

Telework: conceptualization and issues for analysis

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Abstract

A literature review about telework – modality in which the work is performed remotely through Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) – shows different understandings on this subject. This work present a review of the research on this topic, discussing the main research practices and the different viewpoints portrayed in academic production. Several conclusions were obtained from the study, from optimistic understandings, disseminating only the supposed benefits of telework, to understandings that take it as a modern way to exploit the workers. It is noted that telework is a trend in the current scenario of the world of work, and the benefits for companies, workers and society are well propagated. On the other, there are also many risks involved, especially regarding to the individualization of work, which can result in social, professional and political isolation of the workers.

Keywords: Telework. Work management. Subjectivity.

O teletrabalho: conceituação e questões para análise

Resumo

A revisão de literatura sobre o teletrabalho – modalidade em que o trabalho é realizado remotamente, por meio de tecnologias de informação e comunicação (TIC) – indica diversas e díspares compreensões acerca desse tema. Apresentamos achados de pesquisa sobre essa modalidade, tratando das principais maneiras como tem sido aplicada na prática e das diferentes leituras da produção acadêmica. A partir dos resultados levantados, verifica-se a não unidade das conclusões: há desde entendimentos otimistas, que propagam apenas os supostos benefícios do teletrabalho, até leituras que o consideram um modo moderno de exploração dos trabalhadores. Verifica-se que o teletrabalho é uma tendência no atual cenário do mundo do trabalho. Se, por um lado, propagam-se os benefícios às empresas, aos trabalhadores e à sociedade, por outro, também existe uma série de riscos envolvidos, dizendo respeito, principalmente, à individualização do trabalho – que pode acarretar o isolamento social, profissional e político dos trabalhadores.

Palavras-chave: Teletrabalho. Gestão do trabalho. Subjetivação.

El teletrabajo: conceptualización y cuestiones para el análisis

Resumen

La revisión de la literatura sobre el teletrabajo-modalidad en que el trabajo se realiza remotamente, por medio de tecnologías de información y comunicación (TIC)- indica diversas y dispares comprensiones acerca de ese tema. Presentamos hallazgos de investigación sobre esta modalidad, que tratan las principales maneras como se ha aplicado en la práctica y las diferentes lecturas de la producción académica. A partir de los resultados obtenidos, se verifica la no unidad de las conclusiones: hay desde interpretaciones optimistas, que propagan solo los supuestos beneficios del teletrabajo, hasta lecturas que lo consideran un modo moderno de explotación de los trabajadores. Se observa que el teletrabajo es una tendencia en el actual escenario del mundo del trabajo. Si, por una parte, se propagan los beneficios a las empresas, a los trabajadores y a la sociedad, por otra, también existe una serie de riesgos implicados, en particular, en lo que respecta a la individualización del trabajo, que puede acarrear el aislamiento social, profesional y político de los trabajadores.

Palabras clave: Teletrabajo. Gestión del trabajo. Subjetivación.

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INTRODUCTION

The possibility of working from home is a concept that has been encouraging more and more workers and companies. In recent years, the number of workers who are not compelled to work inside the physical space of a company has been growing significantly, meaning that employees have their own companies or that employers have made this form of work available. With the great development and popularization of information and communication technologies (ICT), the possibility of working anywhere has become a very accessible and often attractive reality. Thus, the topic of telework (also called home office, remote work, distance work, among other terms) is quite current.

In approaching this topic, however, one can see that it has often been taken as a panacea. Telework would be able to solve all the problems of work and present advantages to all involved. This approach, however, can hide sensitive questions about the world of contemporary work. The concept of teleworking itself is still very heterogeneous. There are different nomenclatures referring to the same practices, as well as quite divergent situations named by the same terms. So, this literature review investigates the state of the art of academic research about the concept of telework and the different applications that have been observed, as well as what has been discussed in the scientific literature on the subject. Additionally, journalistic articles are discussed to illustrate current issues that have circulated on the subject. It is shown that, far from being a mere novelty, this modality of work has brought to the fore several questions that must be carefully analyzed.

THE CONCEPT OF TELEWORK AND ITS MODULATIONS

The term teleworking is associated with work done remotely, through ICT, permitting the results of an employee's work to be obtained in a different location from the one occupied by the person who performing the work (ROSENFELD and ALVES, 2011b). There are records of remote work since the 1950s, and in the 1960s and 1970s it was not uncommon to practice working from home to produce clothing, textiles and footwear, as well as packaging and assembly of electrical materials.

It is worth differentiating the activities that have the greatest identification with the term *work from home* (HOLZMANN, 2011) of telework. The first term is much closer to production of industrial materials, quite common at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, consisting of the distribution of the stages of production at the workers' homes before centralizing the process in factories. This logic of industrial production was taken up in the context of productive restructuring as a way of making the production structure more flexible. Today it is seen as strategy for the reduction of costs by businesses and therefore considered a precarious form of work.

Remote work that is less linked to industrial production and necessarily connected to the use of ICT was first presented in the 1970s, with the emergence of the term *telework* (or *telecommuting*) and the convergence of the notions of "work from a distance" and "work from home". Interest in this type of work at the time, mainly in Europe and the United States, was influenced by the energy crisis, the popularization of ICTs (especially personal computers) and the emergence of *telematics* - a term created in 1978 to designate the "marriage" between ICTs (SERRA, 1996). From the 1970s to the 1980s, several teleworking experiences emerged as an alternative to reducing the journey from home to work and from work to home, also known as commuting.

The definition of teleworking is not univocal. In the academic literature, national and international papers use different terms to refer to the same thing and the same term to refer to different specificities (SAKUDA, 2001). In the US, the use of the term *telecommuting* is more frequent, while in Europe the use of *telework* is more common. The first term emphasizes the commute between the demanding center of the work and the place where it is carried out being replaced through the use of telematic tools. The second focuses on the activities carried out by such technological means. Both terms, however, refer to the same universe of work organization, referring to the current tendency of work activities being carried out using telematic means without the need to move the worker to the place where the results should be presented. The term "home office" is also frequently used - however, it refers to a specific category within the larger context of telework or telecommuting, which deals with the specificity of being carried out at the home of the worker.

The International Labor Organization (ILO) opts for the term telework, but highlights specific categories within the field. In this systematization, teleworking should be conceptualized in terms of different variables: a) place/work space; b) work hours (full or part-time); c) type of employment (salaried or independent); and d) required skills (content of the work). Various categories of telecommuting can be listed considering these variables. In a study of thousands of teleworkers in 10 European countries, Japan and the USA, six main categories of teleworking stand out (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2000). Rosenfield and Alves (2011b) systematized the following types:

- a) **Work from home:** also identified by the term small office/home office (SOHO), it is the work done at the home of the worker;
- b) **Work from satellite offices:** workers perform their duties in scattered small units of a central company;
- c) **Work from telecentres:** the work is carried out in establishments usually located next to the home of the employee that offer work positions or several telematic organizations or services to remote clients;
- d) **Mobile work:** outside the home or main office, comprising business or field trips and work at the client's premises;
- e) **Work from remote or offshore companies:** call-centers or teleservices through which firms install satellite offices or subcontract telecommunication companies from other parts of the globe with cheaper labor force;
- f) **Informal work or mixed telework:** arrangement with the employer to work a few hours outside the company.

All these types of telework have in common the workspace flexibility and, often, the time invested in the work, replacing the worker's commute to the contracting headquarters through remote information and communication tools. These forms of work started to be consistently recorded, becoming the subject of academic analysis, from the 1990s onwards. That was the decade when the term more consistently acquired a meaning similar to the one that most interests us in this article.

Estimating the number of telecommuters in the world is a difficult task. The different data available in the literature are considerably divergent. However, the trend towards a strong worldwide acceptance of this modality of work, as well as its accelerated growth, is unanimous. Countries such as Portugal, Italy, Spain, France, Finland, USA, Argentina and Chile have already developed specific legislation to recognize and regulate the practice of telework, in addition to the European Union's own regulations (BARBOSA, 2010).

The most significant recent case was that of the United Kingdom, which in June 2014 enacted a law entitling all workers to require flexibilization of the workday, including working part-time or full-time from home. The recent law extended a benefit that was already available to parents with children up to the age of 16: any worker who has been employed in the same company for at least 26 weeks (approximately 6 months) has the legal right to ask for flexibilization of their work, including the possibility of fulfilling part of their tasks remotely. The employer who decides to deny the request must provide plausible formal justifications and the case may be brought before labor courts if the refusal is not considered adequate, according to the recommendations of the legislation (UNITED KINGDOM, 2014).

The extension of the right is justified by the fact that work flexibility is interesting for older workers approaching retirement and for younger workers who wish to further their studies without having to quit the work force. According to a statement made by the British Deputy Prime Minister: a) It is well known that flexible working increases worker's productivity and morale while it helps to maintain the expansion of their talents; and b) it is time to update work practices according to the needs and choices of modern families (FLEXIBLE WORKING RIGHTS EXTENDED TO ALL, 2014).

In 1996, ILO Convention No. 177 and ILO Recommendation no. 184 were published, both concerning "work from home", mainly regarding the necessary health and safety care in this work modality. The ILO, however, has not yet regulated teleworking more comprehensively, which might be explained by the diversity of situations gathered under the same concept. However, the ILO has spoken about the topic of teleworking, recognizing the practice and highlighting its advantages, both for employees and employers and also for society (ILO, 2004; 2013). The advantages highlighted in these publications relate primarily to a significant increase in productivity, the reduction of costs for businesses and workers, the greater satisfaction of workers and the reduction of traffic in cities. They also emphasize that the possibility of having flexible working space and time allows a greater conciliation between interests and personal and work limitations, which would result in greater diversity in the

workforce. Following the logic of the UK, mothers with small children, older people, young students, disabled people, among others, would have an additional incentive to not stop working.

As for the legislation in Brazil, Law no. 12551 / 2011, which amends art. 6 of the Consolidation of Labor Laws (CLT), equated, in legal terms, working in person to telecommuting:

Article 6: No distinction is made between work carried out at the establishment of the employer, work performed at the employee's home and work carried out at a distance, provided that the conditions of the employment relationship are characterized.

Single paragraph. The telematic and computerized means of command, control and supervision are equipped, for purposes of legal subordination, to the personal and direct means of command, control and supervision of the work of others (BRAZIL, 2011).

Defenders of telecommuting had a positive reaction to Law no. 12551 / 2011. However, it is recognized that this is not yet a specific regulation, but only makes sure that the work carried out at a distance has the same effects as the "face-to-face" modality (MELLO and FERREIRA, 2012). The enactment of the law has raised concerns about the control and payment of "extra" jobs. Many companies that do not systematically use telework also take advantage of their employee's work on a daily basis when they are not in their place and working hours, by means of mobile phone contacts and e-mail, for example. Although analysts says that this law did not focus on this type of situation, interesting questions have arisen that demonstrate the depth of the culture of work without delimitation of time through the use of telematic means.

ACADEMIC PRODUCTION ON THE MATTER

Regarding the scientific literature, the topic of teleworking has been much discussed since the 1990s decade, mainly in the areas of administration and management, often aimed at promoting the idea that telework is feasible and discussing the best forms of teleworking and how to apply it (COSTA, 2004). Over the last 5 years there has been a greater variety of research approaches regarding telework, involving areas such as sociology, psychology, occupational medicine and law. Even in the field of administration, there has been a significant production of studies to enlighten the functioning and the consequences of several aspects involved in teleworking (ROSENFELD and ALVES, 2011b).

In a systematic reading of the academic production on telework, it is possible to identify a differentiation between 3 main focuses. The first – and most widespread – relates to the business area and tends towards the advertisement of the benefits of teleworking, displaying it as an advantageous innovation for all. On the other hand, we find pessimistic analysis about teleworking regarding the new forms of flexible work that arise from computerization. In these researches, labor flexibilization is considered a new way of dominating the labor force, a modern form of capitalist capture (ALVES, 2011; ANTUNES, 2009; ANTUNES and BRAGA, 2009). In these references, the current tendency to flexibilize work is seen as a form of threatening of job security and exploitation of workers. The third, and growing, branch of the literature on teleworking brings critical readings, without falling into either of the two previously mentioned extremes. There are already numerous publications that problematize this practice, bringing to the fore matters from different contexts.

The topics most frequently found in the literature concern the identification of advantages and disadvantages in the performance of teleworking by workers, organizations, companies and society. Additionally, aspects such as the legal regulation of teleworking, the necessary skills for teleworkers and the subjective impacts of this modality of work have been discussed. Generically speaking about the effects of telecommuting, however, does not clarify the reality of the many variations gathered under the same label. The advantages and disadvantages listed in the literature do not account for the complexity of situations involved in the practice of teleworking.

The group of journals, mostly related to the field of business, administration and applied sciences tends to focus on the clarification of the benefits and conditions for the success of telecommuting. This literature considers the modality as an evolutionary trend of the labor market. There is a tendency in the market towards the assimilation of telecommuting as a naturally advantageous path in times of ICT expansion. These studies focus on the dissemination of the benefits of teleworking and how its performance can be improved (ABRÃO, 2013; MELLO, 2000; NILLES, 1997; PINEL, 1998; SAKUDA, 2001).

The main advantages to remotely located workers highlighted are related to the flexibility of the working day; the organization of time in order to better reconcile social, family, work and leisure demands; saving time with home-work transportation; and the autonomy to organize the way of working, especially regarding time and space. The main advantages pointed out in terms of the organizations and companies are the reduction of costs with physical space, equipment and maintenance; increased productivity; the decrease of absenteeism; and retention of talent. From the point of view of the community, the advantages of teleworking are the reduction of the circulation of automobiles in the same hours; the reduction of urban pollution; the non-centralized development of cities; and the greater development of ICTs (BARROS and SILVA, 2010; NOHARA, ACEVEDO, RIBEIRO et al., 2010; SILVA, 2000; TREMBLAY, 2002).

In addition to the dissemination of the benefits of teleworking, the literature more associated with the business world has investigated the possible difficulties in its implementation. It shows, however, a point of view directed towards using telework for the greater productivity and profitability of the companies. In these publications, the discussion of the difficulties found in teleworking is based on the search for solutions for its expansion, in order to benefit the productive interests.

The main disadvantages raised refer to the difficulty of control over workers and the loss in integration and attachment to the organization. These two factors have a strong connection to each other, regarding the relationship established between the worker and the job seeker. This relationship has brought controversial issues both on the side of those who are concerned only with the productivity of the company and on those who look at the subjective effects of work. The fear of loss of control over employees by companies has often been pointed out as the main impediment to the deployment of telework (MELLO, 2000). The forms of control of work (and workers) at a distance have thus been the focus of many management publications. These articles seek to clarify the best ways to exercise control over workers remotely in order to keep them motivated and productive, minding the best interests of businesses.

POLEMICS AND CRITICAL READINGS

Yahoo, which has been experimenting with many of its workers at home for years, surprised and stirred up controversy in the business world when, in early 2013, it announced the end of remote work at the company. Publications were quick to present compelling criticisms on such a decision by Yahoo, hastening to further assert the advantages of remote labor and classifying the company's position as backwardness and desperate (ARTHUR, 2013; GOUDREAU, 2013). These critics argue that Yahoo's poor assessment of teleworking is due to management problems in employee control strategies and integration with the company, which are considered to be obsolete. These statements also concern the position expressed by the ILO on the subject (ILO, 2013).

In justifying the decision, Marissa Mayer (CEO of Yahoo) stated that people are more productive when working alone, but they are much more collaborative and innovative when they are together (TKACZYK, 2013). In addition, Mayer argued that some of the best decisions and insights come from corridors and conversations in the cafe, from meeting new people and impromptu team meetings (ARTHUR, 2013). News reports that the company's goal is to seek unity – "We need to be one Yahoo, and that starts with being physically together", but the company did not abolish flexibility. Furthermore, it is stated that this is not a complete and final vision regarding teleworking in its companies. It was just what Yahoo needed at the moment (GOUDREAU, 2013).

The controversy raised by Yahoo's ruling highlights central aspects of the discussions about teleworking that address important issues from both the corporate and the work force points of view. The euphoria observed about the widespread success of distance work is based on maximizing productivity, lowering costs, and increasing employee satisfaction by reconciling work routine with other personal demands. However, when dealing with the relationships between workers and employers inside telework, it is clear that, for management practices, new forms of control and connection between workers and employers are necessary. Despite the oversimplified finding that worker productivity tends to increase quantitatively when it operates remotely, it is also recognized that the way to manage employee involvement with both managers and co-workers has a significant influence on the type of results found.

This discussion directly refers to the specificities of immaterial labor and to the type of work characteristics of a company such as Yahoo. In this case, the worker is expected to do much more than the fulfillment of a quantitative goal, which can be measured in hours of face-to-face or distance work, entailing an involvement that attempts to offer more than the production of numbers, but rather innovative ideas. By looking at the company's rationale in making the decision to have their employees back in the office, one might think that, for their type of production, hallway talk and impromptu meetings make more difference than strict managerial control.

The issue of control in teleworking must consider the type of involvement that is expected from employees that engage in this modality. As already mentioned, the current reality of teleworking cannot be seen as heterogeneous. It encompasses both precarious telemarketing operators of underdeveloped countries that operate mechanical commands for multinationals based in rich countries and leading managers that are responsible for developing great innovations to their companies. Micro-entrepreneurs, professionals, public servants etc. may also engage in teleworking. The type of teleworking management changes according to the variables related to the location, time, type of contract and work content. Despite the variability found in telework, the issue of control is frequent and controversial.

An article about autonomy in telework, by Rosenfield and Alves (2011a), draw a detailed analysis of the different possibilities of control and autonomy involved in this modality. The first finding of their research concerns the variability of situations encountered involving teleworking. It is shown that, as a form of immaterial work, teleworking lends itself more to tasks linked to the intellectual and creative involvement of the employee, and this type of work is most often found in the form of teleworking. However, it is clear that this reality cannot be taken as uniform. According to the authors' findings, ICT and *distance work* are not always synonymous with creative work, since these technologies can enable the use of pre-structured tasks that only need to be "fulfilled" (ROSENFELD and ALVES, 2011a).

Despite the differences in the control and autonomy of work found between salaried and independent teleworkers who are more and less qualified, it is shown that this modality tends more to flexibility than to autonomy. The assumed autonomy in telecommuting regarding time and space often does not mean that employees exercise real control, since they are submitted to great demands of productivity, adaptability, precision, innovation, etc. Instead of the manager's view and control of their working time, employees find themselves compelled to develop techniques of self-control and self-discipline in order to meet the many requirements of immaterial production. Even highly qualified professionals, who theoretically conquer a high degree of autonomy within telework, may be circumscribed to a mindset of submission, considering they have to manage their performance based on the market rationale. In this sense, Rosenfield and Alves (2011a) consider that, instead of permitting real autonomy by the workers, electronic monitoring provided by ICT – in which the workers themselves are included in the monitoring task, forcing themselves to develop self-control techniques and self-discipline to ensure the high productivity of work in flexible tasks (without control of the workday and the workplace) – is limited to a transformation of the forms of control and surveillance. The alleged autonomy does not materialize in the practice, mainly referring to an individualized engagement in the work subordinated to the demands of market flexibility.

Since the workday is no longer measured in hours that an employee spends at the company's headquarters, other types of process and work product control are required. Thus, to control telework, new forms of external control were developed. The most common are result-based monitoring, which stipulates goals to be achieved in a given period, and the use of pre-structured tasks, applying pre-established parameters and actions (ROSENFELD and ALVES, 2011a). When it comes to the

typical production of immaterial labor, it is more important to present specific performances that must be achieved than pre-organized tasks. The teleworker is thus placed amidst the combination of greater pressure for flexibility in the use of his skills and arrangements relative to his personal life in his time and place of work. The pressure to handle differently flexible demands can be further aggravated by the massive use of mobile applications nowadays. Those resources, on the one hand, provide freedom and flexibility to carry out work activities in any place and time. However, there is great risk related to the use of mobile devices for work activities, since the imperative of being able to work can become a kind of inescapable demand even in moments in which, par excellence, the detachment from work related matters would be fair, such as in the midst of family celebrations, holiday travel as well as during sleep time.

Even in the case of a self-employed worker, it is necessary to guarantee the regularity of the labor demand, which depends not only on the quality of the work performed, but also on the participation in an emergency and short-term regime that is characteristic of this type of activity. These demands obligate the teleworker to be constantly available and also able to manage, in terms of time and space, the reconciliation of private life and work. Autonomy is granted to the teleworker to manage his work time, but is dictated by the volume of work. Paradoxically, this takes control away from the employee, who is compelled to respond to the demands, without restrictions of time and availability.

Often, the control of telework is exercised in the mobilization of what Alves (2008, p.18) identifies as an individualising engagement in flexibility, a concept that articulates the issues of control and individualization, both elementary to think about teleworking:

An individualising engagement in flexibility indicates that subjectively the individual would be adhering, on the one hand, to discourses and practices that consider him the source of the productivity of his work, responsible for managing his own work, professional training and career, and, on the other hand, to discourses and practices of work flexibility, in the space-time sense and in the sense of the organization of work and employment. It also means that the individual would be considered the author of his own work and directly responsible for the results of his activity. In this sense, the control and organization of work would not occur without the commitment of the employee.

Control through engagement in teleworking is related to an individual valuation of the flexible and supposedly self-determined work modality. Personal commitment to work is valued, assigning the individual the control and authorship of their own work, placing the employee as the manager himself, being committed to the results of his activities and directly responsible for them. This individualizing engagement generates, at the same time, emancipation and subordination. The control over the work by the worker is relative, since it is subject to goals and deadlines defined by the contracting company or by the market itself (in the case of self-employed workers). The control of telework – and, it can be said, of all flexibilizations in immaterial work – is the result of a correlation of forces involving goals, deadlines and results, but also individual choice and flexibility (ROSENFELD and ALVES, 2011a).

Thus, the individualization and flexibilization of work support the characteristic control of telework. The management of work is related to a process of development of individualizing subjectivities and it is committed to a kind of “profitability of itself” (ALVES, 2008; COSTA, 2004). Self-entrepreneurship has appeared in surveys with teleworkers as the dominant discourse. Telework has fueled the production of workers with an understanding of themselves as mature, responsible, independent, proactive and flexible individuals, which makes them work in an automated way, combining the teleworking experience with the logic that sustains control in the contemporary organization (COSTA, 2013). This understanding of oneself as an entrepreneur extrapolates the labor dimension, dealing with the formation of subjectivities appropriate to this reality:

More specifically, the governance of contemporary organization articulates the discourse of the employee’s “company”. It is built on a set of characteristics such as initiative, self-confidence and the ability to accept responsibility for oneself and for one’s own actions... individuals must adopt the attitude of ‘self-entrepreneurs’. This posture is not, in fact, limited to proper behavior within the

organizational environment. This is the formatting of a new subject. The idea is that the very life of the individual is seen as an enterprise of self – something that transcends the circumstantial link with the organization to which the individual works. Thus, the typical discourses of contemporary management, such as ‘professionalism’ and ‘competence’ and ‘entrepreneurship of self’, are articulated in terms that align professional conduct and competence with personal development: being professional and competent is defined in terms of adopting [a certain] relationship with oneself, a stance toward life (COSTA, 2007, p. 108).

Thus, Yahoo’s employee, rather than clocking hours at the company’s headquarters, is expected to be involved so that the ideas he has in coffee breaks will increase the company’s productivity. The criticisms regarding Yahoo’s management difficulties, in this sense, are appropriate. The organization failed to sufficiently capture the entrepreneurship of its workers for profitability while operating remotely. The controversy over the initiative to step back from the teleworking policies has brought to light other issues that tend to be left in the background by the business journalistic coverage.

The negative consequences of remote work have also already figured in teleworker surveys. Their “super-engagement” often seeks to cover up difficulties in reconciling work and personal life and even consequences for professional growth within companies (“he who is not seen is not remembered”).

Salaried teleworkers tend to have ambiguous engagement, even when virtuous, since, although they perform their work in a highly committed manner and possess strong self-control and self-discipline over time (less flexible, as with self-employed teleworkers), they have collateral disadvantages, such as: difficulty in reconciling work and family - an even more difficult situation for those with small children who require more attention; tendency towards professional isolation; and competitive disadvantages in terms of the distribution of jobs and tasks, especially in the case of total home telework (ROSENFELD and ALVES, 2011a).

Furthermore, some teleworkers report overwork as a result of the adoption of time and space flexibility. This can occur both through the adoption of higher productivity targets for remote labor than those that would be collected in the traditional workday, as well as through the overflow of in-house work performed at home. It is shown that elastic time devices can be used as ways of intensifying work to compensate for the reduction of teams, a frequent strategy in multinational companies (BARROS and SILVA, 2010).

Another relevant aspect that has been discussed on teleworking is the predominance of female employment in this modality (ANTUNES, 2009; HOLZMANN, 2011; ROSENFELD and ALVES, 2011b). In order to be closer to their families, especially because of children and housework, women tend to seek more often the possibility of working from home, posing the risk of an intense composition between productive telework and domestic productive work, increasing the exploitation of the female contingent (ANTUNES and BRAGA, 2009).

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In this review of the academic literature on telework we approached the risks of work intensification, the difficulty separating time and space for work, family, personal life, the risk of work extending indefinitely into all periods and spaces one’s life through digital mobile devices, as well as the risk of decreasing the possibilities of professional growth. Inasmuch, this review also shows that there are also risks related to the legal regulation of telework. Labor rights already in place – such as the registration of work accidents, medical leave and maternity leave, holidays and limitation of the workload - can become hard to enforce with the flexibility of working hours and location.

Finally, the typical production of the worker suitable for teleworking indicates a tendency towards the over-individualization of the work – which can have consequences to the individual employee, with social, professional and political isolation. It can

lead, in a broader sense, to the cultural transformation of society, implying a general vulnerability of labor relations, loss of the collective dimension of work and increase of the processes of individualization in the social field.

Despite all the critical considerations of the authors read for this article, it is not possible to deny that telecommuting has shown as a very strong tendency in the current labor market. This type of work can, undoubtedly, bring many benefits to both companies and workers – as the most optimistic readings on the subject strive to emphasize. However, it is also shown that the teleworking modality is far from being taken as unequivocally advantageous, carrying many associated risks, from the perspective of the workers directly involved and the perspective of society itself. Thus, the subject is fruitful for future theoretical and empirical research in work sociology and social work psychology.

Among the risks shown, the repercussions on how employees socialize stand out, which directly concerns the health of workers, especially when considering clinics that emphasize the importance of work care as health care (CLOT, 2013). Such care emphasizes that work must be a collective experience rather than an individualized experience – namely, employees must resort to the shared micromanagement of the variables that characterize work – more than tasks to be performed, they refer to activities to be experienced.

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