

Dear topic and executive editors,

This is our last letter addressed to you.

We have just uploaded the ninth revised version of our manuscript. As suggested by the third reviewer/topic editor, we have removed SPZ and an emergent line in our figure 1A. We hope that, with these last changes, the abnormally boring and tedious reviewing process of this paper will be finished. Usually, reviewing a contribution is a challenging and exciting process leading to the improvement of the first submitted version. Unfortunately, this is not the case now and, in our opinion (three words that the topic editor never uses because he has not opinion, he simply knows), this is mainly due to an important misunderstanding of editor's role. The editor has to assure that the contribution is aligned with the quality standards of the journal and the topic of, in this case, special issue. The role of the editor is not to push dogmatically the authors to write what he wants to read because he knows the truth. Discrepancy is the basis of scientific progress in any matter, including geology.

The last problem of this paper still deals with figure 1A, where the topic editor wants to see the Variscan subdivision he pleases, and no other. Otherwise he will never accept our paper. The rest of the paper is out of topic editor's mind. This figure is based on two papers, the last one co-authored by some of us in 2020. In his last letter, the statement of the topic editor is clear about Álvaro et al. (2020): "this publication uses a figure/classification with similar ERRORS to the present Ms (...) so it is not a solution of the issues presented in my previous review". So the topic editor is deciding here which papers publish errors in their texts and figures and which papers not. Sincerely, this is a presumptuous and arrogant sentence that labels topic editor's nature.

There are many Variscan reconstructions of southwestern Europe, each one highlighting different complexities. According to the topic editor, there is only one correct and the remaining published Variscan subdivisions are full of errors. Below you will find four selected subdivisions of the Variscan massifs in SW Europe, each one with different alternatives and contradicting interpretations.

MODEL A. This model has been published by Álvaro et al. (2020) in the Geological Society of London with an editor, two reviewers and three authors (two of them have written this letter). As stated above, the topic editor has decided that this figure includes "errors". So, the three authors, the two reviewers and the editor were full of flawed ideas that only our topic editor is able to see.

MODEL B. This is the good model, because the topic editor co-authorized it (Martínez Catalán et al., 2019). But there are several "hard interpretations" here (we do not say "errors" because we are polite, Dr. Barreiro). Topic editor wants to see autochthons in our paper, but no autochthons are distinguished in this model, only paraautochthons and allochthons (e.g., GTMZ, SMD and northern Massif Central). Some curious oroclinal structures occur as well, such as the Cantabrian Orocline together with a partial Central Iberian Orocline. The subdivision of "zones with Cadomian imprint" and "with Early Ordovician magmatism" is wholly arbitrary as this reconstruction ignores, at least, the Cadomian imprint in the Central Iberian and Cantabrian Zones and in the Iberian Chains.

MODEL C. According to this model, the allochthons are located at the GTMZ (the whole zone, not parts of it), the SPZ, the SAD (not the central/northern domains) and the northern Massif Central; no parautochthons are highlighted here; the Central Iberian orocline shows a different outline than the previous version; after Shaw & Johnston (2016). Of course, these authors would have never published this paper with Dr. Barreiro as topic editor. They would be still modifying their figure 1.

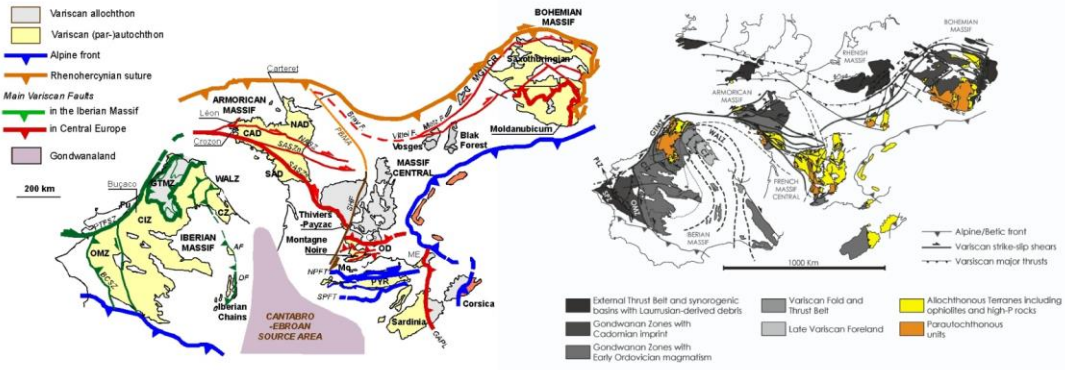
MODEL D. Another different model where the Ossa-Morena Zone is a lateral prolongation of the GTMZ allochthon (it is described as an allochthon contradicting editor's dogmatic model), the SAD and NAD are allochthons but the CAD is an autochthon (new differences); the Iberian oroclines are the Central Iberian and the Ibero-Armorican (not the Cantabrian) Oroclines; taken from Arenas et al. (2016, 2019) and Díez Fernández et al. (2020). One of us (JJA) has discussed this model with Ricardo Arenas several times; we disagree but we gently disagree, avoiding situations such as that forced by our topic editor. Of course, these papers would have never been published with Dr. Barreiro as topic editor.

We could add further models and paradigms different from those dogmas blindly defended by the topic editor but we are sure he will never be persuaded by us. For him, this is a personal (not a scientific) matter.

We consider no further changes are necessary and we will add no further modifications. In case the paper is not accepted in its present form, we will submit it to another journal. This is not our preferred scenario because, for multiple personal and professional reasons, we would like to offer homage to José Ramón Martínez Catalán, an OPEN-MINDED person who RESPECTS other ideas. Whatever the case, we are sure that, when explained, José Ramón will understand our point of view and our homage in another journal.

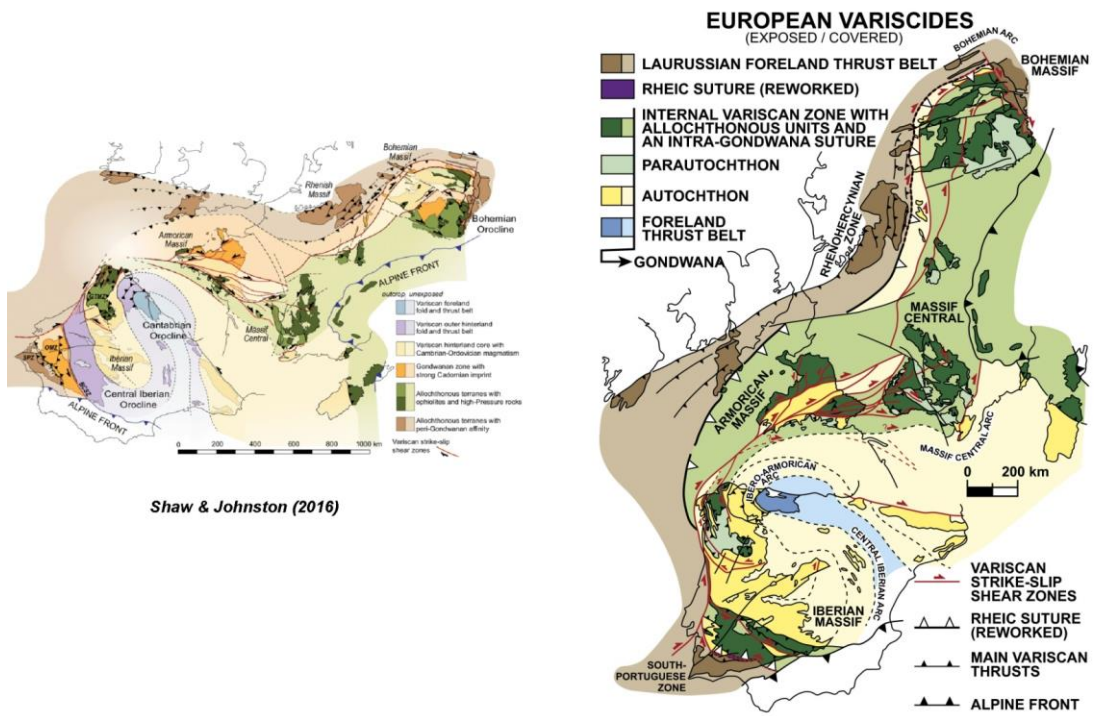
Looking forward to hearing you soon,

JAVIER ALVARO



Álvaro et al. (2020)

Martínez Catalán et al. (2019)



Shaw & Johnston (2016)

Arenas et al. (2016, 2019) and Díez Fernández et al. (2020)