

Dear topic and chief-executive editors,

Thanks for your messages. We have just uploaded the last version of our paper ref. se-2020-45.

According to the last revision (not edition) of the topic editor, there were two aspects that had to (not should) be improved.

1. A “new version with the corrections in Figure 1A including the different zones either in the autochthon or in the allochthon-parautochthon”.
2. “Besides, a good compromise about Ediacaran-Cambrian lithostratigraphic chart issue is to declare well into the main text or the caption that you are aware of other evidence (e.g. Diaz Balda, Valladares et al...) but you are taken, as a reference for the whole ZCI, the stratigraphic model developed in the southern part of the ZCI, because of its consistency/coherency/ degree of development”.

The chief-executive editor considered that she “cannot see any bias occurring by the minor changes recommended, which suggest already a compromise between different possibilities. Thus, my final decision is that the TE's comments are not disturbing your manuscript flow, so that you should consider them before publishing is possible”.

For us, it is a surprise to read these remarks but we have decided to follow your queries and opinions in order to finish with this affair, despite our complete disagreement with the management of this manuscript. If you expend a couple of minutes reading our explanations, you would understand why.

1. Taking into account that the topic editor proposed us to follow one of two options (either subdividing the “autochthon” or the “allochthon-parautochthon”), we have added a subdivision of the “allochthons” in figure 1A. The topic editor did not indicate which “allochthon-parautochthon” had to be subdivided from those included in the figure (i.e., the Galicia-Trás-os-Montes Zone, the northern French Massif Central and the northern edges of Sardinia and Corsica) so we have subdivided all of them. The final result is, in our opinion, hardly readable. The reason why we added figures 1B-to-1D was to help any potential reader to find the samples reported in the paper, but the addition of more information in figure A gives rise to an extremely complex figure that is not necessarily useful.

2. The second question is focused on the (litho-)stratigraphic units previously published exclusively in the Salamanca area of the Central Iberian Zone. As already explained in a former response, we cannot understand why the topic editor requests us to cite some previous works related only to his area of work and ignores other similar reports proposed for other areas included in our work. His view of this issue looks biased and this partial vision should be heralded by no editor. What are about other stratigraphic units that, like the Salamanca area, which are not reported in this paper because we selected no samples from there? No interest about them.

As above, and in order to finish with this discussion, we have cited Díez Balda et al. (1990) as the origin of another lithostratigraphic subdivision of the Salamanca area, and we hope that the topic editor will be satisfied with the special treatment we are finally offering exclusively to the Salamanca area, though it should be noted that there are NO analyzed samples from there in our paper. This paper offers no lithostratigraphic revision of the Central Iberian Zone; this should be obvious for any reader.

However, we disagree in citing Valladares et al.'s works. Our position is not related to any animosity against the author, Prof. Isabel Valladares, whom we know well. Our refusal is based on a conceptual misleading that was explained in a previous response to the topic editor, but we have no troubles to repeat it.

In her PhD thesis and following papers, Isabel Valladares defined FACIES ASSOCIATIONS (labelled I to XV), not FORMATIONS, and she suggested some broad correlations with previous stratigraphic units. As you know (or you should), a facies association (characterized by an assemblage of facies and useful for environmental interpretations) and a lithostratigraphic unit (characterized by its lithology and useful for mapping) are two completely different things. Therefore, we disagree with your insistence on citing works that describe facies associations as if they were lithostratigraphic formations and thus hampered any stratigraphic correlation. This sounds a serious misconception of geological concepts.

We have uploaded the revised version including these two issues and hope that the paper will be definitively accepted in its present form.

Kind regards

JAVIER ALVARO