

Authors comments

The authors comments are in italics

Reviewer 1

Comments to manuscript “Iberulite fall and formation mechanism during a Sahara dust event in Switzerland in February 2021” by Grobety et al.

Introduction

Grobety et al. report an observed iberulite fall event in Switzerland and present analyses of the particles' composition, morphology, and size distribution. Based on the meteorological conditions during the event, the authors propose a formation mechanism for these particles. This study represents the first documented iberulite fall beyond Spanish latitudes, i.e., outside regions relatively close to the main dust source areas. The authors further suggest that these specific iberulites may have formed within snowflakes or ice crystals.

Reporting these events and gaining more insights into their formation mechanism is interesting. I am unsure how much additional knowledge is gained regarding their formation mechanism compared with previous literature (e.g., Díaz-Hernández and Párraga, 2008).

Hernández and Párraga gave no meteorological conditions during the IFs' they sampled. They gave no evidence pointing to the formation mechanism active for the formation of their iberulites.

It is undoubtedly valuable to report their sightings in northern latitudes, as this provides evidence of their abundance in the atmosphere. However, it is unclear whether these types of events have an impact beyond the anecdotal, i.e., whether they should be taken into account in models of dust deposition or whether they might have an impact on the radiation budget (Díaz-Hernández and Párraga, 2008).

We found, since the submission of the paper, iberulites in 50% of aerosol samples collected during SDEs'. I do not think that iberulites are anecdotal, I think that people, who collect bulk samples, are not aware of the presence of iberulites. An important step to decide, if iberulite are important for models of dust deposition, would be to quantify the amount of dust deposited as iberulites.

I think the paper contributes incremental knowledge about the occurrence and formation mechanisms of iberulites. However, I recommend publication only after the manuscript language, scientific content, and organization are revised as suggested in the comments below.

General comments

The paper presents reliable methodology for iberulite characterization and data for event analysis. However, the structuring of the information is deficient, and the language is sometimes unclear.

The paper has been restructured following the comments of the two reviewers.

Typos and other errors can be found throughout the manuscript. These issues give the reader the impression of an unpolished manuscript (more than just typographical errors) that should have been more thoroughly refined by the authors before submission.

I recommend refining the language and structure so that the information is presented more clearly. Specific examples of where this is particularly important are given in the specific comments.

Figures should be refined and made more homogeneous, paying attention to legibility and their role as adequate supporting material. In their current state, they look like preliminary figures rather than figures that meet the standards of a publishable paper.

All criticized figures have been improved.

Light microscopy, SEM, and BSE images are of good quality. I strongly recommend improving the remaining figures. An additional map illustrating the collection sites and data provenance would also be advisable.

A map of Switzerland containing all important locations for the paper has been added.

Another concern relates to the analysis and discussion of the proposed formation mechanism. The authors go back and forth between different formation mechanisms (snow/ice vs. in-drop formation)

There is no fundamental difference between snow/ice vs. in-drop formation, except the aggregate state of the scavengers and the corresponding difference in capture efficiency. Scavenging and evaporation/particle compaction processes can happen when the scavenger is in different aggregate states. In the revised abstract, it is clearly stated that scavenging happens through the scavenger in a frozen state. In chapter 4.2 this is clearly stated: "The layer at 5000 m altitude with supersaturated atmospheric conditions is most likely the source of the ice/snowflake precipitation that led to the formation of iberulites. The temperature at the upper boundary of the dust layer was below 0 °C and became positive around 2800 m. However, melting of the frozen hydrometeors most likely began at a much lower level due to low relative humidity, in which the water vapor density of the surrounding air is lower than the equilibrium water vapor density of frozen hydrometeors at the freezing point; therefore, sublimation of water vapor occurs from the surface of the latter. Because of this sublimation process, latent cooling can push the surface temperature of the hydrometeor below 0 °C (Matsuo and Sasyo, 1981; Heymsfield et al., 2015). The width of the non-melting layer in the atmosphere increases nearly linearly as relative humidity decreases, from 120 m at 90% to 700 m at 50%. The relative humidity at the top level of the main Sahara dust layer is around 50% and remains constant down to an altitude of 1700 m ASL. It is therefore probable that the melting level is displaced far into the massive Saharan dust layer and the encounter of dust with the hydrometeors happened when the latter was frozen."

, and the same conclusions are not consistently reflected throughout the manuscript (for example, in the abstract). This section is quite long, and the discussion should be more concise and focused. It also feels that part of the information presented there as discussion would be more appropriate in the Introduction as part of the state of the art.

The informative part of the original discussion has been moved into the introduction.

Specific comments

L24. Is it necessary to use the concept of the *Greenfield gap* in the abstract? Introducing it later in the results/discussion would be adequate.

We eliminated the concept of the Greenfield gap from the abstract and introduced it in the chapter "Introduction".

L26. There is no reference to snow as the hydrometeor hypothesized to have formed the observed iberulites.

The following sentence was added: "The meteorological conditions and the microstructure of the iberulites suggest that frozen hydrometeors act as scavengers, and below-cloud scavenging is the most probable formation mechanism."

and in the new paragraph 4.2: "However, melting of the frozen hydrometeors most likely began at a much lower level due to low relative humidity, in which the water vapor density of the surrounding air is lower than the equilibrium water vapor density of frozen hydrometeors at the freezing point; therefore, sublimation of water vapor occurs from the surface of the latter. Because of this sublimation process, latent cooling can push the surface temperature of the hydrometeor below 0 °C (Matsuo and Sasyo, 1981; Heymsfield et al., 2015). The width of the non-melting layer in the atmosphere increases nearly linearly as relative humidity decreases, from 120 m at 90% to 700 m at 50%. The relative humidity at the top level of the main Sahara dust layer is around 50% and remains constant down to an altitude of 1700 m ASL. It is therefore probable that the melting level is displaced far into the massive Saharan dust layer and the encounter of dust with the hydrometeors happened when the latter was frozen."

L31. Is it necessary to refer to the Alps as "European Alps"?

We removed "European", but we point to the fact that there are mountain ranges other than the "European Alps" called "Alps", i.e., the "Japanese" or the "New Zealand Alps".

L33. Did the SDE in February-March increase only in occurrence, or also in terms of dust concentration? Please clarify whether this statement refers specifically to the Alps area or to a wider region.

Both the number of events and concentration increased in the "Euro-Mediterranean region", term used by Cuevas-Agullo et al. New sentence: "Since 2020, SDEs in February and March have become more frequent, especially in the Western Euro-Mediterranean region (Cuevas-Agulló et al., 2024), leading to higher dust concentrations."

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L35. Please specify the threshold values established by the EU/Switzerland or WHO and how the measured values in the area exceed those.

Threshold value and the actual value during this event have been added.

L37. Please add examples of how dust affects climate and ecosystems.

We added some examples: " Desert dust has been associated with adverse health effects, including increased cardiovascular mortality and respiratory issues, although impacts vary by the dust's geographic source (Fussell and Kelly, 2021; Tobias et al., 2019). In Europe, dust accounts for over 40,000 deaths annually (Wang et al., 2020). To date, 150 countries are affected, with more than 100 classified as non-dust-source regions (Li et al., 2025). Due to the growing threat of sand and dust storms, international agencies have prioritized mitigation efforts over the past twenty years (Unccd, 2022). Dust also influences climate and ecosystems (Buseck and Pósfai, 1999; Lian et al., 2025) by affecting Earth's radiative balance (Heald et al., 2014), degrading air quality (Proestakis et al., 2025), supplying nutrients to marine and terrestrial ecosystems (Kellogg and Griffin, 2006), reducing snow and ice albedo to accelerate melting (Francis et al., 2018), and adsorbing trace gases, altering their physical properties (Tan et al., 2024). Saharan dust notably impacts hail formation in Europe (Brennan and Wilhelm, 2025). Limited research exists on the economic impact of desert dust, and no standardized data collection or analysis (Middleton, 2017). Annual dust-related damages in Iraq and Iran are estimated between \$1.0 billion and \$1.4 billion (Meibodi et al., 2015). In the U.S., costs related to dust and wind erosion reached \$154 billion in 2017, more than quadrupling since 1995 (Feng et al., 2025). "

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L38. The statement about the scarcity of dust mineralogical studies is too strong. If you refer to a knowledge gap regarding source-specific mineralogy and its implications for atmospheric processes, please adjust the statement accordingly and include recent literature addressing this gap, since dust modelling efforts increasingly aim to take into account soil mineralogy atlas and their coupling with atmospheric modules.

We removed the sentence about the scarcity of dust mineralogical studies, although the last published of your suggested references (Jeong, 2024) states: " Modeling the effect of mineral dust on the environment requires a consistent data set of mineral composition and properties (Claquin et al. 1999; Scanza et al. 2015), which has not yet been established due to the very low quantity of samples, the lack of systematic analyses and interpretation, and the poor mineralogical information on the soils and sediments in desert sources."

L41. Earlier published studies (e.g., Fiol and Guijarro, 2000) already report the observation of deposited small dust spheres.

The reference has been added.

L43. The reported iberulite sightings are confined to Spanish territories at latitudes relatively close to the dust source (Sahara Desert). Would it be more accurate to state that no observations have been reported from regions north of 42°N? The Alps would therefore fall into that category. north of 42°N".

New sentence: "Iberulites have also been identified in Mallorca (Fiol et al., 2005; Fiol & Guijarro, 2000) and in Tenerife (Spain) (Cuadros et al., 2015), but no sightings have been reported north of 42°N."

L46. Please merge the information about the 2021 SDE event and its monitoring. It seems duplicated in sentences L45–L50. For example, February is mentioned three times and systematic monitoring is mentioned twice.

We merged the information. New: "A major SDE struck Switzerland on the afternoon of February 6th, 2021, making it one of the strongest since systematic monitoring began in 2001 (Collaud Coen et al., 2025) at the Jungfraujoch laboratory (JFJ, inlet altitude 3585 m above sea level). Due to its elevation and low local emissions, JFJ is ideal for studying long-range transport processes. A record PM10 concentration exceeding 700 µg/m³ was recorded (NABEL, BAFU/Empa). The iberulite fall (IF) was observed by the authors in Saint-Légier (Vaud), Fribourg (Fribourg), and Geneva. This study aims to characterize the collected iberulites and examine the aggregation mechanism in detail, using well-documented meteorological conditions during the fall."

L51. Define IF again.

IF was redefined.

L52. Remove the observation coordinates from the Introduction.

The observation coordinates were removed and shifted to subsection 2.1.

L54. Since the in-cloud and below-cloud iberulite formation mechanisms have already been proposed in the literature, the Introduction should include a more detailed summary of them, e.g., connecting the mechanism names to the descriptions in L43–L45.

The description of the two mechanisms have been moved from subsection 4.2 to the introduction: "Two mechanisms are proposed for creating these aggregates (Diaz-Hernández & Sanchez-Navas, 2016; Párraga et al., 2021): 1. Coalescence of droplets within a cloud increases condensation nuclei within a single droplet, known as in-cloud scavenging (ICS) or 'nucleation scavenging,' and 2. an increase in concentration through collisions between particles and falling drops, called below-cloud scavenging (BCS) or impaction scavenging (Pruppacher & Klett, 2010). The efficiency of a drop in coalescing or collecting particles is called Number Scavenging Efficiency (NSE) for ICS (Yang et al., 2023) and collection efficiency (CE) for BCS (Laakso et al., 2003; Slinn, 1977, 1983; Volken & Schumann, 1993). If CE were unaffected by factors such as drop and particle properties or environmental conditions, the grain-size distribution in iberulite would match the dust-size distribution in the cloud (ICS) or the volume of air passing through (BCS). However, ICS depends on aerosol activation, which is influenced by particle size, composition, coatings, and atmospheric water saturation. Dust particles with soluble coatings are highly effective cloud condensation nuclei (CCN) (Levin et al., 2005). Small amounts of soluble material greatly increase the CCN activity of fine dust particles (Kelly et al., 2007). Larger dust particles can act as giant CCN, forming efficient collector drops (Feingold et al., 1999; Levin & Cotton, 2009). Recent evidence shows that insoluble species, such as freshly emitted mineral dust, can also serve as CCNs, even with little soluble material, especially if they contain soluble ions or have strong water vapor adsorption on their surfaces (Herich et al., 2009; Koehler et al., 2009; Kumar et al., 2009). Mineral dust's contribution to CCN levels decreases at lower supersaturations

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because insoluble aerosols are less hygroscopic and need higher supersaturation to activate compared to soluble particles. Nonetheless, since dust particles are coarser, coated particles can activate at lower supersaturations than smaller human-made aerosols. At 0.2% supersaturation, mineral dust accounts for up to 30% of CCN, increasing to 35% at 0.4%. NSE, or water adsorption efficiency, varies with particle type, size, and supersaturation. For dust particles between 0.3 and 1 μm , NSE remains around 0.2 (Yang et al., 2023). For particles larger than 1.0 μm , NSE increases, whereas particles between 0.1 and 0.3 μm are often removed by impaction, reducing NSE to about 0.1. For BCS, the capture efficiency depends on particle size and the capture mechanism. If a drop with radius R falls vertically, e.g., without deviation by wind, the maximum number of possible collisions N along a trajectory l within the dust layer with particle radius r , mass density M_d , and particle density d can be calculated.

$$N = \frac{3}{4} \frac{2\pi M_d R^2 l}{\pi r^2 d}$$

For particles larger than 1 μm in diameter colliding head-on with a droplet, bouncing is unlikely, and the sticking efficiency is assumed to be 100%. However, for particles with radii between 0.3 and 1.0 μm , the CE, defined as the ratio of the total number of collisions given by eq. 1 to the number of particles captured by the droplet, is less than 1. This occurs because of the airflow around the falling droplet. Particles in this size range, although on collision trajectories, tend to follow the flow lines and are diverted around the droplet. Larger particles, due to their inertia, cross the flow lines and impact the droplet directly, resulting in a CE of 1 (capture by impaction). Small particles ($< 0.3 \mu\text{m}$) that follow the flow lines may be pushed by Brownian motion into the droplet's wake and deposited on its rear end (Brownian capture), making the CE also close to 1. Capture can also occur through thermophoretic and diffusiophoretic forces. Thermophoretic forces push aerosol particles toward a frozen drop during evaporation and away from it during vapor deposition. During diffusive crystal growth, a flow known as Stefan's flow exists near the hydrometeor surface, exerting a force on nearby aerosol particles that pulls them toward the surface. Particles, regardless of their size, can follow flow lines, but at some point these lines approach the droplet's surface more closely than the particle's radius. The particle then contacts the droplet's surface and sticks to it (capture by interception). This process has a relatively low capture efficiency. For particles with radii between 0.3 and 1.0 μm , none of the preferred capture processes are effective, and the CE decreases by two orders of magnitude. This reduction in CE was first described by Greenfield (1957), and the absence of particles in the 0.3–1.0 μm range is called the Greenfield gap. Both formation mechanisms lead to a depletion of particles in the 0.3–1.0 μm range in the iberulites relative to the dust cloud concentration, but the decrease is much more pronounced for BCS. The particle size distribution (PSD) inside an iberulite, compared to the PSD in the free atmosphere, can therefore indicate the formation mechanism of the iberulite.

L59–62. Include here the coordinates of the iberulite collection sites. Adding a map with the collection site locations and other relevant observation sites (Jungfraujoch observatory, measurements in Payerne, weather radars, balloon soundings, etc.) would help provide a clearer overview of where the data and observations were collected. The description of the weather/remote sensing data collection (L72–79) would then be easier to follow.

See L52 and a map with all important locations have been added: new figure 1.

L62. It is not clear whether iberulites were collected in Geneva or not. Please specify whether the observation (L59) is different from the collection.

The information has been given in form of a new table 1:

Site	Sampling	Dust PSD	Iber. PSD	Dust XRD	Dust SEM	Iber. Opt.	Meteo
Fribourg	x		x	x	x	x	

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St. Léger	x		x	x	x	x	
Genève	x				x		
Jungfrauoch		x					x
Payerne							x

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L71. "Observational data" would be a more appropriate subsection title than "Meteorological data," since more than weather information is presented (e.g., aerosol information). The correct numbering for this subsection is 2.2.

The subsection title and numbering have been changed.

L72–73. Please consider including a map with scale showing where all the observational data were collected.

A map has been added: new figure 1.

L86. The description of HYSPLIT should be placed under a different methods subsection (e.g., 2.3 Dust trajectory analysis).

A new subsection has been introduced: 2.3 Dust trajectory analysis.

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L99. Can you please clarify what is meant by a *bulk sample*?

L102. What constitutes a sample in this case? "Each sample (area depending on particle load on the sample surface) was analyzed..."

The term "sample" was more detailed. New: Single particles and iberulites were isolated from samples collected on the ground in St. Léger and Geneva, as well as on an aluminum foil in Fribourg. A selection of iberulites was gently placed onto a 1/2-inch pin stub (Ted Pella, Redding, CA, USA) and examined using an Olympus SZX12 binocular microscope (Tokyo, Japan). All single particles collected on the foil in Fribourg were dispersed onto a carbon pad covered 1-inch pin stub and analyzed using automated SEM/EDX single-particle analysis (Computer-Controlled SEM, CCSEM).

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L108. Please clarify what a "ZAP correction" is.

In the original text, I do not find "ZAP", "ZAF" has been more detailed: "The AZtec software automatically applied a ZAF correction (PAP version of the $f(\rho z)$ formalism (Pouchou and Pichoir, 1985)—considering atomic number (Z), absorption (A), and fluorescence (F)—to the raw data for elemental concentrations. Quantification was based on factory-calibrated standards."

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L112. Why are the ZAP applicability conditions not valid in your case?

The reason for the non- applicability of the ZAF – correction has been given: "The ZAF correction assumes homogeneous samples with smooth surfaces perpendicular to the beam and thicknesses greater than the excitation volume—conditions not met by these particles due to their rough surfaces and small sizes."

L121–122. What are the particles (nature, origin) present on the unexposed substrates? Are they biological contaminants, such as skin debris? Please clarify what you mean by *follicles*.

Hair follicles

L122. The optical microscope is not described elsewhere.

The optical microscope has been removed.

L131. A summary table specifying the physical samples analyzed (loose dust and iberulites) would be beneficial.

A table has been added see L62.

L144. How many HYSPLIT back-trajectory calculations were performed? Were they single calculations or an ensemble? Can you say something about the air-mass height at the dust source area?

All in all 18 back-trajectory calculations have been performed: 3 arrival altitudes x 6 arrival times. They were single calculations and not an ensemble. The airmass altitudes over the Hauts Plateaux are indicated in new figure 2.

L146. Please indicate in Fig. 2 where the “Haut Plateau” is located.

The Hauts Plateaux region has been indicated in new figure 2.

L152. Figure 2. Please include a color legend that helps identify the dust plume. Indicate countries or regions of interest on the map.

A color legend and locations of interest have been added.

L155. Figure 3 should be improved for clarity and interpretation. The arrows are difficult to read, and the overall resolution is poor. X- and y-axis labels and titles are missing.

Figure 3 has been removed.

L159. Please clarify what “source sensitivities” means.

“Source sensitivities” has been explained: “Source sensitivities (the probability that an air mass originates from a given source along a certain path) for Saharan dust (fine mode) arriving at JFJ were calculated using FLEXPART to generate backward trajectories and assess the general surface contact of air masses over the Sahara Desert (Collaud Coen et al., 2025).”

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L160. Define JFJ here or elsewhere when measurements at Jungfraujoch are described.

JFJ has been defined in the introduction.

L164. Please define what an emagram is or use instead a T/RH profile.

Emagram has been replaced by T/RH profile.

L165. Can you clarify what the zero-degree level means?

Zero-degree level has been replaced by 0°C level.

L169. Figure 4. Please improve the figure quality. The panels could be merged into a single plot with a double x-axis for temperature and relative humidity.

To improve the figure, which was given us by Meteoswiss, we ask the latter the raw data from the balloon flight. We got the complete data set, which allowed us to detect the likely origin of the hydrometeors, which led to the formation of the iberulites: “RH remained between 48 and 55% up to an altitude of 4300 m ASL, where it began to increase to 97 % resulting in a 100 m thick layer between 5000 and 5100 m ASL with temperatures below the frost point.” and “The layer at 5000 m altitude with supersaturated atmospheric conditions is most likely the source of the ice/snowflake precipitation that led to the formation of iberulites”.

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Original figure 4a and b (new figure 3) have been merged and improved.

L175. Can the below-cloud reflections located between 2500–4000 m with a streaky appearance be attributed to dust here, or could they correspond to ice particles? In L146 the strong reflection wall from 3500 m to the ground is attributed to dust. What are the differences in attribution between that feature and the reflections observed earlier than 9:00 UTC?

The main feature is the increase in temperature between early morning (6:00 UTC) and 11:00 UTC., although the thickness of the melting layer plays also a role (explained in the text.)

L176. What is the reason for the 9:00–11:00 ceilometer recording gap?

The gap is due to ground fog blocking the laser.

L180. Figure 5. What do the black dots represent? Please add this information and their location to the figure caption.

The black dots are the lower limit of the meteorological cloud. The information has been added: "The little black dots on top of the reflections show the meteorological clouds' bottom. The white stripes are gaps due to ground fog."

L183. When were the lidar measurements taken? Is this a single measurement or an average of multiple measurements? If averaged, over what time span? To which time in Figure 5 does it correspond? Please make this connection explicit in the text and figure.

Lidar measurement period has been given in the text and figure caption:

L189. Figure 6. Improve the resolution and add a legend. Include location, time, and other relevant information in the figure caption.

Old figure 6 has been reworked and the relevant information has been added: "Aerosol mass concentration profile across the dust cloud calculated from the average of Lidar measurements taken between 15:00 and 16:59 h (MeteoSwiss)."

L191. I suggest changing the section 3.3 title to something like *Size and morphology of iberulites* or *Morphology and microstructure of iberulites*. Were the St. L  gier samples the only iberulites analyzed?

The Iberulite from St. L  gier and Fribourg were analyzed. Fribourg was added. The new title of section 3.3 is: "3.3 Morphology and microstructure of iberulites".

L213. Figure 9b. What do the colors indicate? Please add a legend or clarification in the caption or text.

The different colors are used to better distinguish individual particles. The indication has been added. New figure caption 9: "Figure 9: (a) BSE image of a polished section through an iberulite, and (b) the corresponding segmentation obtained from AVIZO. The different colors are used to better distinguish individual particles but do not represent any specific elemental composition."

L219. Could you clarify what is meant by spherical surface depressions being rare? Are they rare among the collected iberulites, or simply less frequent than those reported by Diaz-Hern  ndez and P  rraga (2008)?

The precision has been given: "Spherical surface depressions, formed by vortices in the tail of a falling precursor water drop, as observed on Iberian iberulites (D  az-Hern  ndez and P  rraga, 2008), are very rare among the sampled iberulites."

L221. Please clarify what "long-term particle size distribution measurements at Jungfraujoch" means in this context. The number of acronyms in the first two sentences of this subsection is quite high.

The sentence has been skipped.

L225. I suggest adding a particle size distribution representative of non-SDE conditions for clearer comparison with the PSD shown in Figure 10 and supporting the statements made in L226.

A PSD when JFJ was SDE-free, meteorological clouds-free and above the PBL has been given in new figure 10 (green bars).

L228. Do you mean dust plumes? If so, please modify.

"Cloud" has been replaced by "plume".

L235 onwards. from the iberulites, and the conversion between d_m and d_v (steps described in equations 1–3), should be better described in the methods or in a methodological appendix to simplify this section.

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Commented [JR1]: This figure caption needs to be further up below the BSE image of a polished section of an iberulite.

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The equivalent volume diameter and shape factor calculation have been moved to subsection 2.5

L242. What does it imply that the PSD of the iberulite components shows a minimum at the same size range where the aerosol PSD measured at JFJ shows a maximum?

That there is a Greenfield gap as expected for BSC!!!!

L243. The aspect ratio is not defined, nor is it explained why it is an interesting parameter to analyze.

AR has been defined. It is interesting because the value supports long distance transport for particles.

L255–265. This passage is poorly written and appears unfinished (e.g., “the ratio given by Peng et al. is the reverse of the latter one!” or “has been measured only(?)”). Please clarify how this conversion factor is derived, what value was used in the d_{ve} calculations, and whether the ratio $C_d(d_m)/C_d(d_{ve})$ corresponding to salt particles was used.

This passage has been rewritten and moved to subsection 2.5

L269. The title of this section suggests that the composition of the iberulite components and the dust (at JFJ) will be presented. However, in sections 3.5.1 and 3.5.2 only results on the mineralogy and elemental composition of the iberulite components are shown.

Sections 3.5.1 and 3.5.2 have been reunited into one section.

L270. The title of section 3.5.1 is misleading, since single-particle analysis results are not presented here.

The analysis is for single particles. The sentence has been corrected.

L275. Please improve the legibility of Figure 11. Axis labels, titles, and legend are difficult to read.

Figure 11 has been removed.

L280. Can you clarify what the 1–2 μm resolution in the EDS analysis implies for the interpretation of the results?

It implies, that many of the compositions are mixed particle analyses as stated in the text

L291–299. It is not clear to me what dust the authors are referring to in section 4.1 (dust sampled at JFJ, loose dust collected along with the iberulites, or individual dust particles inside iberulites). Since composition is used to trace the origin of the dust, I recommend rewriting this section and connecting it more clearly with the back-trajectory analysis results.

The subsection has been adjusted accordingly: "In Northern Africa the general trends are increases in I/K from S to N and from E to W. The value for the present single particles collected in Fribourg is approximately 2.9, consistent with values reported from the Western Sahara, e.g., >2 in NW Algeria and Morocco, the source location for the SDE determined from the back trajectory calculations and from the satellite data."

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L294. It is stated that "The general trends are increases in I/K from S to N and from E to W." What region are the authors referring to here? Northern Africa? Please clarify.

see L291-299

The clarification has been added.

L301. The discussion in section 4.2 presents several problems that should be addressed. First, the actual discussion of the results is obscured by extensive background information that would belong either in the Introduction (e.g., in-cloud and below-cloud scavenging mechanisms) or in methods/supplementary material (e.g., collection efficiency calculations, ice crystal aerodynamics).

The formation mechanism is not presented as a clear step-by-step scenario, and there is no clear logical flow, making the section difficult to follow. Additionally, the main hypothesis (frozen hydrometeor scavenging) emerges only after a long sequence of background explanations.

The discussion would benefit from a clearer structure focusing on the interpretation of the observations and presenting the proposed formation mechanism more concisely. The discussion could be structured around the following topics: observational constraints (meteorology and PSD comparison), evaluation of possible scavenging mechanisms, evidence for frozen hydrometeor scavenging, formation of the core-shell structure during droplet evaporation, and the proposed formation sequence. Organizing this discussion into subsections would be advisable.

Background information and presentation of the scavenging mechanisms have been rewritten and moved to the introduction.

Technical comments

L19. Below scavenging → below-cloud scavenging

Done : "Two formation mechanisms— in-cloud and below-cloud scavenging—have been proposed."

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L24. I recommend using the term "iberulite constituents" to refer to the particles within iberulites. This may make clearer the comparison between the particle size distribution of atmospheric dust and that of iberulite constituents.

done : "The iberulite constituents consist of minerals such as silicates, carbonates, sulfates, halides, oxides, and phosphate-vanadate's, along with plant material, silica shells, plankton, and probably viruses."

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L60. Remove the extra closing bracket after ASL.

done : "The city of Fribourg (500-700 m ASL) is 50 km NNE of Lake Geneva on the Swiss plateau, and the village of St L  gier (576 m ASL) is on the northern central shore of the same lake."

L83. (Ashpole and Washington, 2013) → Ashpole and Washington (2013)

done: *"The plume's path was tracked using satellite images (supplement) following the approach described by Ashpole and Washington (2013)."*

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L95. "The source meteorological data" → "The dust source area meteorological data"

Done: "The dust source meteorological data were obtained via the Real-time Environmental Applications and Display System (READY) from the archived Global Data Assimilation System (Rolph et al., 2017)."

L97. e.g. → i.e.

rephrased: "The data were collected for the center of the main dust source observed in the satellite image, located at 33.8°N, 1.5°W."

L242. JFJ → JFJ-measured aerosol
Sentence does not exist anymore.

L250. d_m is introduced here for the first time. Please define it and clarify that it refers to the mobility diameter measured by the SMPS.

Has been clarified: "To compare the SMPS with the SEM-derived PSDs, the mobility diameter d_m (diameter of a perfectly spherical particle that has the exact same drift velocity and drag as the particle being measured), obtained by SMPS must first be converted to the volume equivalent diameter d_v (Decarlo et al., 2004)."

L263. Do you mean aspect ratio instead of axis ratio?

In particle science, aspect ratio and axis ratio are geometrically synonymou, but it has been, nevertheless, been changed: "The aspect ratios b/a (AR, the ratio of the longest dimension b to the orthogonal width a) and shape factors appear to depend on size, flow regime (Alexander et al., 2016), and orientation (Cheng et al., 1988), ranging from near unity for smaller particles to a value of 3 for the largest particles."

Reviewer 2

The submitted manuscript "Iberulite fall and formation mechanism during a Sahara dust event in Switzerland in February 2021," reports on field measurements of iberulite dust particles, discusses formation/transport mechanisms, and suggest the breadth of the underlying phenomenon. Broadly, the manuscript text is well organized, and the data reported is novel. Given the growing relevance of atmospheric dust for human health applications, as well as climatology, I believe the manuscript is within the scope and impact the journal seeks. However, the current organization of evidence in the manuscript, particularly the figures, requires substantive revision. Therefore, I recommend it for publication only after major revision.

Major Comments

1. Some of the claims in the introduction are not detailed enough and seem more like bullet points or sentence fragments. For example, in Line 37, you simply write "Dust also affects climate and ecosystems." There is no interpretation of what this means physically/chemically/biologically, what the cost is (monetary and/or health), and most importantly why the community should care. Please restructure the first paragraph to give more concrete examples of why desert dust transport is important. It is not necessary to make it much longer, but rather more centered on meaningful claims backed by the literature.

Details and references regarding health, climate and ecology, as well as monetary consequences of dust intrusions have been added. see L37 comment and the first reviewer

2. The second paragraph of the introduction is poorly organized. Please split into three paragraphs: (1) paragraph explaining what Iberulite is, and its relevance, (2) SDEs in Switzerland, monitoring infrastructure etc., (3) introducing the hypothesis, study design, and research goals.

The second paragraph has been reorganized:

1. "A distinct type of dust particles are spherule-shaped aggregates measuring between 50 and 200 μm , called iberulites, a term originating from their first discovery in southern Spain (Díaz-Hernández & Párraga, 2008).

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Iberulites have also been identified in Mallorca (Fiol et al., 2005; Fiol & Guijarro, 2000) and in Tenerife (Spain) (Cuadros et al., 2015), but no sightings have been reported north of 42°N. Iberulites found in Spain display flow textures, including typical depressions (vortices) and a shell structure with a coarse-grained core and a dense, fine-grained surface layer (Díaz-Hernández & Párraga, 2008; Párraga et al., 2021). They contain minerals such as silicates, carbonates, sulfates, halides, oxides, and phosphate-vanadates, along with plant material, silica shells, plankton, and probably viruses. This mineral composition suggests the Sahara and Sahel as primary mineral sources, while other minerals such as gypsum and alunite-jarosite are likely formed in the atmosphere (neoformation), probably via atmospheric pollutants during transport (Díaz-Hernández & Párraga, 2008; Párraga et al., 2021)."

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2./3. "A major SDE struck Switzerland on the afternoon of February 6th, 2021, making it one of the strongest since systematic monitoring began in 2001 (Collaud Coen et al., 2025) at the Jungfraujoch laboratory (JFJ, inlet altitude 3585 m above sea level). Due to its elevation and low local emissions, JFJ is ideal for studying long-range transport processes. A record PM10 concentration exceeding 700 µg/m³ was recorded (NABEL, BAFU/Empa). The iberulite fall (IF) was observed by the authors in Saint-Légier (Vaud), Fribourg (Fribourg), and Geneva. This study aims to characterize the collected iberulites and examine the aggregation mechanism in detail, using well-documented meteorological conditions during the fall."

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3. In Methods section 2.1, some mention/citation/discussion of standards in dust collection is needed. Are the methods used considered "state-of-the-science"? Why are they different? What implications does this have for study credibility?

The sampling method is not standard, but the loss of particles in the transfer from the foil onto a filter is negligible. The statement and other domains (space science), which use sampling of particles on foils, have been added: "Collecting dust on aluminium foil is not a common method, but since the IF was unexpected, standard sampling equipment, such as a sampling head with an impactor and a pump, could not be set up in time. Aluminum foils are used to collect interstellar dust (Kearsley et al., 2010), and to identify laboratory sources of microplastic and nanoplastic contamination (Jones et al., 2024). Loss of particles during dispersal on the foil is negligible."

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4. Section 2.3 ("Scanning Electron (SEM) and Optical Polarization Microscopy (OPM) analyses") of the methods is poorly organized, and difficult to understand the relevance to the study. I recommend 1) briefly describing the method with citations, 2) if any section is different from typical literature methods describe why and how it impacts the findings, 3) move all other technical details to a supplement/appendix (since they are not novel nor directly relevant). In this way, you can combine with section 2.4, for a single concise and readable analytical methods section.

I do not think that CCSEM is a standard method. Therefore I would prefer to maintain the section. Particle analyses is special, because of the deviation from common sample geometries (flat surface). All the papers I looked up in AS describe the SEM and TEM methods within the paper, not in an appendix. Our description does not differ much from the latter.

1. "During CCSEM (Schwoeble et al., 1990; Li et al., 2023), particles are identified based on their Back-Scattered Electron (BSE) contrast, and images, along with Energy-Dispersive X-ray (EDX) spectra, are acquired. Geometrical and chemical data of each particle are determined, which allows to extract chemistry resolved Particle Size Distributions (PSD)."

2. "The ZAF correction assumes homogeneous samples with smooth surfaces perpendicular to the beam and thicknesses greater than the excitation volume—conditions not met by these particles due to their rough surfaces and small sizes. However, studies (Weinbruch et al., 1997; Meier et al., 2018; Kandler et al., 2018)

have shown that for particles larger than 1 μm , the relative standard deviation of corrected major element concentrations is approximately 2%. For minor elements, the deviation is higher. Since only particles >1 μm in diameter were included in further data processing, ZAF-corrected concentrations were used without additional corrections."

3. nothing was moved to a supplement.

5. Figure 1 is not appropriate for scientific journal articles. Figure 1 is a diagnostic plot automatically generated from HYSPLIT, it is both missing key information (e.g., axis labels on the line plot in the middle panel), and contains extraneous information (e.g., "Job ID"). Either extract the relevant data to combine with the suggested map of measurement locations (see Minor Comment #3), eliminate, or move to supplement (with a note that it is an automatically generated diagnostic plot).

The old figure 1, new figure 2, has been improved accordingly.

6. Figure 2 is not appropriate for scientific journal articles. There is no legend presented, so it is impossible to interpret the plot. Readers cannot tell what units are used (if any), the geographic scale, or many other necessary components. Please remove. If you want to show the data, I recommend a simple time series of the dust product in the supplement.

Figure 2 has been updated with a legend, geographic indications and a scale.

Figure 3 is not appropriate for scientific journal articles. The resolution is bad – it is blurry. Although it at least has an appended legend, the figure is difficult to interpret and does not directly support the arguments of the paper as well as the trajectory analysis or analytical methods applied to samples do. I recommend it to be removed entirely.

Original figure 3 has been removed

7. Figure 4 requires significant revision. The figure resolution is bad, too blurry. Why are there breaks in the horizontal lines from y-axis in panel a? If the figures are sharing a y-axis, generally, the y-axis labels should be on the left-most figure, not the right figure. The green line in panel a should also be removed.

Original figure 4a and b, new figure have been combined and redrawn. See comment to L169 for reviewer I.

8. Figure 5 requires significant revision. I strongly encourage the authors to review the figure and illustration guidelines from the publisher. The colormap used is unscientific (i.e., biased in color intensity), and therefore misleading (see <http://blogs.egu.eu/divisions/gd/2017/08/23/the-rainbow-colour-map/>). The figure labels are not thoughtfully placed, and are distracting (e.g., "cloud base" has a dotted line running through it; "lower thick SD level" looks like it may be covering important data). I recommend extracting the underlying data, plotting anew, and carefully placing labels to ensure no overlaps.

The figure has been turned to grey scale and most of the information in the figure have been moved to the caption.

9. Figure 9 only referenced once, and it is not essential to the arguments being made. Please remove.

I do not agree, the BSE image and the AVIZO segmentation of it are important to extract PSD of the particles inside an iberulite, the key argument to prefer BCS over ICS as formation mechanism in the presented IF.

10. Section 3.4 ("PSDs at JFJ and inside the iberulites") does not flow well either internally or with respect to the rest of the paper. I recommend citing any routine calculation (e.g., equivalent volume diameter), moving any non-routine calculations to their own section of the methods section, and simply give the results with a concise description here.

Calculations and citations have been moved to section 2.5.

11. Figure 11 is not appropriate for scientific journal articles . It looks like another diagnostic plot with overlapping figure captions. The text on the figure is also too small to easily read and grasp the meaning of the figure. I recommend moving to a supplement or appendix after fixing the text size and captions.

The figure has been removed.

12. Figure 12 seems like the most important figure but requires significant revision. The it suffers from the same problems as the other figures: the text is unreadable, bad resolution, unclear units, seems automatically generated rather than extracted data. Please follow the feedback from the other figures and apply here.

Figure 12 has been reduced (12c has been skipped), the resolution has been increased and the labeling enlarged

13. Section 4.1 (“Dust Composition”) is just literature review, not needed in the Discussion. Remove it, or fold it into the introduction section.

The literature review has been moved to the introduction.

14. Section 4.2 (“Iberulite formation and internal structure”) needs to be reorganized.

1. Line 302-303: what does it mean that the IF was “observed in person” – does this mean that there is some qualitative flag recorded? Please elaborate.

We elaborated what “in person “ means: “The iberulite fall (IF) was observed by the authors in Saint-Légier (Vaud), Fribourg (Fribourg), and Geneva.”

2. Lines 304-307 restate what has already been mentioned twice before, please make more concise.

The description of the two iberulite formation mechanisms has been moved to the introduction.

3. Lines 315-324 muddle the arguments which follow by introducing yet another equation that is not explored, plotted, or constitutes a novel result.

The equation has been removed.

4. Lines 326-337 should be their own paragraph, please try to refrain from introducing too many new concepts

See Lines 304 - 307.

5. Lines 338-340 is built on anecdotal evidence (“some iberulites striking car windshields were still wet”). Please use some of the abundant meteorological data in the paper to support this finding. Anecdotal evidence is notoriously unreliable; there could be multiple other explanations for wet windshields.

The windshields were dry; it was the iberulites that were wet, and when they hit the windshield, they were squished. The same information has been given in the same words by Diaz.Hernandez and Parraga. We can add a picture when necessary. We added data (supersaturated layer between 5000 and 5100 m ASL, which indicates the probable origin of the frozen hydrometeors, which became liquid during the fall.

6. Much of this section reads like an outline or informal note rather than a scientific journal submission. The parenthetical notes on lines 353, 357, and 359 as well as the general sentence structure is excessively informal or fragmented.

Lines 353-359 were skipped

7. Pages 19-20 introduce many new concepts and literature review. Please condense considerably to only the most essential points regarding iberulite formation.

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6. +7. Background information and presentation of the scavenging mechanisms have been rewritten and moved to the introduction omitting all information not directly important for the iberulite formation.

8. The last paragraph of the section (lines 397-403) is well-written and neatly summarizes many of the concepts necessary to understand the field observations. Please eliminate the extraneous concepts in the section unnecessary to understanding this paragraph.

The extraneous concepts have been eliminated

The acknowledgement section seems to suggest that this manuscript was a rough draft or outline.

Why are there question marks for some contributors in lines 426-427? Please give a very close reading before re-submission to ensure unnecessary figures are eliminated, sentence fragments are rectified, extraneous information removed, and data is presented in the correct section.

Minor Comments

1. At lines 34-37, you claim aerosol concentrations during these events often exceed air quality standards, it would be useful to the reader to first state what the standards are (Annual? Daily? Hourly?), what an example concentration looks like (and at what scale – hourly? Weekly sustained?)

This information has been added: "During these events, aerosol levels often exceed European, Swiss, and WHO PM₁₀ standards (24-hour limit: 50 µg/m³ (European, Swiss), 45 µg/m³ (WHO); during events: 55 µg/m³)." Deleted:

2. You conclude your first paragraph with "dust mineralogical studies are scarce," a reasonable statement, but support with a paper from 2010. Has there been any growth or decline in atmospheric mineralogical studies in Europe or elsewhere? A more recent review is warranted.

A more recent reference has been given. The last published reference (Jeong, 2024) states, what Engelbrecht et al. already said 14 years before: "Modeling the effect of mineral dust on the environment requires a consistent data set of mineral composition and properties (Claquin et al. 1999; Scanza et al. 2015), which has not yet been established due to the very low quantity of samples, the lack of systematic analyses and interpretation, and the poor mineralogical information on the soils and sediments in desert sources."

3. Line 65: "see below" – what does this refer to? Use figure numbers

"see below" has been skipped.

4. There are many collection locations to keep track of in section 2.1. A map with these locations and their terrain either here or in a supplement would be useful.

A map has been added (new Figure 1).

5. Line 71: looks like two different sections called "2.1," please make second "2.1" into 2.2

The section numbering has been corrected

6. In Line 84, please cite the relevant peer-reviewed article on the satellite rather than sharing a link, and briefly describe its relevance.

The link has been replaced by a reference and the dust detection mechanism described: "The dust RGB product, based on three infrared channels from the Spinning Enhanced Visible and Infrared Imager (SEVIRI) on EUMETSAT's second-generation MSG-11 satellite (Schmetz et al., 2002), was used to identify the sources of afternoon dust arriving over western Switzerland (Schepanski et al., 2009)." Formatted: Font: (Default) Times New Roman, 10 pt, Not Bold, Italic, Kern at 14 pt

7. The paragraphs in Section "Meteorological Data" gives too many abbreviations for unnecessary terms, e.g., "NOAA" or "ARL." Simply cite the papers, and use the full form for terms used only a few times.

The abbreviations have been removed.

8. Figure 6 requires some revision. Again, the resolution is bad – too blurry. The figure title is irrelevant, please remove or make it more easily readable. Also consider removing the blue line, and simply keeping the uncertainty band, as it more convincingly tells the story.

The original figure 6 has been reworked. The new figure has no title and no blue line

9. Either remove Figure 7, or move to supplement/appendix.

It is hard for me to remove figure 7. The latter is the best way for the reader to get, what iberulites are.