

Migrants' long-distance relationships and social networks in Dakar

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SUMMARY: This paper describes the changes in the relationships between migrants in Dakar and their relatives in rural home areas, and how traditional kin structures are gradually replaced by new solidarity networks in the city. While remittances are an important resource for rural households, especially during the "hungry months" before the new harvest, migrants' visits are not linked to regular seasonal agricultural work but rather to occasional participation in family ceremonies, suggesting a decrease in temporary migration and a more permanent urban residence.

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I. INTRODUCTION

THE PERSISTENCE OF strong migratory flows from rural areas to the towns, and in particular Dakar and its suburbs, is a key problem facing Senegal. The logic of these population movements is both individual and collective and is intrinsically linked to imbalances in the areas of origin. Migrating means enlarging one's living space and making a commitment elsewhere on a temporary, regular or permanent basis. Through migration, workers relocate and rearrange themselves in an area wider than their original environment. Rather than simply a movement of individual players, groups or communities are being formed which are bringing economic units into contact across space.

Through complex social networks, migrants maintain relationships, on an occasional but more or less permanent basis, with their places of origin. There are several reasons for adopting such a strategy. In some areas where the crisis in agriculture is most severe, household dependence on contributions from migrants to the city appears to be irreversible. In Serer country, heads of household told us that "...a family with no migrants cannot live decently." (1)

Migration generally involves establishing new links but without breaking up former relationships of a structural or functional nature. The reasons given by Pontié and Lericollais provide an illustration of this rationale employed by many rural societies with regard to human relations:

"The nature of social and religious, as well as economic, relationships between migrants and their societies of origin

1. Fall, A.S. (1992), "Une réponse à la crise de l'agriculture, la migration des Sereer du Siin (Sénégal) in Société, Espace, Temps No.1, pages 138-148.

2. Pontié, G. and A. Lericollais (1991), "Relations à distance des migrants sereer", communication at the seminar on "Processus d'insertion urbaine et itinéraires résidentiels, professionnels et familiaux", Sally-Portudel, Senegal, 27-30 May.

3. Fall, A.S. (1991a), "Résaux de sociabilité et insertion urbaine dans l'agglomération de Dakar", PhD Sociology thesis, University of Cheikh-Anta Diop, Dakar.

4. Fall, S.A. (1991c), "Du questionnaire biographique quantitatif aux entretiens approfondis sur les réseaux de sociabilité en ville?" in "Pratiques sociales et travail en milieu urbain", Les Cahiers No.14, ORSTOM/SUD, Paris, pages 37-50.

is to a large extent dependent on the opportunity they have of returning home to farm, in the event of failing to achieve the purpose of migration, on 'retirement' or if the family situation - e.g. the death of an older relative - so requires. For a migrant, this potential access to a few fields, even after a very long absence, is as much a mark of recognition of his membership of the village and of lineage as of economic necessity". (2)

This paper addresses migrants' relationships with their home areas from the perspective of urban networks. One way of understanding the operation of a network is to determine who the migrant approached in order to find work and accommodation, and in order to maintain links, or not, with his or her home of origin. This social network constitutes a complex web of social relations which is a basis for receiving migrants and/or a means of social, occupational and residential integration, and of human solidarity and preferential relationships. This network may be identified as a kind of social staging post, but one which is set up parallel to the social apparatus and institutions and which sometimes stands in opposition to them. (3) The significance of urban integration networks as new social relationships imposed by current living arrangements is compared with the persistence or the development of links with home areas.

II. METHODOLOGY

THE STUDY METHODOLOGY was both quantitative and qualitative. Migrants living in various parts of greater Dakar were interviewed using a quantitative biographical questionnaire to measure urban integration patterns. Four questions addressed remote relationships: visits made by migrants to their places of origin; remittances of money or food sent by migrants or the support they receive; ownership of assets prior to migration; and the possibility of resorting to migrant networks, particularly through people located in Dakar, to gain access to jobs or housing. In order to analyse these data in greater depth, life history interviews were conducted with a structured sub-sample. (4)

The two methods are complementary. They both start with the individual and move on to the social group using an exploratory, in-depth approach, focusing on the survival strategies adopted by individuals and groups.

III. URBANIZATION

WITH AN ANNUAL growth rate close to 3 per cent, the population of sub-Saharan Africa is expected to double by the year 2020, thus becoming the fastest growing region in the world. While the African population doubled between 1950 and 1980, the urban population increased five-fold over the same period. This distinctive feature is the result of two convergent phenom-

ena, namely a high natural growth rate, and substantial flows of migrants from rural to urban areas, especially to the primate cities.

This move away from the countryside has now become unstoppable in Senegal as a result of the deep crisis in agriculture, the mainstay of its economy. Nor is Dakar shielded from the "macrocephalic" nature of the African urban model whereby the capital develops at breakneck speed at the expense of secondary towns. According to the last population census in 1988, Dakar and its "mirror image", Pikine, had 1,310,000 inhabitants. Dakar and its suburbs thus held 19 per cent of country's total population and almost 54 per cent of the urban population, which is estimated at 39 per cent of the total. The urban population grew at an annual rate of 3.8 per cent between 1976 and 1988, against a figure of about 2.7 per cent for the total population over the same period.

The bulk of modern infrastructure is found in the capital although the city is unable to offer jobs in the formal sector to a large proportion of its residents; failing other alternatives, more than half the active population work in the informal sector and the unemployment rate is estimated at 22 per cent.⁽⁵⁾

As Antoine and Savané observe:

"Urbanization, in Senegal in particular and Africa in general, is neither the corollary of nor the driving force behind economic development; unlike what has been seen in the industrialized world, it has not been caused by mechanization of agriculture leading to relative overpopulation. Rather, it has arisen from the rapid degradation of living conditions in the villages and thus, fundamentally, from the crisis in agriculture." (6)

Urbanization therefore presents a substantial challenge; the city is not an alternative development framework but rather a place of survival for individuals and for the households they form there or maintain in the village.

IV. LONG-DISTANCE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN URBAN AND RURAL AREAS

MIGRATION IS OFTEN rooted in traditions of spatial mobility which sometimes go back several generations. Often, the migrant belongs to an extended kinship, family and lineage group and leaves members of his or her community in the village while joining others long-settled in the city. Migrants thus maintain more or less strong links with their home areas. Furthermore, associations of people originating from the same region or the same village are active in the city, where they play a key role in maintaining a privileged relationship with home areas or in preventing total assimilation into the urban environment, sometimes by reinforcing social control as in the case of young Diola maids.⁽⁷⁾

There is a substantial flow of trade and food supplies from

- 5. Bocquier, P. and Fall, A.S. (1992), "Le recours aux réseaux sociaux pour l'accès à l'emploi, le cas d'une ville en développement: Dakar, communication at the 21st Conference of the Canadian Association for African Studies, Montreal 13-16 May, 1992.
- 6. Antoine, P. and L. Savané (1990), "Urbanisation et migration en Afrique" in The Role of Migration in African Development: Issues and Policies for the 90s, UEPA Conference, Nairobi, pages 55-81.

7. Diop, M. (1989), "Un exemple de non-insertion urbaine: le cas des migrantes saisonnières de Basse Casamance à Dakar" in "L'insertion urbaine des migrantes en Afrique", Colloques et Séminaires, ORSTOM, Paris, pages 79-89.

home to destination areas, while cash flows from the city to the migrants' places of origin are also considerable. Cash remittances are voluntary but how freely the decision is taken by migrants and some city dwellers to send money to their communities of origin must be judged against the community lifestyle and traditions which are still strong in Africa, where people have enormous expectations of their children. Efforts to remain bound to the original group may be seen as reproducing the social order and conforming to dominant values.

Visits by rural people to the city and by migrants to their home areas (villages, smaller towns, country, etc.) are indicators of the dynamism of the city/village relationship. Such visits are made under varying circumstances. In our survey, almost 90 per cent of male and 80 per cent of female migrants maintained links with their places of origin but the relatively large proportion of people who said they no longer visited their home areas (16.5 per cent of male migrants aged between 25 and 34 and 22.5 per cent of young female migrants) raises questions about the type of migration involved. It is possible that some migrants have broken with their birthplace for various reasons but, most importantly, it appears that visits are most commonly inspired by cultural reasons such as religious festivals and family ceremonies. The youngest generation, both men and women, is more inclined to make such visits. For women aged under 35, family ceremonies (51.6 per cent) take precedence over religious festivals (2.2 per cent). Money is transferred and exchanged during such ceremonies. The breakdown in village group structure in urban areas does not mean renouncing socio-cultural links between country dwellers and those living in Dakar. Temporary migration to the city continues, albeit on a small scale, or at least this is what the number of migrants returning to their villages of origin for seasonal agricultural work and similar reasons seems to indicate. This mainly affects young male migrants (11.6 per cent), while few female migrants return to their home areas for the purpose of seasonal agricultural work. Few migrants take holidays in their home areas and equally few make periodic visits.

We also looked at remittances made to help other members of the family not living with the household. The proportion of people who regularly help someone else is disaggregated by generation, sex and status (migrant or otherwise). The exact question was: "Do you have dependants or people you help who do not live with you?"

In Dakar, non-migrants support their nuclear households (spouse and children) in the same city, whereas migrants send gifts to their nuclear families in home areas. Those born in Dakar and migrants aged between 35 and 44 are most likely to make gifts to the family, 16.4 per cent and 20.6 per cent, respectively. Migrants are seen to make a more substantial contribution than non-migrants in all age groups since a proportion of migrants have wives in the hinterland.

Young men born in Dakar and aged between 25 and 34 also support their fathers or mothers but to a lesser extent (20.3 per cent) than those aged between 35 and 44 (32 per cent). Mi-

Table 1: Type of Visit by Migrants to their Home Area, by Generation

REASON FOR VISIT	25-34	MEN Age group 35-44	45-59	25-34	WOMEN Age group 35-44	45-59
Seasonal work and similar reasons	11.6	5.7	5.8	0.0	2.7	0.8
Religious festivals and family ceremonies	29.4	26.3	17.7	14.6	12.4	9.8
Holidays, religious festivals and family ceremonies	7.1	4.8	1.9	2.2	0.9	0.0
Holidays and family ceremonies	4.6	11.3	10.7	3.3	2.7	1.5
Holidays	1.8	3.1	2.7	0.2	0.6	0.0
Family ceremonies and other	10.7	16.9	20.3	19.1	20.4	26.4
Family ceremonies	10.3	16.2	21.4	29.2	37.2	32.3
Periodic visits	0.4	0.4	0.8	0.4	0.0	1.5
Religious festivals	2.2	0.4	1.1	2.2	0.9	0.0
Other reasons	5.4	6.6	3.8	5.6	8.0	6.6
Never goes to home area	16.5	8.3	13.8	22.5	14.2	21.1
Total Number	100.0 220	100.0 228	100.0 260	100.0 88	100.0 113	100.0 132

grants aged under 44 send more substantial gifts to their parents and other relatives in home areas (68.2 per cent). Support destined exclusively for fathers or mothers living in the home area is largely the same for the two younger age groups (23.1 per cent for those under 35 and 25 per cent for those under 45). Gifts intended for fathers or mothers and those living with them involve a smaller proportion (10.9 per cent for those under 35 and 9.2 for those under 45) but reflect the many links which migrants continue to maintain from a distance. Migrants do, however, support their parents settled in Dakar. Such support is greater in the case of women (5.6 per cent for those under 35 and 2.7 per cent for those under 45) than men (2.3 per cent for those under 35 and 2.6 per cent for those under 45).

Generation based differences among men are reversed for women born in Dakar. Thus, 18.5 per cent of non-migrant women aged between 25 and 34 support their fathers or mothers and relatives, whereas this is the case in only 6 per cent of those aged between 35 and 44. However, young migrant women make a contribution in their home areas in 22.5 per cent of cases compared to 26 per cent of those aged between 35 and 44. Obviously, amongst the recipients, it is the father or mother who receives the most support.

The oldest migrants are more concerned with sending gifts to wider kin. Such gifts are more important for those staying in their places of origin. However, kin solidarity between migrants

8. Antoine, P., P. Bocquier, O. Barbary, A.S. Fall, Y. Guisse and J. Nanitelamio (1992), *L'Insertion Urbaine: Le cas de Dakar*, report on research funded by the Research and Technology Ministry, Dakar, IFAN and ORSTOM.

still exists and is expressed, *inter alia*, by financial participation in associations which operate mainly in Dakar.

As a general rule, men aged between 25 and 34 born in Dakar do not give very much, whereas those aged between 45 and 59, who usually have quite a large household already, also support other kin. We might therefore join Antoine in wondering "...whether the Independence generations (those aged between 45 and 59) might be a transition group which is bearing most of the weight of the crisis. Young people experience the crisis, their elders bear the weight." (8)

Table 2: Financial Support Received by Respondents

Age group	Status	No support	rom nuclear family	Support father/ mother or relative	Support brother/ sister	Other person	Association
Male 25-34	Born Dakar	80.1	0.6	6.1	6.6	6.0	0.6
	Migrant	80.1	-	4.2	9.9	4.5	1.3
35-44	Born Dakar	87.2	-	1.8	7.4	2.8	0.8
	Migrant	88.2	-	3.9	3.9	1.8	2.2
45-59	Born Dakar	82.8	6.3	-	4.6	6.3	-
	Migrant	83.1	3.1	1.1	5.4	6.5	0.8
Female 25-34	Born Dakar	56.8	11.1	9.9	6.2	16.0	7.4
	Migrant	67.4	6.8	5.6	11.3	1.0	7.9
35-44	Born Dakar	62.0	6.0	10.0	10.0	2.0	10.0
	Migrant	65.5	6.2	5.3	13.3	1.8	7.9
45-59	Born Dakar	63.0	29.6	-	3.7	3.7	3.7
	Migrant	66.3	18.6	6.8	3.0	2.3	3.0

Precarious living conditions in home areas explain the low levels of support respondents say they receive (men in particular). Support from their father or mother, brothers or sisters is important for young men born in Dakar (6.1 and 6.6 per cent, respectively). Support for migrants from wider kin operates from one generation to another but strong interest is shown by the brothers and sisters (9.9 per cent). People aged between 45 and 59, especially men born in Dakar, are supported by their nuclear family (6.3 per cent). This state of affairs may be explained by the involvement of polygamous women in managing the livelihood of their households. Informal inter-personal relationships outside their groups of origin seem to be helpful to both nonmigrant and migrant men in the 45-59 age group. Support re-

ceived from other people with whom no kinship or alliance exists is a permanent feature for all age groups, although this seems to be less well-established for the middle age group (35-44). Young women born in Dakar enjoy such support (16 per cent). Migrant men and women also receive support from associations.

V. CRITIQUE OF THE RURAL/URBAN CONTINUUM

LIFE HISTORIES TAKEN from migrants in Dakar and Pikine confirm that associations of people from the same villages or rural communities, as well as family, lineage and ethnic groups in the city, are important staging posts in the reception and integration of migrants. People linked by their common origins, but who may belong to different social groups, rub shoulders and share their concerns. However, like the communities back home, such associations have a prescriptive rationale. They constitute a cumbersome operating system which is conservative in terms of the values it conveys. They are not really in a position to handle members' day-to-day needs. It may also be that the socio-cultural values they sustain come up against the modernizing impulses brought out by members' needs for adaptation or creativity in an urban setting.

As a result, the potential development of networks and segments of networks occurs on the fringes of the system. O'Deye considers such associations of people from the same area as a means of integration within the lineage, while also acting as a repository for opposite tendencies within the migrant group concerned. In this way, "the city reconstructs associations". (9) In opposition to this approach, with its rural bias, the city and Dakar in particular should not be seen as favouring an extension of traditional village relationships. Rather, we have observed the emergence of new forms or relationships resulting from urban social dynamics. Urban players are network builders and the permanent restructuring of social networks seems to be a basic characteristic of urbanization in Dakar. In fact, faced with the worsening economic crisis and the constraints of urban living, people develop strategies to broaden their sphere of social interaction. The emergence of new relationships in the city illustrates the dynamic process of integration of migrants in Dakar and Pikine. Specifically, urban social networks help to weaken links between town and village.

VI. MAINTAINING RURAL NETWORKS AND THE IMPORTANCE OF URBAN NETWORKS

RESEARCH IS INCREASINGLY focusing on the privileged roles of social networks as structures facilitating the reception and urban integration of migrants. Their function as "shock absorbers" of the overall economic and social crisis comes up against

9. O'Deye, M. (1985), Les associations en villes africaines. Dakar et Brazzaville. l'Harmattan, Paris.

the problems of their continuity and renewal. Rural networks (family structures, ethnic and village communities, etc.) are crucial in the preparation of the departure of migrants and also during the first stages of settlement in the city before they give way to typically urban networks. This transition from village based networks to more specifically urban networks, although a dominant feature in the process of urban integration, has received inadequate attention in recent work on migration in Africa.

Social, kin, cultural and religious networks have been set up and consolidated on the basis of the spirit of solidarity and on the survival needs of the communities involved. They effectively provide newly arrived migrants with mutual support and help in finding employment and housing. Although organized around traditional relationships involving solidarity as well as hierarchy and inequality between members, networks are to some extent "modernizing", drawing in other types of solidarity and relations created by new affiliations: informal, neighbourhood, political, religious, sporting, trade union and working links.

a. The Continuity of Rural Networks

The context of migration from rural to urban areas highlights the role of rural networks, at least as far as the reception of migrants in Dakar is concerned. In the same way, kinship and ethnic networks and other types of networks built around the same regional, socio-cultural area of origin (region, department, rural community, village, etc.) are involved to a greater or lesser extent in arranging initial accommodation and the first job or occupation. Obviously, these networks are more accessible than integrated urban networks or those which have been longer established in the city. However, rural networks are not pre-existing social staging posts which need only be tapped into as required. They are elaborate phenomena, constructed differently depending on the possibilities offered by the type of relationship in which people are involved or on whether communities are structured or informal. Nevertheless, rural networks ensure some continuity in the process of migration and this is why Antoine and Savané say that "migration sustains migration". (10) According to these authors, migration is in fact the result of a collective strategy to diversify household income sources. Migrants rely on networks of social relations to establish themselves in the city. A bridge is thus established between rural areas and the city. Migrants sometimes reinvest, in economic and social terms, in their regions of origin: they help to construct schools, dispensaries and new housing and purchase agricultural equipment, as well as participating in political and social life. Relationships with the home areas lead to substantial financial flows between town and countryside.

The family develops outposts, as circuits for the reception and integration of migrants are established in the city. Money, food, medicine and so on are transferred and the extended family is mobilized. In Senegal, women in polygamous households take turns to live in the city and village while their husbands are

10. See reference 6, page 56.

engaged in urban activity. There is therefore an urban component in rural strategies and vice versa.

b. The Emergence of New Forms of Relationship in Dakar

Networks are not equivalent to organized structures with explicit modes of operation, and a closer analysis reveals the importance of a number of informal relationships. In the city, several examples of informal groupings can be found: neighbours who have sat together in front of a tailor's workshop almost every day for years; a square where people have been playing belote (a card game) or draughts for 30 years or more; brokers who charge for their skills as intermediaries in selling and renting accommodation; executives playing boules at the weekend. Some scenarios are touched on below to illustrate the range of core relationships which may be activated to generate social networks.

As a result of the gradual shrinkage of the job market caused, *inter alia*, by structural adjustment policies, the informal economic sector is increasingly becoming the favoured entry point for migrants into the economic fabric of Dakar. To some extent, this is due to new migrants' lack of professional qualifications. The informal sector is sufficiently flexible to accommodate them and to ensure long-term urban integration, whereas access to training tends to be provided by kin networks.

Throughout their apprenticeship, migrants gain access to networks generated through their links as service providers for some of the clients of the workshop. Setting up on their own depends largely on their ability to develop customer loyalty to the detriment of their bosses and, especially, on the opportunity to take advantage of the network of relationships built up throughout their apprenticeship.

Migrants who succeed in the informal sector are actively involved in other confraternity networks, groups of economic operators and even networks of traders. In order to succeed in the informal sector, it seems essential to play an important part in upwardly mobile networks. The socio-economic nature of religious confraternities explains the strong interdependence between the networks they have developed and the informal sector. In this regard, their function as a socio-political lobby attracts an increasingly large membership, especially amongst those who need to reposition themselves and acquire new status.

The principle of communicating vessels may be applied to the informal sector, migration and confraternity networks, which almost naturally converge, encouraging movement from one to the other. Networks based on religious affiliation can be considered as networks of origin, since belonging to a religion is part of the socialization process. Religion is not chosen but inherited from one's parents. It is an original cultural aspect. On the other hand, belonging to religious associations and, increasingly, to religious confraternities may reflect both the origins and the personal choices of a migrant. The shift from village to optional networks here may be ascribed to the flexibility of confraternity

networks and the popular, open nature of the informal sector in Dakar and Pikine.

In the formal sector, contacts tend to be made at work, thus generating typically urban social networks. Trades unions give opportunities for social interaction, fostering the emergence of networks at company level and beyond. If appointed as a staff delegate, a worker may have access to confidential information giving him a bit of power within the company. This role as mediator is often a way of gaining favours, enabling him to place parents and friends when jobs become available and to have clients and patrons at both management and employee level. The militant style of trade union activity, like the convergent interests of workers in different companies, is amongst the objective and subjective factors helping to create space for social interaction and social networks in urban areas. Working class culture is a component of typically urban culture.

The intensity of corporate working life and closeness between individuals both foster networks built on friendship. In fact, workers in a company often experience all kinds of hardships which bind them more closely together. When employment is continuous, workplaces allow sustained relationships to develop and, as individuals get to know each other better, their friendships extend beyond the company, leading the way to dense social networks of unsuspected vitality.

Religious associations, or daayira, within companies are also a common way of making connections at work. Social networks set up on the basis of belonging to the same confraternity are useful in establishing small group connections within the company. They are a way of "socializing" corporate life and, reciprocally, of extending privileged professional contacts beyond the company. (11) Like working relationships, incidental neighbourhood contacts may undergo transformation or development, giving rise to networks for mutual advancement. It has been established that neighbourhood is an integral element in the networks to which those born in the city belong and is therefore part of their social identity. One may also consider that migrants, especially those who have lived in Dakar for a long time, are happy to identify themselves in this way. (12) Neighbourhood, informal and religious confraternity networks move into spaces opening up in the city. Because of their ease of access, they are a favoured means of social integration into Dakar's urban context. Another, no less important, characteristic of these networks is the greater anonymity they allow and their consolidation of an ethnic, cultural and social mix which reveals their potential as a resource within everyone's reach.

dynamisme confrérique", Psychopathologie Africaine Vol.XVIII, No.3, pages 293-317; also Ndiaye, A.M.I. (1989), "Les associations dans l'entreprise industrielle: le cas des daayira du Port Autonome de Dakar", mimeo, Department of Philosophy, University of Cheikh-Anta Diop, Dakar.

11. Diop, M.C. (1982), "Le phénomène associatif mouride

en ville: expression du

12. Fall, S.A. (1991b), "'Une autre famille?' Les réseaux féminins de voisinage en ville" at the conference on "Femme, Famille et Population" (Woman, Family and Population), Burkina-Faso 24-29 April, Union pour l'Etude de la Population Africaine Vol.2, pages 54-67.

VII. CONCLUSION

THE SHIFT FROM rural to urban networks is not linear, since networks are a result of strategies adopted by individuals both within and outside social institutions in order to meet their needs. Networks are set up and become stronger, drawing where necessary on the existing or potential institutional resources or,

conversely, bypassing these by developing on the fringes as if to challenge the rigidity of the institutions, allowing them to change and either re-adjust or break down. Networks fade away as the needs of the protagonists are met or require other social staging posts. They can thus be diverted from the purpose for which they were set up.

Social networks become necessary when the strategy is to control "areas of power" within or at the level of several institutions. Networks cut across institutions and go beyond their boundaries. The role of networks is not to replace institutions but, rather, to try to surpass and breathe new life into them.

Migrants do not need to rebel against original social institutions to achieve urban integration. Urban networks are built upon social interaction as a way of tapping into other areas of opportunity which facilitate the integration of migrants into the city. Movement from one to another occurs concomitantly with the broadening and greater complexity of migrants' sphere of social interaction in the city. Village and urban networks retain their informal, implicit rationale but original networks are not exactly the same as village networks which are just one part of them. The continuity of original networks is only equalled by the vitality of urban social networks which are now an important focus in analysing the dynamics of migrant integration in Dakar and Pikine. As Pontié and Lericollais point out "...structural solidarity networks are not marginalized by migration."(13) In the same way, there is no argument that the extremely rapid development of new social networks helping to "cushion" the crisis goes hand in hand with the fragmentation of earlier group structures.

13. See reference 2.