1. Introduction

The reason for writing this book is straightforward. In media and political circles across the world, there has been in recent years a heated discussion about the growth in the number of workers who are falsely classified as working on a self-employed basis for businesses, especially collaborative platforms, and how this is leading to poorer working conditions for those employed in this manner. However, these discussions about what is loosely and variously called ‘bogus self-employment’, ‘false self-employment’ or ‘dependent self-employment’ have been based largely on anecdote rather than rigorous empirical evidence. Here, the intention is to transcend this reliance on vignettes of specific cases and, in doing so, to fill a major lacuna. Until now, there have been few evidence-based evaluations of this emergent and apparently burgeoning new type of employment relationship, and those empirical studies that have been so far undertaken have tended to be small-scale studies often on a sector and specific country.

Despite this lack of a solid evidence base, some dominant narratives have come to the fore in not only the academic literature but also the media and political discourse regarding the prevalence, growth and distribution of this employment relationship existing in the ‘grey zone’ between pure dependent employment and genuine self-employment. The intention here is to put these widespread assumptions about this employment relationship under the spotlight by analysing the findings of an extensive cross-national data set on this phenomenon, namely the 2015 European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS). This will reveal that the lived realities of dependent self-employment do not always conform with the dominant narratives in the media and political discourse.

To show this, answers are sought in this book to several questions. What types of employment relationship exist in this grey zone between pure dependent employment and genuine self-employment? And are these forms of dependent self-employment extensive and growing in contemporary labour markets? Is this work conducted by marginalized groups who engage out of necessity rather than choice in such an employment relationship? To what degree is the emergence of dependent self-employment a by-product of the advent of online platforms and mobile device applications (that is, the ‘gig’ or ‘sharing’ economy)? Are the working conditions
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of those in this grey zone poorer than for the rest of the employed population? And how can this phenomenon be tackled?

In the next section of this Introduction, we set the scene by defining what is here meant by dependent self-employment, and briefly review what have been sometimes very confusing discussions for a lay reader regarding how to define employment relationships existing in this grey zone between pure dependent employment and genuine self-employment. Having defined what is being discussed in this book, the final section of this introductory chapter then sets out the arguments of this book by reviewing its structure and what will be argued.

DEFINING DEPENDENT SELF-EMPLOYMENT

Since the turn of the millennium, there has been recognition that the ‘standard employment relationship’ (SER) of formal, full-time and permanent waged employment is becoming ever less the standard relationship, the norm. Given that the SER has been for many decades the key vehicle for allocating rights and social protection, its demise poses challenges for the operation of regulatory frameworks, and raises issues regarding working conditions, rights and benefits. This diminution of the SER is due to both the growth of non-standard employment (NSE) forms such as part-time, fixed-term and agency employment (Eichhorst et al., 2013; Hatfield, 2015; Pedersini and Coletto, 2010), as well as the growth in participation in not only undeclared work but also self-employment, neither of which are usually covered by the umbrella of protective rights for the worker and responsibilities for the employer. Although protective rights are being gradually extended in many countries to employees in NSE (ILO, 2016), this has not been so much the case for the self-employed. Instead, this group has been treated as a residual group largely outside of the purview of labour standards and regulation. This is largely because they are not perceived to have an employment relationship with their clients but, rather, a contract for services or civil contract with those to whom they supply their labour.

In recent years, furthermore, a small but burgeoning literature has raised concerns that employers are falsely classifying employees as self-employed, despite these workers possessing many of the characteristics of dependent employees. This misclassification, it is argued, is deliberate. Workers are being falsely classified as self-employed to circumvent collective agreements, labour laws (for example, minimum wages, working time legislation, protection in case of redundancy), employment tax and other employer liabilities implied in the standard contract of employment (Conaty et al.,
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2016; Cremers, 2010; Eichhorst et al., 2013; Eurofound, 2013a, 2016a, 2016b; Gialis et al., 2017; Giraud and Lechevalier, 2018; Hatfield, 2015; ILO, 2013; Marín, 2013; OECD, 2000; Westerveld, 2012). Traditionally, in many countries, labour law has applied to dependent employment, while self-employment is covered by civic law. However, in practice, employment relationships are not either dependent employment or self-employment: such a dualistic depiction, or binary divide, does not capture the full range of employment relationships. A continuum of employment relationships exists, ranging from pure dependent employment at one end of the spectrum to genuine self-employment at the other end.

The employment relationships situated in the grey area in the middle include ‘dependent self-employment’, where ‘workers perform service for a business under a contract different from a contract of employment but depend on one or a small number of clients for the incomes and receive direct guidelines regarding how the work is done’, and ‘disguised employment relationships’, where ‘an employer treats an individual as other than an employee in a manner that hides his or her true legal status as an employee’ (ILO, 2016, p. 36). To denote the employment relationships in this grey zone, various terms have been used including ‘bogus’, ‘fake’, ‘false’, ‘sham’, ‘involuntary’ or ‘misclassified’ self-employment, or ‘disguised employment’ (Ana, 2009a; Böheim and Mühlberger, 2006; Eichhorst et al., 2013; Harvey and Behling, 2008; Jorens, 2009; Kautonen et al., 2009; Kautonen et al., 2010; Mandrone et al., 2014; Parliamentary Committees, 2018; Pedersini and Coletto, 2010; Stan et al., 2007; Thörnquist, 2013).

As Perulli (2003) argues, this grey zone is studied for two different reasons, and these different reasons generate some confusion about whether different categories of employment relationship are being studied. On the one hand, the grey zone is studied to define those forms of work which cannot be categorized as either pure dependent employment or genuine self-employment because they possess some features of dependent employment and some features of self-employment. On the other hand, the grey zone is also studied to describe those situations when a worker is formally registered as self-employed but, in reality, the worker is engaged in dependent employment (Perulli, 2003). Thus, while for those who study disguised employment the challenge is how to apply the law and to reclassify the worker, in the case of those studying the dependent self-employed who are difficult to fit in the binary divide the question is rather of the need for the recognition of a new form of employment relationship.

The result is that the literature has reached no consensus about how to define employment relationships in this grey zone and how to define the differences in the employment relationships in the middle of the spectrum between pure dependent employment and genuine self-employment. For
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some commentators, whether the worker has chosen or not the status of dependent self-employment is the most important characteristic identified for differentiating the different types of employment relationship in this grey zone. As Böheim and Mühlberger (2009) assert, there are two categories of dependent self-employed, namely the ‘opportunity’-driven self-employed who choose to enjoy more autonomy and working time flexibility, and the ‘necessity’-driven self-employed who are unable to find an employment position or who accept this form of work because their client only offered them work based on a commercial contract rather than a waged employment contract. Indeed, when a worker is forced to change their status from an employee to self-employed, as a means of evading labour regulation, dependent self-employment implies bogus self-employment (Eichhorst et al., 2013).

The problems in distinguishing between dependent self-employment and bogus self-employment are further accentuated by the fact that the same employment relationship – namely, a self-employed person who has the same tasks and works for the same employers for which they previously had a dependent employment relationship – is used for defining dependent self-employment in some studies (Román et al., 2011; Thörnquist, 2013), while in other studies these cases where the worker was pressed or forced to register as self-employed are defined as bogus self-employment (Bekker and Posthumus, 2010; Bengtsson, 2016; Social Security Advisory Committee, 2014; Wickham and Bobek, 2016). Other studies simply refer to bogus self-employment to describe the working relationship where the workers either declare themselves or are declared by their employer as self-employed for labour and tax laws purposes despite the fact that they have similar working conditions as employees (Behling and Harvey, 2015; Eichhorst and Tobsch, 2014; Hatfield, 2015; Jorens and van Buynder, 2009; Millán et al., 2018; Pedersini and Coletto, 2010; Thörnquist, 2013, 2014). Yet other literature either uses the terms interchangeably (e.g., European Platform Undeclared Work, 2018; Keller and Seifert, 2013; van Es and van Vuuren, 2010), frames bogus self-employment as dependent self-employment due to unequal power and the dependence of the income on a single client (McKay, 2014), or considers dependent self-employment as an ‘imperfect’ indicator for assessing the extent of bogus self-employment in a country (Hatfield, 2015).

To overcome these confusions, it is here recognized that there exists a continuum of employment relationships ranging from pure dependent employment through more employment-like relationships and more self-employment-oriented relationships to genuine self-employment. By recognizing a continuum of employment relationships, it becomes obvious that each type of employment relationship identified on this spectrum in
practice overlaps and merges into others. This has seldom been recognized. Instead, much of the literature, as identified above, has sought to treat dependent self-employment, which exists towards the self-employment end of the continuum, and disguised employment (or what is sometimes referred to as bogus self-employment), which exists towards the dependent employment end of the spectrum, as discrete categories with specific characteristics. This, however, is not the case.

In this book, therefore, we refer to the employment relationships that we study in this grey zone between pure dependent employment and genuine self-employment as ‘dependent self-employment’. Most commonly, dependent self-employment is referred to as an employment relationship where a worker is formally registered as self-employed but works under same working conditions as those of direct employees, or they depend on a single employer for a main part of their income (Burton-Jones, 1999; Eichhorst et al., 2013; Jansen, 2016; Pedersini and Coletto, 2010). However, the literature does not provide a consensus on how to define dependent self-employment (Mühlberger and Bertolini, 2008), and neither does the legislation across different countries, which focuses either on their economic dependency or on the strict coordination between the self-employed and the business of their main client (ILO, 2015a).

For example, the International Labour Organization (ILO) (2016) defines dependent self-employment as those cases where a worker’s income depends on a single or a small number of clients from which they receive direct guidelines on how the work is performed and does not have an employment contract for their services but rather a different form of contract. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Employment Outlook (OECD, 2014), similarly, defines dependent self-employment as own-account self-employment without employees, who provide goods and/or services for their clients, but which have similar working conditions to those of employees in terms of working mainly or exclusively for one firm or client, having limited autonomy and, frequently, being integrated in the client’s organizational structure. Meanwhile, and based on the most common criteria used to define genuine self-employment, Eurofound (2016a, 2016b) frame the dependent self-employed as those workers who report themselves as self-employed without employees and meet two or more of the following characteristics: they do not have more than one client, they do not have the authority to hire staff, and/or they do not have the authority to make important strategic decisions about how to run the business.

Reflecting this emergent consensus among supra-national institutions, dependent self-employment throughout this book is therefore defined as an employment relationship where workers are self-employed but have a
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de facto employment relationship, if not de jure, because they either only work for one employer, do not have the authority to hire staff, and/or do not have the authority to make important strategic decisions about how to run the business. Indeed, this definition covers both types of dependence commonly identified in not only the academic literature but also the legislation of different countries, namely economic dependence and personal dependence (Böheim and Mühlberger, 2006; Eichhorst et al., 2013; ILO, 2015a; Mühlberger, 2007). Economic dependence is present where the worker generates their income from one or mainly from one employer, while personal dependence refers to subordination and lack of authority on working methods, content of work, time and place (Böheim and Mühlberger, 2006; Eichhorst et al., 2013).

By defining dependent self-employment in this way, there is a recognition not only that it is in practice difficult to achieve a clear distinction between dependent self-employment and bogus self-employment, but also that differentiating between dependent and bogus self-employment makes no difference to the arguments in this book. What is important to recognize, however, is that the definition of self-employment is not uniform across (or even within) countries, with self-employment defined differently in labour law, tax law, trade law and social security law in different countries (Spasova et al., 2017), or even not defined in some countries, such as the United Kingdom (UK) (Jorens, 2009). Nevertheless, examining the European Social Policy Network (ESPN) national experts’ reports on 35 countries (European Union member states plus FYR Macedonia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Serbia, Switzerland and Turkey), Spasova et al. (2017, p. 28) conclude that, across these countries, three criteria are mainly used for defining self-employment, namely, ‘own-account activity, risk assumption and profit-purpose’. While some European Union member states do not have well-defined criteria to define pure dependent employment, pure self-employment and/or dependent self-employment or bogus self-employment, those European Union member states which do tend to use slightly different criteria (Heyes and Hastings, 2017).

For example, analysing the definitions derived from the case law of the Court of Justice of the European Union, Geopa-Copa (2015) concludes that autonomy is the relevant factor that is more important than the formal classification of the worker in the binary divide, and therefore the lack of autonomy leads to reclassification. Similarly, the ILO considers that subordination or dependence are the indicators that should be considered for defining an employment relationship (ILO, 2016). Therefore, in practice, dependent self-employed and bogus self-employed possess similar features and significantly overlap. Indeed, the conclusion drawn from analysing the 35 ESPN national experts’ reports is that there is ‘currently no single,
unambiguous definition applicable in any of the countries (except for Slovenia) drawing a clear-cut distinction between “genuine”, “dependent” and “bogus” self-employed’ (Spasova et al., 2017, p.11).

In sum, the consensus in the literature is that both forms belong to the grey zone between dependent employment and genuine self-employment. Considering the overlapping of the characteristics of those in dependent self-employment and those in bogus-self-employment, the blurred border between the two concepts, the lack of a consensus and a clear distinction in both literature and legislation, and the fact that this is often a difference that makes no difference, in this book we focus our discussion on dependent self-employment, and do not entangle ourselves in some overly complex and unnecessary differentiation between dependent and bogus self-employment. Throughout this book, therefore, and to repeat, ‘dependent self-employment’ is our focus and this here refers to employment relationships where workers are self-employed but have a de facto employment relationship, if not de jure, because they only work for one employer, do not have the authority to hire staff, and/or do not have the authority to make important strategic decisions about how to run the business.

STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

The aim of this book is to advance understanding of dependent self-employment. Theoretically, and in Part I, knowledge is therefore advanced by reviewing the trends in employment in 35 European countries and the changing nature of employment relationships, especially with regard to the growth of self-employment; and secondly, by evaluating the dominant depiction of dependent self-employment as a rapidly growing form of precarious work which is characterized by poorer working conditions and undertaken by ‘marginalized’ population groups for large firms operating online platforms. Empirically, and in Part II, meanwhile, the contribution is to advance understanding by providing an extensive cross-national analysis of the extent, distribution and characteristics of dependent self-employment, including the job quality and working conditions of workers in this form of employment relationship, using the 2015 European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS), therefore filling a major lacuna in existing knowledge. Finally, and in Part III, with this understanding of dependent self-employment in lived practice in hand, this book advances policy by addressing the range of policy approaches and measures available for tackling this phenomenon.

In Chapter 2, therefore, dependent self-employment is put in its wider context by examining the broader trends in employment away from the
formal, full-time and permanent waged employment (that is, the standard employment relationship). Given that this is the principal means used for allocating rights and social protection, the argument is that its potential decline raises issues for working conditions, rights and benefits. Although protective rights have been gradually extended in many countries to non-standard employees, the self-employed have so far seldom been covered by such rights. Indeed, previous studies in recent years reveal that a particular concern has been that employees are being falsely classified as self-employed by employers in order to circumvent collective agreements, labour laws (for example, minimum wages, working time legislation), employment tax and other employer liabilities implied in the standard contract of employment, and that the emergent ‘gig’ or ‘platform’ economy is accelerating this trend. This chapter therefore situates the discussion and debates on dependent self-employment in the context of the broader trends in employment and worker protection.

Chapter 3 then turns its attention to the dominant depictions of dependent self-employment. This chapter outlines the dominant theorization of dependent self-employment as an extensive and rapidly growing form of precarious work characterized by poorer working conditions and undertaken by ‘marginalized’ groups for large firms operating online platforms. In this chapter, each component of this dominant theorization is reviewed by examining both the widespread existence of each assumption and the current evidence available to support it. This reveals the lack of rigorous empirical evidence supporting the dominant depictions of dependent self-employment as: an extensive employment relationship; a growing type of work; conducted by marginalized groups; closely associated with large businesses operating online platforms in the sharing economy; and characterized by poor working conditions. In doing so, it sets the scene for the rest of the book, which reports new evidence based on a cross-national survey of the prevalence, distribution and characteristics of dependent self-employment. This survey is the European Working Conditions Survey which covers 28 European Union (EU) member states and seven other countries (Albania, FYR Macedonia, Montenegro, Norway, Serbia, Switzerland and Turkey) and comprises 43,850 interviews.

Part II then turns its attention to dependent self-employment in practice. In Chapter 4, the prevalence and trends in dependent self-employment are analysed. Although the share of total employment that is self-employment has been relatively stable for the past decade in the EU, a widely held view is that technological changes are transforming the nature and quality of many existing and new jobs. The expansion of work organized through online platforms and mobile device applications (apps), exemplified by Uber and Lyft, has led to debates about whether the self-employed often
found in these realms need to be reclassified as dependent employees, or whether there is a need for a new third category of employment relationship, somewhere between dependent employment and self-employment, so that such workers enjoy protections typically associated with the traditional dependent employment relationship. Dependent self-employment is therefore an employment relationship where workers are self-employed but have a *de facto* employment relationship, if not *de jure*, because they either: (1) only work for one employer; (2) do not have the authority to hire staff; and/or (3) do not have the authority to make important strategic decisions about how to run the business.

It is important at the outset of this book to identify the prevalence of dependent self-employment and trends, so that readers understand the magnitude of what is being discussed. Analysing the 2015 European Working Conditions Survey, the finding is that 6.2 per cent of total employment in the 35 European countries studied can be classified as dependent self-employment comprised of self-employed workers who do not comply with one or more of these three criteria (compared with 5.8 per cent in 2010). Indeed, in 2015, 45 per cent (compared with 50 per cent in 2010) of the self-employed without employees were genuine independent self-employed workers (fulfilling all three criteria), while 55 per cent (50 per cent in 2010) were dependent self-employed, with 20 per cent (15 per cent in 2010) meeting none or only one of the three criteria, and 35 per cent (similarly, 35 per cent in 2010) meeting only two of the three criteria. When the self-employed with employees are included, 38 per cent of all self-employed are dependent self-employed (compared with 35 per cent in 2010).

The trend is slightly different when the agricultural sector is excluded. Between 2010 and 2015, pure dependent self-employment (that is, complying with fewer than two of these three criteria) decreased from 1.04 per cent of total non-agricultural employment to 1.02 per cent. When those complying with only two of the three criteria are included, an additional 3.04 per cent of total non-agricultural employment was dependent self-employment in 2010 and 2.77 per cent in 2015. Hence, in 2010, 4.08 per cent of total non-agricultural employment was dependent self-employment (not complying with one or more of these three criteria) and 3.79 per cent in 2015. Therefore, analysing the 35 European countries, the results are rather mixed. A slight increase in dependent self-employment is observed when the whole economy is analysed (6.2 per cent in 2015 compared with 5.8 per cent), and a slight decrease when the agricultural sector is excluded (3.79 in 2015 compared with 4.08 in 2010).

This chapter also reports the cross-national variations in the prevalence of dependent self-employment across 35 countries and identifies the structural conditions associated with higher levels of dependent
self-employment using bivariate correlation analyses. This reveals that neo-liberal countries with lower levels of state interference in work and welfare are more likely to display higher levels of dependent self-employment than countries which intervene more actively in work and welfare.

Chapter 5 then turns its attention to who engages in dependent self-employment. Based on the view of dependent self-employment as an exploitative low-paid form of work conducted in the gig economy, this chapter examines the assumption that because dependent self-employment is a precarious form of work, those engaged in dependent self-employment are more likely to be from marginalized groups. This chapter reveals through a detailed analysis that those engaged in dependent self-employment are from a heterogeneous variety of population groups. Although some marginalized groups, such as those with financial difficulties and those with less formal education, are more likely to engage in such work, this chapter reveals that great care should be taken in assuming that this employment relationship is concentrated among groups normally marginalized from the labour market.

Chapter 5 goes on to examine the distribution of dependent self-employment across sectors, occupations and businesses. In doing so, it evaluates the assumptions that: (1) those in lower-skilled occupations are more likely to be engaged in dependent self-employment than those in higher-skilled occupations; and (2) those engaged in economic activities associated with the advent of online platforms and mobile device applications are more likely to be engaged in dependent self-employment than those engaged in economic activities not associated with them.

Chapter 6 turns attention to the working conditions of the dependent self-employed. Based on the view that dependent self-employment allows employers to evade the protective rights that are tied to dependent employment relationships, and that this is a form of precarious work conducted by precarious workers, a further dominant depiction is that the working conditions of those in dependent self-employment are poorer than the rest of the population in employment. Commentators have variously argued not only that those in dependent self-employment possess diminished social protection, but also that they suffer from various forms of exploitative work conditions, poorer health and safety standards, reduced career opportunities and job security, and less training.

Examining whether the working conditions of the false self-employed are different from the rest of the employed, the finding is that the dependent self-employed do not always have significantly worse working conditions than the rest of the population in employment. Although some aspects of their working conditions are worse, this is not the case across all aspects of their working conditions.
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To assert, therefore, that the dependent self-employed have worse working conditions than the rest of the employed population is a simplification. However, this is not to assert that tackling dependent self-employment is not important. Working conditions are only one reason for detecting and preventing dependent self-employment. The misclassification of workers as self-employed also has wider consequences: for workers, such as the loss of labour law protections (dismissal, holiday pay, sick leave) and collective bargaining coverage; for governments and the wider society, including the loss of tax revenue which otherwise could be used for social inclusion and cohesion purposes; and for legitimate business, resulting in unfair competitive advantages for enterprises that disguise their subordinate employees under the status of self-employed to reduce their labour costs, resulting in wage dumping. There are thus other reasons for tackling dependent self-employment beyond the working conditions involved in such an employment relationship.

Part III then turns its attention to the policy options. To do so, Chapter 7 discusses the approaches towards addressing the misclassification of employment. This chapter reveals the approaches so far used to address the misclassification of employment in different countries. On the one hand, this reveals how some countries have maintained the binary divide between employment and self-employment, and how the approach towards the dependent self-employed has variously included: (1) presumptions that these are dependent employees and fall within the scope of employment protection legislation (for example, France, Greece, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands); (2) reversal of the burden of proving employee status (for example, Belgium); and (3) listing criteria that enable the classification of workers as either employees or self-employed (for example, Austria, Belgium, Germany, Ireland). On the other hand, it reveals that other countries have introduced a hybrid legal category of employment relationship that sits between dependent employment and self-employment, which provides these workers with some legal rights that would not exist under the legal status of self-employment, such as in Germany, Italy and Portugal, and as proposed in the UK in the recent proposal for a ‘dependent contractor’ employment status (Taylor, 2017) as well as recently by the ILO (2018a, 2018b).

Given that a major driving force appears to be financial gain, this chapter will reveal that one option is to ensure that the costs of misclassifying workers outweigh the benefits. To increase the costs, governments can therefore increase the sanctions and/or the risks of detection. Sanctions for misclassification might range from requalification of the employment relationship into the proper contractual relations, through to criminal sanctions, with various civil and economic sanctions in between.
Identifying such violations, however, remains difficult, not least because employees fear dismissal if they whistle-blow, there is a lack of appropriate information available to workers on their rights, and the time and costs involved as well as uncertainty over the outcome of administrative or judicial authorities hinders this kind of action.

Rather than increase the perceived and/or actual costs to employers of misclassifying workers so that they outweigh the perceived benefits, an alternative would be to change the incentives for employing workers as dependent self-employed. This might involve equalizing the financial costs of employers using dependent employment compared with outsourcing to the self-employed, as has recently been implemented in Romania, and has been proposed in the UK (Taylor, 2017). Another option is to make it easier for employers to put their affairs in order. In the Italian labour market reform approved in 2015 (Decree No. 81/2015), an amnesty was introduced regarding possible fines and compensation if the employer transformed an existing self-employed contract (including those suspected as being false self-employment) into an open-ended subordinate employment contract by the end of 2015. This could be coupled with an awareness-raising campaign targeted at employers and workers about the benefits of the standard employment relationship and the costs of dependent self-employment.

Chapter 8 then discusses policy towards dependent self-employment in the wider context of employment and social protection. This chapter argues that tackling dependent self-employment purely by developing effective mechanisms to detect and reclassify this work as standard employment is insufficient. There is also a need to tackle the ‘decent work’ deficits attached to other employment relationships. Unless this is done, then tackling dependent self-employment might simply lead to greater subcontracting and outsourcing to genuine self-employment. Hence, the issue is not so much about making this work standard, but more about making all work decent. Although the misclassification of dependent self-employment needs to be urgently addressed, either by reclassifying it as dependent employment or by recognizing a new hybrid category and attaching rights and protection to such work, at the same time this chapter argues that decent work deficits across all employment relationships need to be tackled. This requires, firstly, collective responses, including the strengthening of collective bargaining; and secondly, adapting social protection to better reflect the demise of the standard employment relationship of permanent full-time dependent employment.

This final chapter, Chapter 9, then summarizes the advances made in this book in understanding dependent self-employment. This reveals the need to transcend the dominant depiction of dependent self-employment...
as a rapidly growing form of precarious work, conducted by marginalized and lower-skilled workers, as a direct result of outsourcing and subcontracting by large corporations, which is closely affiliated with the advent of online platforms and mobile applications, and as involving worse working conditions than other employment. It argues that if this book has begun to challenge some or all these assumptions about dependent self-employment, and to develop a better theorization of the prevalence, distribution and characteristics of dependent self-employment in lived practice, then it will have fulfilled one of its intentions. If this more nuanced theorization of the lived practice of dependent self-employment now leads to greater evaluation of the policy approaches and measures required, then it will be argued to have fulfilled its wider intention. What is certain, however, is that it can no longer simply be assumed that dependent self-employment is a precarious form of work conducted by marginalized populations, and is a rapidly growing phenomenon resulting from the advent of the online platform economy.