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#### 7.1.4. THE EMERGENCE OF INFORMAL NETWORKS AS A RECRUITMENT TOOL FOR EMPLOYERS

Over time the role of labour providers in channelling A8 labour migration flows has become less prominent but the main driver of this has not been the change in economic circumstances brought about by the recession but the opportunities that employers reported in recruiting labour through informal transnational networks. Interviewees often lauded the ‘community spirit’ of these groups, claiming that they supported each other and ‘helped each other’ to find employment.

From the employers perspective this new channel was encouraged because it too was seen to have advantages in ‘producing’ certain types of worker. The positives of the ‘word of mouth’ approach to recruitment were that it was an inexpensive, reliable and convenient means of getting good quality members of staff. The recession simply accelerated the use of these networks as a recruitment tool since employers had greater incentives to reduce recruitment costs and migrant communities had reasons for developing these connections.

*‘Normally we get staff because people that work here just recommend us to people they know and everyday we have about ten applications and 95% of them are from people from Eastern Europe who are already living in Scotland and are friends of people that work here and it is also good to have someone that someone else has already recommended because if we have our own employees and they are great and they recommend their friends or someone they know usually they are good as well. So the recruitment is all done through those family and friends networks and we don’t have to do anything else because we get plenty of people that way. We used to work with Jobcentres in Poland but we don’t do it anymore now there are so many people giving in applications for work’.*

*Beatrice, HR consultant, food processing plant, rural Scotland*

A key positive aspect of word of mouth recruitment from interviewee’s perspective was that it functioned as an informal means of filtering good workers.

*'I just speak to the guys and say 'look we are looking for someone else' and they'll say 'so and so is coming over in two weeks time' and we take him. That works well for us. We have had one or two people come over and it is so and so's father-in-law and they have been absolute duffers and we have had to say 'look your father-in-law is absolutely useless, we can't employ him'. And the guy is going 'yeah I know he's useless, sorry'. So they will put pressure from within for the people coming over to perform well, because it embarrasses them and puts pressure on them as well.*

*Martin, owner, building materials production company, rural Scotland*

In comments such as this there is clear evidence of the self-regulating nature of labour migration, with 'pressure from within' (Martin) becoming a means of encouraging conformity to the image of the ideal migrant worker.

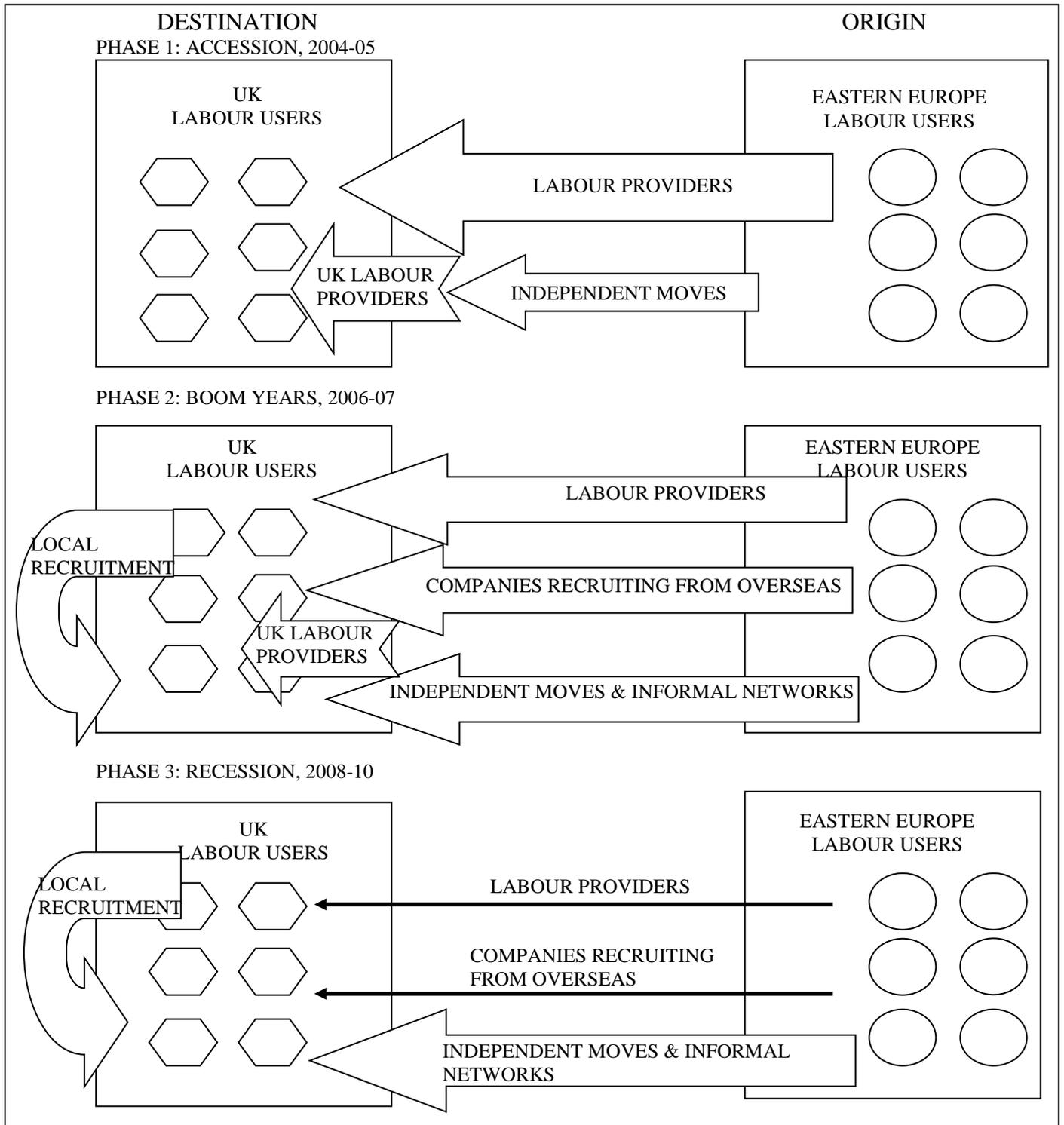
## **7.2. LABOUR MIGRATION CHANNELS: DISCUSSION**

This research has described some of the main channels that are responsible for shaping how employers source A8 migrants and has noted how these channels have changed over time. Previous research on migration channels has tended to present a rather static image of how these channels recruit selectively from certain cities or regions within a country of origin and shape patterns of migration in a selective geographical fashion in destination regions (Findlay and Li, 1998). The interviews reported in this paper suggest a more dynamic structuring of migration channels as represented in Figure 2. Aspects of the original channels framework are maintained in Figure 2 with the channels being represented as arrows linking origin and destination countries (large rectangles), sourcing labour in particular locations within Eastern Europe and providing labour differentially to particular employers in specific destination locations (small spheres).

The three phases of mobility identified in the interviews suggest that over time some channels grow in importance while others decline. This in turn impacts on the geographical production of migration spaces origin and destination. This paper has not been able to map these spatial outcomes, although the authors (Findlay *et al*, 2010; McCollum and Findlay, 2011) have presented evidence elsewhere of how variable East European geographies are in countries of destination.

What this paper has shown is that the nature of migration channels is not merely a function of economic forces but that they are also culturally produced social

institutions (Goss and Lindquist, 1995; Geddes and Scott, 2010). As such it is not surprising to have learned that they interact and affect one another, as a reflection of how social and cultural practices operate over time. Research remains to be done to explore more fully the geographical consequences of these recruitment practices (e.g. the switch to increased sourcing of labour by informal networks) in producing new emigration geographies in countries such as Poland and Latvia.

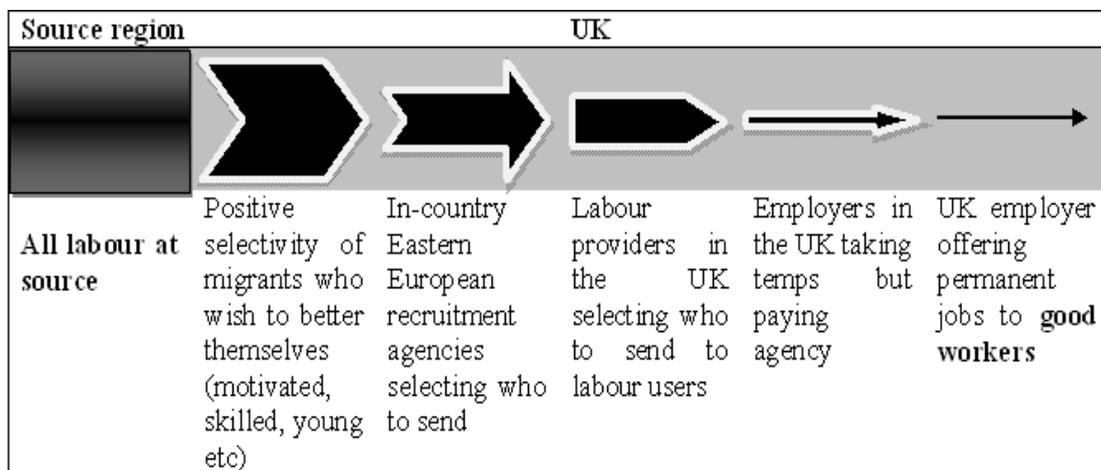


**Figure 2** Evolution of East European labour migration channels

The analysis has also focused on employer perceptions and representations of the ‘good worker’. Figure 3 schematises some of the processes that are responsible for producing ‘good workers’. If this schema is meaningful, then East European migrants in the UK labour market are not simply a broad representation of Eastern Europeans

*per se* but are the product of a range of social and cultural filtering processes that produce ‘good workers’.

If as the literature suggests migrants are self-selecting, then only those who are sufficiently motivated and interested in promoting an appropriate image to potential employers will seek to move. These tend to be individuals who are ambitious, skilled and young. Recruitment agencies in sending countries act as another filtering layer in only putting forward suitable candidates for consideration for positions in the UK. Likewise UK-based labour providers further filter migrants so that they provide UK employers with the most ‘suitable’ candidates. Figure 3, drawing on the interview transcripts then shows how employers filter out the worst performing temps by getting their labour provider to ‘take them away’ (Sam, labour provider, rural Scotland). Finally employers cherry pick the best temps and take them on as permanent members of staff. This filtering process therefore contributes to producing the good worker by selecting out ‘bad’ or ‘not so good’ workers, meaning that only the best workers pass through the various filtering stages and are rewarded by being taken on and given a job by an employer.



**Figure 3** Filtering to ‘produce’ the ‘good worker’













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