Polyamine metabolism and activation of lipid signalling pathways in Arabidopsis thaliana

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There is a beautiful poem by Antonio Machado that says: “Walker, your treads are the path and nothing more; walker, there is no path, the path is made when walking. Stroke by stroke, verse by verse...”. Despite the fact that this poem was written in exile nearly a century ago, it is a good reminder of the intriguing uncertainty in nowadays life. Such was the case with this PhD – it started in Barcelona and ended unexpectedly in Amsterdam. What happened in between was a kind of a soap opera (a great one) that would require an extra act, a few beers and a copyright.

This section is typically the smallest in a thesis manuscript, but it contains the largest amount of very relevant “non-scientific data”. As I am also pretty sure that some people will spend few minutes reading it, I will put special care in summarizing chronologically those who played an important role in this series during the last few years.

One of the first actors was Antonio, from whom I heard for the first time the word “polyamine” (poly what?) and who became my former boss in Barcelona. Besides convincing me about the potential of these molecules with “funny” names, he also appointed me as a technician first, assistant professor later, and PhD student (briefly) at last. I will always be grateful for many things Antonio, especially for your unconditional support and for letting me work at a handful of top European labs, including the Max Planck Institute in Golm, where I had the pleasure of working alongside Prof. Joachim Kopka, contributing towards the improvement of his methods of analysis in metabolomics.

Leaving the lab and starting all over again while facing uncertainty was not the easiest decision I have ever made, but it was a good one. Especially, since I knew that Kosta, my great lab colleague and close friend, did better than me there. Kosta, I am really proud of having you around and to see you grow as a scientist hand in hand with Rubén who I admire and owe a lot. In those years in Barcelona I made really good friends who are nowadays spread around the world: Miren, Brezana, Triam, Miriam, Laura, Carles, Stefi, Dani, Alina, Gus, Rafa, Ana, Beatrice, Nati, Eudald, Carmelina, Ying, Vincenzo, Marc, Ambra, Marta and Strahil. Thanks for all the laughter and unforgettable moments we spent together guys! Also, a thanks to my buddies Jean, Ale and Javier (and Teo!), even tho you live 12.000 km far away, I consider you as part of my family. I hope we can keep visiting each other for many years to come and continue climbing the Andes together. And you too Urbi (and Comi), thanks for all those years where we grew (literally) side by side.
The second part of this story took place in Amsterdam, where besides escaping from hot Mediterranean summers and eating paellas on Thursdays, I had the opportunity to move forward in many different ways. Mainly responsible for this was Teun, who I met at a congress in Spain while drinking “Agua de Valencia”. I will always appreciate your extraordinary hospitality, loyal support and the way you see and enjoy science, which keeps me constantly learning and knocking on your office door every other day. There are many things I am grateful for on a scientific and personal level. However, this is not the end of the story, more a to-be-continued, so let’s cheers to the years to come first! Also thanks to Michel and Christa for your constructive ideas, your support and good vibes; together with Petra and Rob you make this place a great scientific centre to be proud being part of.

During this time, I have seen many people passing by in the lab, with some of them I share especial memories: Kelly, Noam, Jamil, Jiorgos, Wojciech, Bojan - it was a pleasure to share bench and beers with you guys! And of course you, Ringo, the technical backbone of the lab, you rock man! Thanks Fariza, Yukie, Fionn, Essam, Magda, Niko, Dorota, Ruy, Alessandra, Steven, Ola, Jiesen, Fran, Juan for being such great colleagues. Ludek, Michel, Peter, Petra, thanks a lot for taking care of the plants and labs, and sorry for the mess. And of course thanks to my lunch group buddies Eleni, Silke, Jiorgos and Benjamin for sweetening up the cantina food with your amazing company. Also, many thanks to you Héctor for feeding me more when necessary and for bringing a glimpse of Cuba to Amsterdam (including the habanos). Viva Cuba carajo!

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