance with small vacuoles, the
222 name “vacuolinos” has been proposed (Faraco *et al.*, 2017). Further investigation has shown
223 that the trafficking of tonoplast localised PH1-PH5 pumps transit through the vacuolinos in a
224 SNARE dependent pathway (Faraco *et al.*, 2014; 2017). In contrast, before reaching the
225 vacuole, a-, d- and g- TIPs from Arabidopsis or Petunia accumulate in similar structures which
226 are distinct from vacuolinos and CV. These observations, together with additional data using a
227 collection of mutants affecting biogenesis and fusion of vacuolinos, have led the authors to
228 propose the existence of multiple vacuoles in a single cell (Faraco *et al.*, 2017). This hypothesis

229 is supported by the identification of individual markers for each type of vacuole (vacuolinos,
230 CV and PSV). Although vacuolinos are confined to Petunia petal epidermis, the co-existence
231 of different types of vacuoles in a single cell has been speculated by many and represents a
232 future path worth investigating.

233

234

235 2. GOLGI to VACUOLE TRAFFICKING PATHWAY (Golgi-DEPENDENT ROUTE).

236

237 The classical view described above, with VSR as a model, is still considered as the only or
238 major route for delivering vacuolar proteins. But this has been somewhat challenged by a
239 growing number of reports describing alternative routes to the vacuole. In the following
240 paragraphs, we will give an overview of various alternative pathways that are starting to
241 emerge for vacuolar transport routes.

242

243 **2a. The case of AP-3**

244 AP-3 is an adaptor complex similar to AP-1 and AP-4. In yeast, the AP-3 dependent pathway
245 to the vacuole was first described 20 years ago. It is known as the ALP (alkaline phosphatase
246 pathway) pathway, as opposed to the classical CPY (carboxypeptidase) pathway (Valls *et al.*,
247 1990; van Voorst *et al.*, 1996; Cowles *et al.*, 1997; Jørgensen *et al.*, 1999). Despite using
248 similar proteins, the two pathways have been shown to be independent as the inhibition of the
249 ALP pathway affects ALP transport without affecting the transport of CPY (Cowles *et al.*,
250 1997). In mammalian cells, the AP-3 pathway has also been very well described and is involved
251 in transport to the lysosome or related organelles, such as the melanosome and platelet dense
252 granules or lytic granules. Mutation in the AP-3 complex leads to relocation of lysosomal
253 proteins and genetic disorder (Dell'Angelica *et al.*, 1997; Nakatsu *et al.*, 2004; Assoum *et al.*,
254 2016).

255 In both yeast and mammals, AP-3 has an established role in transport of specific
256 vacuolar/lysosomal proteins directly from the Golgi, therefore bypassing the post-golgi
257 organelles (Rous *et al.*, 2002; Reusch *et al.*, 2002; Bowers and Stevens, 2005; Feraru *et al.*,
258 2010). Yet, in plants, a role for AP-3 in vacuolar sorting is only starting to emerge.

259 In Arabidopsis, the localisation of AP-3 is still unclear. AP-3 β subunit was found to be
260 mostly cytosolic with discrete punctate structures, rarely localising with endomembranes
261 (Feraru *et al.*, 2010). Although these structures have not been identified, Lee et al (2007) have

262 demonstrated that AP-3 interacts with two TGN proteins, VTI12 and EPSIN2. Therefore it
263 would appear that AP-3 could be localising partially at the TGN, similarly to yeast and
264 mammals where AP-3 and AP-1 colocalise on the same membranes but on distinct regions of
265 *trans*-Golgi network or recycling endosomes (Cowles *et al.*, 1997; Odorizzi *et al.*, 1998; Peden
266 *et al.*, 2004). Likewise, we would expect AP-3 to localise and act at the level of the TGN in
267 plants, similarly to AP-1 and AP-4. Yet, this hypothesis is questioned by the finding that in
268 *AP-3 β* mutants, SUC4 (a sucrose transporter) was arrested in the Golgi rather than in the TGN
269 (Wolfenstetter *et al.*, 2012), suggesting that in plants, AP-3 could also be involved in a direct
270 route from the Golgi to the Vacuole.

271 Despite this uncertainty on AP-3 localisation in plants, the role of AP-3 in vacuolar
272 transport is established as an alternative pathway to the classical AP-1/AP-4 pathway. Various
273 evidence suggests that transported substrates are different for these two routes.

274 While AP-3 does not seem to interact with VSR2, as shown with a yeast two hybrid experiment
275 (Gershlick *et al.*, 2014), *AP-3 β* knock-out mutant mistarget membrane proteins such as
276 vacuolar invertase, PIN1, PIN2, BRI1, plasma membrane aquaporin and ATPases or
277 membrane proteins essential for lytic vacuole biogenesis (Feraru *et al.*, 2010; Zwiewka *et al.*,
278 2011; Pertl-Obermeyer *et al.*, 2016). While storage protein delivery is not affected in this
279 mutant' seeds, the transition from PSV to lytic vacuole was compromised with enlargement of
280 RabF2b/Ara7 positive compartments (Feraru *et al.*, 2010). Therefore, it appears that AP-3
281 could act in parallel to the classical pathway with a double function: the rapid delivery of
282 essential proteins for the biogenesis of the vacuole (mostly membrane proteins) and the
283 recycling of plasma membrane proteins such as PINs. An interplay between the AP-1/AP-4
284 route and the AP-3 route cannot be excluded, as it has already been shown in mammalian cells
285 (Hirst *et al.*, 2012). In agreement with this, signals such as Yxx Φ motif and dileucine motifs
286 involved in the classical pathway, seem to also be recognised by the AP-3 pathway in
287 mammals. Although this has not yet been tested in plants yet, similar evidence could explain
288 an overlap between the two pathways in plants. Nevertheless, other unidentified signals should
289 be present on cargo proteins to selectively recruit membrane protein cargos to AP-3
290 subdomains, separate from the AP-1/AP-4 subdomains. Finally, a putative receptor for
291 unconventional soluble vacuolar cargo using the AP-3 pathway still awaits identification.

292

293 **2b. Transport from Golgi to the vacuole: Dense Vesicles**

294 Several pathways connecting the ER or even the Golgi directly to the vacuole seem to usually
295 share a common trait: they all use electron dense vesicles. This characteristic has given its
296 name to Dense Vesicles (DVs) as seen by electron microscopy in pea cotyledons (Hohl *et al.*,
297 1996), and this was later confirmed with density gradients (Hinz *et al.*, 1999a). Dense vesicles
298 are slightly bigger than clathrin coated vesicles (average of 130 nm compared to around 60 nm
299 (Dhonukshe *et al.*, 2007) and appear to mature from the side of the cis-Golgi to the trans-Golgi
300 where they bud off. They accumulate specific storage proteins, such as prolamins and globulins
301 (vicilin and legumin), and sucrose binding protein (SBP) (Craig *et al.*, 1979; Hohl *et al.*, 1996;
302 Wenzel *et al.*, 2005; Robinson *et al.*, 2005). In addition, they seem to be devoid of BP80/VSRs
303 but contain RMRs, putative vacuolar receptors (Hinz *et al.*, 1999a, 2007; Hillmer *et al.*, 2001).
304 The mechanism by which DVs fuse to the PSV (protein storage vacuole) remains elusive
305 (Vitale and Raikhel, 1999). It was suggested that DVs fuse directly with the PSV (Herman and
306 Larkins, 1999a; Liu *et al.*, 2013). However DVs in rice endosperm were found to fuse to
307 different types of prevacuolar compartments before fusing with the PSVs (Shen *et al.*, 2011).
308 These prevacuolar compartments contain RMRs due to the fusion with DVs, but are not
309 labelled with VSRs. Moreover, as in the classical pathway, fusion of DVs with PSVs depend
310 on Rab5 proteins (Fukuda *et al.*, 2013; Liu *et al.*, 2013). In agreement with this, Wang and
311 collaborators have reported that, in late stages of bean cotyledon development, globulin 8s is
312 found in DVs and also in novel forms of partitioned MVBs with one side packed with storage
313 proteins and the other packed with internal vesicles (Wang *et al.*, 2012). Again, these
314 partitioned MVBs were labelled with Rha1, but the authors have not investigated the role of
315 this protein.

316 In the light of this evidence, DVs represent an alternative pathway for proteins destined for the
317 vacuole. Although the fate of DVs still requires further investigation, the similarities between
318 DVs and LPVCs are intriguing. Indeed, the LPVC was defined in tobacco transgenics as
319 enriched in Soluble vacuolar proteins, depleted in vacuolar receptors and labelled by Rab5
320 GTPases, characteristics similar to DVs (Foresti *et al.*, 2010). Growing evidence also show an
321 increasing interconnection between MVBs and DVs in rice (Shen *et al.*, 2011; Liu *et al.*, 2013).
322 Hence, the link between LPVC and DVs could represent a new point of convergence leading
323 to the merge of the lytic and storage protein trafficking pathways before fusion to the vacuole
324 (Figure 1). Various reports give indication in favour of this statement. Indeed, while DVs have
325 been reported to pack storage proteins at level of the Cis-Golgi, they were reported as partially
326 coated with clathrin after progressing to the trans-Golgi network (von Lüpke *et al.*, 2008).

327 Additionally, Aleurain, which predominantly binds to VSR and traffics through the classical
328 pathway, could also be detected in DVs (Hinz *et al.*, 2007). All this evidence suggests that
329 pathways to the vacuole are flexible and interconnected and views on a strict segregation
330 between lytic and storage vacuolar trafficking pathways might have to be reconsidered (Jiang
331 *et al.*, 2002).

332

333 3. ER - VACUOLE TRAFFICKING PATHWAY (Golgi-independent route)

334 Both AP-3 and dense vesicles routes are described as Golgi-dependent pathways to the
335 vacuole. In parallel, more evidence is pointing to the existence of Golgi-independent routes for
336 unconventional vacuolar cargo.

337

338 **3a. Direct ER to Vacuole trafficking**

339 Several direct trafficking events between the ER and the vacuoles have been studied in detail
340 but they are generally not considered as part of a unique molecular mechanism.

341 One of the mechanisms that is involved in the direct transport of storage protein precursors
342 from the ER to PSV, i.e. by-passing the Golgi, involves precursor-accumulating (PAC)
343 vesicles. PAC vesicles have been described during the maturation of *C. maxima* seeds but were
344 also described in other plants such as *O. sativa* (Hara-Nishimura *et al.*, 1998). In this organism,
345 PAC vesicles were reported to contain storage proteins, such as glutelin and α -globulin, as well
346 as an ER-resident protein such as BiP (Takahashi *et al.*, 2005; Pelham, 1990; Vitale and
347 Denecke, 1999). For this reason, and their larger size compared to Golgi-derived dense
348 vesicles, PAC vesicles were suggested to derive directly from the ER and transport proteins
349 directly to the vacuole directly. The presence of VSR molecules and other hyperglycosylated
350 proteins in PAC vesicles, however, has questioned this hypothesis, indicating that they might
351 not by-pass the Golgi where glycosylations occur (Shimada *et al.*, 2002). In addition, the Golgi-
352 mediated vacuolar transport of a BiP deletion mutant lacking the HDEL motif suggests that the
353 presence of BiP in PAC vesicles is not sufficient evidence to prove a direct trafficking from
354 ER membranes (Pimpl *et al.*, 2006). The origin of PAC vesicles and the involvement of the
355 Golgi in this pathway is therefore still unclear.

356 Nevertheless, other types of ER to vacuole transport have been reported. One of them
357 involves protein bodies (PBs). PBs differ in shape and size from the electron-dense core PAC
358 vesicles. Yet, their content is very similar as PBs have been reported to accumulate storage
359 proteins and ER proteins. Two types of PBs have been described. In *O. sativa*, glutelin is stored

360 in PB type II (PB-II) and transported to the vacuole, while prolamin is deposited in PB type I
361 (PB-I), a sub-domain of the ER. Calreticulin, a protein with an ER-retention signal at the C-
362 terminus, (Pelham, 1990; Vitale and Denecke, 1999) has been found in both PB types with a
363 small portion also reported in PSVs in rice callus and mesophyll cells (Torres *et al.*, 2001).
364 This finding has prompted the authors to suggest an alternative pathway from the ER directly
365 to the vacuole via PBs. However in tobacco leaf protoplasts, calreticulin has been shown to
366 follow a classical COPI and COPII route (Phillipson *et al.*, 2001; Pimpl *et al.*, 2006). These
367 apparent discrepancies could be explained in terms of cell maturation: although in early stages
368 (seed development) calreticulin could be accumulating in PB and transported to the vacuole in
369 a Golgi-independent pathway, such protein would follow a more classical route in established
370 and mature cells. It was recently hypothesized that in leaves, PBs do not detach from the ER
371 but rather dynamically interact with the ER to exchange proteins (Saberianfar *et al.*, 2016).
372 Another factor could be cell type: while glutelin could be sorted to PSV by-passing Golgi
373 cisternae in rice (Torres *et al.*, 2001), a Golgi-dependent sorting was described in castor beans
374 (Jolliffe *et al.*, 2004) and pea (Hinz *et al.*, 1999b). Such differences may reflect the high
375 flexibility of the alternative trafficking pathways from the ER to the vacuole, adjusting the
376 routes with the needs of cell types.

377

378

379 **3b. Autophagic related processes**

380 Autophagy is the main process for organelle degradation in most eukaryotes and hence
381 plays a major role in cell homeostasis (Michaeli *et al.*, 2016/2; Liu and Bassham, 2012). In
382 addition, autophagy related mechanisms appear to also be involved in a number of trafficking
383 events, such as the direct ER-vacuole trafficking (Robinson *et al.*, 1998; Herman and Larkins,
384 1999a; Michaeli *et al.*, 2014). Indeed, PBs have been reported to become surrounded by
385 autophagic membrane in the cytosol after their release from the ER (Herman and Larkins
386 1999). This autophagosome then fuses with the tonoplast, releasing PBs in the vacuole. Early
387 evidence of the presence of PBs engulfed in vacuoles comes from electron microscopy
388 observations of storage protein delivery by the ERvt pathway (Levanony *et al.*, 1992; Coleman
389 *et al.*, 1996). Interestingly, prolamins can be delivered to vacuole via the Golgi-dependent
390 pathway in early stages of development, and then switch to autophagy mediated delivery in
391 later stages when accumulation in PBs is increased (Levanony *et al.*, 1992). This again shows
392 the flexibility and interconnection between pathways depending on the cell status.

393 Autophagy has also been proposed for the delivery of other types of cargos and vesicles
394 originating from the ER such as rubber and anthocyanins (Pourcel *et al.*, 2010/1; Herman and
395 Schmidt, 2004; Chanoca *et al.*, 2015). Autophagy of ER-derived compartments can also be
396 induced by stress or overexpression of proteins (Bassham *et al.*, 2006). In stress induced events,
397 Atg8, the main protein involved in classical autophagy processes, has been shown to be
398 recruited to ER membrane and to the vacuole (Liu *et al.*, 2012). Despite this observation, the
399 role of the main autophagy regulators such as Atg8 in the process of ER-vacuole trafficking is
400 questionable as knock out mutants of Atg proteins appear not to disturb seed formation in
401 Arabidopsis (Liu and Bassham, 2012). In addition, Atg8 is not present with prolamin-
402 containing PBs engulfed in maize seeds vacuoles (Reyes *et al.*, 2011). Therefore, it seems that
403 despite the existence of autophagy like processes involved in vacuolar trafficking, the main
404 autophagy regulators do not seem to play a role. New regulators of this pathway hence await
405 identification.

406

407 **3c. Anthocyanins trafficking and other metabolites**

408 Other interesting observations derived from staining of neutral red-stained bodies
409 (NRSBs) include large bodies found inside plant vacuoles that are stained by the supravital dye
410 neutral red. In anthocyanin accumulating cells, NRSBs appear much bigger than in other cells,
411 suggesting a relationship with AVIs (anthocyanin vesicular inclusions), other anthocyanin
412 accumulating bodies (Pourcel *et al.*, 2010). Anthocyanins have been proposed to be
413 synthesized on the cytosolic side of the ER and further transported to the vacuole, which then
414 confers typical petal colors (Saslowky and Winkel-Shirley, 2001; Winkel-Shirley, 2002).
415 However, the transport of anthocyanins to the vacuole is not yet understood. TT19, an
416 Arabidopsis glutathione S-transferase ligand transporter, seem to play a specific role in the
417 transport of anthocyanins to vacuoles. Indeed, the inhibition of TT19 lowers the amount of
418 total anthocyanins (Poustka *et al.*, 2007; Sun *et al.*, 2012). Therefore it has been postulated that
419 TT19 induces the solubility of cytoplasmic anthocyanins, which otherwise aggregate and are
420 engulfed by microautophagy in the vacuole (Chanoca *et al.*, 2015). This mechanism appears
421 to be Atg-dependent as *Atg* mutants are defective in the accumulation of anthocyanins, with
422 fewer numbers NRSBs and AVIs reported (Pourcel *et al.*, 2010). NRSBs and AVIs disappear
423 in *Exo70B1-2* double mutants demonstrating that *Exo70B1-2* is also implicated in the transport
424 of anthocyanins from the ER to the vacuole (Kulich *et al.*, 2013) (Kulich and Žárský, 2014).
425 NRSBs and AVIs are nevertheless not the only mechanism of anthocyanin transport to the
426 vacuole. In *Vitis vinifera* and *Zea mays*, anthocyanins accumulate initially in small tubular or

427 vesicular bodies that become larger through vesicular fusion or vacuolar autophagy (Irani and
428 Grotewold, 2005; Zhang *et al.*, 2006; Conn *et al.*, 2010; Gomez *et al.*, 2011). These bodies and
429 tubes are composed of ER membranes or ER-derived vesicles and are localized to tonoplast
430 invaginations deep inside the vacuole (Poustka *et al.*, 2007; Gomez *et al.*, 2011). This suggests
431 that they may be the plant version of autophagic tubes previously described in yeast (Müller *et*
432 *al.*, 2000).

433

434 Apart from anthocyanins, other secondary metabolites and hormones are also reported
435 to be directly sorted to the vacuole from the ER. This is the case for compounds such as
436 phenylpropanoid/flavonoids and cyanogenic glucosides (Ralston *et al.*, 2005), alkaloids
437 (sanguinarine) and indole alkaloids (vinblastine) (Alcantara *et al.*, 2005), phytohormones, like
438 salicylic acid (Yoshimoto *et al.*, 2009), abscisic acid glucosyl ester (ABA-GE) and its activator
439 (AtBG1, a β -glucosidase (Lee *et al.*, 2006; Burla *et al.*, 2013), and auxin (Kulich and Žárský,
440 2014). However, these pathways are difficult to observe as they may involve cooperation of
441 multiple transport mechanisms as suggested for flavonoids (Zhao, 2015). Membrane
442 transporters, glutathione S-transferase conjugation and vesicle trafficking may be cooperating
443 for the vacuolar sequestration of flavonoids. In fact, the only known protein involved in the
444 membrane fusion of flavonoid-containing vesicles with vacuoles is the Golgi-localized
445 membrane protein GFS9 (Ichino *et al.*, 2014; Zhao, 2015). Therefore, more work is required
446 to understand how these secondary metabolites are transported to the vacuole (Kulich and
447 Žárský, 2014).

448

449

450 **3d. Other uncharacterized vacuolar pathways.**

451

452 In addition to the above described unconventional trafficking to the vacuole, many
453 more routes have been reported but still require clarification or remain controversial. In the
454 following paragraph, we give a summary of the findings to date.

455

456

457 ***The Chitinase A case***

458 In contrast to Aleurain which contains a typical N-terminal NPIR motif, Chitinase is an enzyme
459 that carries a C-terminal vacuolar sorting determinant (CtVSD). This determinant does not

460 have a consensus sequence, but relies on 4-7 amino acids with hydrophobic characteristics.
461 Chimeric proteins fused with this C-terminal signal are transported to the vacuole showing that
462 it acts as a VSD. Other proteins such as barley lectin and phaseolin also contain a CtVSD. It
463 has been shown that VSR affinity for this type of protein is very low, and instead another
464 putative vacuolar receptor (RMR: Receptor Membrane RING-H2) has been proposed (Ahmed
465 *et al.*, 2000; Park *et al.*, 2007). A fusion protein GFPChi is in part retained in the ER and also
466 found in uncharacterised punctate structures different from those labelled by Aleu-RFP in
467 tobacco (Stigliano *et al.*, 2013) and tomato (Di Sansebastiano *et al.*, 2014) protoplasts.
468 Altogether these observations suggest that Chitinase and Aleurain might use different routes
469 to the vacuole (Stigliano *et al.*, 2013). Various reports have shown differences in Chitinase and
470 Aleurain sorting: engineered glycosylated GFPChi appears to be sensitive to EndoH treatment
471 whereas the glycosylated AleuGFPgl133 is not (Stigliano *et al.*, 2013). SNAREs appear to
472 control vacuolar sorting and modulate targeting of these markers differentially (Uemura end
473 Ueda 2014). Indeed, VTI12 and SYP51 has been reported to affect more specifically GFPChi
474 trafficking, while VTI11 and SYP52 seem to be involved in AleuGFP transport (Sanmartin et
475 al., 2007; De Benedictis et al., 2013). Finally, Sar1HL, an inhibitor of COPII trafficking, seem
476 to increase the fluorescence of Chitinase in the vacuole while Aleurain trafficking is prevented.
477 Taken together this evidence suggests that Aleurain and Chitinase might traffic through
478 different routes. Nevertheless, other reports have shown that RFPChi transport is still
479 dependent from components of the classical route such as Rab11, Rha1, Ara6 and Rab7
480 (Bottanelli *et al.*, 2011). RFPChi was found to strongly label the ER, with only weak labelling
481 of the central vacuole (Bottanelli et al, 2011). Although these observations might only be the
482 result of differential fluorescent fusion (GFP vs RFP), a plausible explanation is that Chitinase
483 could be trafficking through various routes depending on the cell status and vacuole identity,
484 as suggested above (Fluckiger *et al.*, 2003). Indeed, Chitinase can also be found in dense
485 vesicles, budding off from the Golgi, or in ER bodies in seeds and developing cotyledons
486 respectively (G. Hinz unpublished data). Both Aleurain and Chitinase can also be found
487 colocalising in BFA bodies or in prevacuolar compartments upon treatment with auxin and/or
488 acetylcholine (ACh) (Stigilano et al., 2013; Di Sansebastiano *et al.*, 2014). Auxin and ACh
489 treatments do not alter sorting pathways like BFA treatments (Stigliano *et al.*, 2013) but simply
490 change the sorting specificity, emphasizing compartments characterized by PIN1 and PIN7
491 (Kleine-Vehn *et al.*, 2006; Geldner, 2009). These observations again suggest a close
492 connection between pathways.

493

494

495

496 ***Cardosines***

497 Even if the trafficking of Chitinase may appear exceptional, an increasing number of
498 proteins may soon be reported as trafficking through alternative pathways. Cardosin A, a
499 vacuolar aspartic proteinase, is characterized by two domains: a plant specific insert (PSI)
500 domain and a C-terminal region. Both domains act as vacuolar sorting determinants (VSDs)
501 but each of them is involved in distinct routes to the vacuole (Tormakangas et al., 2001). A
502 working model for Cardosin A trafficking suggests that the C-terminus mediates a COPII-
503 dependent ER-to-Golgi pathway to the vacuole while the PSI domain mediates either a COPII-
504 dependent or COPII-independent vacuolar trafficking pathway in a non-glycosylated or
505 glycosylated form, respectively. Again, the relevance of the PSI-mediated pathway depends on
506 the type of tissue and the metabolic activity of the organs (Pereira *et al.*, 2008, 2013).

507

508 ***Membrane proteins examples***

509 Although most studies have concentrated on the sorting of storage and lytic proteins to
510 the vacuole, membrane proteins have also been studied and found to use various routes. As
511 already described above, VSRs and RMR proteins traffic via different pathways (classical or
512 DVs).

513 AtRMR1 and -2. AtRMR2 homodimers and AtRMR2/AtRMR1 heterodimers have
514 been recently shown to assemble in the ER and bind different vacuolar cargos (Occhialini *et al.*,
515 2016). Two different pathways sort AtRMRs to the TGN, either a Golgi-dependent or
516 Golgi-independent pathway (Occhialini *et al.*, 2016). Comparative studies emphasizing
517 common characteristics between lysosomes and vacuoles also point out that the percentage of
518 N-glycoproteome is much higher in lysosomal/PM membrane than in the tonoplast (Pedrazzini
519 *et al.*, 2016; Pompa *et al.*, 2017). Based on this observation, the authors propose that the major
520 trafficking pathway to the tonoplast might be bypassing the Golgi apparatus.

521 Other reports on more membrane proteins again support the presence of multiple pathways to
522 the tonoplast. α -TIP, the SNARE VAMP3 and CBL6 were all found to be COPII independent
523 in tobacco epidermis, suggesting a direct ER-vacuole transport (Bottanelli *et al.*, 2011).
524 However, while α -TIP trafficking is sensitive to Rab mutants (Rha1, ara6 and Rab7), Vam3 is
525 only sensitive to Rab7 mutant and CBL6 is not affected by any of these mutants. Moreover,

526 additional evidence comes from the fact that BFA affects the sorting of TIP1;1, but not of
527 TIP3;1 (α -TIP) and TIP2;1 in *A. thaliana* hypocotyls (Rivera-Serrano et al. 2012).

528 PIN proteins also traffic through different pathways: PIN2 (as well as AUX1) recycling
529 appears to be BFA insensitive whereas PIN1 and 3 appear to be BFA sensitive and dependent
530 on the GNOM pathway (Geldner *et al.*, 2003; Kleine-Vehn *et al.*, 2006; Ding *et al.*, 2011). The
531 inhibition caused by this molecule also defines a link between the BFA-insensitive pathway
532 and PIN2 recycling (Rivera-Serrano *et al.*, 2012). However, the BFA treatment disrupts most
533 of the pathways exhibiting these markers (Kleine-Vehn *et al.*, 2006; Drakakaki *et al.*, 2009;
534 Ding *et al.*, 2011).

535 Golgi-mediated trafficking may play a role in controlling and modifying another kind
536 of compartment formed directly from the ER membranes, the dark-induced protein (DIP)
537 vesicles. These compartments are characterized by the presence of DIP aquaporin (specifically
538 α -TIP; (Neuhaus and Rogers, 1998) and RMR-like proteins, and are formed with the direct
539 contribution of the ER and the Golgi (Jiang *et al.*, 2000, 2001). DIP vesicles are the main
540 system for transporting crystalloid elements to PSVs (Vitale and Hinz, 2005).

541 A small amount of DIP aquaporin is present in the PSV tonoplast. In contrast, α - and γ -
542 aquaporin are typically targeted to CVs and are absent from DIP vesicles (Jiang *et al.*, 2000).
543 DIP vesicles are surrounded by a double membrane that fuses with PSVs, delivering the inner
544 membrane that forms an independent compartment inside PSVs. DIP vesicles probably
545 transport specific membrane proteins and hydrolytic enzymes (Isayenkov, 2014).

546

547 Clearly, more evidence is still needed to decipher interconnections between vacuolar
548 pathways. Nevertheless, the obvious existence of alternative transport routes for these
549 membrane proteins suggests that some classes of soluble vacuolar cargo molecules could also
550 be using such alternative pathways. This hypothesis however does not exclude the existence of
551 a merging point with the classical routes at various stages (Bottanelli *et al.*, 2011).

552

553 ***Non-vesicular ER-Vacuole transport***

554

555 A Golgi-independent tonoplast biogenesis model has been proposed in which the
556 smooth ER is involved. This ER sub-domain has a distinctive lipid composition that
557 accumulates proteins and lipids destined for the tonoplast (Viotti *et al.*, 2013). After reaching
558 a certain size, the smooth ER curves (Knorr *et al.*, 2012) and eventually fuses with the pre-

559 existing vacuolar network. When post-Golgi trafficking is blocked by BFA, provacuoles
560 appear multi-lamellar, suggesting that a component delivered by the TGN is necessary for the
561 separation of the provacuole from the ER or for fusion with the vacuolar network (Viotti *et al.*,
562 2013). The analogy with the GERL model (Golgi-associated ER from which lysosome
563 apparently form) (Marty, 1999) first described in the late 70s (Marty, 1978) is evident. GERL
564 models proposes that despite the formation of provacuoles in the vicinity of Golgi *trans* faces,
565 the Golgi apparatus itself appears to be bypassed in the transport. The novelty of more recent
566 research arises from evidence that trafficking can now be shown to fully bypass the Golgi, and
567 merge with endocytosis and phagocytosis later.

568

569 Whilst models need to be adjusted and fine-tuned, it is now obvious that direct transport from
570 the ER to vacuoles represent a large portion of the transport to the vacuole. The Golgi
571 contribution in this process is still unclear, but if it occurs, it certainly differs from the classic
572 Golgi-dependent model in ways that are slowly emerging.

573

574

575 **Conclusions**

576 Golgi-independent vacuolar trafficking is not exceptional but a fundamental process, which is
577 still poorly understood, and affects the very interpretation of cell compartmentalization starting
578 from vacuoles characterization. It is evident that their compartmental diversity is not due to a
579 maturation process similar to that observed in Golgi cisternae. Vacuoles receive cargo
580 molecules and membranes from multiple sources and acquire their functional specificity
581 depending on the contribution of different donors. The ER is the most important of these donors
582 but the plasma membrane and Golgi apparatus are also involved.

583 ER export has a central role in controlling the biogenesis of intermediate compartments,
584 including endosomes. In the absence of specific pathways activated by growth, stress,
585 starvation and/or other specific processes, post-Golgi organelles such as the TGN and the
586 LPVC may represent hubs where trafficking events could merge. Clearly, the trafficking
587 pathways are more complex and interconnected than previously thought. In addition, direct
588 routes involving post-translational modifications mediating transport from the cytosol to
589 membranes of the secretory pathway such as the tonoplast need to be explored in more depth
590 (Batistic *et al.*, 2012). Future studies will probably contribute to the idea that “unconventional
591 trafficking” routes will soon become conventional.

592

593

594

595

596 **Figure 1:**

597 Possible routes from the Endoplasmic Reticulum (bottom) to the Vacuole (top). Depicted are
598 multiples routes that can be adopted by various storage or lytic proteins showing classical and
599 unconventional sorting to the vacuole.

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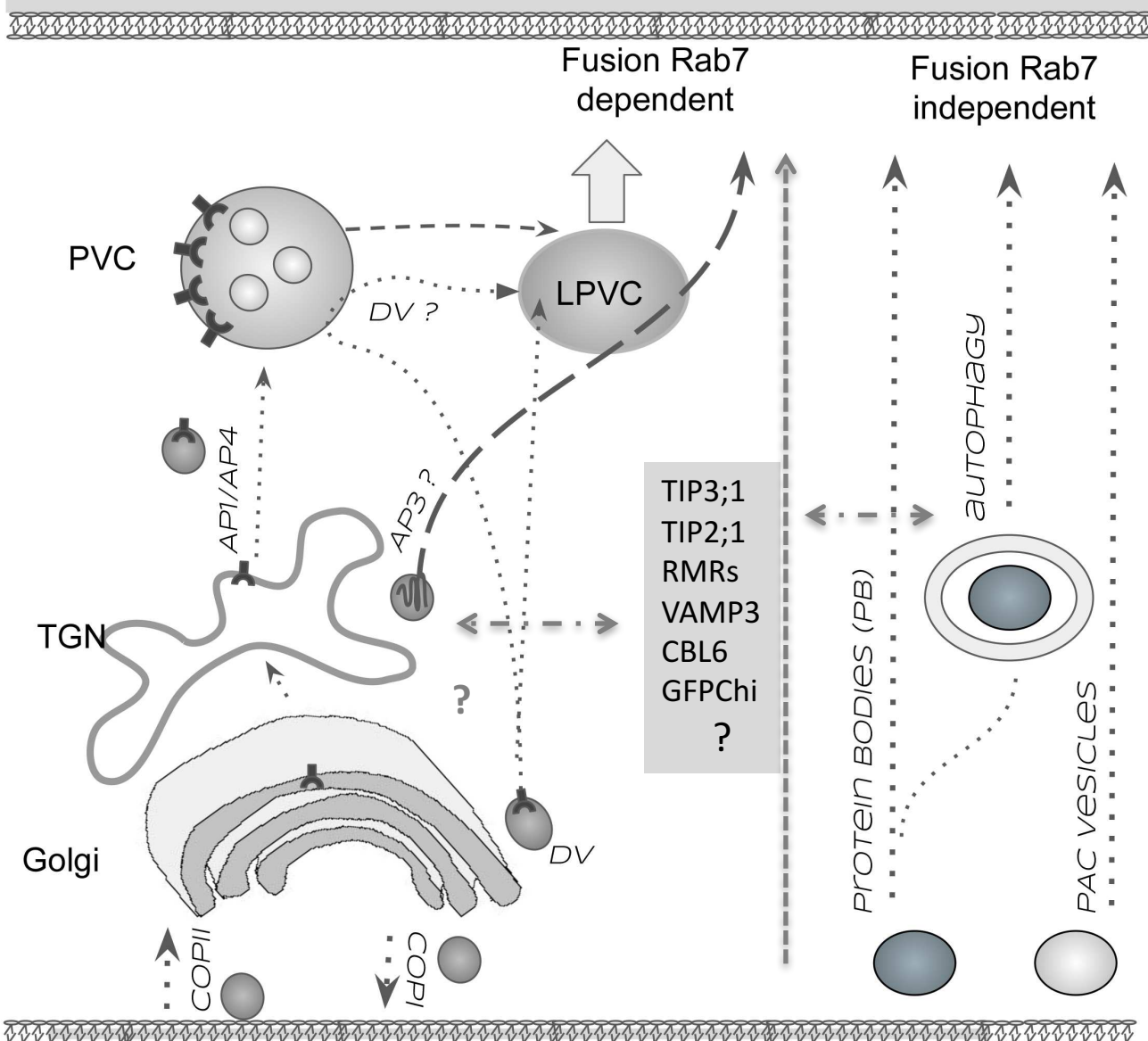
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VACUOLE



Fusion Rab7 dependent

Fusion Rab7 independent

PVC

LPVC

DV ?

AP1/AP4

AP3 ?

TGN

Golgi

DV

COPII

COPI

- TIP3;1
- TIP2;1
- RMRs
- VAMP3
- CBL6
- GFPChi
- ?

autophagy

PROTEIN BODIES (PB)

PAC VESICLES

Endoplasmic Reticulum