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► **To cite this version:**

Maelle Bellec, Ruoyu Chen, Jana Dhayni, Cyril Favard, Antonello Trullo, et al.. Boosting the toolbox for live imaging of translation. 2023. <hal-04236974>

HAL Id: hal-04236974

<https://cnrs.hal.science/hal-04236974v1>

Preprint submitted on 15 Nov 2023

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1 **Boosting the toolbox for live imaging of translation**

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18 19 **Abstract:**

20 Live imaging of translation based on a tag recognition by a single chain antibody is a powerful
21 technique to assess the fine tuning of translation regulation in living cells. However, especially
22 in a multicellular organism, this approach is challenging and requires optimization in terms of
23 expression level and detection sensitivity of the system. Here, we improved existing fluorescent
24 tools and developed new ones to image and quantify nascent translation in the living *Drosophila*
25 embryo and in mammalian cells. We tested and characterized five different Green Fluorescent
26 Protein variants fused to the single chain fragment variable (scFv) and uncover photobleaching,
27 aggregation and intensity disparities. Using different strengths of germline and somatic drivers,
28 we determined that the availability of the scFv is critical in order to detect translation throughout
29 development. Finally, we introduced a new translation imaging method, based on a
30 nanobody/tag system, named ALFA_array, allowing the sensitive and simultaneous detection
31 of the translation of several distinct mRNA species.

32 33 **Introduction:**

34 During development, multipotent cells progressively acquire specific fates leading to the
35 formation of a variety of tissues. This process relies on a spatio-temporally regulated gene
36 expression program, contributing to the reliability and reproducibility of gene expression
37 patterns to generate the final body plan. In that process, the regulation of mRNA translation is
38 a key step since the dynamics of translation in space and time critically affects the outcome of
39 gene expression. Most approaches to study the regulation of translation in whole organisms rely
40 on a bulk population of cells with poor spatial and temporal information. Consequently, the
41 heterogeneity in the regulation of translation at the cellular and molecular level remains poorly
42 investigated. Live imaging methods of translation have been developed in cultured cells¹⁻⁵ since
43 2016 and recently introduced in *Drosophila*⁶⁻⁸. These methods are based on the fluorescent
44 labeling of nascent peptide chains. The labeling system is made of two components, a
45 genetically-encoded antibody such as a single-chain variable fragment antibody (scFv) or Fab
46 fragment⁹⁻¹¹ fused to a fluorescent protein (FP; referred to as the detector), and a N-terminal
47 peptide epitope inserted in multiple copies in frame with the gene of interest¹². These live
48 imaging approaches made it possible to visualize translation up to the single-molecule scale in
49 cultured cells but also in an entire organism^{7,8}. Such technological breakthroughs provided
50 important insights in our understanding of gene regulation through translation and, for instance,
51 revealed the existence of motor-driven polysome transport and a spatial heterogeneity of
52 translation at the subcellular level^{5,7,13-17}.

53 The discovery of the *Aequorea victoria* green-fluorescent protein^{18,19} and especially its
54 optimized version mEGFP²⁰ have revolutionized imaging of biological processes²¹. Since then,
55 several new FPs have been and continue to be discovered and engineered^{22,23}. The constant race
56 for better FPs generally implies the optimization for fast folding, pH resistance as well as
57 improvement of photo-physics²⁴.

58 Introduction of the bacteriophage-derived MS2 RNA binding sites, which are
59 recognized by MS2 Coat Protein (MCP) fused to FP, provided a technique to visualize
60 transcription in living cell. This technological advance has been subjected to numerous
61 improvements from its initial development in 1998²⁵. These improvements include increased
62 sensitivity down to single molecules²⁶, implementation in a living organism²⁷, the generation
63 of new stem loops to visualize single mRNAs at a high temporal resolution^{28,29}, artefact-free
64 RNA³⁰ and double mRNA species imaging with an orthologous system³¹. However, several
65 limitations exist with the present tools that hinder quantitative imaging. For example, protein
66 aggregation has been observed for some systems derived from MS2 Coat Protein fused to
67 GFP³²⁻³⁴ and for scFv fused to specific GFP variants³⁵. Furthermore, the expression level of the
68 detector is critical to ensure accurate detection, particularly for translation, as most of the time
69 one mRNA undergoes multiple rounds of translation. However, no such optimization has been
70 made for the SunTag system in the context of a developing organism, although photo-physical
71 properties of molecules can be variable between different systems (i.e. *in vitro* experiments,
72 cell culture, tissues, organisms...)^{24,36,37}.

73 We tested five different GFP variants for their brightness, photobleaching and propensity to
74 aggregation in fixed and live embryos. We also generated inducible scFv-FP constructs that,
75 when combined with different drivers to extend the use of the SunTag system to a wider range
76 of genes and biological questions. Furthermore, we developed an orthologous method, called
77 ALFA-array, to visualize nascent translation in *Drosophila* embryo and mammalian cells. This
78 system is based on a small and soluble nanobody and we show its usefulness by combining it
79 with the SunTag to visualize translation of two different mRNA species in *Drosophila* embryos.

80

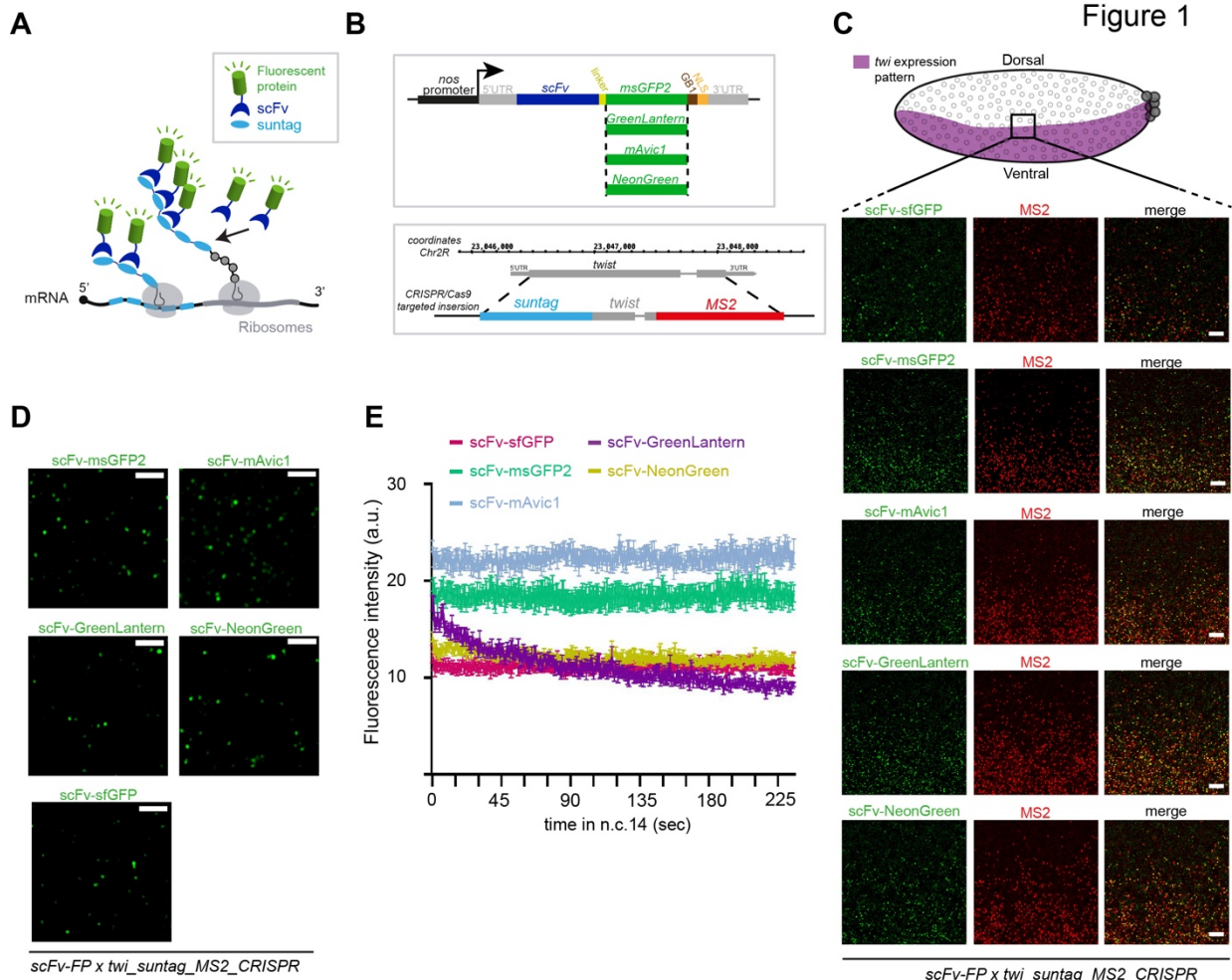
81 **Results:**

82 **New fluorescent protein fused to scFv to detect nascent translation.**

83 The SunTag method is a bipartite system based on an antibody-derived single chain variable
84 fragment (scFv) detector fused to a fluorescent protein (FP; the detector) which binds a peptide
85 named Supernova Tag (suntag) derived from the yeast GCN4 protein and are experimentally
86 fused in multiple copies at the N-terminus of the gene of interest³⁵ (Figure 1A). To improve the
87 system, we created new scFvs with different green fluorescent proteins under the control of
88 *nanos* (*nos*) enhancer-promoter (EPr). This EPr drives expression in the *Drosophila* germline³⁸⁻
89 ⁴¹ allowing the maternal deposition of mature scFv-FP into the laid eggs (Figure S1A). We
90 generated a set of four different constructs, in addition to the previously published scFv fused
91 to the superfolder GFP (sfGFP)⁴², named scFv-sfGFP²⁹. The new generation of green
92 fluorescent protein variants includes: i) the monomeric superfolder GFP2 (msGFP2)⁴³, ii) the
93 mGreenLantern (GL)⁴⁴, iii) mNeonGreen⁴⁵ and iv) the monomeric *A. victoria* fluorescent
94 protein 1 (mAvic1)²² (Figure 1B, upper panel). Live imaging of these five scFv-FPs during
95 embryonic development until the end of nuclear cycle 14 (n.c. 14) showed that all the scFv-FPs
96 are well expressed, localize mainly in the nucleus, due to the presence of a nuclear localization
97 signal, and do not form aggregates (Figure S1B and Movie S1-5). Quantification of the
98 fluorescent intensity during the first forty minutes of n.c.14, showed that the apparent brightness
99 of these four new scFv was similar to the scFv-sfGFP, while scFv-mAvic1 harbors a brighter
100 signal (Figure S1C). Although, we observed that scFv-GL is prone to photobleaching (Figure
101 S1C). We confirmed that the distribution of scFv-FP was homogenous in the embryo and

102 dots/aggregates were not detected by light-sheet imaging of the two brightest scFv-FPs, scFv-
103 mAvic1 and scFv-msGFP2 (Figure S1D and Movie S6-7).

104 We next tested the capacity of these new scFv-FPs to detect mRNA in translation in
105 embryos. We crossed the different scFv-FP lines into the background of a *twist* gene
106 endogenously tagged with MS2 and suntag (*twi_suntag_MS2_CRISPR*) (Figure 1B, lower
107 panel) and performed single-molecule Fluorescent *in situ* Hybridization (smFISH) on fixed
108 embryos to detect the tagged mRNAs. Actively translated mRNAs (polysomes) were then
109 visualized as co-localized GFP and mRNA spots. Imaging the border of *twist* mRNA
110 transcription pattern showed that the translation signal was present only in the described pattern
111 of *twist* expression (mesoderm)⁴⁶ (Figure 1C), supporting that the signal is specific. For all scFv-
112 FPs we observed a clear colocalization between mRNA (red signal) and polysomes (green
113 signal) in addition to mRNA that were not in translation (Figure S1E). Notably, a fainter signal
114 was detected for polysomes with scFv-mAvic1 and scFv-NG at this stage of embryogenesis,
115 suggesting that mAvic1 and NG are less bright or more sensitive to the fixation/smFISH
116 protocol. Immuno-smFISH with an antibody against GFP did not improve the signal but
117 increased the background. Moreover, we found that staining with only a secondary antibody
118 could label nascent foci of translation, and only when the scFv-FP is present (Figure S2A). This
119 result suggests that secondary antibodies can bind scFv-FP unspecifically and experiments
120 using both simultaneously should be avoided. We then looked at the behavior of these scFv-
121 FPs in live embryos in presence of *twi_suntag_MS2_CRISPR*. We could observe bright green
122 fluorescent dots in movement within the mesoderm (Figure 1D, Movie S8-12). To characterize
123 the detection capacity of each FP in live embryos, we measured the mean intensity of all
124 detected spots with a high temporal resolution for 4 min during n.c. 14 (Figure 1E, Movie S8-
125 12). The translation foci detected by scFv-mAvic1 and scFv-msGFP2 showed a stronger signal
126 compared to scFv-NG, scFv-sfGFP and scFv-GL (Figure 1E). Collectively, these results show
127 that the four new scFv-FPs are able to bind nascent suntag peptides and therefore detect mRNA
128 in translation in live and fixed samples.



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Figure 1: Generation of different scFv-Fluorescent proteins (scFv-FP) to monitor nascent translation in *Drosophila*.

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(A) Schematic of the SunTag system. Once the mRNA (dark grey) is translated by the ribosomes (grey), the *suntag* epitopes (light blue) will be bound by the single chain variable fragment (scFv) (dark blue) fused to a fluorescent protein (FP) (green). Therefore, the nascent peptide will be detected by the accumulation of fluorescent signal. (B) (top) Schematic of the different constructs of scFv-FP generated in this study. scFv-msGFP2, scFv-GreenLantern, scFv-mAvc1 and scFv-NeonGreen were created for this study and scFv-sfGFP in our previous study⁷. (bottom) Schematic of the CRISPR/Cas9 targeted insertion strategy to obtain endogenous *twist* gene tagged with *suntag* and *MS2*⁷. (C) (top) Schematic of a sagittal view of a *Drosophila* embryo with *twi* expression pattern in purple. Anterior side is on the left, posterior on the right, dorsal on the top and ventral side on the bottom. Black square represents the imaged area of the bottom panels. (bottom) One Z-plane of confocal images from smFISH with direct fluorescent protein signal in green (scFv-msGFP2, scFv-GreenLantern, scFv-mAvc1, scFv-NeonGreen and scFv-sfGFP) and *MS2* probes (red) on *scFv-FP x twi_suntag_MS2_CRISPR* embryos in early-mid n.c. 14. Scale bars are 5 μm. (D) Snapshots from representative fast-mode acquired confocal movies of *twi_suntag_MS2_CRISPR/+* embryos carrying either scFv-msGFP2, scFv-GreenLantern, scFv-mAvc1, scFv-NeonGreen or scFv-sfGFP proteins. Green dots represent nascent translation of *twi*. Scale bars are 5 μm. (See related Movies S8-12). (E) Quantification across time during n.c. 14 of different scFv-FP signals from movies represented in (d), n=5 movies from at least 3 embryos for each scFv-FP. Error bars represent SEM.

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New scFv-FP prevents aggregates formation

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To show whether scFv-FPs expressed under the maternal *nos* EPr could detect translation during embryogenesis, at least until gastrulation, we imaged fixed embryos at the gastrulation stage. We observed tagged Twist protein localized to nuclei in the ventral gastrulation furrow region, consistent with Twist being a mesodermal transcription factor (Figure S2B, upper panel). To test, whether the presence of a NLS in the scFv-FP construct might be responsible

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155 for this nuclear localization, we imaged the localization of the Insulin-like peptide 4 (Ilp4), an
156 excreted protein expressed in the mesoderm⁴⁷. We used the tagged Ilp4 with suntag and
157 observed scFv containing the NLS in the cytoplasm (Figure S2B, lower panel). Thus, the
158 presence of a NLS in the scFv-FP construct appears not to significantly interfere with the native
159 localization of tagged proteins.

160 Strikingly, at the gastrulation stage, bright GFP spots were observed only when using scFv-
161 sfGFP in *twi_suntag_MS2_CRISPR* embryos but not with the other scFv-FPs (Figure S3A). As
162 only the FP sequences is different between these constructs, this discrepancy might be due to a
163 difference in protein stability, scFv-sfGFP being more stable than the other variants, or that
164 scFv-sfGFP being more prone to aggregation. To decipher between these hypotheses, we used
165 smFISH to label *twi_suntag_MS2_CRISPR* mRNA in the presence of the different scFv-FPs to
166 determine whether the bright GFP spots observed during gastrulation co-localize with mRNA
167 and represent translation spots. With scFv-sfGFP we saw large green spots that were not co-
168 localized with mRNA (Figure S3B upper left panels, white arrowhead). We did not observe
169 these large spots with the any of the four new scFv-FPs (Figure S3B) suggesting an aggregation
170 of the scFv-sfGFP in the *Drosophila* embryo at the gastrulation stage in presence of
171 *twi_suntag_MS2_CRISPR*.

172 We next asked whether aggregation formation is specific to the tagged *twi* in developing
173 embryos or could also occur in cultured cells with a different suntag construct. We expressed
174 scFv-sfGFP and scFv-msGFP2 in *Drosophila* S2R+ cells along with a SunTag-luciferase
175 reporter (SunTagRLuc-MS2) (see methods, Figure S3C). The SunTagRLuc-MS2 plasmid (see
176 methods) was co-transfected with an scFv-FP plasmid as well as an MCP-Halotag plasmid (see
177 methods) to track single mRNA molecules and their translation during live-cell imaging. As
178 expected, scFv-FPs were able to label polysomes by forming GFP foci co-localizing with
179 mRNA (Figure S3D). With the scFv-sfGFP, however, we frequently observed GFP aggregates
180 which were not associated with mRNA. These aggregates were morphologically distinct from
181 translating foci and were more abundant and bigger than the GFP aggregates observed in
182 gastrulating embryos (Figure S3D-E). This result suggests an aggregation of the SunTag
183 peptides bound by the scFv-sfGFP after being translated and released from polysomes.
184 Although few aggregates were also present in cells expressing scFv-msGFP2 with the
185 SunTagRLuc-MS2 reporter (Figure S3D) this occurred with a significantly lower frequency
186 (~55% of cells without aggregates compared to ~15%) and smaller aggregate size, suggesting
187 that msGFP2 is less prone to aggregate formation.

188 These results support that the scFv-FPs containing newer generation FPs are more suitable for
189 translation analysis, as they are less likely to form aggregates.

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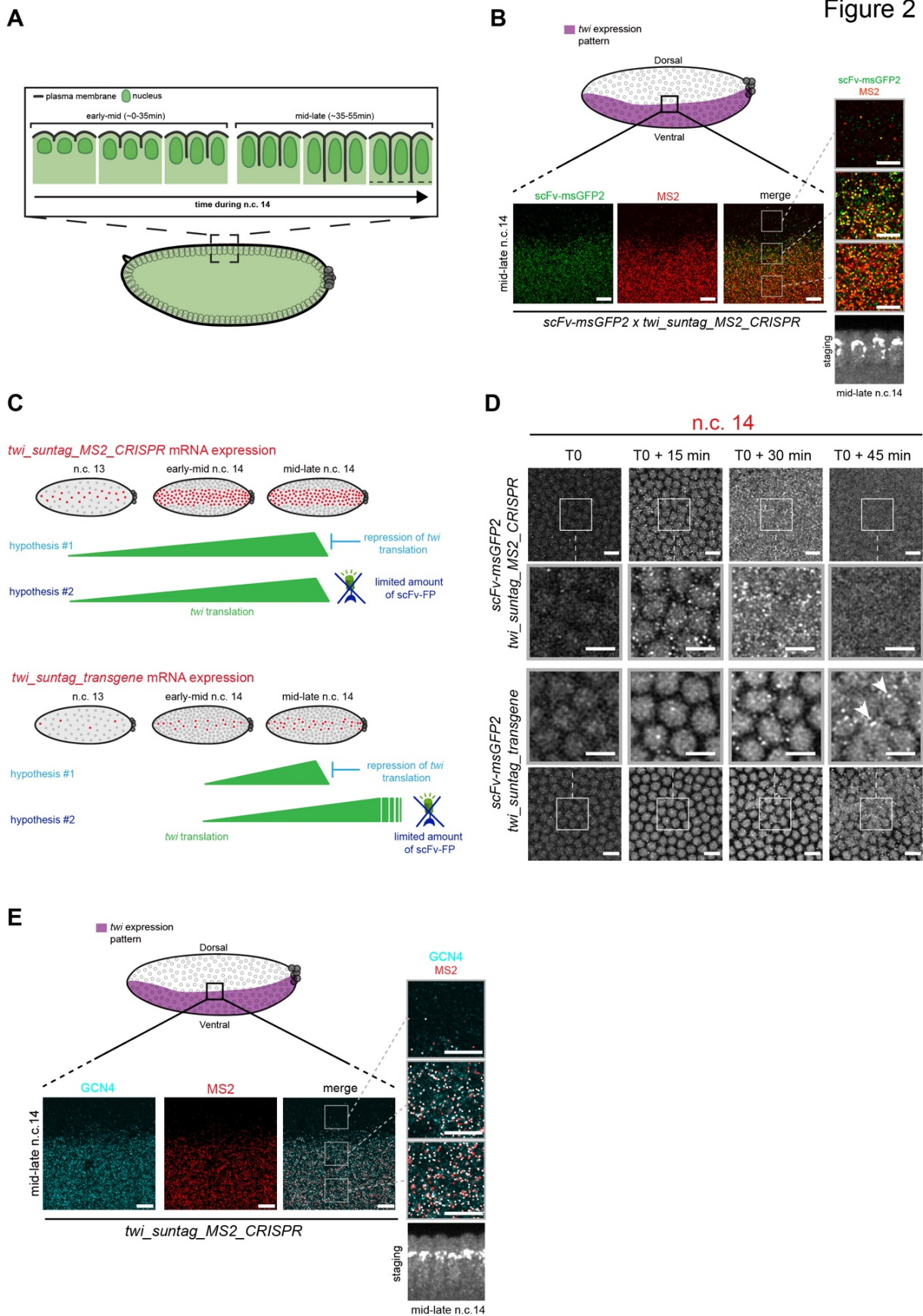
191 **Monitoring translational arrest during *Drosophila* embryogenesis**

192 The low amount of translation spots observed during gastrulation suggested that *twi* translation
193 maybe have ceased at this stage of development (Figure S3A-B). However, a *twist* mRNA
194 translational arrest had not been described previously. This unexpected observation led us to
195 investigate whether *twi* transcripts were undergoing a translational arrest during n.c.14 (Figure
196 2A) using the four new scFv-FPs. Interestingly, we found at mid-late n.c. 14 (Figure 2A) that
197 the *twi_suntag_MS2_CRISPR* RNA was mostly translated at the border of the mesoderm
198 (Figure 2B and S4A-C). In comparison, polysomes dots in the center of the mesoderm were
199 less intense suggesting reduced translation (Figure 2B and S4A-C). A translational arrest was
200 recently described for *Hunchback* (*Hb*) using the SunTag system in the *Drosophila* embryo⁴⁸.
201 In this study the authors showed that after being translated in the entire Hb domain (anterior
202 half of the embryo), *hb* translation became restricted to the border of its expression pattern,
203 similarly to what we observed for *twist*. At least two models can explain this result: i) *twi*
204 translation is actively repressed at first in regions where the RNA and protein expression is

205 highest (as suggested for *hb*⁴⁸) or ii) the amount of scFv-FP becomes limiting during mid-late
206 n.c. 14 at first in regions where the RNA and protein expression is highest and prevents the
207 detection of translation (Figure 2C upper panel). To test these hypotheses, we used the
208 *twi_suntag_transgene*, which exhibits a stochastic expression pattern, belated transcriptional
209 activation²⁹ and thus lower mRNA level compared to *twi_suntag_MS2_CRISPR*. If *twi*
210 translation is actively repressed, a similar translational arrest should be observed for the
211 *twi_suntag_transgene*. If the amount of scFv-FP is limiting, its translation spots should be
212 detectable over a longer period of time (Figure 2C). Using live imaging, we observed translation
213 spots of the *twi-suntag_transgene* at a stage when *twi_suntag_MS2_CRISPR* translation spots
214 vanished (Figure 2D, S4D and Movie S13-15). The translation dots of the
215 *twi_suntag_transgene* colocalized with mRNA dots in late n.c. 14 and gastrulation stage as
216 confirmed with smFISH (Figure S4E). This result suggests that the scFv-FP amount might be
217 limiting given the high amount of available mRNA templates when *twi* is monitored from its
218 endogenous locus (*twi_suntag_MS2_CRISPR* allele), causing a seeming translational arrest at
219 gastrulation.

220 We next used an antibody against the suntag peptides (anti-GCN4) in the absence of scFv-FP
221 and saw translation of *twi_suntag_MS2_CRISPR* mRNAs at mid-late n.c. 14 and gastrulation
222 stage (Figure 2E and S4F). Moreover, its translation was homogenous inside the pattern of *twi*
223 expression (Figure 2E). Altogether these results demonstrate that there is no translational arrest
224 of *twi* mRNAs during n.c.14. Instead, the amount of scFv-FP expressed under the maternally
225 active *nos* EPr becomes insufficient to detect translation during gastrulation, when a large pool
226 of mRNAs is translated. Our experiments suggest that anti-GCN4 antibodies should be used as
227 a control to distinguish between true endogenous regulation of translation and mere
228 experimentally-dependent depletion of the labelling reagent.

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Figure 2: scFv-FP concentration under *nos* EPr creates an artefactual translation arrest of endogenous *twi* mRNA during early embryogenesis

233 (A) Schematic of nuclear elongation and cellularization during n.c. 14. In this study, we defined one early-mid
234 stage (corresponding to 0 to 35min of the n.c. 14 from the mitosis) and one mid-late stage (corresponding to 35 to
235 55min of the n.c. 14 from the mitosis). (B) (top) Schematic of a sagittal view of a *Drosophila* embryo with *twi*
236 expression pattern in purple. Anterior side is on the left, posterior on the right, dorsal on the top and ventral side
237 on the bottom. Black square represents the imaged area of the bottom panels. (bottom) A single Z-plane of confocal
238 images from smFISH with direct fluorescent protein signal in green (scFv-msGFP2) and MS2 probes (red) on
239 *scFv-msGFP2 x twi_suntag_MS2_CRISPR* embryos at mid-late n.c. 14. Gray squares represent the zoomed images
240 in the right panels. The three different zoomed images represent external (top), border (middle) and internal
241 (bottom) zone of the imaged pattern. Scale bars are 10 μ m on the larger images, and 5 μ m on the zoomed images.
242 Staging is given by DAPI staining on a sagittal view of the imaged embryo (black and white image at the bottom).
243 (C) Schematic representing *twi_suntag_MS2_CRISPR* mRNA expression from n.c. 13 to late n.c. 14 in red. From
244 the observations on *twi* CRISPR translation (b), two hypotheses can be considered. Hypothesis 1 is that the
245 decrease of translation observed at mid-late n.c. 14 is due to an active repression of translation. Hypothesis 2 is
246 that the amount of scFv-FP becomes limiting at mid-late n.c. 14, leading to an arrest of the detected green signal.
247 These two hypotheses are represented in the context of *twi_suntag_MS2_CRISPR* expression (above) and
248 *twi_suntag_transgene* expression (below). *twi_suntag_transgene* mRNA is expressed more stochastically and
249 later than *twi_suntag_MS2_CRISPR* mRNA. In hypothesis 1, a decrease of translation should be simultaneously
250 observed for the two constructs (mid-late n.c. 14). In hypothesis 2, no arrest of translation should be observed with
251 *twi_suntag_transgene* as the amount of mRNA is lower. (D) Snapshots each 15 minutes from movies of *scFv-*
252 *msGFP2 x twi_suntag_MS2_CRISPR* or *scFv-msGFP2 x twi_suntag_transgene* embryos on the ventral side. T0
253 correspond to early n.c.14. White squares represent the zoomed images in the center of the panel. Note a persistence
254 of translation for the *twi_suntag_transgene* at T0+45min (white arrowhead), absent in *twi_suntag_MS2_CRISPR*
255 embryos. Scale bars are 10 μ m on the larger images, and 5 μ m on the zoomed images. (See related Movies S13-
256 14). (E) (top) Schematic of a sagittal view of a *Drosophila* embryo with *twi* expression pattern in purple. Anterior
257 side is on the left, posterior on the right, dorsal on the top and ventral side on the bottom. Black square represents
258 the imaged area of the bottom panels. (bottom) Single Z-planes of confocal images from immuno-smFISH with
259 anti-GCN4 antibody (cyan) and MS2 probes (red) on *twi_suntag_MS2* embryos at mid-late n.c. 14. Gray squares
260 represent the zoomed images in the right panels. The three different zoomed images represent external (top), border
261 (middle) and internal (bottom) zone of the imaged pattern. Scale bars are 10 μ m on the larger images, and 5 μ m on
262 the zoomed images. Staging is given by DAPI staining on a sagittal view of the imaged embryo (black and white
263 image at the bottom).

264

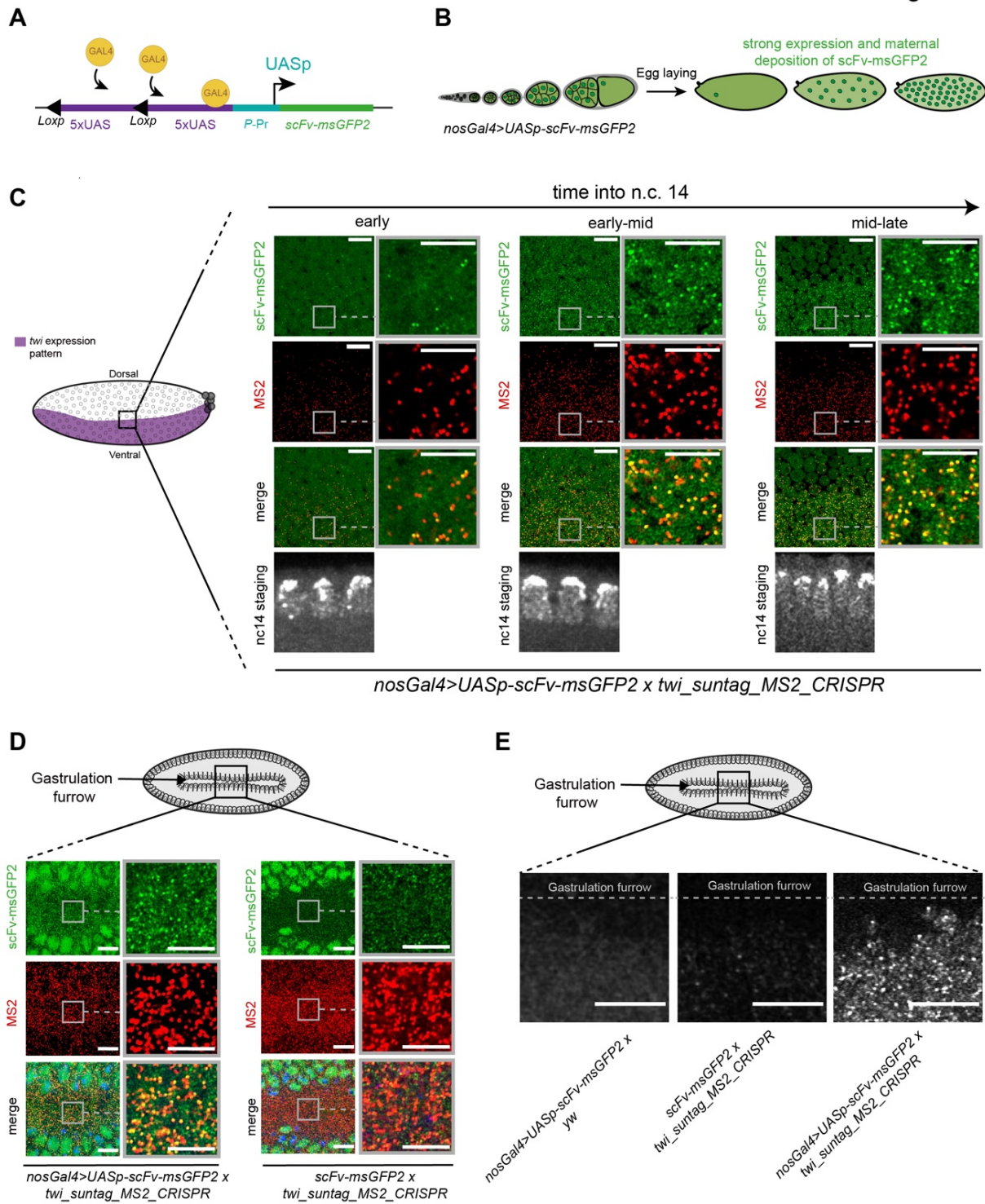
265 **Inducible scFv-FP allows imaging of translation during embryogenesis**

266 To overtake the limitation of scFv-FP amount and allow the sustained imaging of *twi* translation
267 from egg laying to gastrulation, we used the UAS/Gal4 system to increase the expression of
268 scFv-FP during oogenesis. We generated four lines with the different *scFv-FPs* downstream of
269 a *UASp* promoter (Figure 3A and S5A) and crossed these with the maternal *nos-Gal4* driver
270 (Figure 3B) to allow expression of the scFv-FPs. No aggregation and a higher scFv-FP signal
271 were observed in live embryos (Figure S5A, Movie S16-19 and see methods). Next, we asked
272 if using this system would allow detection of *twi* translation until late n.c. 14 and gastrulation
273 stage. In *twi_suntag_MS2_CRISPR* embryos with maternally provided *nos-Gal4>UASp-scFv-*
274 *msGFP2* we saw that *twi* mRNA was translated throughout n.c.14 (Figure 3C), even in the most
275 ventral part of the embryo, at the center of the *twi* domain of expression (Figure 3C). However,
276 we were not able to detect small dots of scFv-FP, most likely corresponding to individual
277 mature proteins, probably due to the lower signal to noise ratio, because of the increased levels
278 of *scFv-msGFP2*. We also observed translation dots at the gastrulation stage in fixed
279 *twi_suntag_MS2_CRISPR* embryos with *nos-Gal4>UASp-scFv-msGFP2* (Figure 3D left
280 panels) but not with *EPr-scFv-msGFP2* (Figure 3D right panels). Similar results were observed
281 with live imaging, where *twi_suntag_MS2_CRISPR* mRNAs were translated until gastrulation
282 with *nos-Gal4>UASp-scFv-msGFP2* (Figure 3E and Movie S20) but not with *EPr-scFv-*
283 *msGFP2* or, in the control, in the absence of *twi_suntag_MS2_CRISPR* mRNAs (Figure 3E and
284 Movie S20).

285 The *UASp* promoter is used to drive expression in the germline but is less efficient in the somatic
286 tissues⁴⁹. On the contrary, the *UASt* containing *HSP70* promoter drives expression in the
287 somatic tissue⁵⁰. Recently, the *UASt* promoter has been modified to obtain a promoter, called

288 *UASz*, to drive expression in both somatic and germline tissues⁵¹. Due to the high amount of
289 free scFv observed with the *UASp-FP* lines, we generated a new promoter derived from the
290 *UASz*, in which we removed the translational enhancer *IVS-Syn2I*⁵¹ to prevent oversaturation
291 of free scFv-FP (Figure S5B). This new promoter named *UASy* was fused to the *scFv-msGFP2*
292 and crossed with the *nos-Gal4* driver line. As all the other constructs generated in this study,
293 *nos-Gal4>UASy-scFv-msGFP2* alone does not lead to aggregates during early embryogenesis
294 (Figure S5C and Movie S21). Unfortunately, when we analyzed the translation of
295 *twi_suntag_MS2_CRISPR* mRNA at the end of n.c. 14, we observed a similar pattern - although
296 less pronounced - as with *scFv-msGFP2* where translation was mostly present at the border of
297 *twi* pattern (Figure S5D), likely due to the weaker expression of the *UASy* compared to *UASp*
298 promoters and consequent depletion of scFv in the central mesoderm. Maternal expression of
299 the scFv-FP constructs limits our ability to observe translational dynamics at later stages in
300 development. To overcome this, we crossed *UASy-scFv-msGFP2* with an early zygotic *nullo-*
301 *Gal4* driver to express throughout the embryo. This revealed scFv-msGFP2 expression at the
302 beginning of gastrulation (Movie S22) and a strong and homogeneous expression in somatic
303 tissues of later embryos (Figure S5E). We conclude that the *nos-Gal4>UASp-scFv-FP*
304 represents a good tool to image translation from early embryogenesis to gastrulation stage and
305 that the new *UASy-scFv-msGFP2* will enable the imaging of translation in somatic cells at later
306 stages.

Figure 3



307 **Figure 3: Increasing scFv-FP expression allows translation detection at later stages**

308 (A) Schematic of *UAS-scFv-msGFP2* construct and activation by the Gal4 protein. 10 UAS sequences (purple)
 309 are placed upstream the P-promoter (blue) and scFv-msGFP2 (green) sequences. Gal4 proteins (yellow) will bind
 310 the UAS sequences to activate transcription of the scFv-msGFP2. (B) Schematic of the expression of the *scFv-*
 311 *msGFP2* in *nosGal4>UAS-scFv-msGFP2* female strain during oogenesis until egg deposition. (C) (left)
 312 Schematic of a sagittal view of a *Drosophila* embryo with *twi* expression pattern in purple. Anterior side is on the
 313 left, posterior on the right, dorsal on the top and ventral side on the bottom. Black square represents the imaged
 314 area of the right panels. Single Z-planes of confocal images from smFISH with direct scFv-msGFP2 fluorescent
 315 protein signal (green) and MS2 probes (red) on *nosGal4>UAS-scFv-msGFP2 x twi_suntag_MS2_CRISPR*

316 embryos in early, early-mid and mid-late n.c. 14. Gray squares represent the zoomed images in for each panel. The
317 three different zoomed images represent external (top), border (middle) and internal (bottom) zone of the imaged
318 pattern. Nuclei are counterstained with DAPI (grey, bottom images) for staging. Scale bars are 10 μ m on the larger
319 images, and 5 μ m on the zoomed images. (D) (top) Schematic of a *Drosophila* embryo on the ventral side with
320 gastrulation furrow represented with invaginating cells. Black square represents the imaged area of the bottom
321 panels. (bottom) Single Z-planes of confocal images from smFISH with direct scFv-msGFP2 fluorescent protein
322 signal (green) and MS2 probes (red) on *nosGal4>UASp-scFv-msGFP2 x twi_suntag_MS2_CRISPR* and *scFv-*
323 *msGFP2 x twi_suntag_MS2_CRISPR* embryos at gastrulation stage and on the ventral side. Scale bars are 10 μ m
324 on the larger images, and 5 μ m on the zoomed images. Note that translation dots are visible only with
325 *nosGal4>UASp-scFv-msGFP2*. (E) (top) Schematic of a *Drosophila* embryo on the ventral side with gastrulation
326 furrow represented with invaginating cells. Black square represents the imaged area of the bottom panels. (bottom)
327 Single Z-planes of confocal images from movie of *scFv-msGFP2 x yw*, *scFv-msGFP2 x twi_suntag_MS2_CRISPR*
328 and *nosGal4>UASp-scFv-msGFP2 x twi_suntag_MS2_CRISPR* embryos at gastrulation stage (furrow represented
329 with grey dashed line). Scale bars are 10 μ m. (See related Movie S20).

330

331 **Development of the ALFA_array system to monitor translation**

332 After having optimized scFv-FP-based detector, we sought to generate an optimized
333 orthologous system to the SunTag to allow the detection of translation of two different RNA
334 species. To this end, we searched for a highly specific nanobody/tag couple and decided to use
335 the recently developed ALFA-Tag⁵². The ALFA-Tag is a small peptide that harbors several
336 advantages: its synthetic sequence is absent from the proteome of most studied model
337 organisms, its sequence is smaller than that of the SunTag sequence (15 amino acid compare to
338 19, respectively Figure 4A), it is monovalent, hydrophilic and was effective in *Drosophila* for
339 protein manipulation⁵³. Finally, the nanobody anti-ALFA detector (NB-ALFA) is smaller than
340 the scFv (Figure 4B), is quite soluble and displays a strong binding affinity for the ALFA-Tag
341 (measured at 26pM)⁵². Taking advantage of these properties, we multimerized the ALFA-Tag
342 sequences to create a 12X and 32x_ALFA-array. Each ALFA-tag sequence was flanked by a
343 proline, to reduce potential influence of neighboring secondary structures, and a spacer of 5
344 amino acid (GSGSG) to minimize steric hindrance of neighboring peptide binding sites (Figure
345 4A, C). The NB-ALFA was fused to the msGFP2 and to the GB1 solubilization tag (also used
346 for the scFv) to avoid potential aggregation caused by the multimerization of ALFA-tag
347 sequences. Finally, we generated a *Drosophila* line with the *NB-ALFA-msGFP2* under the
348 control of *nos* EPr (*NB-ALFA-msGFP2*). The system was also tested in mammalian cells (see
349 below).

350 To study translation in *Drosophila* embryos using the 32x ALFA-Array system, we chose to
351 tag the *Ilp4* gene for its small size. We reasoned that if we could visualize translation with a
352 very short transcript/protein, it may be possible for longer ones. A 32x_ALFA-array was
353 inserted between the *Ilp4* initiation codon and *Ilp4* gene body, appended with *Ilp4* UTRs and
354 *Ilp4* EPr (*Ilp4_32x_ALFA-Array*, Figure 4D). With immuno-smFISH we found that the
355 *Ilp4_32x_ALFA-Array* was expressed in the mesoderm of early *Drosophila* embryos (Figure
356 S6A) consistent with previous reports for *Ilp4*⁴⁷. The anti-ALFA formed bright dots specifically
357 colocalizing with *Ilp4_32x_ALFA-Array* mRNAs representing foci of translation (Figure S6B-
358 C), while the *Ilp4_32x_ALFA-Array* was not recognized by the anti-GCN4 antibody (Figure
359 S6A).

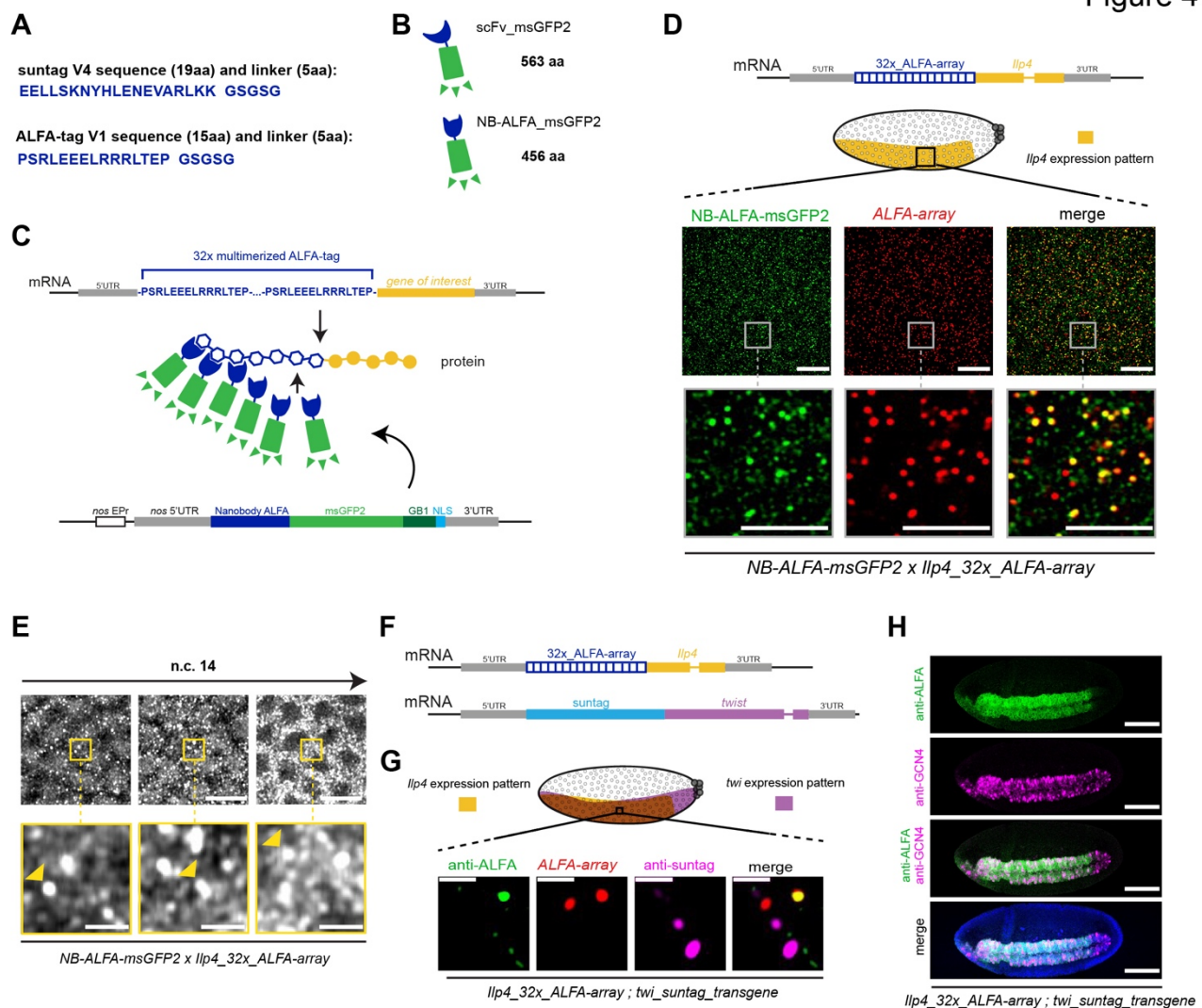
360 We first confirmed by live imaging that the *NB-ALFA-msGFP2* strain is expressed during
361 embryonic development until the end of n.c.14, that it was mainly localized to the nucleus, and
362 that it did not form any aggregates (Figure S6D and Movie S23). The *Ilp4_32x_ALFA-Array*
363 was crossed with *NB-ALFA-msGFP2* and the resulting embryos showed bright GFP spots
364 overlapping with *Ilp4_32x_ALFA-Array* mRNAs (Figure 4D), showing the ability of NB-
365 ALFA-msGFP2 to bind 32x_ALFA-Array *in vivo*. Next, we monitored translation in live
366 embryos and observed bright GFP dots appearing on the ventral side of the embryo (Figure 4E
367 and Movie S24). The signal was restricted to the mesoderm during n.c.14 (Figure S6E and
368 Movie S25) and became more restricted to the ventral furrow during gastrulation (Figure S6F

369 and Movie S25), demonstrating the specificity of the signal detection. Thus, the
 370 *Ilp4_32x_ALFA-Array* - NB-ALFA-msGFP2 system is a useful alternate tool to detect mRNA
 371 translation during early embryogenesis. To test if we use this system to image translation of
 372 two distinct mRNA species in the same embryo, the *Ilp4_32x_ALFA-Array* was crossed with
 373 the *twi_suntag_transgene* (Figure 4F). Using immuno-smFISH in n.c.14 embryos, we observed
 374 the two overlapping expression patterns of *Twi* and *Ilp4* as well as the posterior region where
 375 only *Twi* is present (Figure S6G). With higher resolution images, we could visualize single
 376 molecules of *Ilp4* mRNA in translation well distinct from *twi* mRNA translation dots (Figure
 377 4G). Furthermore, we were able to distinguish the localization of *Ilp4* protein in the cytoplasm
 378 from *Twi* protein in the nucleus (Figure 4H).

379 Together, these results demonstrate that the 32x_ALFA-array can be used in conjunction with
 380 the SunTag system to study translation of two different mRNAs and their protein localization
 381 during early embryogenesis.

382

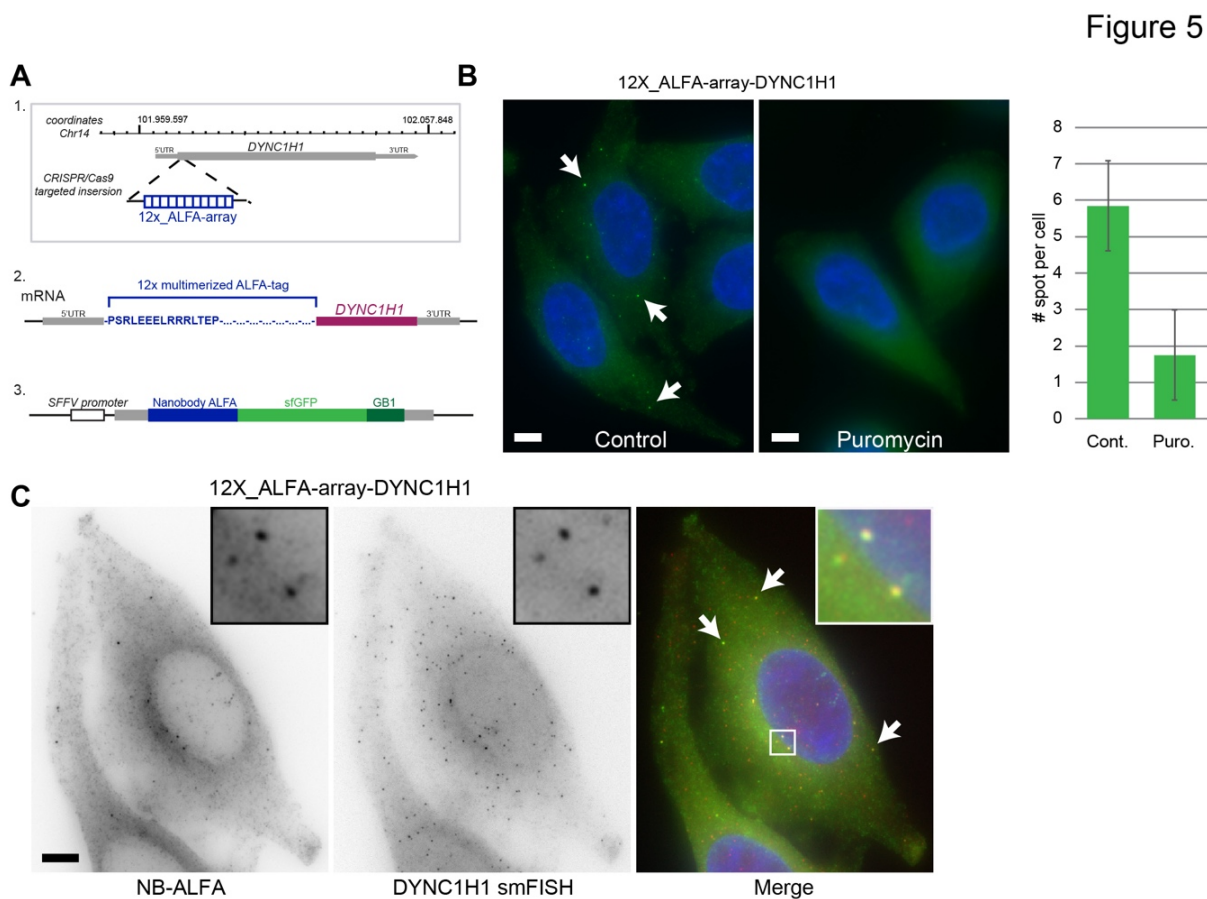
Figure 4



383 **Figure 4: Development of the ALFA_array system to detect nascent translation in *Drosophila***
 384 (A) Peptide sequence of one suntag with its linker (24 amino-acids) and peptide sequence of the ALFA-tag with
 385 its linker (20 amino-acids). (B) Schematic of the scFv and the nanobody ALFA (NB-ALFA) fused to the
 386 fluorescent protein msGFP2 and their size in amino-acid (aa). (C) Schematic of the ALFA-array system developed
 387 in this study to detect translation. 32 ALFA-tag sequences were multimerized (blue amino-acid sequence) and
 388 inserted at the 5' of the gene of interest sequence (yellow). Upon translation, nanobodies ALFA fused to msGFP2
 389 (NB-ALFA_msGFP2) will bind to the ALFA-tag peptides. As a bipartite system, the NB-ALFA is expressed

390 under *nos* EPr fused to *msGFP2*, *Streptococcal protein G* (*GB1*) domain and a *Nuclear Localisation Signal* (*NLS*).
391 **(D)** Representation of the transgene mRNA containing 32x_ALFA-array in frame with the *insulin-like peptide 4*
392 (*Ilp4*) gene sequence. Schematic of a sagittal view of a *Drosophila* embryo with *Ilp4* expression pattern in yellow.
393 Anterior side is on the left, posterior on the right, dorsal on the top and ventral side on the bottom. Black square
394 represents the imaged area of the bottom panels. One Z-plane of confocal images from smFISH with direct Nb-
395 ALFA-*msGFP2* fluorescent protein signal (green) and 32x_ALFA-array probes (red) on *NB-ALFA_msGFP2>Ilp4_32x_ALFA-array*
396 embryos in early-mid n.c. 14 on the ventral side. Scale bars are 10µm on the larger images, and 5µm on the zoomed images. **(E)** Snapshots from representative fast-mode acquired confocal
397 movies of *Ilp4_32x_ALFA-array/+* n.c. 14 embryos carrying *NB-ALFA_msGFP2*. Bright white foci represent
398 nascent translation of *Ilp4* transgene. Yellow squares represent zoomed images of the top panels. Nascent
399 translation of *Ilp4* transgene is indicated by yellow arrowheads. Scale bars are 10µm on the larger images, and
400 2µm on the zoomed images. (See related Movies S24). **(F)** Representation of the transgene mRNAs containing
401 32x_ALFA-array fused to *Ilp4* coding sequence or *suntag* fused to *twist* coding sequence used in (G) and (H). **(G)**
402 Schematic of a *Drosophila* embryo on the ventral side with *twi* expression pattern in purple and *Ilp4* in yellow.
403 Black square represents the imaged area of the bottom panels. One Z-plane of confocal images from immuno-
404 smFISH with *NB-ALFA_msGFP2* (green) labeling nascent translation of *Ilp4_32x_ALFA-array*, probes against
405 32x_ALFA-array (red) labeling *Ilp4_32x_ALFA-array* mRNA molecules and anti-GCN4 antibody labeling
406 nascent translation of *twi_suntag_transgene* (magenta) in n.c. 14 embryos. Scale bars are 1µm. **(H)** Maximum
407 intensity projection of a whole embryo confocal images from immuno-staining with anti-ALFA antibody (green)
408 and anti-GCN4 antibody (magenta) on *Ilp4_32x_ALFA-array; twi_suntag_transgene* gastrulating embryo. Scale
409 bars are 100µm.
410

411
412 To test the performance of the ALFA-tag labeling system to image translation in a different
413 model, we turned to mammalian cells. We generated HeLa cells expressing a NB-ALFA-sfGFP
414 recombinant nanobody and then inserted a 12xALFA-Array repetition at the N-terminus of the
415 DYNC1H1 gene by CRISPR-mediated knock-in (Figure 5A), as previously done for the
416 SunTag¹. Heterozygous clones were obtained and imaged with and without a thirty-minute
417 puromycin treatment to inhibit translation. In untreated cells, bright foci were observed in the
418 cytoplasm, which disappeared following puromycin addition (Figure 5B). In addition, smFISH
419 against the endogenous DYNC1H1 mRNAs revealed that the bright ALFA-tag foci colocalized
420 with mRNA spots (Figure 5C), confirming that these correspond to DYNC1H1 polysomes. The
421 quality of the signal obtained with only 12 repeats of the ALFA-tag demonstrates the efficiency
422 of this labeling system to image translation.



423
 424 **Figure 5: Development of the ALFA array system to detect nascent translation in mammalian cells**
 425 (A) (1.) Schematic of the CRISPR/Cas9 targeted insertion strategy to obtain endogenous *DYNC1H1* gene tagged
 426 with 12X ALFA-tag. (2.) Schematic of the ALFA-array system developed in mammalian cells. 12 ALFA-tag
 427 sequences were multimerized (blue amino-acid sequence) and inserted at the 5' of the gene of interest sequence
 428 (*DYNC1H1*, yellow). (3.) The NB-ALFA is expressed under *spleen focus-forming virus (SFFV)* promoter fused
 429 to *sfGFP* and *Streptococcal protein G (GB1)* domain. (B) Left: micrographs of HeLa cells expressing a *DYNC1H1*
 430 allele endogenously tagged 12xALFA-Array tag and NB-ALFA-sfGFP, and treated (right) or not (left) with
 431 puromycin. Green: NB-ALFA-sfGFP signal; blue: DAPI. Scale bars are 5 μ m. Arrows: NB-ALFA-sfGFP spots.
 432 Right: quantification of the number of NB-ALFA-sfGFP spots per cell, with and without puromycin treatment.
 433 Error bars: standard deviation (n=40 cells). (C) Micrographs of HeLa cells expressing a *DYNC1H1* allele
 434 endogenously tagged 12xALFA-Array tag and NB-ALFA-sfGFP, and hybridized in situ with a set of probes
 435 against *DYNC1H1* mRNAs. On the merged panel: NB-ALFA-sfGFP signal (green); smFISH signals (red); DAPI
 436 (blue). Scale bar is 5 μ m. Arrows: *DYNC1H1* polysomes.

437
 438 **Discussion**

439 Amplification of biological signals is crucial to study many biological processes with a high
 440 spatio-temporal resolution and single-mRNA-molecule sensitivity. Live imaging of translation
 441 at single molecule resolution is a relatively recent technology implemented in 2016 in tissue
 442 culture and in 2021 in multicellular organisms. In this study, we provide a powerful toolbox to
 443 image translation in living cells and organisms. We will discuss some of the limitations and
 444 challenges that need to be considered to obtain robust and reliable results.

445 Our data show that the choice of the fluorescent protein is a key element for the signal quality
 446 of translation imaging-based systems. The development of fluorescent proteins is a very rapidly
 447 evolving field and FP-based tools need to be updated to optimize their use. Often, the choice of
 448 the FP needs to be empirically defined for each cell type, tissue or organism studied. Local
 449 translation of specific mRNAs is an important biological process to control gene expression in

450 space and time. To obtain quantitative answers it is necessary to precisely resolve the location
451 of mRNAs and where their translation occurs. In the present experimental designs, with the
452 orthologous scFv and the NB-ALFA, the use of secondary antibodies can confound signal
453 interpretation as they appear to bind the scFv and NB-ALFA fusion. This recognition may be
454 due to the linker and GB1 sequences added, as a recent study in plants, which used Western-
455 blot analysis, showed a strong affinity between GB1 and IgG⁵⁴. To combine translation imaging
456 with immunofluorescence, a solution to this problem would be directly linking a fluorophore to
457 a primary antibody.

458 An important aspect in imaging live embryos or tissues is signal amplification to increase the
459 signal-to-noise ratio. Indeed, in systems like the MS2/MCP, llama-Tag/Fluorescent protein⁵⁵ or
460 scFv/SunTag and their derivatives, the signal appears by local specific accumulation of
461 fluorescent detector, over a diffuse background of molecules freely diffusing in the cells. To
462 improve the signal-to-noise ratio, one can reduce the available free fluorescent detector and
463 therefore the background using weak promoters or targeting the free fluorescent detector to
464 other cellular compartments such as the nucleus, or specific organelles for cytoplasmic analysis.
465 However, one should be careful that the availability of these fluorescent detector does not
466 become limiting as more and more RNAs and proteins are produced during development. As
467 we illustrate here, the available concentration of the detector can be a major challenge in
468 developing organisms, especially when the source of the detector is controlled by an
469 endogenous promoter and when the amount of template mRNA in translation is important. This
470 limitation can also be particularly important when a burst of translation occurs such as during
471 viral infection^{14,15}. We provide a direct example for detector limitation during early
472 embryogenesis. Here, early activated genes such as *twist* are highly and rapidly transcribed and
473 translated leading to rapid depletion of free detector. We demonstrate the importance of
474 distinguishing between detector depletion and cessation of translation by validating the results
475 with direct immunostaining against the tag of choice. We also show that increasing the
476 expression of the detector can overcome the detection problem but will reduce the signal-to-
477 noise ratio and has thus to be taken into consideration for the specific experimental design. To
478 reach conditions that can most accurately capture the dynamics of translation, diverse *UAS*
479 promoters together with a variety of available Gal4 drivers should be tested depending on the
480 tissue of interest and the expression level of the tagged gene.

481 Studies on mRNA localization and local translation have speculated that different mRNAs
482 species may be translationally co-regulated⁵⁶⁻⁵⁸. To obtain independent translational readouts
483 of different mRNA simultaneously, one can combine orthogonal tagging systems. In Boersma
484 et al., the authors inserted the MoonTag and the SunTag¹⁶ into different translational reading
485 frames of the same RNA. This allowed them to observe in real time heterogeneities in the start
486 site selection of individual ribosomes on a single mRNA molecule. Here, we introduce a new
487 antibody-based detector/tag pair to image translation in living cells and organisms based on
488 multimerization of the ALFA-Tag. The ALFA-array system has a number of advantages: i) it
489 comes from synthetic design and its sequence is thus absent from most organisms; ii) the tag is
490 small, soluble, hydrophilic and lacks aldehydes-sensitive amino acids altered by fixation; iii)
491 the detection is made by a nanobody, which is small and soluble, and has a very strong affinity
492 for the ALFA-Tag (K_d of 27pM), which favorably compares to the MoonTag (K_d of 30 nM)¹⁶.
493 The new translation imaging system described in this study should be applicable to many
494 different organisms to follow localization and control of protein translation. Moreover, the
495 availability of several orthogonal systems will allow to better analyze of the complexity of
496 translation dynamics by simultaneously comparing several mRNA in diverse cellular
497 environments and conditions. The wide range of applications of the ALFA-array system,
498 coupled with other antibody-based translation detector, provides to the scientific community a
499 highly versatile toolbox that will facilitate future scientific breakthroughs.

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Online methods

Reagents created in this study

Reagent type	Genotype	Insertion type and chromosome number	Additional information
<i>Drosophila</i> line	<i>nosEPr > scFv-msGFP2</i>	Landing site insertion vk33 – Chr. III	mini-white marker, plasmid also available (in pBPhi vector)
<i>Drosophila</i> line	<i>nosEPr > scFv-GL</i>	Landing site insertion vk33 – Chr. III	mini-white marker, plasmid also available (in pBPhi vector)
<i>Drosophila</i> line	<i>nosEPr > scFv-mNeonGreen</i>	Landing site insertion vk33 – Chr. III	mini-white marker, plasmid also available (in pBPhi vector)
<i>Drosophila</i> line	<i>nosEPr > scFv-mAvic1</i>	Landing site insertion vk33 – Chr. III	mini-white marker, plasmid also available (in pBPhi vector)
<i>Drosophila</i> line	<i>nosEPr > scFv-msGFP2</i>	Landing site insertion vk27 – Chr. II	mini-white marker, plasmid also available (in pBPhi vector)
<i>Drosophila</i> line	<i>nosEPr > scFv-GL</i>	Landing site insertion vk27 – Chr. II	mini-white marker, plasmid also available (in pBPhi vector)
<i>Drosophila</i> line	<i>nosEPr > scFv-mNeonGreen</i>	Landing site insertion vk27 – Chr. II	mini-white marker, plasmid also available (in pBPhi vector)
<i>Drosophila</i> line	<i>nosEPr > scFv-mAvic1</i>	Landing site insertion vk27 – Chr. II	mini-white marker, plasmid also available (in pBPhi vector)
<i>Drosophila</i> line	<i>UASp > scFv-msGFP2</i>	Landing site insertion vk33 – Chr. III	mini-white marker, plasmid also available (in pBPhi vector)
<i>Drosophila</i> line	<i>UASp > scFv-GL</i>	Landing site insertion vk33 – Chr. III	mini-white marker, plasmid also available (in pBPhi vector)
<i>Drosophila</i> line	<i>UASp > scFv-mNeonGreen</i>	Landing site insertion vk33 – Chr. III	mini-white marker, plasmid also available (in pBPhi vector)

<i>Drosophila</i> line	<i>UASp > scFv-mAvic1</i>	Landing site insertion vk33 – Chr. III	mini-white marker, plasmid also available (in pBPhi vector)
<i>Drosophila</i> line	<i>UASy > scFv-msGFP2</i>	Landing site insertion - vk33 Chr. III	mini-white marker, plasmid also available (in pBPhi vector)
<i>Drosophila</i> line	<i>nosEPr > NB-ALFA-msGFP2</i>	Landing site insertion - vk33 Chr. III	mini-white marker, plasmid also available (in pBPhi vector)
<i>Drosophila</i> line	<i>Ilp4_32x_ALFA-Array</i>	Landing site insertion - vk33 Chr. III	mini-white marker, plasmid also available (in pBPhi vector)
DNA plasmid	NB-ALFA in pUC57-Simple	N/A	Synthesized by Genescript, codon optimized
DNA plasmid	ALFA-Array in pUC57-Simple	N/A	Synthesized by Genescript, with linker GSGSG and codon optimized
DNA plasmid	pMT-SuntagRLucFKBP24MS2v5-SV40	N/A	Used in S2 cell experiments
DNA plasmid	pAWF-stdMCP-stdHalotag	N/A	Used in S2 cell experiments
DNA plasmid	pAWF-scFv-msGFP2	N/A	Used in S2 cell experiments
DNA plasmid	pAWF-scFv-sfGFP	N/A	Used in S2 cell experiments
DNA plasmid	12xALFA-Array for CRISPR tagging DYNC1H1	N/A	Used for HeLa cells experiments
DNA plasmid	NB-ALFA-sfGFP in pHR	N/A	Used for HeLa cells experiments

507

508 **Fly stocks, handling and genetics**

509 The *yw* fly stock was used as a wild type. The germline driver *nos-Gal4:VP16* (BL4937) and
 510 the *His2av-mRFP* (B123651) fly stocks come from Bloomington Drosophila Stock Center. The
 511 *nullo-Gal4* fly stock comes from RL laboratory. The *twi_suntag_MS2_CRISPR* and
 512 *twi_suntag_transgene* lines were from⁷. Briefly, the 32x *suntag* sequence from⁵⁹ (containing
 513 thirty three *suntag* repeats) was inserted in frame into *twi* gene⁷ and 128X MS2 from²⁸ placed
 514 just after the stop codon. All live experiments were done at 21 °C except when using - or
 515 comparing to - strains containing UAS-GAL4 which were done at 25 °C.

516

517 **Cloning and transgenesis**

518 *scFv-FP* under *nanos* enhancer-promoter (EPr) lines were generated using NEBuilder® HiFi
 519 DNA Assembly Master Mix with primers listed in supplementary table 1 and inserted into *scFv-*
 520 *sfGFP* vector⁷ digested with BamHI/XhoI. The transgenic construct was inserted into the
 521 VK00033 (BL9750) and VK00027 (BL9744) landing site using PhiC31 targeted insertion⁶⁰.
 522 *UASp-scFv-FP* lines were done by inserting fragment of the *scFv-FP* plasmid digested with
 523 XhoI/HpaI in the *UASp-scFv-sfGFP* vector⁶ digested with XhoI/HpaI. The transgenic construct

524 was inserted in the VK00033 (BL9750) landing site using PhiC31 targeted insertion⁶⁰.
525 Fluorescent proteins were extracted from plasmids: mAvicFP1 from pNCST-mAvicFP1
526 (addgene 129509), mGreenLantern from pcDNA3.1-mGreenLantern (addgene 161912),
527 msGFP2 (addgene 160461), mNeonGreen is a kind gift from S.Piatti. The Ilp4 transgene
528 (regulatory regions and coding sequence) was synthesized (GenScript Biotech) into pUC57-
529 simple⁷. The 32x_ALFA_array repeats were synthesized (GenScript Biotech) into pUC57-
530 simple (see supplementary materials). The 32x_ALFA_array was inserted between KpnI and
531 EcoRV restriction sites of the Ilp4 puc57-simple vector. Ilp4-ALFA_array fragment was
532 inserted into pBPhi using PmeI and NheI and injected into BL9750 using PhiC31 targeted
533 insertion⁶⁰ (BestGene, Inc.). All cloning for plasmids used in *Drosophila* S2 cells were
534 performed using In-Fusion® HD Cloning Plus Kit (Takara Bio) and PCR was carried out with
535 CloneAmp HiFi PCR premix (Takara Bio). Primers used are listed in supplementary table 1.
536 To inducibly express SunTag in S2 cells, we generated pMT-SuntagRLucFKBP24MS2v5-
537 SV40 by inserting SuntagRLucFKBP24MS2v5 fragment (addgene 119946) into pMT
538 backbone that was PCR-amplified from pMT-EGFPActin5C (addgene 15312) with In-Fusion®
539 HD Cloning Plus Kit. For constitutive expression in S2 cells, pAWF (DGRC stock # 1112) was
540 used as an expression vector. pAWF-stdMCP-stdHalotag was generated by inserting stdMCP-
541 stdHalotag (addgene 104999) into PCR-linearized pAWF vector using In-Fusion® HD Cloning
542 Plus Kit. To generate pAWF-scFv-FPs, sequences containing scFv fused to various fluorescent
543 proteins and GB1-NLS were amplified from *scFv-FP* under *nanos* enhancer promoter plasmids
544 generated for in this article and ligated with PCR-linearized pAWF vector using In-Fusion®
545 HD Cloning Plus Kit. All plasmid sequences are listed in supplementary materials.

546

547 **Single molecule fluorescence *in situ* hybridization (smFISH) and immuno-smFISH in** 548 ***Drosophila***

549 A pool of 0-4h after egg-laying (AEL) embryos were dechorionated with bleach for 3 min and
550 thoroughly rinsed with H₂O. They were fixed in 1:1 heptane:formaldehyde-10% for 25 min on
551 a shaker at 450 rpm; formaldehyde was replaced by methanol and embryos were shaken by
552 hand for 1 min. Embryos that sank to the bottom of the tube were rinsed three times with
553 methanol and kept at -20°C for further use.

554 Embryos were washed 5 min in 1:1 methanol:ethanol, rinsed twice with ethanol 100%, washed
555 5 min twice in ethanol 100%, rinsed twice in methanol, washed 5 min once in methanol, rinsed
556 twice in PBT-RNasin (PBS 1x, 0.1% tween, RNasin® Ribonuclease Inhibitors). Next, embryos
557 were washed 4 times for 15 min in PBT-RNasin supplemented with 0.5% ultrapure BSA and
558 then once 20 min in Wash Buffer (10% 20X SCC, 10% Formamide). They were then incubated
559 overnight at 37 °C in Hybridization Buffer (10% Formamide, 10% 20x SSC, 400 µg/ml *E. coli*
560 tRNA (New England Biolabs), 5% dextran sulfate, 1% vanadyl ribonucleoside complex (VRC)
561 and smFISH Stellaris probes against *suntag*⁷ or 32x_ALFA_array coupled to Quasar 570
562 (supplementary table 1) or probes against 32X MS2 coupled to Cy3 (from E. Bertrand)⁶¹ and/or
563 GCN4 primary antibody (Novus Biologicals C11L34) (1/200) and/or affinity purified rabbit
564 anti-ALFA polyclonal antibody (NanoTag Biotechnologies) (1/200). Probe sequences are listed
565 in Supplementary table 1. The next day, secondary antibody (1/500 anti-mouse Alexa 488-
566 conjugated (Life Technologies, A21202); anti-mouse Alexa 647-conjugated (Invitrogen,
567 A32728); anti-rabbit Alexa 555-conjugated (Life Technologies, A31572) or anti-rabbit Alexa
568 488-conjugated (Life Technologies, A21206)) was added if necessary, during 1h at 37° in Wash
569 Buffer. DAPI was added at 45min (1/1000). Embryos were then washed three times 15min in
570 2x SCC, 0.1% Tween at room temperature before being mounted in ProLong® Diamond
571 antifade reagent.

572 Images were acquired using a Zeiss LSM880 confocal microscope with an Airyscan detector
573 in Super Resolution (SR) mode. GFP/Alexa-488 was excited using a 488 nm laser, Cy3/ were

574 excited using a 561 nm laser, Alexa 670 was excited using a 633 nm laser. Laser powers were:
575 27 μ W for 488nm laser (9 μ W for UAS>nos images), 80 μ W for 561nm laser and 46 μ W for
576 640nm laser. Laser powers were taken under a 10X objective. Figures were prepared with
577 ImageJ (National Institutes of Health), Photoshop (Adobe Systems), and Illustrator (Adobe
578 Systems)

579

580 **Cell culture**

581 *Drosophila* S2R+ cells (DGRC Stock 150) were maintained at 25°C in Schneider's medium
582 containing 10% Fetal Bovine Serum and 1% Penicillin-streptomycin. For the transfection,
583 0.7x10⁶ cells in 350ul were seeded into each well of a 24-well plate. Cells are transfected with
584 plasmid mix of pMT-SuntagRLucDD-MS2 (200ng), pAWF-MCP-Halotag (5ng), pAWF-scFv-
585 FP (10ng) using effectene transfection reagent. 24h after transfection, cells were first incubated
586 with Schneider's medium containing 200 nM Janelia Fluor® 594 HaloTag® Ligand (Promega
587 GA1110) for 15min and then switched to medium with 1 mM CuSO₄ for 1h or 3h to induce
588 expression of pMT construct.

589 HeLa cells were maintained in DMEM supplemented with 10% FBS, 10 U/ml
590 penicillin/streptomycin and 2.9 mg/ml glutamine in a humidified CO₂ incubator at 37°C. For
591 translational inhibition, cells were treated with puromycin at 100 μ g/ml for 30 min. Cells were
592 transfected with JetPrime (Polyplus) and selected on 150 μ g/ml hygromycin. For each stable
593 cell line, several individual clones were picked and screened by smFISH with sets of fluorescent
594 oligonucleotide probes against the integrated sequence. For CRISPR recombination, clones
595 were additionally analyzed by genomic PCR using amplicons specific for the non-recombined
596 or the recombined allele. The CRISPR guide and repair plasmids have been previously⁵⁹. For
597 the repair plasmid, the 12xALFA-Array replaced the SunTag X56 tag.

598 The NB-ALFA-sfGFP was introduced into HeLa cells by retroviral infection. HEK293T cells
599 were transiently transfected with a cocktail of plasmids coding for retroviral components and
600 producing the genomic NB-ALFA-sfGFP retroviral RNAs. Viral particles were collected and
601 used to infect recipient HeLa cells, which were then sorted by FACS. Only lowly expressing
602 cells were selected.

603

604 **Single molecule fluorescence *in situ* hybridization (smFISH) in mammalian cells**

605 Cells were grown on glass coverslips (0.17 mm), washed with PBS, fixed in 4% PFA for 20
606 min, and permeabilized in 70% ethanol overnight at 4°C. Cells were hybridized as previously
607 described²⁶, except that the probes were sets of unlabeled oligonucleotides hybridizing against
608 the target RNA and additionally contained a common supplementary sequence that was
609 preannealed to a fluorescent oligonucleotide probe termed the FLAP⁶². We used sets of 48 for
610 the DYNC1H1 mRNAs⁵⁹. Slides were mounted in Vectashield with DAPI (Vector
611 Laboratories).

612 Fixed cells were imaged at room temperature on an Axioimager Z1 wide-field microscope (63 \times ,
613 NA 1.4; ZEISS) equipped with an sCMOs Zyla 4 0.2 camera (Andor Technology) and
614 controlled by MetaMorph (Universal Imaging). 3D image stacks were collected with a Z-
615 spacing of 0.3 μ m. Figures were prepared with ImageJ (National Institutes of Health),
616 Photoshop (Adobe Systems), and Illustrator (Adobe Systems)

617

618 **Light-Sheet Microscopy**

619 For light-sheet imaging (related to Movie S6-7 and Figures S1D), the MuViSPIM⁶³ (Luxendo,
620 Brüker company GMBH) was employed. This setup provides two-sided illumination with two
621 Nikon 10x/0.3 water objectives and two-sided detection with two Olympus 20x/1.0 W
622 objectives. The lightsheet is created by scanning a Gaussian beam, as in digital scanned laser
623 light-sheet microscopy (DSLIM). We used the line mode which is an in-built synchronization

624 between rolling shutter readout mode of sCMOS cameras and digital light sheets canning. This
625 allows the rejection of out-of-focus and scattered light, thus improving the signal to noise ratio.
626 Images are acquired by two ORCA Flash 4.0 (C91440) from Hamamatsu and processed by
627 LuxControl v1.10.2. A 50ms exposure time was used for the green channel with a 488nm laser.
628 Maximum intensity projections were processed with Fiji⁶⁴.

629

630 **Live imaging of the scFv-FP and NB-ALFA-msGFP2 alone**

631 For all live imaging experiments, embryos were dechorionated with tape and mounted between
632 a hydrophobic membrane and a coverslip as described previously⁶⁵.

633 Movies for scFv-FP (related to Figure S1 and Movie S1-5) and NB-ALFA-msGFP2 under
634 *nanos* promoter (related to Figure S6 and Movie S23) were acquired using a Zeiss LSM880
635 confocal microscope with a Plan-Apochromat 40x/1.3 oil objective lens, with green excitation
636 using a 488nm laser (6 μ w measured with 10x objective lens). A GaAsP detector was used to
637 detect fluorescence with the following settings: 512x 512-pixels images, zoom 2x, each Z-stack
638 comprised of 25 planes spaced 1 μ m apart.

639 Movies for *UASp>scFv-FP* (related to Figure S5, and Movie S16-19) and *UASy>scFv-*
640 *msGFP2* with *nos-Gal4* driver (related to Figure S5 and Movie S21) were acquired using a
641 Zeiss LSM880 confocal microscope with a Plan-Apochromat 40x/1.3 oil objective lens, with
642 green excitation using a 488nm laser (1 μ w measured with 10x objective lens). A GaAsP
643 detector was used to detect fluorescence with the following settings: 512x 512-pixels images,
644 zoom 2x, each Z-stack comprised of 25 planes spaced 1 μ m apart.

645

646 **Live imaging of the scFv-FP and anti-ALFA-msGFP2 in presence of tagged genes**

647 For all live imaging experiments, embryos were dechorionated with tape and mounted between
648 a hydrophobic membrane and a coverslip as described previously⁶⁵.

649 Movies of *scFv-FP>twi_suntag_MS2_CRISPR/+* (related to Figure 1 and Movie S8-12) were
650 acquired using a Zeiss LSM880 with confocal microscope in fast Airyscan mode with a Plan-
651 Apochromat 40x/1.3 oil objective lens. GFP was excited using a 488nm (7 μ w measured with
652 10x objective lens) laser with the following settings: 132x 132-pixel images, each Z-stack
653 comprised of 15 planes spaced 0.5 μ m apart and zoom 8x. Intensity measurement of each
654 polysomes was done on a MIP of 5 planes using a custom-made software written in Python,
655 that performs a spot detection on the MIP raw data stack. For each time frame, the software
656 performs a Laplacian of Gaussian 2D filter and the filtered images are then thresholded with a
657 user defined threshold. The threshold is expressed in terms of the average and standard
658 deviation of intensity values of each image in order to have a threshold value self-re-scaled with
659 respect to the characteristic of the images itself. Spots smaller in size than a user-defined value
660 are removed (considered as fake detection). Finally, for each of the detected spots, we use a 2D
661 expansion of the spots silhouettes in order to define a region around the spots devoided of any
662 other spots and that we can use to estimate background and measure it all along the time
663 evolution for corrections purposes.

664 Movies of *scFv-FP>twi_suntag_MS2_CRISPR/+* and *scFv-msGFP2>twi_suntag_transgene*
665 (related to Figure 2, Figure S4 and Movie S13-15) were acquired using a Zeiss LSM880 with
666 confocal microscope in fast Airyscan mode with a Plan-Apochromat 40x/1.3 oil objective lens.
667 GFP was excited using a 488nm (4.7 μ W measured with 10x objective lens) laser with the
668 following settings: 568x 568-pixel images, each Z-stack comprised of 61 planes spaced 0.5 μ m
669 apart and zoom 2x. Movies were then processed to remove frame outside of the embryos or
670 containing the membrane signal to correct drifting, and processed stacks were maximum
671 intensity projected using custom-made software, developed in Python^{TM7}.

672 Movies of *nos-Gal4>UASp-scFv-msGFP2 x twi_suntag_MS2_CRISPR/+* and *scFv-msGFP2*
673 *x twi_suntag_MS2_CRISPR/+* (related to Figure 3 and Movie S20) were acquired using a Zeiss

674 LSM880 with confocal microscope in fast Airyscan mode with a Plan-Apochromat 40x/1.3 oil
675 objective lens. GFP was excited using a 488nm (5 μ W measured with 10x objective lens) laser
676 with the following settings: 396x 396-pixel images, each Z-stack comprised of 30 planes spaced
677 0.5 μ m apart and zoom 4x.

678 Live tilescreens of *nullo-Gal4>UASy-scFv-msGFP2-NLS* (related to Movie S22) were acquired
679 using a Zeiss LSM880 with confocal microscope in fast Airyscan mode with a Plan-
680 Apochromat 40x/1.3 oil objective lens. GFP was excited using a 488nm (13 μ W measured with
681 10x objective lens) laser with the following settings: 1440 x 2746-pixel images using two tiles,
682 each Z-stack comprised of 9 planes spaced 2 μ m apart and zoom 0.8x.

683 Live tilescreens of *UASy-scFv-msGFP2-NLS/his2Av-RFP* in presence or not of *nullo-Gal4* driver
684 (related to Supplementary Figure S5E) were acquired using a Zeiss LSM880 with confocal
685 microscope in fast Airyscan mode with a Plan-Apochromat 40x/1.3 oil objective lens. GFP was
686 excited using a 488nm (13 μ W measured with 10x objective lens) and RFP was excited using a
687 561nm laser with the following settings: 1024 x 3072-pixel images using three tiles, each Z-
688 stack comprised of 14 planes spaced 2 μ m apart.

689 Movies of NB-ALFA-msGFP2 under *nanos* EPr crossed with *Ilp4_32x_ALFA-array* (related
690 to Figure 4 and Movie S24) were acquired using a Zeiss LSM880 with confocal microscope in
691 fast Airyscan mode with a Plan-Apochromat 40x/1.3 oil objective lens. GFP was excited using
692 a 488nm (6.4 μ W measured with 10x objective lens) laser with the following settings: 256x 256-
693 pixel images, each Z-stack comprised of 6 planes spaced 1 μ m apart and zoom 6x.

694 Live tilescreens of NB-ALFA-msGFP2 under *nanos* EPr crossed with *Ilp4_32x_ALFA-array*
695 (related to Figure S6 and Movie S25) were acquired using a Zeiss LSM880 with confocal
696 microscope in fast Airyscan mode with a Plan-Apochromat 40x/1.3 oil objective lens. GFP was
697 excited using a 488nm (13 μ W measured with 10x objective lens) laser with the following
698 settings: 1612 x 4860-pixel images using 3 tiles, each Z-stack comprised of 9 planes spaced
699 2 μ m apart.

700

701 **S2 cell culture imaging:**

702 Cells were pipetted into a μ -Slide (Ibidi #80621) and live-imaged using a Zeiss LSM980
703 confocal microscope with an Airyscan detector in SR mode with a 63X Plan-Apochromat
704 (1.4NA) oil objective lens. GFP was excited using a 488nm laser and MCP-Halotag labelled by
705 Janelia Fluor® 594 was excited using a 561nm laser. Cells with mRNAs visible in cytoplasm
706 and with comparable GFP signal were chosen for acquiring images. Images of individual cells
707 were acquired with following setting: z-stack of 5 planes with 0.5 μ m interval, 8x zoom,
708 396x396 pixel and 8 bit per pixel. GFP foci co-localized with mRNA foci (Janelia Fluor® 594
709 signal) were considered as translation sites while GFP foci or larger amorphous or ring-like
710 GFP structures that were not co-localized with mRNA were considered as aggregates.

711

712

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875 **Acknowledgments:**

876 We are grateful to NanoTag Biotechnologies for sharing ALFA-Tag and anti-ALFA
877 nanobody plasmids and advices. We are grateful to Karim Mazjoub's lab for sharing space in
878 his experimental room. We thank Drs. Xavier Pichon and Vera Slaninova for their help in
879 setting up the mammalian ALFA-Tag system. For imaging, we acknowledge Sylvain de Rossi
880 and Montpellier Ressources Imagerie (MRI), a microscopy facility of The National
881 Infrastructure France-BioImaging (FBI), supported by the French National Research Agency
882 (ANR-10-INBS-04). We acknowledge M.Verbrugghe for help with fly handling, and the
883 Montpellier *Drosophila* Facility (BioCampus). We acknowledge Etienne Schwob and Eric
884 Kremer for their help in preparing the manuscript. We acknowledge HFSP (CDA Grant to ML)
885 for the early sponsoring of the implementation of *Drosophila* translation imaging project.
886

887 **Funding:** This work was supported by the ERC SyncDev starting grant to ML, the ANR
888 MemoRNP to ML, and by IGMM internal capital. ML, JD, EB and CF are sponsored by CNRS.
889 MB was supported by a FRM fellowship and then by ERC SyncDev. HL was supported by
890 ERC SyncDev. JDh was supported by ANR grant ULTIM.
891

892 **Author contributions:** JD conceived the project. JD conceptually supervised the work
893 with the help of ML at its early stages. JD, MB, ML, EB, RL and RC designed the experiments.
894 JD, MB, and CF performed *Drosophila* embryos experiments. AT developed software. HL
895 helped with cloning and fly handling. ML acquired funding. EB supervised mammalian cells
896 experiments, which were performed by JDh. RL supervised *Drosophila* S2 cells experiments
897 performed by RC. JD, MB, RC, AT, EB and CF analyzed and interpreted the results. JD and
898 MB wrote the manuscript. ML, RC, EB, RL and CF edited the manuscript. All authors discussed
899 and approved the manuscript.
900

901 **Competing interests:** The authors declare that they have no competing interests.
902

903 **Data and materials availability:** All relevant data supporting the key findings of this
904 study are available within the article and its Supplementary Information files or from the
905 corresponding author upon reasonable request. The intensity measurement software is available
906 through this link: https://github.com/ant-trullo/Av_Ints_software/. Fly lines and plasmids will
907 be available upon peer-reviewed publication of the article.

Supplementary figures

Figure S1

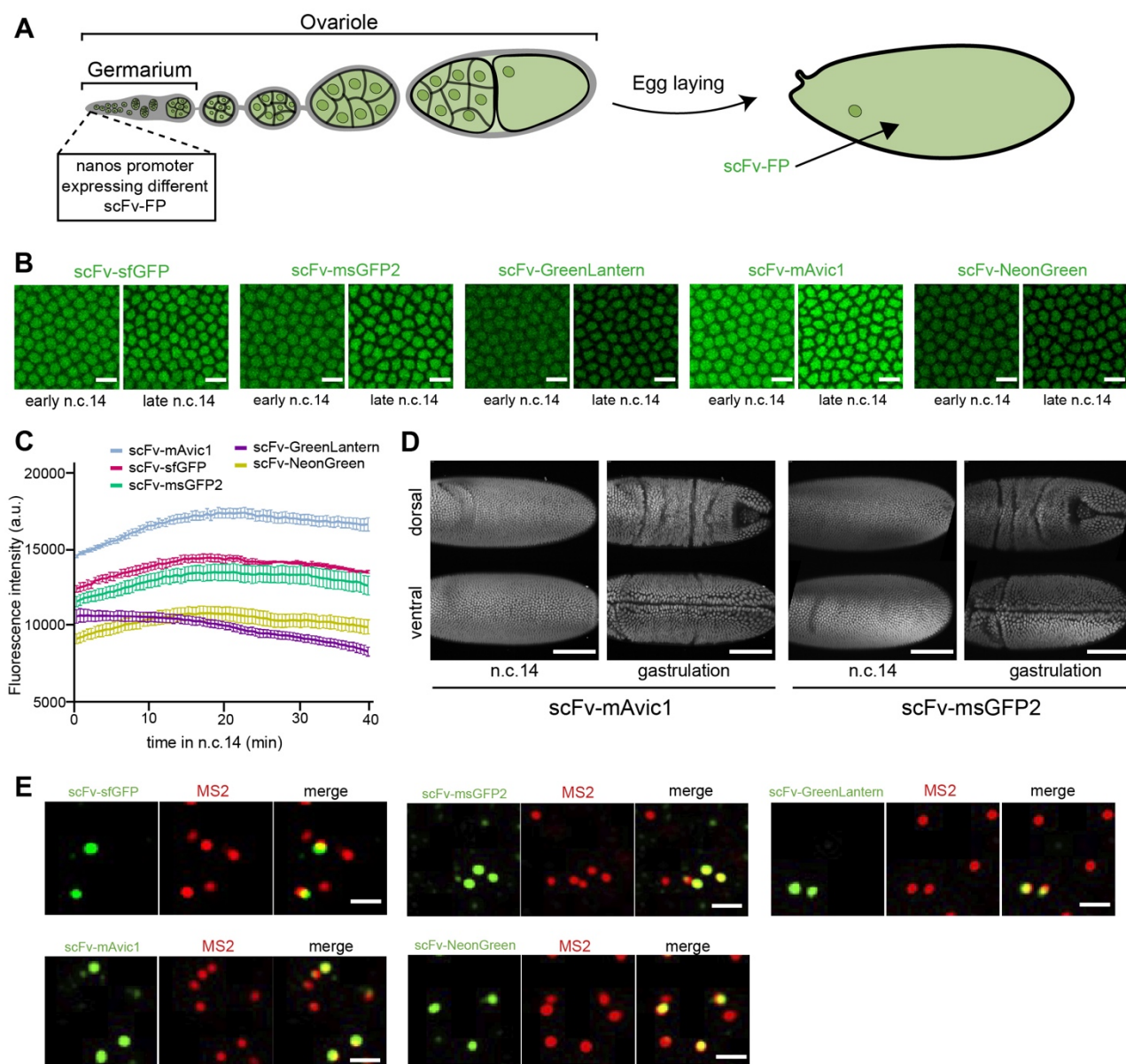


Figure Supp 1: Characterization of the different scFv-Fluorescent proteins (scFv-FP).

(A) Schematic of the expression pattern of scFv-FP under control of the *nanos* enhancer/promoter during *Drosophila* oogenesis. (B) Snapshots from movies on embryos carrying scFv-sfGFP, scFv-msGFP2, scFv-GreenLantern, scFv-mAvic1 or scFv-NeonGreen in early and late n.c. 14. Scale bars are 10µm. (see related Movies S1-5). (C) Quantification across time during n.c. 14 of the different scFv-FP signal from movies represented in (b), n=3 movies from 3 embryos for scFv-sfGFP and scFv-GreenLantern and n=4 movies from 4 embryos for scFv-msGFP2, scFv-mAvic1 and scFv-NeonGreen. Error bars represent SEM. (D) Snapshots from light-sheet movies on embryos carrying scFv-mAvic1 or scFv-msGFP2 in n.c. 14 and at gastrulation stage. Ventral and dorsal view are represented for each embryo. Scale bars are 100µm. (See related Movies S6-7). (E) Single Z-planes of confocal images from smFISH with direct fluorescent protein signal in green (scFv-msGFP2, scFv-GreenLantern, scFv-mAvic1, scFv-NeonGreen and scFv-sfGFP) and *MS2* probes (red) on *scFv-FP x twi_suntag_MS2_CRISPR* embryos in early-mid n.c. 14 on the ventral side. Images represent zoomed images from Figure 1c. Scale bars are 1µm.

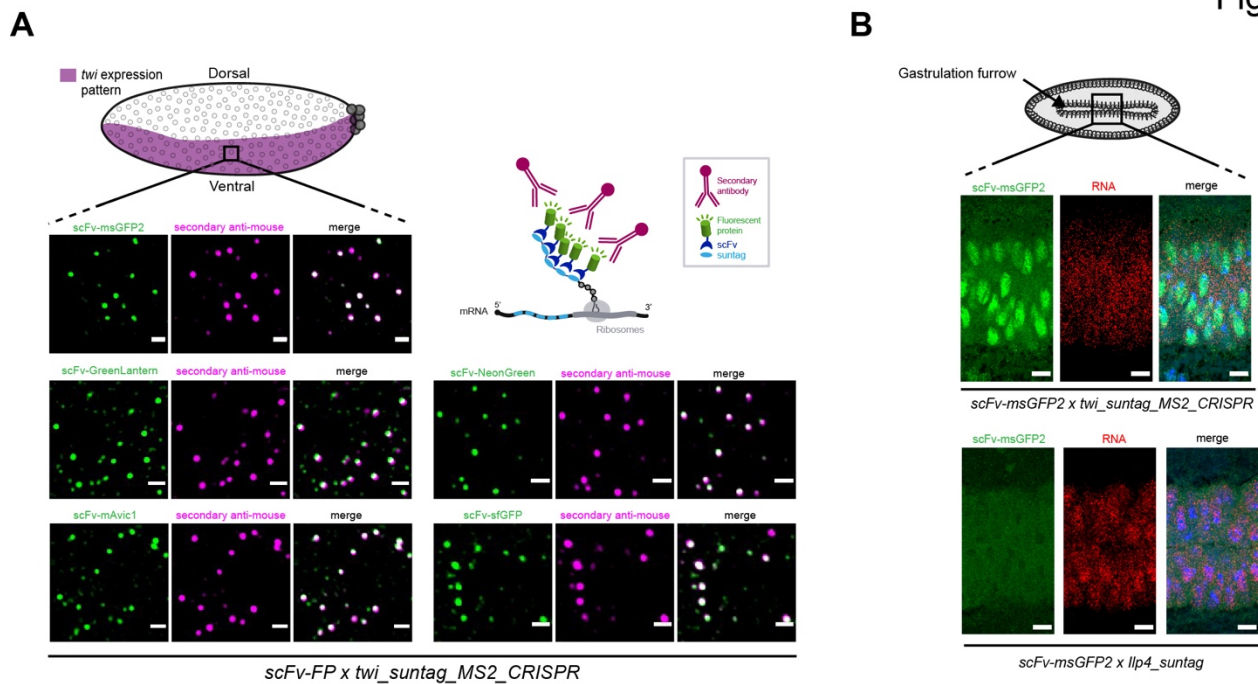


Figure S3

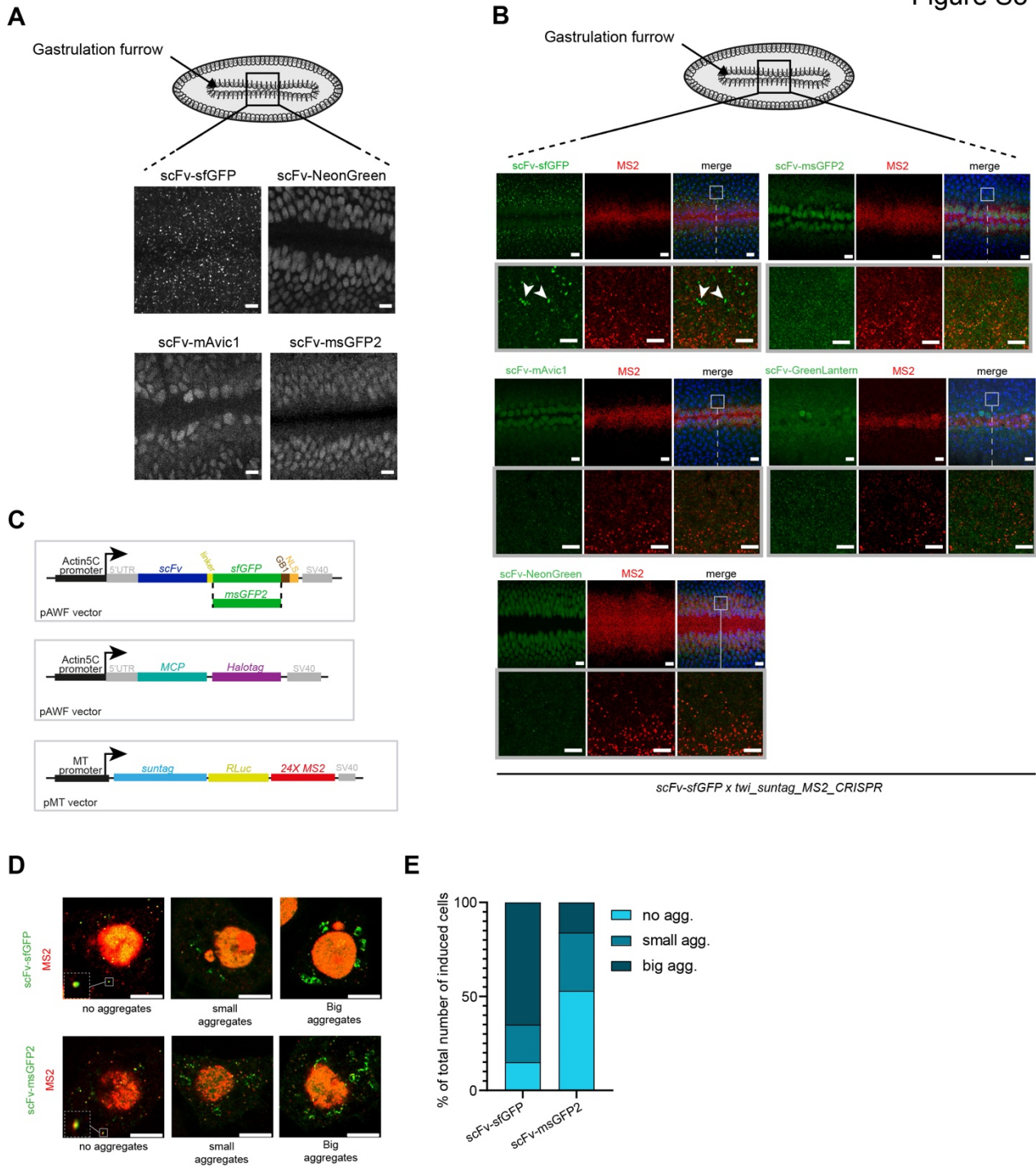


Figure Supp 3: The scFv-sfGFP can form aggregates in *Drosophila* embryos and S2 cells

(A) Schematic of a *Drosophila* embryo on the ventral side with gastrulation furrow represented with invaginating cells. Black square represents the imaged area of the bottom panels. Snapshots from representative confocal movies of *twi_suntag_MS2_CRISPR/+* embryos at the gastrulation stage carrying either scFv-sfGFP, scFv-NeonGreen, scFv-mAvic1 or scFv-msGFP2 proteins. Scale bars are 10 μ m. (B) Schematic of a *Drosophila* embryo on the ventral side with gastrulation furrow represented with invaginating cells. Black square represents the imaged area of the bottom panels. Maximum intensity projection of 10 Z-planes of confocal images from smFISH with direct fluorescent protein signal in green (scFv-FP) and MS2 probes (red) on *scFv-FP x twi_suntag_MS2_CRISPR* embryos at gastrulation stage on the ventral side. Grey squares represent zoomed images. Note the presence of scFv-sfGFP signal not overlapping with RNA (white arrowheads). Scale bars are 5 μ m. (C) Schematic of the different constructs transfected in S2 cells. *scFv-FPs* and *tdMCP-stdHalotag* were

placed downstream of the *Actin5C* promoter. Reporter containing suntag Renilla Luciferase (RLuc) and 24XMS2 was placed under the control of the inducible metallothionein (MT) promoter. **(D)** Single Z-planes of confocal images of S2 cells expressing scFv-FPs (green) and MCP-Halotag (red) with induction of *suntagRLuc24XMS2* reporter showing aggregation size of the scFv-FPs. A zoom on single mRNA in translation is shown on no aggregate's panels (white squares). Scale bars are 5 μ m. **(e)** Percentage of the number of big (dark blue) and small (blue) aggregates (scFv-FP signal not colocalizing with an mRNA) and no (light blue) aggregates (scFv-FP signal colocalizing with an mRNA) in cells expressing *MCP-Halotag*, *suntagRLuc24XMS2* reporter and *scFv-sfGFP2* or *scFv-msGFP2* (n=100 cells for each condition).

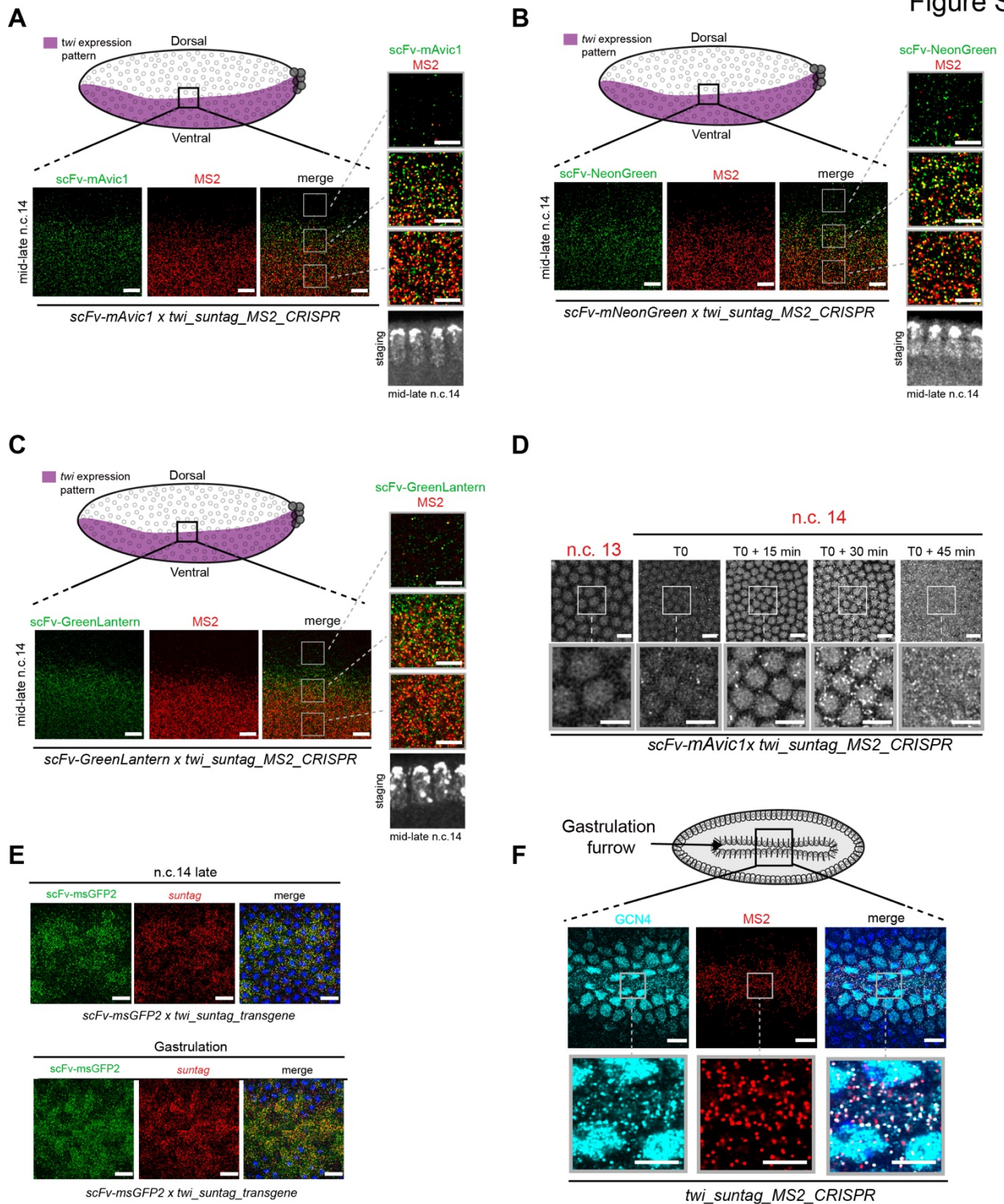


Figure Supp 4: *twi* translation detection in developing embryos until gastrulation.

(A) (top) Schematic of a sagittal view of a *Drosophila* embryo with *twi* expression pattern in purple. Anterior side is on the left, posterior on the right, dorsal on the top and ventral side on the bottom. Black square represents the imaged area of the bottom panels. (bottom) A single Z-plane of confocal images from smFISH with direct fluorescent protein signal in green (scFv-mAvic1) and MS2 probes (red) on *scFv-mAvic1 x twi_suntag_MS2_CRISPR* embryos at mid-late n.c. 14. Gray squares represent the zoomed images in the right panels. The three different zoomed images represent external (top), border (middle) and internal (bottom) zone of the imaged pattern. Scale bars are 10 μ m on the larger images, and 5 μ m on the zoomed images. Staging is given

by DAPI staining on a sagittal view of the imaged embryo (black and white image at the bottom). **(B)** (top) Schematic of a sagittal view of a *Drosophila* embryo with *twi* expression pattern in purple. Anterior side is on the left, posterior on the right, dorsal on the top and ventral side on the bottom. Black square represents the imaged area of the bottom panels. (bottom) A single Z-plane of confocal images from smFISH with direct fluorescent protein signal in green (scFv-NeonGreen) and *MS2* probes (red) on *scFv-NeonGreen x twi_suntag_MS2_CRISPR* embryos at mid-late n.c. 14. Gray squares represent the zoomed images in the right panels. The three different zoomed images represent external (top), border (middle) and internal (bottom) zone of the imaged pattern. Scale bars are 10 μ m on the larger images, and 5 μ m on the zoomed images. Staging is given by DAPI staining on a sagittal view of the imaged embryo (black and white image at the bottom). **(C)** (top) Schematic of a sagittal view of a *Drosophila* embryo with *twi* expression pattern in purple. Anterior side is on the left, posterior on the right, dorsal on the top and ventral side on the bottom. Black square represents the imaged area of the bottom panels. (bottom) A single Z-plane of confocal images from smFISH with direct fluorescent protein signal in green (scFv-GreenLantern) and *MS2* probes (red) on *scFv-GreenLantern x twi_suntag_MS2_CRISPR* embryos at mid-late n.c. 14. Gray squares represent the zoomed images in the right panels. The three different zoomed images represent external (top), border (middle) and internal (bottom) zone of the imaged pattern. Scale bars are 10 μ m on the larger images, and 5 μ m on the zoomed images. Staging is given by DAPI staining on a sagittal view of the imaged embryo (black and white image at the bottom). **(D)** Snapshots each 15 minutes from movies of *scFv-msGFP2 x twi_suntag_MS2_CRISPR* embryos on the ventral side. T0 correspond to early n.c.14. White squares represent the zoomed images in the center of the panel. Note the absence of translation for *twi_suntag_MS2_CRISPR* at T0+45min, Scale bars are 10 μ m on the larger images, and 5 μ m on the zoomed images. (See related Movies S15). **e.** Single Z-planes of confocal images from smFISH with direct fluorescent protein signal in green (scFv-msGFP2) and *suntag* probes (red) on *scFv-msGFP2 x twi_suntag_transgene* embryos in late n.c. 14 (top panels) and gastrulation stage (bottom panels) on the ventral side. Nuclei are counterstained with DAPI (blue). Scale bars are 10 μ m. **f.** (top) Schematic of a *Drosophila* embryo on the ventral side with gastrulation furrow represented with invaginating cells. Black square represents the imaged area of the bottom panels. (bottom) Single Z-planes of confocal images from immuno-smFISH with anti-GCN4 antibody (cyan) and *MS2* probes (red) on *twi_suntag_MS2_CRISPR* embryos. Grey squares represent the zoomed images in the bottom panels. Scale bars are 10 μ m on the larger images, and 5 μ m on the zoomed images.

(A) (top) Schematic of the different constructs expressing the different scFv-FP (scFv-GreenLantern, scFv-NeonGreen, scFv-mAvic1, or scFv-msGFP2) under the control of the UASp promoter. (bottom) Snapshots from movies of embryos carrying *UASp-scFv-msGFP2*, *UASp-scFv-GreenLantern*, *UASp-scFv-mAvic1* or *UASp-scFv-NeonGreen* and *nanos-Gal4* at early n.c.14 and gastrulation stage. Scale bars are 10 μ m. (See related Movies S16-19). **(B)** Schematic of the two constructs UASz and UASy containing two times *5xUAS* with *hsp70* promoter with *IVS-syn21* sequence (UASz) or without (UASy). Both of these constructs contain the *scFv-msGFP2*. **(C)** Snapshots from movies of embryos carrying *UASy-scFv-msGFP2* and *nanos-Gal4* at early n.c.14 and gastrulation stage. Scale bars are 5 μ m. (See related Movies S21). **(D)** (left) Schematic of a sagittal view of a *Drosophila* embryo with *twi* expression pattern in purple. Anterior side is on the left, posterior on the right, dorsal on the top and ventral side on the bottom. Black square represents the imaged area of the right panels. (right) A single Z-plane of confocal images from smFISH with direct fluorescent protein signal in green (scFv-msGFP2) and *MS2* probes (red) on *nosGal4>UASy-scFv-msGFP2 x twi_suntag_MS2_CRISPR* embryos in early-mid and mid-late n.c. 14. Staging is given by DAPI staining on a sagittal view of the embryo (black and white image at the bottom). Yellow, blue and white squares (external, border and internal zone of the pattern, respectively) represent the three different zoomed images on the right side of each panel. Scale bars are 10 μ m on the larger images, and 5 μ m on the zoomed images. **(E)** Maximum intensity projected snapshots of a whole embryos confocal live tilescan expressing *UASy-scFv-msGFP2* and *Histone-H2A-RFP* (left panels) or *nulloGal4>UASy-scFv-msGFP2* and *Histone-H2A-RFP* (right panels), after gastrulation. Scale bars are 100 μ m.

Figure S6

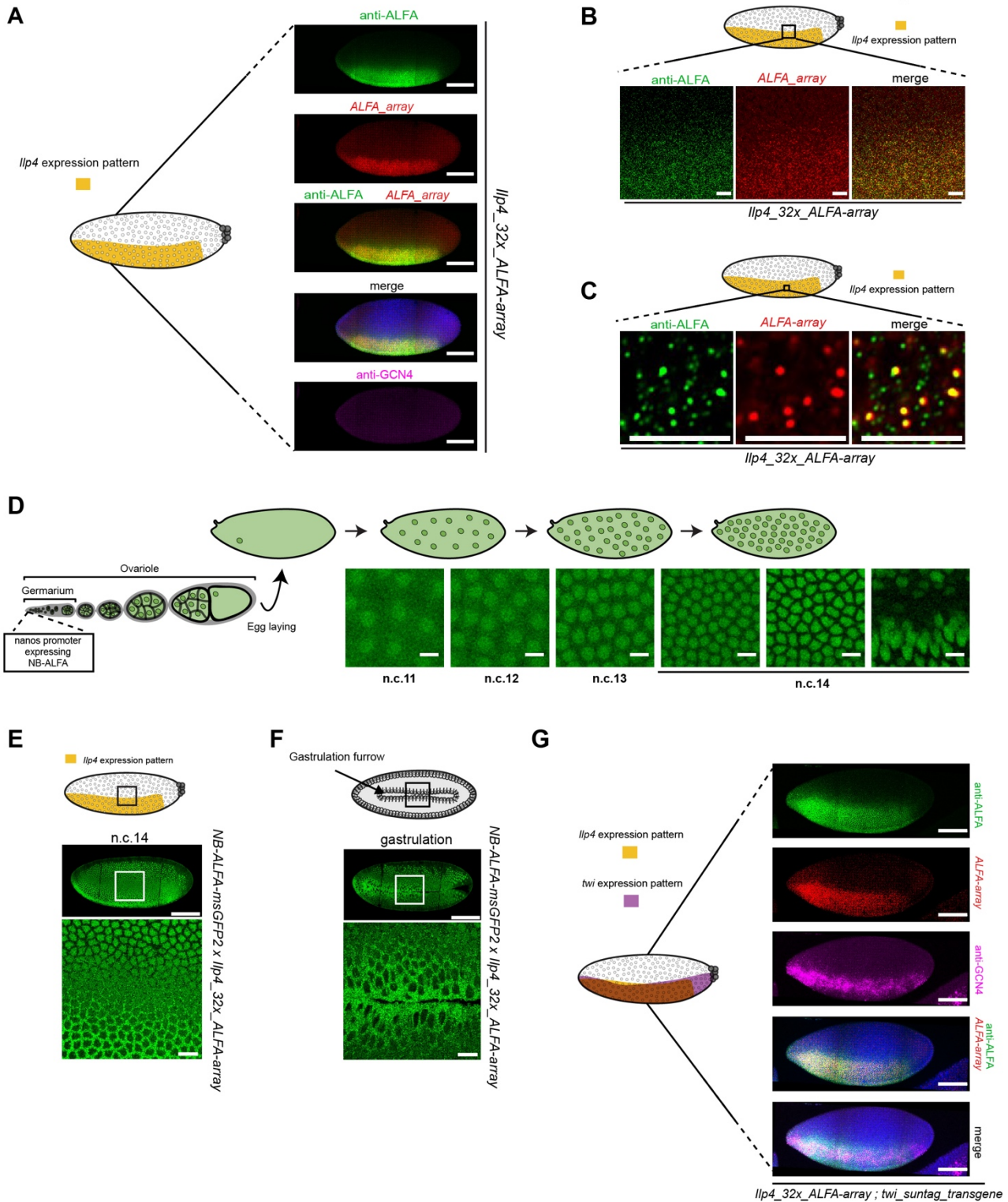


Figure Supp 6: Efficient detection of *Ilp4* transgene translation with the new AlfaTag system

(A) (left) Schematic of a sagittal view of a *Drosophila* embryo with *Ilp4* expression pattern in yellow. Anterior side is on the left, posterior on the right, dorsal on the top and ventral side on the bottom. (right) Maximum intensity projection of a whole embryo tilescan confocal images from immuno-smFISH with anti-ALFA antibody (green), *32x_ALFA-array* probes (red) and anti-GCN4 antibody (magenta) on *Ilp4_32x_ALFA-array* n.c.14 embryos. Scale bars are 100 μ m. (B) (top) Schematic of a sagittal view of a *Drosophila* embryo with *Ilp4* expression pattern in yellow. Black square represents the imaged area of the bottom panels. (bottom) Single Z-planes of confocal images from immuno-smFISH with anti-ALFA antibody (green) and *32x_ALFA-array* probes

(red) on *Ilp4_32x_ALFA-array* in early-mid n.c. 14 embryos at the border of *Ilp4* expression pattern. Scale bars are 10 μ m. (C) (top) Schematic of a sagittal view of a *Drosophila* embryo with *Ilp4* expression pattern in yellow. Black square represents the imaged area of the bottom panels. (bottom) Single Z-planes of confocal images from immuno-smFISH with anti-ALFA antibody (green) and *32x_ALFA-array* probes (red) on *Ilp4_32x_ALFA-array* in early-mid n.c. 14 embryos to visualize single mRNA molecules in translation. Scale bars are 5 μ m. (D) (top) Schematic of the expression pattern of NB-ALFA under control of the *nos EPr* during *Drosophila* oogenesis. (bottom) Snapshots from movies of embryos carrying *nos>NB-ALFA-msGFP2* in n.c. 11, 12, 13 and 14. Scale bars are 10 μ m. (See related Movies S23). (E) (top) Schematic of a sagittal view of a *Drosophila* embryo with *Ilp4* expression pattern in yellow. Black square represents the imaged area of the bottom panel. (bottom) Snapshots from movies of *NB-ALFA-msGFP2 x Ilp4_32x_ALFA-array* embryos in n.c. 14. The top image is a tile scan of the whole embryo and the bottom image a zoomed area represented with a white square at the border of *Ilp4* expression pattern. Note the green signal located in nuclei outside the pattern and in the cytoplasm within *Ilp4* pattern (corresponding to tagged *Ilp4* proteins). Scale bars are 100 μ m in the tilescan and 10 μ m in the zoomed image. (See related Movies S25). (F) (top) Schematic of a sagittal view of a *Drosophila* embryo with *Ilp4* expression pattern in yellow. Black square represents the imaged area of the bottom panel. (bottom) Snapshots from movies of *NB-ALFA_msGFP2 > Ilp4_32x_ALFA-array* embryos at gastrulation stage. The top image is a tile scan of the whole embryo and the bottom image a zoomed area represented with a white square at the gastrulation furrow. Scale bars are 100 μ m in the tilescan and 10 μ m in the zoomed image. (See related Movies S24). (G) Maximum intensity projection of a whole embryo tilescan confocal images from immuno-smFISH with anti-ALFA antibody (green), *32x_ALFA-array* probes (red) and anti-GCN4 antibody (magenta) on *Ilp4_32x_ALFA-array; twi_suntag_transgene* embryos in n.c. 14. Scale bars are 100 μ m.

Movie Supp legends

Movie S1: Maximum intensity projection of confocal Z-stack live imaging of an embryo containing *scFv-sfGFP*. scale bar 10 μ m.

Movie S2: Maximum intensity projection of confocal Z-stack live imaging of an embryo containing *scFv-mAvic1*. scale bar 10 μ m.

Movie S3: Maximum intensity projection of confocal Z-stack live imaging of an embryo containing *scFv-msGFP2*. scale bar 10 μ m.

Movie S4: Maximum intensity projection of confocal Z-stack live imaging of an embryo containing *scFv-NeonGreen*. scale bar 10 μ m.

Movie S5: Maximum intensity projection of confocal Z-stack live imaging of an embryo containing *scFv-GreenLantern*. scale bar 10 μ m.

Movie S6: Maximum intensity projection of LightSheet Z-stack live imaging of *scFv-mAvic1* embryo. Upper part: dorsal view, lower part: ventral view Scale bar 100 μ m.

Movie S7: Maximum intensity projection of LightSheet Z-stack live imaging of *scFv-msGFP2* embryo. Upper part: dorsal view, lower part: ventral view Scale bar 100 μ m.

Movie S8: Maximum intensity projection of confocal Z-stack fast live imaging of an embryo containing *scFv-NeonGreen>twi_suntag_MS2_CRISPR/+*. Translation foci are in green, scale bar 1 μ m.

Movie S9: Maximum intensity projection of confocal Z-stack fast live imaging of an embryo containing *scFv-sfGFP >twi_suntag_MS2_CRISPR/+*. Translation foci are in green, scale bar 1 μ m.

Movie S10: Maximum intensity projection of confocal Z-stack fast live imaging of an embryo containing *scFv-GreenLantern >twi_suntag_MS2_CRISPR/+*. Translation foci are in green, scale bar 1 μ m.

Movie S11: Maximum intensity projection of confocal Z-stack fast live imaging of an embryo containing *scFv-msGFP2>twi_suntag_MS2_CRISPR/+*. Translation foci are in green, scale bar 1 μ m.

Movie S12: Maximum intensity projection of confocal Z-stack fast live imaging of an embryo containing *scFv-mAvic1>twi_suntag_MS2_CRISPR/+*. Translation foci are in green, scale bar 1 μ m.

Movie S13: Maximum intensity projection of confocal Z-stack live imaging of an embryo containing *scFv-msGFP2>twi_suntag_MS2_CRISPR/+*. Translation foci are in white, scale bar 10µm.

Movie S14: Maximum intensity projection of confocal Z-stack live imaging of an embryo containing *scFv-msGFP2>twi_suntag_transgene/+*. Translation foci are in white, scale bar 10µm.

Movie S15: Maximum intensity projection of confocal Z-stack live imaging of an embryo containing *scFv-mAvic1>twi_suntag_transgene/+*. Translation foci are in white, scale bar 10µm.

Movie S16: Maximum intensity projection of confocal Z-stack live imaging of an embryo containing *nos-Gal4>UASp-scFv-GreenLantern /+*. scale bar 10µm.

Movie S17: Maximum intensity projection of confocal Z-stack live imaging of an embryo containing *nos-Gal4>UASp-scFv-msGFP2 /+*. scale bar 10µm.

Movie S18: Maximum intensity projection of confocal Z-stack live imaging of an embryo containing *nos-Gal4>UASp-scFv-NeonGreen /+*. scale bar 10µm.

Movie S19: Maximum intensity projection of confocal Z-stack live imaging of an embryo containing *nos-Gal4>UASp-scFv-mAvic1 /+*. scale bar 10µm.

Movie S20: Comparison of maximum intensity projection of confocal Z-stack live imaging of an embryo containing *scFv-msGFP2>twi_suntag_MS2_CRISPR/+ or nos-Gal4>UASp-scFv-mAvic1 ; twi_suntag_MS2_CRISPR/+*. Translation foci are in white. Translational arrest is seen *scFv-msGFP2>twi_suntag_MS2_CRISPR/+ but not in nos-Gal4>UASp-scFv-mAvic1 ; twi_suntag_MS2_CRISPR/+*. scale bar 10µm.

Movie S21: Maximum intensity projection of confocal Z-stack live imaging of an embryo containing *nos-Gal4>UASy-scFv-msGFP2 /+*. scale bar 10µm.

Movie S22: Maximum intensity projection of confocal Z-stack live imaging of an embryo containing *nullo-Gal4>UASy-scFv-msGFP2 /+*. scale bar 100µm.

Movie S23: Maximum intensity projection of confocal Z-stack live imaging of an embryo containing *NB-ALFA-msGFP2*. scale bar 10µm.

Movie S24: Maximum intensity projection of confocal Z-stack live imaging of an embryo containing *NB-ALFA-msGFP2>Ilp4_32x_ALFA-array/+*. Scale bar 10µm.

Movie S25: Maximum intensity projection of confocal tile-scan with Z-stack live imaging of an embryo containing *NB-ALFA-msGFP2>Ilp4_32x_ALFA-array/+*. Scale bar 100µm.