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January 22, 2021

New Haven, Connecticut, USA.

To: Marian Turner, PhD

Dear Marian,

We enclose the new revisions of our manuscript titled: "Engineering complex communities by directed evolution" (NATECOLEVOL-200711037).

In this second batch of revisions, reviewers 1 and 3 asked solely for clarification of concepts and improved writing in certain parts, which we have done. Reviewer 2 also asked us to show more explicitly the distribution of single-species contributions to function, which we have also done. We enclose a point-by-point response, as well as the revised manuscript with all changes highlighted in red font throughout.

Given that you stated you did not have a strong preference for the use of directed evolution vs artificial selection in the title, we went for evolution for the reasons described in the attached point-by-point response to editorial and reviewer comments.

We sincerely appreciate the thoughtfulness and attention to detail by all reviewers. Our paper has benefited enormously from the improvements resulting from peer review. We hope that, with the latest round of revisions we have made, the paper will now be acceptable for publication.

Sincerely,



Alvaro Sanchez

Assistant Professor of Ecology & Evolutionary Biology

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