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THE ODYSSEY OF HOMEWORK DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**Eugen Bruno Ștefan^{1,2} ***¹⁾ *University Politehnica of Bucharest, Bucharest, Romania*²⁾ *Bureau of Social Research, Bucharest, Romania*

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Abstract

Working from home has brought a number of changes in the lives, habits and ways of working of many employees. The article analyzes some of these changes starting from a survey conducted at the end of 2020 on a national sample of 554 subjects. The results were grouped on several major topics: resources, changes, advantages/disadvantages, which resulted in three analysis models: CALIPSO, CIRCE and CICLOP. These are the names of famous characters from Homer's Odyssey, and the comparison with them shows that the way back from office work to home work was not without its adventures and consequences. The COVID-19 pandemic produced changes in the attitudes and behaviors of those who experienced work from home in the second half of 2020. The correlations show significant differences between types of employees, such as those between public servants and those in the private sector. or between those with doctoral studies and those with fewer years of schooling.

Keywords: telework, pandemic, Odyssey.**JEL Classification:** A14; D23; D91; E24; M54

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Introduction

Work from home was regulated by the Parliament after long discussions between the government and the social partners through Law 81 of April 2018. For almost two years, telework has not seen a significant increase. But since the state of emergency has been implemented, authorities have considered telework as a useful tool to reduce the risks of spreading the COVID-19 virus and to protect employees, so Decree 195/2020 established that employers can introduce work from home in all possible situations, without seeking the consent of employees, by unilateral decision. Shortly afterwards, Law 55 of May 2020 regarding some measures to prevent and combat the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic has introduced the agreement of employees to work from home during the lockdown. As a result, the number of employees who worked remotely increased in Romania from 0.8% to 18.4% according to a Eurofound study (the European average was 36.8%). The report “Live, working and COVID-19” shows that young people have the strongest feeling of exclusion from society and the highest risk of depression, while women are more pessimistic about the future in comparison to men, having even more household chores (Eurofound, 2020). An Ipsos study conducted in partnership with BestJobs at the end of the state of emergency period confirms that young people experienced contradictory emotions and feelings, moving easily from impulsivity, irritation, boredom and tension to skepticism, ambition and pride, being more easily distracted from work activities (Ipsos, 2020).

As a result of COVID-19, managers of public and private institutions have accelerated the implementation of telework, finding that it leads to reduction of costs (rents, tools, office supplies, etc.), increase of performance, simplification of the internal activities, and a quicker adjustment to the market’s changes. Studies on the consequences of working from home have become more and more numerous, and the old ones have become more and more relevant.

Analyzing the scientific literature, we noticed that researchers have shown that telework involves profound positive and negative changes for employees in terms of attitude, performance, fatigue, relationships with their coworkers, supervisors, customers and partners, etc. These changes were not explained to most employees who were forced to work from home, and they experienced them intensely, describing them in great detail within the survey. After processing the data, it turned out that working from home was like an odyssey, and the resemblance to Homer's epic led me to build up some presentation matrices, which I named after famous characters from Greek mythology. The first part of the article presents the synthesis of valuable research conducted by specialists from different countries. The second part presents the results of my own research, grouped into three categories: resources, changes, advantages/disadvantages, from which the CALIPSO, CIRCE and CICLOP models emerged. The final part contains the conclusions of the research.

1. Review of scientific literature

Alvin Toffler and Charles Handy were among the first to analyze the phenomenon of telework, saying that it is not new; it has existed since pre-industrial times when many people worked from home, near home or on their own land. The industrial revolution concentrated work in institutions, and now there is a reverse phenomenon of relocation of activities at home, using electronic media and a specific form of communication with the organization. Alvin Toffler and Charles Handy predicted since 1981 and 1984, respectively, that

teleworking would be adopted by the majority of the population due to its profitability (flexibility of the schedule, reduction of transportation and building maintenance cost, as well as, of the sick leave required by employees, etc.).

Returning home from work is not a simple process, without consequences. Yehuda Baruch of the School of Management at the University of East Anglia said two decades ago that teleworking produces five types of effects: 1. *Identity* (changed conceptions of oneself as an employee, family member, professional). 2. *Skills* (development or atrophy of social skills or time management skills). 3. *Context* (being aware of the communication process, the disruptive factors, the use of space and time). 4. *Requirements* (changing priorities, requirements, constraints and support in relation to the activities and tasks performed). 5. *Results* (changing attitudes and satisfactions, stress, performance and rewards). Family involvement, data confidentiality, controlling the employees in their home environment without their consent, disrupting their leisure time, reduced affiliation opportunities and social interactions, low influence of employee on events at work, reduced job stability and security, lower career development opportunities, more difficult motivation of remote staff, loss of advantages given by the teamwork, creation of an autistic society (with atomized individuals who are isolated from each other and from their workplace) - all these negative aspects were measured by Yehuda Baruch's study of 62 teleworkers in five organizations in the UK (Baruch, 2000).

Sandi Mann and Lynn Holdsworth have written in 2003 that teleworking lead to increased irritability and negative emotions among employees due to their social isolation and inability to share work problems with coworkers in order to find solutions together (Mann and Holdsworth, 2003).

Hellen Russel, Philip J. O'Connell and Frances McGinnity demonstrated in 2009 that teleworking deteriorates the work-life balance, as it not only increases the work schedule, but also causes the intrusion of work into family life (Russell, et al., 2009).

Paolo Pillastrini and his collaborators demonstrated in 2009 that the home environment is worse than the workplace for running job activities. The absence of ergonomic office furniture at home leads to muscular and bones problems, as well as, neck and lower back pain (Pillastrini et al., 2009).

Meghna Virick, Nancy DaSilva and Kristi Arrington showed in a 2010 study that working from home decreases job satisfaction because interpersonal relationships and communication are lacking and because it requires more self-discipline (Virick, et al., 2010).

Valerie Morganson and her colleagues showed in 2010 that the absence from the office makes employees feel uncomfortable, because they think that their chances of being promoted are reduced. That is why they tend to work more hours (which generates stress) as they are convinced that this aspect is not noticed and appreciated by their supervisors (Morganson, et al., 2010).

Because some of the negative effects of telework (including home computer technical issues, time management, communication with employers, colleagues and customers, isolation and stress) have been studied by several specialists, Udo Konradt, Renate Schmoock, Andreas Wilm and Guido Hertel introduced the concept of *health circle* since 2000. Participants shared their experiences, received additional information from foreign experts, and the evaluation at the end of the last session showed that the negative aspects were significantly reduced compared to the control group (Konradt, et al., 2000).

A 2010 study published by Lizzy Mogale and Margie Sutherland entitled "Managing Virtual Teams in Multinational Companies" showed that managers' socio-emotional skills increase the performance of highly skilled employees more when they are in telecommuting than when working in the office, and work from home allows them to balance personal and professional life (Mogale and Sutherland, 2010).

Carita Lilian Snellman wrote in 2014 that telework changes organizational structures, makes hierarchies more flexible, facilitates subcontracting, joint ventures, and network-based collaborations, attracting skilled people living anywhere in the world, thus increasing the international competitiveness of companies (Snellman, 2014).

In addition to the positive aspects, the specialists also addressed the problems that arise due to telework. Donata Benetytė and Gražina Jatuliavičienė showed that geographical dispersion, electronic dependency, dynamic structure and cultural diversity lead to low trust between members of virtual teams. They provide less valuable information and knowledge, they have difficulties coping with the challenges faced by organizations (Benetytė and Jatuliavičienė, 2013).

Tugrul Daim and his colleagues at Portland State University and Intel Corporation have shown that the lack of nonverbal and face-to-face communication produces not only poorer but also erroneous communication and, along with anxiety and confusion, the quality of activities in organizations decreases while the risks of slowing down the projects delivery increase. The absence of cordial relationships lowers team morale, people feel neglected, have higher expectations from their leader, lose their sense of mission, while the religious and cultural issues become more important in project planning (Daim, et al., 2012).

Sonia Ospina considers that there is a big gap between the research carried out in this field and the current activity, a gap that managers are aware of, and this is an important factor of mistrust that is established in institutions between employees and their managers. (Ospina, 2016). The lack of trust is also exacerbated by the feeling of uncertainty based on the fact that employees believe they have access to insufficient and incomplete information, a feeling that is stronger in virtual than in office-based teams.

Meltem Kuscu and Hasan Arslan say that globalization has created a different type of organizations, which are run remotely. The trainings take place regardless of time and space, sometimes globally. Firstly, this produced changes at the level of teachers and trainers, then of students, then at the level of the support team. The virtual leader must have the communication and leadership skills of remote teams (Kuscu and Arslan, 2016). This model developed by corporations has been adopted by open universities (which have switched to online courses long time ago), and then by other institutions.

Peter Arnfalk and colleagues at Lund University in Sweden have shown that working remotely creates certain communication routines for employees, and changing them causes reticence. The introduction of texting or business travel was carefully implemented in order to have positive results, as employees tended rather to refuse them (Arnfalk, et al., 2016).

Specialists from the American Psychiatric Association pointed out during the COVID-19 pandemic that working at home causes stress, anxiety and isolation, influencing effectiveness, well-being, work-life balance (American Psychiatric Association, 2020).

Recounting his experience as a teacher who taught online in the state of emergency from March to May 2020, Manos Spyridakis says that in the telework situation the socialization does not develop, mentoring exists only at a superficial level, job becomes less protected, people do not have the opportunity to compare themselves with others in order to enrich their skills and increase their efficiency, a phenomenon of “presentism” develops as the employees know that they are constantly monitored. For him, telework is the expression of “the neoliberal desire to reduce labor costs and wages in the name of the common good” (Spyridakis, 2020).

The World Bank Group report *When Face-to-Face Interactions Become an Occupational Hazard* in May 2020 shows that only certain jobs can be done from home (professional, scientific and technical services, education), while others (accommodation, food, trade), medical and social care, construction) require face-to-face interactions. Although some services can be delivered digitally, their quality is lower. Teacher performance is higher in the classroom and classes are more interactive than online classes. Financial-banking services are inhibited, and the sale of new products decreases significantly. Although occupations prone to work at home are concentrated in high-wage areas, women and those with lower incomes are pushed more towards work exclusively from home, while managers and top people practice at the same time the work from home and the face-to-face work (Avidu and Nayyar, 2020).

Studies conducted during the pandemic have shown the necessity for balance between homework and the family life, the need for available space equipped with certain facilities (internet access, computer, software, printer, desk, ergonomic chair, etc.). These researches pointed out that not all people can work efficiently from home and that certain personal circumstances, skills and characteristics facilitate or reduce the efficiency of work from home, that there is a need to create a culture of telework in organizations and the work relationships must be based on trust and less on monitoring (which favors presentism, the obligation to “be there”), that the problems related to discipline, tenacity, integrity, stress, fatigue remain difficult to solve (Palumbo, 2020).

2. Research methodology

In the early 1980s, Alvin Toffler and Charles Handy were confident that at least half of the world's employees would quickly adopt work from home. Despite the fiscal and legislative facilities, this has only occurred to a very small extent in the following decades. The COVID-19 pandemic triggered the process of returning to the work at home, but this was not a smooth journey, despite the warnings of specialists who studied and wrote about the problems that may occur. The phenomenon was somewhat similar to the return journey that King Odysseus and his companions from Ithaca made after the end of the Trojan War. Homer's *Odyssey* is a parable that designates a long journey full of adventures, wanderings, losses, temptations, accomplishments. Pseudo-Heraclitus warned us from the first century that “if we want to carefully examine the wanderings of Odysseus, we will notice that they are allegorical” (Heraclitus, 2005).

The research presented below aims to explore telework as a journey that restores part of Odysseus' journey, a journey into the fragile realm of the relationship between the individual and the organization for which he works. If Homer's work consists of 12,200 verses divided into 24 songs, the research started from a questionnaire consisting of 95 items, grouped into 20 themes. To measure various aspects of telework we started from the questionnaire used

by Lithuanian researchers Agota Giedrė Raišienė, Violeta Rapuano, Kristina Varkulevičiūtė, Katarína Stachová (Raišienė et al., 2020) and from the one used by Italian researchers Antimo Menna, Fabriz Milena Aulicino, Marco Paoletta, Sara Ligouri, Giovanni Iolascon (Moretti et al., 2020). We reformulated many of the questions and added to them aspects found in my own work as a teacher and researcher as well as, in discussions with colleagues.

The questionnaire was pre-tested on a group of 8 sociologists, who contributed at designing its final form. After posting it on Google Forms, the link was sent by text message and email to 12,240 employees from all counties of Romania. Their contact data were taken from the databases of the Bureau of Social Research - BCS, they have participated in one or more sociological studies the last 2 years, being selected by the interview operators according to the same criteria: residence in areas corresponding to odd-numbered voting sections and of odd-numbered apartments or houses (thus preserving the probabilistic random selection principle, being statistically unlikely to have significant differences of opinion compared to employees domiciled in even-numbered voting stations or apartments/houses). Their weights on different socio-demographic categories observed the existing proportions in the database of the National Institute of Statistics - Tempo Online. They were asked if they worked from home in the last 6 months, after the expiration of the state of emergency (after May 15, 2020), and those who answered positively were invited to complete the online questionnaire. All were informed about the purpose of the research and they were asked to post their contact details (name, surname, telephone) in order to confirm their participation.

A total of 554 people answered the questionnaire, stating that they had been involved in telework recently. They live in 138 cities and villages from 38 counties.

The data were collected between November 19 and December 22, 2020 and they were statistically processed with the SPSS program. The survey has a statistical error of +/- 4.1% at a 99% confidence range.

The population involved in telework has several distinct socio-demographic characteristics: it consists mainly of women, young people, with an average age of 35 years, with a monthly income of approximately 1,000 EURO (4,842 RON), and who live in very large cities with over 200,000 inhabitants. They are graduates of college and postgraduate studies, being employed in the private sector, in medium and large companies, and they work in the field of information and communications, education, professional scientific and technical activities. Employees over 50 years of age, with secondary or elementary education, residents of small towns or rural areas, employed in budgetary or small institutions, in the fields of hotels and restaurants, cultural and recreational activities, extractive and processing industry, real estate transactions were the least involved in telework during the alert period in the second half of 2020.

Table no. 1. Socio-demographic characteristics of the population working from home in Romania in the second half of 2020

Variable		Nr	%
Sex	Masculine	215	38.8
	Feminine	339	61.2
Age	18-29 years	228	41.2
	30-39 years	123	22.2
	40-49 years	126	22.7
	50-59 years	64	11.6
	Over 60 years	13	2.3

Variable		Nr	%
Education	Primary school / vocational school	4	0.7
	High school / GED	84	15.2
	College	224	40.4
	Master	206	37.2
	Ph.D.	36	6.5
Occupation	Employee in public sector	178	32.1
	Employee in private sector	347	62.6
	Self-employed, employer	29	5.2
Residence	Urban area with over 200.000 population	326	58.8
	Urban area with 100.000 – 200.000 population	42	7.6
	Urban area with 30.000 – 100.000 population	65	11.7
	Urban area with less than 30.000 population	43	7.8
	Rural area	78	14.1
Business size	Micro (0-9 employees)	52	9.7
	Small (10-49 employees)	110	19.9
	Medium (50-249 employees)	135	24.4
	Large (over 350 employees)	257	46.4
Field of activity	Agriculture, forestry and fishing	7	1.3
	Extractive and manufacturing industry	5	0.9
	Electricity, heat, gas and water	27	4.9
	Constructions	26	4.7
	Trade, car repair	33	6.0
	Transportation and storage	11	2.0
	Hotels and restaurants	2	0.4
	Information and communication	104	18.8
	Financial and insurance services	46	8.3
	Real estate	5	0.9
	Professional, scientific and technical activities	54	9.7
	Public administration, defense, social security	41	7.4
	Education	112	20.2
	Health care and social care	16	2.9
	Cultural and leisure time activities	4	0.7
	Other activities of social and personal services	43	7.8
Domestic workers	1	0.2	
Activities of extraterritorial organizations	17	3.1	
Total		554	100

If Odysseus crew consisted of young men, hardened in 10 years of fighting at the gates of Troy, the team involved in the adventure of studying the telework consists of young women, hardened in approximately 12 years of experience in online working, using the tools of modern technology (computers, mobile phones, software and special applications).

3. Research results

3.1. CALIPSO

Homer describes Calipso, daughter of the titan Atlas, as a nymph living alone in a large cave on the island of Ogygia (now the island of Gozo in the archipelago of Malta), served by other nymphs. She picked Odysseus from the beach after his shipwreck, fell in love with him and

seduced him with her famous beauty, music and richness, managing to keep him by her side for seven years, even offering him the immortality if he would have agreed to stay with her forever. "Only him, full of longing for his return and for his wife / The mistress nymph kept him, Calipso, a goddess among goddesses / In her polished cave, wanting to have him as her husband." (Homer, 2011).

Like the ancient epic, employees were seduced to stay in the cave of their apartments, "embellished" by employers with various items (computer, software, etc.) for stimulating the social isolation. The CALIPSO model shown in Table 2 shows us the minimal requirements that union leaders had from institutions for isolating employees at home as well as, the employees' responses to the offer received: almost two-thirds received software, laptops or tablets, but only 5% received a printer. 40% participated in webinars and training courses to adapt to the new conditions, but only 8% received a desk or an ergonomic chair (the health problems due to inappropriate working conditions at home have worsened in recent months).

Table no. 2. Items provided free of charge by employer for telework:

		Yes	No	No need
C	Training courses	39,9	37,2	22,9
A	Applications, programs, software for work	66,4	23,5	10,1
L	Laptop, computer or tablet	63,9	27,6	8,5
I	Printer	5,1	54,2	40,8
P	Programs for protection of data	52,7	36,6	10,6
S	Ergonomic chair, desk	8,1	71,8	20,0
O	Office supplies	9,0	72,4	18,6

Young people under 30 received office equipment twice as much as the elderly, the employees in the private sector were luckier than those in the public sector, and the training courses were attended rather by doctoral graduates and public servants. Those living in cities with 100,000 - 200,000 inhabitants benefited the least from equipment and training courses during the alert period.

It is possible that the CALIPSO offer is perceived as less attractive for some employees (especially from the public sector), who preferred to go to work with the risk of getting infected with coronavirus, especially since the income did not increase for those who joined the telework. Some of the interviewed participants stated that the offer of employers must be significantly enriched with other aspects: payment of expenses for internet, electricity and heat, water and gas, cleaning and maintenance of the house, a certain percentage for the use of furniture and personal appliances that deteriorate due to their long hours of usage performing telework, etc.

3.2. CIRCE

Homer says that the wind god Aeolus gave Odysseus a sack in which he gathered the winds and storms to make his journey home smooth. Almost at their destination, the sailors curiously opened the sack, and the storms drove them away from Ithaca, in the kingdom of the witch Circe (nowadays, Monte Circeo peninsula in Italy). She invited the Greeks to her palace at a feast, fed them, and then turned them into pigs. Inspired by Hermes, Odysseus convinced the witch to restore his companions their human form and, in exchange, he spent a whole year with her.

How did the liquor of telework has changed the employees who tasted it in the first months of the pandemic? Almost half of them started working harder and productivity increased to

over a third of them. Fatigue due to longer hours of work covered almost half of them, although the creativity and motivation of their work did not increase. Time for something other than work has been reduced. One third gained weight, 15% lost weight and only 45% remained at the same body weight as six months ago. By grouping the measured changes into several categories, we obtained the CIRCE model: house – investments – results – conscientiousness – effects.

Table no. 3. Since you work home, it increased, decreased or remained the same as when you went to work

		Increased	Decreased	Same	NC/NA/NS/NR	Balance**
C Home (Casă)	Time allocated to family (children, parents, spouse)	31,9	24,5	30,7	12,8	7,4
	Arguments, family conflicts	14,8	14,6	41,9	28,7	0,2
	Domestic activities	35,9	22,4	39,4	2,3	13,5
I Investments	Time allocated to work	52,2	13,0	32,9	2,0	39,2
	Professional training	22,7	12,6	59,7	4,9	10,1
	Motivation for work	26,4	26,7	44,9	2,0	-0,3
R Results	Volume of work	47,3	8,3	42,6	1,8	39,0
	Productivity, efficiency	37,9	23,8	35,9	2,3	14,1
	Incomes	12,3	12,3	72,9	2,5	0
C Conscientiousness	Focus on professional activities	33,6	25,6	39,2	1,9	8,0
	Stress, tiredness	47,3	29,2	19,3	4,2	18,1
	Creativity	27,3	23,8	44,6	4,3	3,5
E Effects	Physical activities, sport	13,2	59,2	24,5	3,1	-46,0
	Body weight	35,7	15,5	45,5	3,2	20,2
	Free time for relaxation, hobbies	28,0	46,4	23,5	2,2	-18,4

Note: *NC/NA/NS/NR = Not the case / Not able to appreciate / I don't know / No answer

** The balance is calculated as the difference between the answers "Increased" and "Decreased".

The changes did not occur to all employees in the same way. Regarding the house (time spent with family, arguments, household activities) the average balance was positive: 4.5%. Investments (in time, training and motivation) increased to 16.3%. The results (work volume, productivity, income) also increased to 17.7%. Conscientiousness (concentration, stress, creativity) also recorded a positive average balance: 9.8% said that it increased. Only the effects on personal life (movement, weight, relaxation time) recorded a negative balance of -14.7%.

Family time increased for men and decreased for women, and increased more for those working in the private than for those in the public sector, as well as, for those who had more years of education. Family arguments were reported more by men than women, by those over 60 (23%), living in small towns, working in entertainment (75%), public administration (24%), trade (21%) and it decreased the most for those working in real estate transactions (40%) and health and social care (25%). Domestic activities increased mainly among men (44%), young people under 30 (42%), doctoral graduates (36%), employees in the private sector (41%), residents of cities with more than 200,000 inhabitants (42%), engaged in

cultural and recreational activities (75%), information and communication (49%), transport and storage (46%), agriculture, forestry and fishing (43%), extraterritorial bodies (41%), professional, scientific and technical activities (41%).

The time allocated to work activities was longer for women, and it increased with age and directly proportional to the number of years of study, and it was longer for public employees, especially in the fields of education (78%), cultural performances and recreation (75%), financial and insurance services (61%), construction (61%) and the extractive and processing industry (60%). Those who benefited of training were especially people over 60, with a doctoral degree, self-employed, residents of very small towns, employed in education (36%), health (31%), shows (25%), trade (24%). The work motivation was higher, especially for the elderly and super-qualified people, who carry out professional scientific and technical activities.

The volume of work increased significantly more for women than for men; 54% of them became workaholics and only 5% worked less. The appetite for work increased in direct proportion to aging, especially those over 55 (70%) "getting drunk", while young people under 30 being the least tempted to taste it (38%). The higher the level of education, the higher the volume of work, with only 25% of graduates of general or vocational schools declaring that they worked more, while 64% of those with a doctoral degree declaring the same. Public employees felt twice as much as private employees that their workload increased. The perceived productivity of work was higher for men, young people, those with elementary education and those from the private sector. Revenues have slightly increased and decreased during the state of emergency. They increased more for those aged 30-39 and decreased especially for those aged 40-49 and over 60, they increased more in private sector, but in the public one they remained the same. They increased in health and social assistance, transport and storage, but decreased in the field of hotels and restaurants, in public administration and defense, social insurance.

The focus on professional activities was more intense for those working in transport and storage and in the field of electricity and heat, gas and water, residents of medium-sized cities (30,000 - 100,000 inhabitants). Stress and fatigue increased with age and were higher for public employees, women, those living in small towns and rural areas, working in education (76%), cultural and recreational activities (75%), financial and insurance services (54%), extraterritorial organizations (53%). The least stressed were those who worked in agriculture, forestry and fishing, for whom working at home or around the house has been a common activity for long time. Creativity has increased for the elderly, graduates of doctoral studies, residents of medium-sized cities (30,000 - 100,000 inhabitants), those working in public sector, in the fields of education (36%), extraterritorial bodies (35%), electricity and heat (33%), information and communications (32%), health and social assistance (31%).

Physical activity, exercise, sports decreased to 6 out of 10 workers at home. Men exercised twice as much as women, those under 30, 3 times more than those aged 50-59, those with secondary education, 3 times more than those with a doctoral degree, those employed in the private sector more than those from the public sector, and those from trade, transportation and storage, information and communications, health and professional, scientific and technical activities (18%) more than those from real estate transactions, entertainment, extractive and manufacturing industry, and hotels and restaurants (0%). In the state of emergency, men gained the most weight (39%), while 17% of women even managed to lose weight (although another 34% of women admitted to gaining weight).

The fat was deposited mainly on the bodies of those aged 50-59 (44%), while the slimming diets worked best for those under 30 (17%). College and master's graduates gained the most weight, while those with secondary education managed to lose the most excess weight. Those who gained weight were mainly employees in transportation and storage (46%), agriculture (43%), trade and construction (42%), extraterritorial organizations (41%) and education (38%), while those who lost weight were especially those in the field of shows (50%), hotels and restaurants (50%), real estate transactions (40%), extractive and processing industry (20%).

Leisure time increased more for men than women, for those under 30 (36%) than for those over 55 (15%), for those employed in the private sector (35%) than for those employed in the public sector (16%), for those in rural areas and very large cities (30-35%) than for those in small and medium-sized cities (11-15%), for those in agriculture, energy, hotels and restaurants, information and communications, organizations extraterritorial (over 40%), than in education (7%) and real estate transactions (0%).

After six months of teleworking, people are more industrious at working online, but they are overweight, stressed more, without motivation and enthusiasm, in a vegetative state of stillness.

The CIRCE model shows that the dimensions of change can be studied on several levels, of which the first to be analyzed is the house. The entry of work into the home produced a resettlement of habits, relationships and family activities. The lucrative tasks took place in improper conditions, so personal investments of time, education and self-motivation were necessary, and the results materialized in a visibly increased workload, an increased productivity, but with unchanged incomes. The adaptation led to a conscientiousness that employees did not feel the same way when they went to work: a focus on tasks, creativity, but also a 10% higher stress. And the effects on employees were negative: they didn't move, they didn't have free time and they gained weight. The CIRCE model is flexible because it allows the introduction of other elements in the five dimensions. For example, aspects of the house can be studied on several indicators: area, work room, frequency of work interruptions due to family problems, sexual relations between partners, influence on children, in-laws, parents and other relatives who live under the same roof and their influence on work, etc.

Like the witch who turned Odysseus' sailors into pigs, the CIRCE model shows the transformations produced on those working from home. In the Odyssey, the god Hermes told Odysseus how to resist charms and persuade Circe to change his people back into humans. Nowadays, specialists warned before the pandemic about the dangers of the changes produced by telework, but their messages did not reach the ears of many workers. The CIRCE model of analysis can be a useful tool to make the results of scientific research seductive.

3.3. CYCLOPS

The Cyclopes were fabulous creatures, represented as giants with one eye on their foreheads. The best known of them, Polyphemus, was the son of Poseidon (the god of the sea) and the nymph Thoosa, and he lived on the island of Sicily, along with other nameless giants. Once on this island, Odysseus and his crew entered the Cyclops' cave, where they found large pieces of cheese, from which they feasted until Polyphemus returned from grazing the sheep, locked the sailors in his cave and began to eat some of them. After getting the Cyclops drunk and sleepy, Odysseus took a log and stuck it in his eyes, blinding him. He managed to get out of the cave hidden under the bellies of the sheep. Before lifting the sails, Odysseus told the

Cyclops his name, and Polyphemus begged his father, Poseidon, to avenge him. Poseidon's wrath prevented Odysseus from returning home for 10 years, being exposed to numerous challenges. In order to resist, he had to show a lot of skill, cunning, temperance, intelligence and effort, suffering many losses and pains.

Like Odysseus and his crew, teleworkers had to face various challenges during the state of alert. These were grouped into 6 categories – coworkers, information, communication, leadership, organization, presentation – that generated the CICLOP model.

Table no. 4. Are the following aspects of telework in your advantage or disadvantage?

		In my advantage	In my disadvantage	It doesn't matter	Not the case / NR	Balance *
C coworkers	Absence of team spirit, of "us"	9,4	65,0	13,9	11,7	-55,6
	Absence of a creative atmosphere	9,7	64,1	13,4	12,8	-54,4
	Quality of your colleagues' work	23,3	40,4	18,8	17,5	-17,1
	Cooperation with coworkers for common results	24,4	50,7	11,9	13,0	-26,3
I information	Access to important information about your work and career	25,8	43,2	13,9	17,1	-17,4
	Communication, spread of important information at work	23,6	47,3	14,8	14,3	-23,7
	Online meetings	42,2	35,7	10,3	11,7	6,5
	Reports of activity	32,9	39,7	14,6	12,8	-6,8
C communication	Lack of face-to-face interaction with coworkers	11,9	67,7	14,3	6,1	-55,8
	Decrease of communication with other employees	14,3	63,2	13,0	9,6	-48,9
	Lack of face-to-face interaction with supervisor	18,6	50,5	17,3	13,5	-31,9
	Time spent for communication with coworkers and supervisors	30,3	44,8	13,4	11,6	-14,5
L leadership	Employer's expectations regarding the workload	22,4	43,5	17,0	17,1	-21,1
	Way of making decision at work	19,0	47,8	14,6	18,6	-28,8
	Feedback to your work	32,3	40,8	12,3	14,6	-8,5
	Evaluation of your work	32,1	39,9	14,3	13,7	-7,8

		In my advantage	In my disadvantage	It doesn't matter	Not the case / NR	Balance *
O organization	Way of demonstrating your skills, competences and results of your work	31,9	44,9	11,0	12,1	-13,0
	Difficulty of self-organization and discipline in pursuing your job tasks	29,1	44,8	10,8	15,3	-15,7
	Possibility of independent work	57,4	22,7	8,5	11,4	34,7
	Overload	15,5	54,5	13,2	16,8	-39,0
P presentation	Mixing work and personal life	23,5	49,6	11,4	15,5	-26,1
	Presence of family members next to you during telework	21,8	46,0	12,6	19,5	-24,2
	Lack of formal attire during telework	42,2	31,9	12,8	13,0	10,3
	Online relations with customers	31,9	31,9	12,8	23,3	0

Note: * The balance is calculated as the difference between advantages and disadvantages (column 3 - column 4).

Negative balances were found in all 6 categories of problems, although some of their aspects produced a positive result. Relationships with colleagues had the highest negative balance: -38.3%. Information had a score of -10.3%. Communication produced a very high negative balance: -37.7%. The leadership also received a negative balance of -16.5%. Organization had the lowest negative score: -8.2%, and presentation obtained -10.0%. The most important advantages of working from home were the possibility to work independently (57.4%), the way of running online meetings (42.2%) and not needing to wear a professional outfit (42.2%). And the most important disadvantages expressed were the lack of face-to-face interactions with coworkers (67.7%), the absence of a team spirit (65.0%) and the absence of an inspirational atmosphere (64.1%).

The problems related to *coworkers* (lack of a team spirit and of an office atmosphere, collaboration with them and the quality of their work) negatively affected especially women, young people, living in small towns, those working in the public sector, employees in hotels and restaurants, entertainment, but also in real estate, education, financial and insurance services (between 50-75%). And it benefited especially those over 50 years old, men, with doctoral degree, self-employed or employers, employed in extraterritorial organizations, information and communications, health services, and energy (25-40%).

Information issues (access to important information related to work and career, the way it is spread within the institution, how online meetings take place, requested reports) were considered a disadvantage especially for women, adults aged 40-50, those working in public sector, from education, public administration, HORECA, entertainment industry (over 50%). But they were appreciated by young people, with a master's and doctoral degree, private

employees or self-employed, who work in health care, professional scientific and technical activities, extractive and manufacturing industry, international organizations, financial and insurance services (35-50%).

Changes in *communication* (lack of face-to-face interaction with coworkers and managers, limited discussions with other employees, online communication) were an impediment for young people at the beginning of their careers, but also for those aged 40-50, high school graduates and undergraduates, those working in the public sector, in the areas that were negatively affected by the pandemic: hotels and restaurants, entertainment, real estate (over 60%).

Issues related to the *leadership* and management (expectations regarding the real volume of work, the way they make decisions in the institution, the feedback they provide to and how they evaluate their employees) were viewed with hostility by those working in the public sector, in the fields of transportation and storage, hotels and restaurants, financial and insurance services, education, public administration, culture (over 50%). But they were positively perceived by young people, those employed in the private sector, in international organizations, health care, trade, energy, information and communications (over 33%). Women were more affected than men by the new management approaches, while men looked at them with more detachment and indifference.

Changes in *organization* of work (how teleworkers have to demonstrate their skills, competencies and results, the difficulty of establishing a self-discipline and time management in pursuing tasks, the possibility to work independently, the overload) have favored those with master's and doctoral degrees, self-employed or employers, working in international organizations, health care, collective social and personal services, IT industries (over 40%), but they provoked negative reactions to those employed in the public sector, working in administration, education, culture (over 40%).

Situations related to *presentation* (lack of a formal attire at work, mixing work with personal life, presence of other family members, online relationships with customers) were reported in a negative way by employees in administration, education, culture, those working in professional, scientific and technical activities, real estate, trade, hotels and restaurants in over 50% of cases, but it was seen favorably by those working in information and communications, financial and insurance services, extraterritorial organizations, collective, social and personal services (over 30%).

The CICLOP model shown in Table 3 allows an analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of working from home, assessing the relationship between isolated individuals at home and their jobs, a classification of problems by series of attributes that are perceived as huge as Cyclopes from Odyssey. These six characteristics facilitate the understanding of human behaviors in crisis situations, in which sudden changes provoke reactions, take people out of the state of institutional comfort and force them to an isolation that raises issues of identity, profession, and career.

Conclusions

The analysis of the survey results revealed some relevant aspects of the changes resulted from the transition to telework in the second half of 2020. There was a rebalancing of roles between men and women, the former dealing more with household chores - women did not have

mentioned this, while the men gladly appreciated it, not as a burden. Women perceived the changes resulted from working at home more intensely - they appreciated and rejected them more vehemently than men, they sought solutions to cope, they worked harder. To demonstrate their commitment to organizations, they have developed skills to work independently, to manage their time more responsibly, and to communicate online more efficiently. Men perceived the changes as difficulties or opportunities that people from all over the planet are facing, so they adapted more indifferently, but they redefined their domestic role with interest.

Those working in public sector perceived work from home rather negatively, especially those working in areas frequently accused of lack of performance (public administration, education, culture). The pandemic has further highlighted the freezing of these areas in certain inefficient organizational structures. Despite the training courses and adaptation to the new conditions - definitely more numerous than those working in the private sector or those who are self-employed - and the increased workload of the last six months, the feeling of lagging behind and of a lower efficiency often penetrates when reading survey data. To hide it, they complained about the absence of coworkers and the lack of an office atmosphere.

The most adapted to work from home were IT specialists and those employed in private institutions or in a competitive market (banks, insurance companies, real estate companies, international corporations). The structure of their institutions and the frequent communication allowed them not to feel strongly isolated from their coworkers. Young people, but also older generations and those with a doctoral degree have more often supported the benefits of working from home and organizing activities on their own. The increased education and the employment in successful institutions have led to greater self-confidence and the strength to meet new challenges.

The biggest feeling of insecurity was experienced by those of 35-55 year olds, with high-school or college education, working in the public sector, who understood that the changes produced with the pandemic are far from temporary, and the return to old organizational behaviors it will not be possible under the same conditions. That is why they participated more in professional development trainings, worked harder and paid attention to the evolution of their field in similar institutions in Western countries. They felt most the need to be led and guided to regulate their workflow, attended training courses, needed the feeling that they were not alone and complained about the absence of coworkers in their professional lives.

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated some organizational procedures, simplified others, and complicated some others. In addition to greater independence and responsibility, people appreciated the way of running the meetings, the lack of formalism (attire, but not only), the faster feedback received from their supervisors, the debureaucratization. They accepted the increase in the volume and time of work as a natural phenomenon that should bring them closer to the pace of large corporations, even though their income was frozen.

On the other hand, the forced entry into telework due to the COVID-19 pandemic was made without providing employees with minimum conditions for carrying out their activities. Beyond the inappropriate space they used - in the living room, bedroom, kitchen, hallway, while children or life partners worked, studied, played or sat on TV or on the Internet in the same room or nearby rooms - there were many cases in which they did not receive from employers the minimum tools for carrying out activities. They did not receive computers, printers, ergonomic chairs (and these are an exception in most homes), they used their own

furniture, internet, electricity, gas, water, heat that they paid for from their own resources. Some said they spent on remodeling the apartment so it could be used for telework.

Working from home has reduced physical activity, exercise, and free time for fun and recreation; this phenomenon has resulted in an increase in body weight in over a third of employees and in worsening some health problems - only 35% of them said that they did not suffer a deterioration of health during this period. The isolation made them value more their coworkers, the organizational atmosphere that helped them to develop certain skills, behaviors, attitudes. The physical absence of coworkers decreased motivation to perform tasks and increased stress for more than a quarter of employees.

Changes in the work environment, comfort, way of working, relationships, weight occurred quickly and required adaptive strategies that people learned rather intuitively, but according to predictable social patterns, described long before by researchers. It was like a journey that Odysseus made in antiquity. This journey back home is not over, and the comparison with the one described by Homer is incomplete. The odyssey of homework continues with several episodes that were measured in the survey, such as the road to the land of consumers of stimulants, on the island of mermaids, through the Straits of Scylla and Charybda, fighting with suitors and finally home near Penelope. The description of the remaining journey would make this article excessively long, but the fact that all these episodes of the Odyssey are found in the sociological analysis of telework reinforces the idea that we must perceive the process of returning the work from office to home as an odyssey. This term comes from the Greek word *odynê*, which means "pain". The central character of this well-known epic poem about travel, wandering and pilgrimage, suffering and victory is, literally, "the man of pain". The journey is about separation, about what those who started it have left behind, about the problems they faced until they found Penelope - the love of working from home. As the Greek philosopher Porphyry (who wrote several treatises on Homer) said, the Odyssey is the story of a *paiudeusis* (a word that comes from the Greek verb *paideuô* which means "to educate"), that is, education seen as a journey of knowledge and desire for wisdom, which means that the one who starts it will have to go through trials, challenges, sufferings and achievements.

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