

Crossing Past and Present:

Ost-Ampelmännchen and the Memory of the

German Democratic Republic

By:
Kyle Massia

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Dr. Kirrily Freeman
Associate Professor

Dr. Nicole Neatby
Associate Professor

Dr. John Munro
Assistant Professor

Dr. John Bingham
Assistant Professor

Date: 22 April 2014

Abstract

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By Kyle Massia, 22 April 2014

Abstract: Despite his connection to daily life in East Germany; east Germans began replacing their chubby, hat-wearing pedestrian light figure (the *Ost-Ampelmännchen*, or Ampelmann) with the non-descript West German one in the euphoria of reunification. By the mid-1990s, however, east Germans began to see their old state differently, bringing back their Ampelmann as a reminder of the safety, security, and equality their old state possessed. Following his resurrection, Ampelmann transformed into a pop-culture icon as shops sprung up selling Ampelmann-branded products. From here, his popularity spread as Ampelmann lights appeared in western Germany and Ampelmann shops opened their doors not only in Berlin, but also in Tokyo and Seoul. East Germans supported this, declaring that his popularity showed that their past and its values could find a place in a globalizing world. In doing so, East Germans have used and rewritten their past to promote a more respectful and equitable alternative to modern life.

Introduction:

Traffic lights were probably the last thing on the minds of East Germans on 9 November 1989 as the Berlin Wall fell and the borders of their German Democratic Republic (GDR) opened. The dissolution of the socialist state quickly followed as Germans on both sides tossed the GDR's cars, furniture, government, ideals, and even its traffic lights into the rubbish heap in favour of the more "progressive", "modern", and "better" products and systems of West Germany.¹ A negative view of East Germany emerged from this process which focused on the terror and repression of the ruling Socialist Unity Party (SED) and the Ministry for State Security (MfS or Stasi).² Most easterners and westerners adopted this stance, agreeing that the former East German state had few, if any, redeeming features.³ This process led to a demonization of the GDR. Scholars on both sides of the former Wall began condemning the horrendous actions of the GDR, positing that this aberrant "second dictatorship", a sequel to National Socialism, had continued along Germany's "Special Path" while its western cousin developed "normally" according to liberal democratic principles.⁴

East Germans were thrilled, at first, with their inclusion in this glorious West, welcoming the treasures of Western consumer culture, embracing both unrestricted travel

¹ Eva Kolinsky and Hildegard Maria Nickel, *Reinventing Gender: Women in Eastern Germany since Unification* (Portland: Frank Cass, 2003), 2. For the sake of clarity and in line with the general format of works on this topic, this paper will use the capitalized East or West when referring to the former German Democratic Republic and the former Federal Republic of Germany respectively. The lower case will be used to distinguish between these two groups of people and the geographic areas of the two republics in reunified Germany.

² Mary Fulbrook, *A History of Germany 1918-2000: The Divided Nation*, 3rd edn (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 300.

³ Martin Diewald, Anne Goedicke and Karl Ulrich Mayer eds., *After the Fall of the Wall: Life Courses in the Transformation of East Germany* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2006), 30.

⁴ Katherine Pence and Paul Betts eds., *Socialist Modern: East German Everyday Culture and Politics* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press: 2008), 18.

and freedom from state repression.⁵ East Germans' situation, particularly in comparison to those from other former Eastern Bloc countries, "seemed much clearer and the future much brighter; instant inclusion into a well-functioning West German democracy and an affluent and socially regulated market economy..."⁶ In short order, however, the rosy haze of reunification lifted, revealing a west which was neither as accepting nor as wonderful as easterners had first imagined.

Globally hegemonic neoliberal capitalism was responsible for part of this disenchantment. Neoliberalism, which began its global ascent in the late 1970s, is a "theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade."⁷ The neoliberal order brought rapid capitalist expansion through the eradication of trade barriers, the opening up of markets, and the global restructuring of the means of production. Simultaneously, the planet hastily shrank as information technologies and increasing economic interdependence drew citizens of the world ever more closely together.⁸⁹ These values had already taken hold in West Germany by 1983

⁵ Chris Hilton, *After the Berlin Wall: Putting the Two Germanys Back Together Again* (Stroud: The History Press, 2009), 9.

⁶ Martin Diewald, Anne Goedicke, and Karl Ulrich Mayer, "Introduction," in *After the Fall of the Wall: Life Courses in the Transformation of East Germany*, edited by Martin Diewald, Anne Goedicke, and Karl Ulrich Mayer (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2006), XVII.

⁷ David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 2.

⁸ David McNally, *Global Slump, The Economics and Politics of Crisis and Resistance* (Black Point: Fernwood Publishing, 2011), 27.

⁹ Neoliberalism and globalization are thus intrinsically linked. For the purposes of this study, globalization is understood as a process (or set of processes) which "embodies a transformation in the spatial organization of social relations and transactions – assessed in terms of their extensity, intensity, velocity and impact – generating transcontinental or interregional flows and networks of activity, interactions, and the exercise of power." Joshua Glenn, *Globalization: North-South Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 28. In this system, "power is located in global social formations and expressed through global networks rather than through territorially based states." Glenn, *Globalization*, 28.

when the conservative Free Democratic Party (FDP) and Christian Democratic Union (CDU/CSU) coalition took power, repealing the more Keynesian policies of the 1960s and 70s.¹⁰ Although the strength of trade unions and social protection meant that West Germany never fully adopted neoliberal values, in the eyes of East Germans, the state into which they merged still appeared frightening, uncaring, hostile, and destructive.¹¹

The inequalities inherent in this system, which conflicted with the socialist heritage of east Germans, resulted in melancholy: “Life turbulences and upheavals in life trajectories were experienced by a vast majority of East Germans in the area of employment and work...in comparison with 1989, jobs declined by about one third during the next three years.”¹² This unhappiness and uncertainty for the future, in contrast to the relative security of life in the GDR, was reflected in birth rates: “immediately after unification, the birth rate in the Eastern *Länder* [states] fell dramatically, reaching its lowest point in 1994 at 79, 000 live births. This represented a fall of some 60 percent of the total births registered in 1989.”¹³ East German women, in particular, had a turbulent post-Wall experience as western values of domesticity were imposed both culturally and through

¹⁰ Fulbrook, *A History of Germany*, 180.

¹¹ Harvey, *A Brief History*, 88. Chris Flockton and Eva Kolinsky eds., *Recasting East Germany: Social Transformation After the GDR* (Portland: Frank Cass: 1999), 4. Neoliberalism is, of course, a complex phenomenon whose implications and breadth cannot be fully touched on in the context of this paper. For further reference on this topic, I would recommend the works of David Harvey, particularly *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. For an examination of protest against neoliberalism, see David McNally’s *Global Slump: The Economic and Politics of Crisis and Resistance*.

¹² Diewald, Goedicke and Mayer, *After the Fall*, 295.

¹³ Patricia Hogwood, “How Happy Are You...?’ Subjective Well-Being in East Germany Twenty Years After Unification,” *Politics* 31, No. 3 (2011) 150. Academic Search Premier, EBSCOhost, (accessed 1 December, 2012). The New Länder or States refers to the five federal states created from the GDR following reunification. The Old Länder or States, by contrast, refers to the states of the former Federal Republic of Germany.

the removal of programmes such as state-funded child care, which had allowed East German women to enjoy employment nearly equal to that of men before 1989.¹⁴

West German media contributed to this turmoil by attempting to define what the GDR was, who east Germans were, and what this meant for the newly unified country. Western publications did this in the years directly following reunification by dismissing the GDR: “all of the important actors in the [western] media [spoke] negatively about numerous aspects of GDR life.”¹⁵ Others declared that east Germans were “psychologically deformed by dictatorship,” characterizing the general population as “high-ranking SED members and Stasi informers.”¹⁶ While such harsh criticisms have mostly receded, east Germans continue to see themselves collectively as “second class citizens” of the new republic.¹⁷

The government of contemporary Germany also attempted to define the East German state, focusing on “stories and images of suffering, repression, and state violence...” to form “the concept” which guides national sites of remembrance.¹⁸ Forming this “concept” effectively created an official national memory in which easterners appeared as “powerless victims of an all-pervasive ‘totalitarian system.’”¹⁹ The rapid availability of

¹⁴ Josie McLellan, “Did Communists Have Better Sex? Sex and the Body in German Unification” in *Remembering the German Democratic Republic*, edited by David Clarke and Ute Woelfel (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011) 124.

¹⁵ Thomas Ahbe, “Die Ost-Diskurse als Strukturen der Nobilitierung und Marginalisierung von Wissen: Eine Diskursanalyse zur Konstruktion der Ostdeutschen in den westdeutschen Medien-Diskursen 1989/90 und 1995” in *Die Ostdeutschen in den Medien: Das Bild von den Anderen nach 1990*, edited by Thomas Ahbe, Rainer Gries, and Wolfgang Schmale (Leipzig: Leipzig Universitätsverlag, 2009).

¹⁶ Ahbe, “Die Ost-Diskurse,” 108.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 110.

¹⁸ Daphne Berdahl, “Re-Presenting the Socialist Modern: Museums and Memory in the Former GDR,” in *Socialist Modern: East German Everyday Culture and Politics*, edited by Katherine Pence and Paul Betts (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2008), 348.

¹⁹ David Clarke and Ute Woelfel, “Introduction,” in *Remembering the German Democratic Republic*, edited by David Clarke and Ute Woelfel (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 13.

documents from the GDR following reunification, in contrast to the 30-year hold placed on comparable Western documents, contributed to the dictatorship narrative as the horrors of the MfS were easily and immediately available to scholars and to the public.²⁰ While of undoubted significance to GDR history, exclusive focus on this image can also be “seen as part of a wider discursive strategy” in which the GDR “became a negative foil [against] which the democracy of contemporary Germany defines itself...” and which “...helps to affirm the achievements of the Federal Republic.”²¹ Enforcing the dictatorship paradigm also overlooks the West’s own failings, most notably western unwillingness to fully deal with the National Socialist legacy.²²

Scholars, too, have focused on the totalitarian rule of the SED. “Indeed,” as Catherine Epstein points out, “perhaps the most salient feature of German work on GDR history is its extraordinary politicization.”²³ The plethora of documents available following the state’s collapse has allowed scholars, primarily west Germans, but also east Germans and Anglophones to a lesser degree, to draw attention to the repressive methods of the state’s security apparatus.²⁴ Comparing the resulting image of East Germany to the West, many scholars have addressed the GDR as Germany’s “second dictatorship.”²⁵ This has allowed for the troubling rebirth of the discredited *Sonderweg* (special path) thesis which examines Germany’s departure from a “normal” path of development into the dangerous

²⁰ Clarke and Woelfel, “Introduction,” 6.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 12.

²² *Ibid.*, 12.

²³ Catherine Epstein, “East Germany and Its History Since 1989,” *The Journal of Modern History* 75, No. 3 (September 2003), 635. JSTOR (accessed 3 October, 2012).

²⁴ Epstein, “East Germany and its History,” 661.

²⁵ Corey Ross, *The East German Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives in the Interpretation of the GDR*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002) 170.

paths of authoritarianism – whether fascist or socialist.²⁶ Historian Manfred Wilke epitomized these beliefs when he asserted his fear that de-emphasizing political oppression “would weaken the potential of the GDR to serve as an example of the battle between democracy and dictatorship in Germany’s history in the 20th century.”²⁷ Similarly, Anselma Gallinat examined attempts by SED victims to pass on their stories, asserting that the public’s unwillingness to listen obstructed “the development of suitable narrative frameworks” but also precluded “the finding of ‘habitable self-identities’” for survivors.²⁸

While the narrative of state repression and terror is critical to understanding the GDR and its legacy, there are many aspects of life in East Germany and of East German identity which an exclusive focus on the SED and MfS excludes. Wolfgang Engler summarized this limitation most succinctly: “What is achieved when one has discovered that the GDR was neither a citizen’s democracy nor a competitive society? This is already well known.”²⁹ Social historians, scholars of memory, and east Germans more generally, while accepting the limitations of the dictatorship narrative, have worked to create a more well-rounded understanding of East Germany by exploring everyday life in the GDR. The insightful assertion by Mary Fulbrook that the social history of East Germany is not one with “the politics left out” but rather “the people put back in”³⁰

²⁶ Pence and Betts, *Socialist Modern*, 18.

²⁷ Clarke and Woelfel, “Introduction,” 9.

²⁸ Anselma Gallinat, “Difficult Stories: Public Discourse and Narrative Identity in Eastern Germany,” *Ethnos* 71, No. 3 (September 2006) 356. Academic Search Premier, EBSCOhost (accessed September 15, 2012).

²⁹ Wolfgang Engler, *Die Ostdeutschen: Kunde von einem verlorenen Land* (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 1999), 9.

³⁰ Mary Fulbrook, *The People’s State: East German Society from Hitler to Honecker* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2005), 17. Patrick Major’s *Behind the Berlin Wall* makes a similar argument especially in its attempt to integrate the agency of “ordinary Germans” into the GDR story, as scholars of Nazi Germany have done.

provides a framework in which it is possible to include both the role of the state and its citizens in East German history.

Social historians of the GDR have been key in this process. In contrast to narratives focusing exclusively on the state, scholars such as Mary Fulbrook, Paul Betts, Elizabeth A. Ten Dyke and Judd Stitzel have inserted East Germans back into their own history, revealing how it was possible to live rich, ordinary lives under state socialism. In broad strokes, these authors have revealed the distinct nature of life in the GDR, particularly when compared to life in a western democracy. Participating in the state, for example, did not involve voting *per se* but rather “being involved in the micro-systems of power through which GDR society worked” (participants consisted of perhaps one sixth of the population) or by writing *Eingaben*, letters of complaint, to the state in order to suggest ways that products and other aspects of East German life could be improved.³¹ Fashion and consumer culture also operated along different rhythms with the latter revolving around cycles of hunting, gathering, and hoarding in order to deal with the limited and irregular stock of East German shops.³² Pleasures such as vacations, while often less

³¹ Fulbrook, *The People's State*, 236. East German society had several microsystems, these include 300,000-400,000 key functionaries and between one to two million adults who played a significant role in “one or more of the mass organisations, political parties and regional and local representative institutions such as the Stasi, the Army and the People's Police,... and the state administrative and economic apparatus.” Altogether, these people made up between 12 and 19 percent of the total population. 237. Fulbrook, *The People's State*, 271.

³² These trends have been examined by numerous scholars. For information on the complex nature of fashion in the GDR see Judd Stitzel, *Fashioning Socialism: Clothing, Politics and Consumer Culture in East Germany*, (New York: Berg, 2005). For another study focusing on material culture and memory of the GDR see: Elizabeth Ten Dyke, “Tulips in December: Space, Time and Consumption before and after the End of German Socialism,” *German History* 19, No. 2 (2001). Academic Search Premier, EBSCOhost (accessed December 1, 2012). To understand the unique rhythms and patterns of GDR material culture, see: Ina Merkel, “Consumer Culture in the DDR, or How the Struggle for Antimodernity Was Lost on the Battleground of Consumer Culture,” in *Getting and Spending: European and American Consumer Societies in the Twentieth Century*, edited by Susan Strasser, Charles McGovern, and Matthias Judt (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

lavish than those that westerners could purchase, were also available to East Germans.³³ Social histories of East Germany show that East German lives were full, complex, and surprisingly ordinary, suggesting furthermore that the memory of the GDR ought not to be limited to narratives of repression and terror.

Working with the essential premise that East Germans actively participated in the GDR, newer scholarship on memory and the GDR operates largely outside of the dictatorship paradigm. These works can be categorized into two interconnected, frequently overlapping groups: personal or everyday memories; and *Ostalgie*.³⁴ Such studies have allowed for a more complete understanding of life in the GDR and what this past means to east Germans in reunified Germany.

One of the most prominent trends amongst social historians of the GDR and historians of memory is the study of East German generations. Here, Mary Fulbrook and Rene Lehmann, among others, have assessed the relation between life experience in the GDR and the subsequent memory of the state, particularly the “remarkable yearning for the past” among “older generations.”³⁵ While those born in the early GDR are “capable of commenting both positively and negatively on the GDR after 1989,” many east Germans

³³ Fulbrook, *The People's State*, 78. For other social histories of the GDR, refer to: Dieter Kirchhöfer, Gerhart Neuner, Irmgard Steiner, and Christa Uhlig eds., *Kindheit in der DDR: Die gegenwärtige Vergangenheit* (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2003). Ulrike Häußler and Markus Merkel eds., *Vergnügen in der DDR* (Berlin: Panama: 2009).

³⁴ The word *Ostalgie* comes from the combination of the terms *Ost* meaning East and *Nostalgie*, or nostalgia.

³⁵ Mary Fulbrook, *Dissonant Lives: Generations and Violence through the German Dictatorships* (New York: Oxford UP, 2011), 440. See also: Ulrike Meinhof and Dariusz Galasinski, “Photography, Memory and the Construction of Identities on the Former East-West German Border,” *Discourse Studies* 2 (2000). SAGE (accessed 5 September, 2012).

are united in their distaste for a narrative focusing solely on dictatorship.³⁶ Furthermore, they posit that the GDR could have contributed more to unified Germany than the west has allowed.³⁷

Scholars of *Ostalgie* also frequently refer to east German aversion for an exclusive focus on the dictatorship narrative. Where scholars of GDR memory and nostalgia diverge, however, is in their focus on the remnants of GDR consumer and material culture in the Berlin Republic and the narratives of the past which these represent. *Ostalgie*, which elevates aspects of East German material culture to iconic status, arose out of the collision between eastern dissatisfaction, the cultural hegemony of the west, and the discrediting of the GDR past.³⁸ “The difference between say, a West German Mercedes and an East German Trabant,” Paul Betts has argued, “has not been construed simply as alternative automobile styling but seized upon as the very expression of each country’s historical destiny.”³⁹ By assigning importance to otherwise “valueless” objects, *Ostalgie* has emerged as a means through which an eastern identity can be reclaimed and the GDR past inscribed with meaning and value which simple comparisons between the West and East German states fail to do.

³⁶ Rene Lehmann, “Generation and Transition: East German Memory Cultures, in *Remembering the GDR*,” in *Remembering the German Democratic Republic*, edited by David Clarke and Ute Woelfel (New York: Palgrave Macmillan: 2011), 109.

³⁷ Lehmann, *Generation and Transition*, 111.

³⁸ Daphne Berdahl, “‘(N)Ostalgie’ for the Present: Memory, Longing and East German Things,” *Ethnos* 64, No. 2 (July 1999), 194. Academic Search Premier, EBSCOhost (accessed 5 September, 2012). The Berlin Republic refers to the contemporary German state.

³⁹ Paul Betts, “The Twilight of the Idols: East German Memory and Material Culture.” *The Journal of Modern History* 72, No. 3 (September 2000), 739. JSTOR (accessed 25 September, 2012).

The iterations of *Ostalgie* are many and varied, ranging from Eastern grocery products to cars, television programs, movies, websites, and even sex.⁴⁰ The resurrection of the most popular car in the GDR, the Trabant, or Trabi, is one of the most well-known illustrations of this phenomenon. Its two-stroke engine, notorious fragility, smelly oil-gas fuel mixture and the difficulty of acquiring one made it an object of both cherished freedom and frustration in the GDR.⁴¹ After the fall of the Wall, the Trabi became a symbol of Eastern antiquation, particularly when compared with the better-built West German alternatives.⁴² As time went on and disenchantment with the west set in, however, east Germans began to once again embrace their endearingly unreliable automobiles, turning them into luxury cars and holding Trabi rallies, transforming the car into a symbol of the vanished GDR and the acceptance for which easterners longed.⁴³

Although a broad discussion of *Ostalgie* is outside the scope of this study, a few main concepts central to this field will help to shape the interpretive frame of this work.

Dominik Bartmanski, for example, redefined *Ostalgie* when he posited that:

“... ‘nostalgic’ icons are successful because they play the cultural role of mnemonic

⁴⁰ Berdahl, *(N)Ostalgie for the Present*, 200. Daphne Berdahl, “Go, Trabi, Go!,” *Anthropology and Humanism* 25, No. 2 (2000), 131. Academic search Premier, EBSCOhost (accessed 5 September 2012). Paul Cooke, “Ostalgie’s Not What it Used to Be: The German Television Craze of 2003,” *German Politics and Society* 73:22, No. 4 (Winter 2004), 148. Academic Search Premier, EBSCOhost (accessed September 25, 2012). Oana Goeanu-Kenworth, “Deconstructing Ostalgie: The National Past Between Commodity and Simulacrum in Wolfgang Becker’s Good Bye Lenin! (2003),” *Journal of European Studies* 41, No. 2 (2011), 172. SAGE (accessed September 30, 2012). Mary Fulbrook, “Re-Presenting the Nation, History and Identity in East and West Germany,” *Representing the German Nation: History and Identity in Twentieth-Century Germany*, edited by Mary Fulbrook and Martin Swales (New York: Manchester University Press, 2000), 185. Dagmar Herzog, *Sex After Fascism: Memory and Morality in Twentieth Century Germany* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2005) 217. Paul Cooke, “Surfing for Eastern Difference: *Ostalgie*, Identity and Cyberspace,” *Seminar* No. 4 (September 2004), 212. Academic Search Premier, EBSCOhost (accessed September 25, 2012).

⁴¹ Berdahl, “Go, Trabi, Go!,” 132.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 137.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

bridges *to* rather than tokens of longing *for* the failed communist past.”⁴⁴ As we will see, the concept of a memory-bridge is particularly relevant to the examination of the transposition of GDR era ideals into the present. Bartmanski further developed the idea of subversion through comparison, arguing that “post-communism is revealed to be not just an anomic phase of early capitalism, but a cultural ‘site in which non-capitalist legacies transform the allegedly homogenizing tendencies of globalization’ and thus partake in ‘remaking modernity.’”⁴⁵ Paul Cooke has shown how *Ostalgie* functions similarly in attempting to “remake” German identity:

...easterners do not wish to change the system of unified Germany, but to be able to remember their GDR past within it without restriction, which would enable their sense of east Germanness to sit more comfortably with their sense of Germanness.⁴⁶

As an extension of this, other authors such as Claire Hyland have pointed out that those who suggest that an eastern identity precludes a German one, or must be overcome to reach German unity imply “that the reunification of Germany is synonymous with the westernization of the east.”⁴⁷ Such an assumption suggests that “easterness” is the “other” which must be overcome to reach “normalcy” and ignores the potential for pluralities within German identity.

While these concepts make invaluable contributions to this thesis, those studying the memory of the GDR through material culture have made some key mistakes that this work aims to correct. The most critical of these is over-generalization. The temptation is

⁴⁴ Dominik Bartmanski, “Successful Icons of Failed time: Rethinking Post-Communist Nostalgia,” *Acta Sociologica* 54, No. 3 (2011), 213. SAGE (accessed December 1, 2012). Emphasis original

⁴⁵ Bartmanski, “Successful Icons,” 227.

⁴⁶ Paul Cooke, *Representing East Germany Since Unification* (New York: Burg, 2005), 20.

⁴⁷ Claire Hyland, “The Era Has Passed, But It’s Nice to Remember,” in *Remembering the German Democratic Republic*, edited by David Clarke and Ute Woelfel (New York: Palgrave Macmillan: 2011), 149.

strong, it would seem, to study the memorialization of east Germany through material culture holistically, turning to individual representations only to support a larger narrative. A holistic focus limits the extent to which singular aspects of east German material culture are understood, which has in turn led to misconceptions about east German memory, such as its supposed historical groundlessness. The handful of studies which focus more narrowly have also neglected to study the relationship between easterners and the objects around which their memory revolves.

Other criticisms of *Ostalgie* come from scholars studying the MfS or similar institutions of oppression as well as from those who express concerns about its origins and content. Mary Fulbrook is one of these critics. She contrasts what she considers an authentic yearning for the East German past with "...its capitalist forms of expression, namely an *Ostalgie*...often expressed in objects and products which capitalists and the tourist trade were only to [*sic*] eager to cash in on."⁴⁸ Paul Cooke expresses similar concerns when examining a surge of television shows in which western presenters have painted the GDR as "strange and non-western." "In so doing," Cooke posits, "the programs invite former GDR citizens to join a club of western German consumers and to laugh along with them at their bizarre, ridiculous past."⁴⁹ These critics are not alone as the spectre of exploitative capitalism continues to hang over this particular form of remembrance. Indeed, much of the commodification of the East German past, either by

⁴⁸ Fulbrook, *Dissonant Lives*, 440

⁴⁹ Cooke, "Ostalgie's Not What it Used to be," 148.

the tourist trade or by other capitalist industries, has already become a crude and distorted “Checkpoint Charlie” version of GDR history.⁵⁰

One of the most frequently cited, and also thoroughly misunderstood, examples of “Checkpoint Charlie” history is the East German pedestrian traffic light figure, the *Ost-Ampelmännchen* (popularly referred to as Ampelmann, see appendices 1 and 2).⁵¹ East German engineer Karl Peglau invented this jolly, hat-wearing traffic light figure in 1961. Eight years later, in 1969, the figure made his debut on East German streets. After reunification, he became one of the most widely circulated symbols of the GDR.⁵² While studies criticizing this figure often hit on critical points, such as the problematic nature of his commodification, they often make incorrect or overly general assumptions which distort the true nature of this *lieu de mémoire*. Svetlana Boym, for example, suggests that Ampelmann had “no inherent political or cultural symbolism” in the GDR which allowed him to become “the biggest fetish of GDR nostalgia.”⁵³ This fetishization, Boym posits, occurred once the figure was brought back after “all Berlin streetlights were made uniform”⁵⁴ by “a more pragmatic West German image.”⁵⁵ Dominik Bartmanski, although making some thoroughly insightful points about the figure’s memorialization such as its spread into the west, stumbles similarly, repeating Boym when stating that Ampelmann had “no inherent cultural symbolism.”⁵⁶ Similarly, in Claire Hyland’s discussion,

⁵⁰ Pence and Betts, *Socialist Modern*, 4. Checkpoint Charlie is a well-known tourist site in Berlin. A former American checkpoint between East and West Berlin, this area is now synonymous with the worst excesses of the Berlin tourist trade. Not only does the site itself distort the reality of the original checkpoint, but it is also the centre of a mass of tourist shops and attractions commodifying East German history for profit.

⁵¹ *Ost-Ampelmännchen* translates as “little traffic light guy from the East.”

⁵² Paul Betts, “Twilight of the Idols,” 743.

⁵³ Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 196.

⁵⁴ Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 196.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 54.

⁵⁶ Bartmanski, “Successful Icons,” 224.

Ampelmann “never became politicized,”⁵⁷ an assertion based on a questionnaire posed to east Germans (and published in a 2011 article) – a narrow focus of research. In this way, scholars studying the eastern traffic light figure, despite the otherwise high quality of their works, have misinterpreted Ampelmann either by making false assumptions or neglecting more detailed research.

This study will build upon these works by examining Ampelmann’s GDR history and post-Wall trajectory. This study will, in contrast to many others, examine one site of east German remembrance in order to track its history during the GDR era and determine the way in which the East German past and reunified, neoliberal, and globalized present have been recast in this one example. Ampelmann has had a storied career not just, as many critics assert, following reunification but also during the GDR period. By examining the ways East Germans have reimagined and resurrected aspects of their past through Ampelmann, this thesis will argue against accusations of “mere” nostalgia by showing the diverse and complex memories represented in this figure, revealing nuances more broadly focused studies have overlooked.

In addition, this study examines the ways in which east Germans have used Ampelmann to re-examine the present by studying the traffic light figure’s commodification and branding. Often, East Germans are portrayed as passive in this process, blindly consuming East German symbols drained of their symbolic powers by the exploitative forces of capitalism.⁵⁸ In contrast, this study will examine east Germans as constructors of their own memory. East Germans are not only conscious their figure’s

⁵⁷ Hyland, “The Era has Passed,” 152.

⁵⁸ See, for example, Mary Fulbrook, *A History of Germany 1918-2008*, 301; Paul Cooke, *Ostalgie’s Not What It Used to Be*.

commodification, they are also aware of what this commodification implies and among its most adamant supporters. Through their support for Ampelmann's commodification, easterners have also envisioned a more equitable form of capitalism that is compatible with east German values from the GDR. Extending this vision, easterners have used their traffic light figure to reveal the ways in which their lives, identity, and values can be compatible with and beneficial to those of the west, potentially helping to further German unity. By expanding their reimagining of the present to the world, east Germans have suggested an alternative which is open and welcoming while appreciating eastern innovation, history, and local diversity. This image of an alternative world aligns with – although it is more moderate than – those suggested by new social movements, positing a world where the unchecked rule of neoliberal hegemony is restricted while social services and local values are expanded.

This is not to suggest, however, that those bringing Ampelmann to market are doing so altruistically. While, in this specific case, the marketing of Ampelmann has often been done with respect paid to easterners and their values, money is still a key motivating factor for those selling Ampelmann merchandise and it is unlikely that this would be done without a healthy profit.⁵⁹ Likewise, the more equitable world imagined by east Germans is not necessarily reflected in reality. Nevertheless, through their traffic light figure east Germans have taken values and rituals from their past, used them to suggest improvements to German unity, capitalism, and globalization, and envisioned a present

⁵⁹ Indeed the Ampelmann stores in Berlin earned over 2 million Euros in 2005. Jakob Schlandt, "Siegeszug des Ampelmännchens," *Berliner Zeitung*, December 21, 2006. <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/archiv/gute-geschaefte-und-grosse-plaene-mit-dem-ostsymbol-siegeszug-des-ampelmaennchens,10810590,10443248.html>.

where eastern values and identity are respected and made compatible with existing structures.

The framework of memory will be critical to understanding just how Ampelmann functions in this way. Given the absence of the GDR and its traditions after reunification, the soil of post-Wall Germany is fertile for - to borrow Pierre Nora's term - the *lieux de mémoire* around which memory revolves, to take root. This "moment of *lieux de mémoire*," Nora asserts, "occurs at the same time that an immense and intimate fund of memory disappears, surviving only as a reconstituted object beneath the gaze of critical history."⁶⁰ These sites furthermore exist as an attempt to preserve an identity and sense of community in times when these are threatened:

[They] make their appearance by virtue of the deritualization of our world – producing, manifesting, constructing, decreeing, and maintaining by artifice and by will a society deeply absorbed in its own transformation and renewal, one that inherently values the new over the ancient, the young over the old, the future over the past.⁶¹

East Germany, given its integration into a vastly different capitalist system, is prime territory for the reconstruction of its memory along such lines. Memory forms around the present, as Maurice Halbwachs asserts: "...even at the moment of reproducing the past our imagination remains under the influence of the present social milieu."⁶² This memory is, furthermore, collective in the sense that "groups provide us the stimulus or opportunity to recall; they also shape the ways in which we do so, and often provide the materials."⁶³

⁶⁰ Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," *Representations* No. 26 (Spring, 1989), 12. JSTOR (accessed January 13, 2014).

⁶¹ Nora, "Between Memory and History," 12.

⁶² Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, Lewis Coser trans. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press: 1992), 49.

⁶³ Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 38.

The distinction between memory and history is also crucial here. While “history is unitary, and it can be said that there is only one history”⁶⁴ memory is, by its very nature, plural and widely variant. *Lieux de mémoire*, consequently, “exist because of their capacity for metamorphosis, an endless recycling of their meaning and an unpredictable proliferation of their ramifications.”⁶⁵ In this way memory is subject to constant working and re-working as its meaning and value in the present is redefined according to contemporary conditions and the needs of those remembering. Forgetting those parts of the past deemed incompatible with this narrative is therefore just as important as what is being remembered:

...for the historians of memory, the “truth” of a given memory lies not so much in its “factuality” as in its “actuality.” Events tend to be forgotten unless they live on in collective memory.⁶⁶

Memory is thus complex and the symbols which represent it

...are simple and ambiguous, natural and artificial, at once immediately available in a concrete sensual experience and susceptible to the most abstract elaboration. Indeed, they are *lieux* in three senses of the word – material, symbolic, and functional. Even an apparently purely material site...becomes a *lieu de mémoire* only if the imagination invests it with a symbolic aura.⁶⁷

Finally, this identity formation and alternative view of the past can be threatening as

“memories by marginalized or subordinated groups are, by virtue of their form or content, regarded as problematic, disturbing.”⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 145.

⁶⁵ Nora, “Between Memory and History,” 19.

⁶⁶ Jan Assmann, “Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism,” in *The Collective Memory Reader*, edited by Jeffrey K. Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Daniel Levy (New York: Oxford UP, 2011).

⁶⁷ Nora, “Between Memory and History,” 19.

⁶⁸ Elizabeth Hallam and Jenny Hockey, *Death, Memory and Material Culture* (New York: Berg, 2001), 153.

In order to tap into this stream of memory, this study will use a variety of primary sources. Newspapers and other periodical publications are the most prominent of these. These include ones targeted towards a more eastern audience such as *Berliner Zeitung*, *Neues Deutschland*, and *Mitteldeutsche Zeitung*, among others.⁶⁹ These will be buttressed by objects of material culture and other relevant publications produced by Ampel-advocates. Through these sources, this study will aim to discern the way easterners have utilized their traffic light figure to re-write and make usable their past but also to determine how they have interpreted his commodification. West German publications⁷⁰ as well as newspapers and official documents from the GDR⁷¹ have been used when relevant in order to provide context to this study's claims. These sources provide a small sample of contemporary German memories. Furthermore, although publications from various organizations and political perspectives have been included and weighed against each other, the views presented in them are limited by the hegemony of west Germany and neoliberalism. This reality is perhaps in part responsible for easterners' acceptance of capitalist and west German values examined in chapters 3 and 4.⁷² Nevertheless, one of the most remarkable things shown by this study is the critical dialogue presented against neoliberalism and globalization by easterners through Ampelmann.

Within this framework, Ampelmann functions on many seemingly contradictory levels. Across his pre- and post-unification journey, he has shown a remarkable capacity

⁶⁹ These include *Berliner Kurier* and *Der Tagesspiegel* which, in spite of their West German origins, align thematically with other publications originally from the GDR. This is likely due to their nature as local Berlin publications, as well as the 'Berlinification' of Ampelmann as discussed in chapter 4.

⁷⁰ These include *Der Spiegel*, *Die Zeit*, *Die Welt*, and *Hessen Niedersächsische Allgemeine*, among others.

⁷¹ These include *Neue Zeit*, *Neues Deutschland*, and *Berliner Zeitung* as well as the archival sources included in the bibliography.

⁷² See, for example, Dominik Bartmanski, *Successful Icons of Failed Time*, and Paul Cooke *Representing East Germany since Unification*.

for metamorphosis, bringing forth many visions of the past and present as East Germans attempt to navigate their past and make it usable. It is this extraordinary capacity which, paradoxically, both undermines and reinforces German unity, capitalism, and globalization as easterners reconstitute their past with the aim of revising these institutions so that they may become compatible with eastern heritage.

In order to provide historical context to this remembrance, Chapter 1 will examine Ampelmann's role within traffic safety culture during the GDR era. In contrast to those claiming that Ampelmann had no symbolic value in the GDR, this chapter reveals that he was part of a much wider programme which aimed to create a culture of safety directed at adults and children alike. Ampelmann's role in this, both on his television show and in the classroom, was important in developing his symbolic power and paving the way for his post-Wall career. Other factors are critical here as well, since East Germans would later attempt to resurrect the GDR's traffic safety concerns and rituals.

Chapter 2 examines the post-Wall memorialization of the GDR through Ampelmann. It argues that Ampelmann served as a mnemonic bridge to the past through which east Germans could bring selected ideals from East Germany to the present. Simultaneously, East Germans attempted to re-create and re-define eastern identity and a sense of community. In this narrative the GDR appeared safe, secure, and innocent in a way the modern Berlin Republic was not. The complexity, variety, and nature of these reconstructions moves beyond other scholars' allegations that the hat-wearing traffic light man is 'merely' a fetishized commodity.

Chapter 3 explores the little studied relationship between Ampelmann and west Germany. Here, Ampelmann's interaction with the west and its capitalism is evaluated in detail. Examining eastern interpretations of Ampelmann's commodification and spread into the west reveals how east Germans have reinterpreted the socialist past and made it compatible with the capitalist present. In reimagining their past and present, east Germans show that a defined sense of eastern values and identity does not preclude German unity but rather aims to contribute to it by proposing a more equitable form of capitalism.

The global expansion of Ampelmann, particularly his spread into Japan and South Korea, has functioned in similar ways. Chapter 4 examines the interplay between visions of the global and local as east Germans used their traffic light figure to imagine a world where the eastern past could be respected and valued by people around the globe. This narrative of success aimed to abate fears associated with globalization as the local has all too frequently been subjugated to the whims of international capitalism. By using their past to suggest an alternative to the current structure of globalization, east Germans have integrated themselves into a global network of new social movements which aims to limit unchecked neoliberal hegemony.

Ultimately then, Ampelmann is a *lieu de mémoire* with impressive symbolic power. He is able to navigate the turbulent space between the East German past and the unified, neoliberal, and globalized present. Through him, East Germans have attempted to resurrect select ideals and rituals from their past in order to preserve them and forge an eastern identity. East Germans have also used Ampelmann to imagine a present (and future) where east German values, history, and culture are appreciated. In short order, then, and unlike in the early years following reunification, traffic lights became one of the

first things on many east German minds as they used Ampelmann to reimagine their past to forge a better, more egalitarian present and future.

Chapter 1: Crossing the Past: Ampelmann, Traffic Safety, and Traffic Safety

Culture in the GDR

Unsurprisingly, Ampelmann's post-Wall success has its roots in the GDR where the dangers posed by East German streets compelled officials to find innovative solutions. Starting in the late 1960s and lasting until the state's collapse, traffic and traffic safety loomed consistently in the GDR's imagination. There were many reasons behind this, ranging from establishing the GDR as a "modern" state, satisfying (or at least appearing to satisfy) economic and environmental responsibilities, as well as out of genuine concern for its citizens, particularly children and the elderly. The government and the population as a whole attempted to rectify traffic safety issues through both technical solutions such as traffic lights and pedagogical ones, instructing the population on proper street safety. State officials also adopted less direct tactics such as creating, spreading, and enforcing a culture of traffic safety.

The state solved some traffic safety issues by enforcing the idea that traffic safety ought to be a shared responsibility among all inhabitants of the GDR. This culture was enforced through the bold-faced public shaming of offenders, as well as more subtle narratives in state publications. Educating children, both in and outside of the classroom, was another critical part of this process. To this end, officials dispatched the traffic police, in addition to teachers, to instruct youth on traffic safety and to give hands-on, multi-media demonstrations. Ampelmann emerged here as a tool to help children learn about proper street caution, appearing in traffic police presentations as well as in a television show, granting the figure both recognition and effectiveness. Traffic safety and

education were prominent in the GDR, highlighting both the state's concern for the well-being of its citizens and Ampelmann's entrenchment in the lives of East Germans.⁷³

Traffic Problems in the GDR

Officials and state publications first began expressing concerns about the increasing volume of traffic and its implications in the late 1960s.⁷⁴ The emergence of these concerns coincided roughly with the introduction of Ampelmann onto East German streets in 1969. Swelling traffic and soaring accident rates demanded solutions from the East German government. In outlining these issues, state publications, as well as internal documents, consistently refer to them as 'modern' problems faced by a 'modern' state.⁷⁵ The Berlin Department of Electricity further revealed this in a document proposing solutions to traffic issues in Alexanderplatz, East Berlin. It declared that: "Every day major cities around the world face the same image: overcrowded roads," thus placing East Berlin's dilemmas alongside those of major world cities.⁷⁶ State-run papers echoed

⁷³ There were undoubtedly other motivations behind the implementation of this program. Economic concerns examined later, particularly the losses which arose from slower transportation, are certainly high among these.

⁷⁴ While an exact date when the GDR shifted towards a traffic safety-centred approach is difficult to pinpoint, the release of articles in state-run newspapers was used to determine this rough timeframe. In the 1940s and 50s there are just a few references to traffic or traffic safety. The volume of these articles explodes in the late 1960s and continues thereafter at a fairly constant rate throughout the 1970s. There is another spike beginning roughly around 1985 and continuing until the collapse of the GDR. Government documents support this timeline. Actions taken in regards to traffic safety spike in the late 60s and early 70s, peaking again in the mid-80s with little (at least which this study was able to obtain) inbetween. While both of these periods correspond to significant events in the Ampelmann narrative, his introduction onto streets in the first case and his television debut in the latter, it is not possible, with the evidence used in this study, to determine if these events are causally related.

⁷⁵ See, for example: Heiner Hein, "Kontrollfahrt im Morgengrauen," *Berliner Zeitung*, March 15, 1975 <http://zefys.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/ddr-presse/ergebnisanzeige/?purl=SNP26120215-19750315-0-8-143-0>; Dietmar Kroschky, "Disko," *Neue Zeit*, August 14, 1983. <http://zefys.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/ddr-presse/ergebnisanzeige/?purl=SNP2612273X-19860814-0-8-84-0>; Win, "Unfall," *Neue Zeit*, March 27, 1971. <http://zefys.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/ddr-presse/ergebnisanzeige/?purl=SNP2612273X-19710327-0-6-69-0>.

⁷⁶ Stiftung Archiv Der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bundesarchiv (SAPMO)-Bundesarchiv (B-arch), DM 101 902, VEB Geräte und Regler-Wekre Teltow, "Technolgische

the message, describing how “automatic traffic lights” could solve the problems incurred by the “modernization of the streets.”⁷⁷ In the modern city, they continued, “instead of a traffic post, a traffic light has taken over control [of the streets].”⁷⁸ Stressing the modernity of these problems implied the innovativeness of their solutions. This discourse, along with the desire to ‘keep up’ both with other countries and the desires of the GDR’s own population, coloured the state’s approach to problems of traffic and traffic safety.

These descriptions also showcase real problems which the GDR faced as street traffic increased, thus mandating practical solutions: “Traffic engineers and city planners face a difficult problem to solve with all too familiar consequences such as rising accident rates, pudding-like traffic flows, traffic jams, and excessive demands on drivers and the economy.”⁷⁹ “The rapid growth of traffic on the streets of our city [East Berlin],” writes the Berlin Electrical Department in 1961, “brings with it a reduction in the fluidity, speed, and safety of traffic.”⁸⁰ But the frequency and tenor of official publications which emphasized the GDR’s ‘modernity’ suggests that image-making, depicting the GDR as a forward-thinking and vanguard state, was another aim of East German traffic solutions.

Other concerns fueled the GDR’s desire to seek innovative answers to the question of traffic safety. One of the most pressing issues was soaring accident rates, particularly at crossings: “it has been the tendency for years that the amount of accidents at traffic lights

Ausführungsunterlagen zum Vorhaben Steueranlage nach Projekt typ 2.2 für LSA Alexanderplatz in Berlin,” November 04, 1969.

⁷⁷ E.L., “1057 Unfälle in drei Monaten,” *Neue Zeit*, May, 08 1971. <http://zefys.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/ddr-presse/ergebnisanzeige/?purl=SNP2612273X-19710414-0-8-130-0>

⁷⁸ Win, “Unfall,” *Neue Zeit*, March 27, 1971. <http://zefys.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/ddr-presse/ergebnisanzeige/?purl=SNP2612273X-19710327-0-6-69-0>

⁷⁹ SAPMO-Barch, DM 101 902.

⁸⁰ SAPMO-Barch, DM 101 900, Diethard Kaliski, “Technologisches Projekt BMSR-Teil: LSA Berlin Typ 2,” December 14, 1966.

is disproportionately high.”⁸¹ The seriousness of the problem, as well as the care and concern of the state for the well-being of its citizens, is reflected in the vast array of statistics published in state newspapers. On a yearly, often monthly, basis, state newspapers lamented the number of accidents occurring on GDR streets, providing shockingly detailed breakdowns of where these accidents occurred and who was at fault. “The accident rate for pedestrians,” *Berliner Zeitung* lamented “has increased every year since 1967. This year [1971] there were 1197. This is 22.7% of all accidents. 1337 pedestrians were injured and 89 died.”⁸² Another paper provided even more detail, describing how, up to mid-August 1983, there were 3122 accidents in East Berlin, a “14.4% increase from the previous year, 44 people died, 1681 were injured.”⁸³ The paper continued: “the main causes of accidents were excessive speed (20%), unpermitted seizure of the right of way (17.5%), pedestrian misconduct (16%), and the influence of alcohol (6.3%).”⁸⁴

The authors of these articles found the frequency of accidents at traffic lights notably troubling. Although most official publications accepted that “crossings and junctions with traffic lights, in contrast to those without, are safer,”⁸⁵ many agreed that “the accidents

⁸¹ Heiner Hein, “Volle Aufmerksamkeit an Kreuzung und Einmündung,” *Berliner Zeitung*, June 28, 1986. <http://zefys.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/ddr-presse/ergebnisanzeige/?purl=SNP26120215-19750315-0-8-143-0>

⁸² Heiner Hein, “Unfälle durch Fußgänger,” *Berliner Zeitung*, September 15, 1971. <http://zefys.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/ddr-presse/ergebnisanzeige/?purl=SNP26120215-19710915-0-12-213-0>

⁸³ “Kurz berichtet,” *Neue Zeit*, August 18, 1983. <http://zefys.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/ddr-presse/ergebnisanzeige/?purl=SNP2612273X-19830818-0-8-114-0>

⁸⁴ “Kurz berichtet,” *Neue Zeit*, August 18, 1983. <http://zefys.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/ddr-presse/ergebnisanzeige/?purl=SNP2612273X-19830818-0-8-114-0>

⁸⁵ “Unfälle an Ampeln,” *Neue Zeit*, February 18, 1984. <http://zefys.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/ddr-presse/ergebnisanzeige/?purl=SNP2612273X-19840218-0-10-232-0>

which occur at light-regulated crossings are relatively high.”⁸⁶ *Neue Zeit* described how in 1974 “from the first of January to the 27th of March there were 956 accidents on the streets of the capital, most of them at crossings and junctions where 939 Berliners were injured.”⁸⁷ Such concerns continued and, in 1984, 32.6% of all accidents occurred at crossings with traffic lights.⁸⁸

As disconcerting as the more general statistics were, officials in the GDR seemed particularly worried about the rate of accidents involving children and the elderly. In the first three months of 1971, for example, accident rates increased by 5.8% (when compared to the same period in 1970) to 1221, 238 of which involved pedestrians. “Of these [pedestrians] there were 94 children and 74 older citizens...” a number which the paper described as “disproportionate.”⁸⁹ Another publication outlined accidents in 1983 according to age groups, citing how, out of every 100, 000 residents, children between the ages of 3 and 9 were guilty of causing 82 accidents, 6 to 9 year olds 105, 9 to 14 years olds 102, and 14 to 25 year olds - by contrast –a meagre 48.⁹⁰ The implications of this were disturbing as “every fourth accident in 1984 was caused by a child less than 6 years of age.”⁹¹ The year 1985 saw no improvement as traffic accidents injured 3850 children

⁸⁶ “Unfälle an Ampeln,” *Neue Zeit*, February 18, 1984. <http://zefys.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/ddr-presse/ergebnisanzeige/?purl=SNP2612273X-19840218-0-10-232-0>

⁸⁷ C.M.B., “Sicherheit im vordergrund,” *Neue Zeit*, March 29, 1974. <http://zefys.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/ddr-presse/ergebnisanzeige/?purl=SNP2612273X-19740329-0-6-107-0>

⁸⁸ “Unfälle an Ampeln,” *Neue Zeit*, February 18, 1984. <http://zefys.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/ddr-presse/ergebnisanzeige/?purl=SNP2612273X-19840218-0-10-232-0>

⁸⁹ W.H.Kr., “Um Unfällen vorzubeugen,” *Neue Zeit*, April 21, 1972. <http://zefys.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/ddr-presse/ergebnisanzeige/?purl=SNP2612273X-19720421-0-6-145-0>

⁹⁰ This article, although it does show the GDR’s awareness of traffic safety issues, is a bit peculiar in placing responsibility on the children (declaring them *schuldig*, or guilty). “Das rote und das grüne Ampelmännchen,” *Neue Zeit*, March 10, 1984. <http://zefys.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/ddr-presse/ergebnisanzeige/?purl=SNP2612273X-19841003-0-5-200-0>

⁹¹ “Das rote und das grüne Ampelmännchen,” *Neue Zeit*, March 10, 1984. <http://zefys.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/ddr-presse/ergebnisanzeige/?purl=SNP2612273X-19841003-0-5-200-0>

with an additional 100 losing their lives.⁹² The elderly fared little better. In 1970, official publications warned older people with poor sight to avoid “peak hours for traffic during months where it gets dark earlier. In the fourth quarter of 1970, 80% of pedestrians killed or injured after 16:00 were over 60 years of age.”⁹³

The GDR was aware of the cost, in human terms, of poor traffic safety. The impressive (and perhaps disturbing) multitude of statistics the GDR possessed to this end shows the state’s commitment to discovering the nation’s own failings and to improving the lives of its citizens with a particular focus on the most vulnerable groups in East German society. The focus placed on children and the elderly by the East German state would later become a key point around which the memory of the GDR would revolve.

The wealth of information they possessed made officials in the GDR conscious of the implications of traffic accidents and regulation beyond the direct effects of these calamities on drivers and pedestrians. One of the main problems faced by the GDR in this regard was the high economic cost of traffic accidents and inefficiencies. Official publications highlighted this: “in the direction of Weißensee a moving Wartburg rolls. As he locks his breaks he bounces against a moving Trabant. 2000 Marks in material damages.”⁹⁴ In another situation, “a pedestrian carelessly walked into the street at a crossing, causing a car to crash into the light and the pedestrian to be hospitalized. This

⁹² Margaret Vierjahn, “Unfallgefahren vorbeugen,” *Neue Zeit*, June 21, 1986. <http://zefys.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/ddr-presse/ergebnisanzeige/?purl=SNP26120215-19860621-0-11-155-0>

⁹³ “Drei Töte, zwei Fußgänger,” *Berliner Zeitung*, April 17, 1971. <http://zefys.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/ddr-presse/ergebnisanzeige/?purl=SNP26120215-19710417-0-8-222-0>

⁹⁴ H. Günther, “Immer wieder Leichtsinnige,” *Neue Zeit*, July 12, 1971. <http://zefys.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/ddr-presse/ergebnisanzeige/?purl=SNP2612273X-19711207-0-6-256-0>

caused 4000 Marks in damage!”⁹⁵ The significance of this is underlined by the inefficiencies of GDR manufacturing, which limited the availability of products such as car parts. Indeed, Ina Merkel has described how one could rarely purchase parts for a Trabant, forcing savvy socialist consumers to buy what parts they could and hoard them until they were needed.⁹⁶

Environmental concerns also presented themselves in internal official discourse, although these concerns were significantly less pronounced. The Ministry for Transportation, for example, included environmental concerns under its 1983 “General guidelines for Traffic concepts,” with a section entitled, “the calming of traffic and environmental protection.”⁹⁷ Here, the ministry declared that “in general, the planning and realization of all traffic organization measures [must] consider environmental issues.” And that “in the main street networks of the inner city, the normative [regulations concerning] noise and exhaust pollution are not being met but can certainly be met in the near future.”⁹⁸ In this way, then, the GDR possessed a wealth of information which allowed officials to grasp the wider implications of traffic issues, including the personal, material, and environmental costs that resulted from inefficient roads.

Traffic Solutions and Traffic Safety Culture in the GDR

In tackling issues of traffic safety, East German officials were hoping not only to ease the economic burden of poorly managed streets but also to improve the lives of its

⁹⁵ Drowski, “Ampel auf Rot,” *Berliner Zeitung*, January 12, 1972. <http://zefys.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/ddr-presse/ergebnisanzeige/?purl=SNP26120215-19720112-0-12-269-0>

⁹⁶ This is a process Merkel discusses more generally, describing the rhythms of GDR consumer culture as centering around patterns of “Hunting, Gathering, and Hoarding.” This spawned from the SED’s decision to produce single, as opposed to multiple, product lines. Ina Merkel, “Consumer Culture in the DDR,” 292.

⁹⁷ SAPMO-Barch, DM 1 11923, Ministerium für Verkehrswesen, “Rahmenrichtlinie für die Arbeit mit Verkehrskonzeptionen,” January 1983.

⁹⁸ SAPMO-Barch, DM 1 11923.

citizens and meet their expectations. The Ministry for Transportation, along with various other government agencies, discussed the desire to meet East German expectations in its 1980 plan “for the regulation of street traffic with traffic lights in the cities of the GDR by 1985,” declaring that:

With the growth of efficiency and the national economy as well as the increase in the standard of living of the socialist community in the GDR, the safe and economical regulation of transportation gains an increasing importance. The decisive criteria of this are the smoothness and safety of traffic organization as well as the reliability and availability of modern technical measures.⁹⁹

This reveals a desire to match realities in the GDR with the expectations of the population, aiming to do so through the regulation of traffic with traffic lights. This would ensure the “swift and safe flow of traffic,” improve “the safety and comfort of pedestrians,” and ameliorate “pedestrian traffic in living areas.”¹⁰⁰ GDR officials were both aware of and concerned with the problems they faced with regard to traffic and traffic safety.

The first step on the path to a traffic solution was the implementation and coordination of traffic lights into a series of so-called “green waves” that would allow drivers adhering to proper speed limits to cross through busy intersections without stopping.¹⁰¹ Through regulating traffic lights officials hoped that safety would be increased, serious accidents reduced, time saved, and a stronger feeling of safety forged. Engineers employed by the Berlin Electrical Department declared in 1968 that

⁹⁹ SAPMO-Barch, DM 1 10366, “PMR-Vorlage: Konzeption zur Regelung des Strassenverkehrs mit LSA in den Städten der DDR im Zeitraum bis 1985.” June 6, 1980.

¹⁰⁰ SAPMO-Barch, DM 1 11923.

¹⁰¹ Reiner Franz, “Weiter Hauptstraßenzug erhält eine ‚Grüne Welle‘,” *Neues Deutschland*, June 23, 1976. <http://zefys.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/ddr-presse/ergebnisanzeige/?purl=SNP2532889X-19760623-0-8-137-0>

An automatic traffic light, along with a means of suitable programming, allows for street traffic to be safely and quickly led through street crossings. This allows for drivers to drive more safely, more quickly, and with less waiting times, particularly when lights are co-ordinated through a so-called “green wave.”¹⁰²

The disadvantages of poorly managed traffic signals, a 1976 document from the college of transportation, further asserts, “can be seen during peak periods. This leads to loss of time which could, however, be saved through more appropriate methods of signaling.”¹⁰³

The faith put in the green wave system is reflected again in state media coverage.

Berliner Zeitung wrote on the effectiveness of “green wave” lights in 1971, reporting that “the number of accidents in Karl-Marx-Allee where the green wave was implemented has also sunk considerably.”¹⁰⁴ A year later, *Neues Deutschland* agreed, stating that “The traffic police inform us that the number of accidents has been reduced after the introduction of the green wave. Drivers and pedestrians have adjusted well to each other, particularly when drivers are turning right.”¹⁰⁵ The green wave system was thus one method GDR officials used in attempting to solve traffic problems. Furthermore, the green wave was arguably the most direct, practical solution examined in contrast to other methods directed at educating the population and creating a culture of traffic safety.

State representatives continued to search for solutions in traffic lights. In 1978, “Central analysis and evaluation of accidents caused by the failure of a traffic light” spawned the introduction of a new Quality Assurance System (QSS) under the

¹⁰² SAPMO-Barch, DM 101 900.

¹⁰³ SAPMO-Barch, DM 101 1676, Richard Schmidt, “Diplomarbeit: Signalzeitplanmodifikation in verkehrsabhängig gesteuerten Grünen Wellen.” August 12, 1976.

¹⁰⁴ Kadro, “Mit Toni 203 im Einsatz die “grüne Welle“ funktioniert,” *Berliner Zeitung*, October 24, 1971. <http://zefys.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/ddr-presse/ergebnisanzeige/?purl=SNP26120215-19711024-0-8-89-0>

¹⁰⁵ “ND untersuchte gemeinsam mit der Verkehrspolizei,” *Neues Deutschland*, March 03, 1972. <http://zefys.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/ddr-presse/ergebnisanzeige/?purl=SNP2532889X-19720303-0-8-137-0>

supervision of the Minister of Transportation.¹⁰⁶ He, in turn, was “responsible, according to the statute of the Ministry for Transportation, to ensure traffic safety through facilities and technologies.”¹⁰⁷ Functionally, QSS consisted of stricter measures regarding the production, testing, and control of traffic lights. It aimed to “minimize the strains on technology and people,” increase the “permeability of traffic flow” and limit the “impact on the environment.”¹⁰⁸ A key aspect of this was the “international exchange of experiences with the USSR and its socialist countries” in order to help with “questions of testing, control, measuring and organizational abilities.”¹⁰⁹

Given yearly increases in traffic, it remains difficult to assess how effective both the green wave program and QSS were, but they nevertheless display how the GDR was attempting to find a modern solution to the problems of traffic and traffic safety. The existence of these systems and the effort the state expended in implementing them – even co-operating with other socialist countries – shows the concern, care, and seriousness with which GDR officials attempted to tackle traffic issues.

State representatives also attempted to forge a culture of traffic safety in order to help solve street safety problems. The central aim of this culture was to characterize traffic safety, in the minds of the East German population, as a shared responsibility. A writer for *Berliner Zeitung* revealed this in 1973, stating that: “the responsibility for traffic safety is shared: State organs, social organizations and individual citizens have an equal

¹⁰⁶ SAPMO-Barch, DM 1 15912, Zentrale Abteilung: HV Straßenwesen, “Qualitäts sicherungssystem Lichtsignalanlagen.” 1978.

¹⁰⁷ SAPMO-Barch, DM1 15912.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

responsibility.”¹¹⁰ The Ministry for Transportation outlined this culture further in 1983: “through targeted and informative public relations activities, the understanding of the citizens for the designated traffic organizational measures can be aroused and cooperative societal powers will be activated.”¹¹¹ On one level, east German traffic safety culture endeavoured to outline the shared responsibility between drivers and pedestrians on East German roads. State publications frequently targeted drivers as the guilty party. Speaking of drivers who had their licenses taken away, one reporter wrote that “mostly it is these same drivers who ignore good advice and warnings and do not participate in the traffic safety education of the social collective.”¹¹² In this way, irresponsible and selfish drivers were depicted as being guilty in causing traffic accidents, thus shirking their duty to the larger collective.

State publications also targeted pedestrians for violating the social contract. A Berlin City councillor highlighted this shared obligation: “both pedestrians and drivers are responsible for this increase [in traffic accidents].”¹¹³ This position was frequently asserted “[...]of course not all pedestrians are angels” wrote another East German reporter, “three little girls, for example, ran across the street just a few meters before the street crossing at the busy Karl-Liebknecht street. They endanger themselves and others.”¹¹⁴ Another journalist wrote: “When nearly a quarter of those injured in traffic accidents are pedestrians, then we have to make it clear: Caution and consideration are

¹¹⁰ Hans-Jurgen Renneisen, “Kreuzungen kreuzgefährlich?,” *Berliner Zeitung*, April 13, 1973. <http://zefys.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/ddr-presse/ergebnisanzeige/?purl=SNP26120215-19730413-0-2-17-0>

¹¹¹ SAPMO-Barch, DM1 11923.

¹¹² “Jede Ausnahme ist gefährlich,” *Neue Zeit*, June 29, 1974. <http://zefys.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/ddr-presse/ergebnisanzeige/?purl=SNP2612273X-19740629-0-11-272-0>

¹¹³ W.H.Kr., “Um Unfällen vorzubeugen,” *Neue Zeit*, April 21, 1972. <http://zefys.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/ddr-presse/ergebnisanzeige/?purl=SNP2612273X-19720421-0-6-145-0>

¹¹⁴ “ND untersuchte gemeinsam mit der Verkehrspolizei,” *Neues Deutschland*, March 03, 1972.

the first rules of traffic safety, not just for drivers but for pedestrians as well.”¹¹⁵ In this way, state officials and publications engaged in a cultural program aimed at creating a more unified and considerate socialist population of drivers and pedestrians.

Sometimes, this approach was far more direct than merely reasserting a socialist ideal; occasionally official publications publicly shamed those who violated their communal duty. Drivers, easily identified by their licence plates, were vulnerable to these attacks in the press. Two drivers were targeted in 1972 when *Neues Deutschland* reported that “[...] two cars forced their right of way over two pedestrians. A red Skoda IT 20-82 and a blue Moskwitsch IE 01-20.”¹¹⁶ Pedestrians were not, however, immune to such criticisms. *Berliner Zeitung*, for example, attempted to discover why pedestrians were being so reckless by interviewing locals reporters saw violating traffic laws. Frau Gisela Troschke was the target of one such interrogation, responding after “she crossed the street on a red” that “I’ll be alright I watch out! Ultimately it’s about time. My family is waiting at home...” The paper retorted “what would happen if Frau Toschke’s family had to wait one day because – and we hope it doesn’t happen - she has been the victim of a traffic accident?”¹¹⁷ Such bold inquiries were not uncommon as GDR publications pulled few punches in criticising those who irresponsibly and selfishly violated traffic regulations. Some resented this, such as one lady who, when confronted about crossing on a red, declared “I am not a marionette that dances to the colours of the traffic light.”¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ “ Ampeln gelten auch für Fußgänger,” *Neues Deutschland*, November 25, 1972.
<http://zefys.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/ddr-presse/ergebnisanzeige/?purl=SNP2532889X-19721125-0-8-200-0>

¹¹⁶ “ND untersuchte gemeinsam mit der Verkehrspolizei,” *Neues Deutschland*, March 03, 1972.

¹¹⁷ Heiner Hein, “Mir passiert schon nichts!,” *Berliner Zeitung*, January 13, 1972.
<http://zefys.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/ddr-presse/ergebnisanzeige/?purl=SNP26120215-19720113-0-8-129-0>

¹¹⁸ “ND untersuchte gemeinsam mit der Verkehrspolizei,” *Neues Deutschland*, March 03, 1972.

Occasionally, however, publications commended those who displayed care and attention during their commute: “Our compliments to the driver of a “wolga” IB 72-69 who, due to his careful driving, allowed pedestrians to safely cross while making a right turn.”¹¹⁹ In this way, the East German state strove to change traffic safety culture in the GDR by forging the idea that this was a shared, socialist responsibility, enforcing this belief by publicly criticizing violators while praising the obedient.

Children played a particular role in this collective as one of the most vulnerable groups. As a result, the state used children to enforce the cultural ideal of traffic safety. Indeed, state papers highlighted the endangered state of children, pointing out how in September “thousands of children will be going back to school and, thus, becoming independent traffic participants.”¹²⁰ Another article played on parental anxieties:

From their very first step, a child becomes a traffic participant. First they are well protected in the hands of their parents or older siblings. But eventually they want to venture out on their own. No mother, no father can keep their children protected every hour of the day. And so eventually, parents, with rattling hearts, have to let their offspring go, protected only by good advice, to play on their own. An everyday situation – but parents want to be sure that the proper precautions are taken by educating their children.¹²¹

In this way parents were targeted as being responsible for the safety of their children.

State periodicals outlined what parents ought to do to ensure this: “...parents should practice the way to school with their children once again. Not the shortest, but rather the safest route must be planned. Ideally, children should be led through crossings, T-

¹¹⁹ “ND untersuchte gemeinsam mit der Verkehrspolizei,” *Neues Deutschland*, March 03, 1972.

¹²⁰ “Schmackhaft und altersgerecht Schülerspeisung nach neuen Plänen,” *Neue Zeit*, August 27, 1986. <http://zefys.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/ddr-presse/ergebnisanzeige/?purl=SNP2612273X-19860827-0-2-21-0>

¹²¹ Margaret Vierjahn, “Unfallgefahren vorbeugen,” *Neue Zeit*, June 21, 1986. <http://zefys.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/ddr-presse/ergebnisanzeige/?purl=SNP26120215-19860621-0-11-155-0>

junctions, as well as pedestrian bridges and tunnels.”¹²² One article stressed the extent of this responsibility: “...it is particularly important... that adults set a proper example for children” before warning that “frequently girls and boys see adults going against what the children learn in school. They also see that these reckless activities are tolerated in the outside world.”¹²³ The East German state thus attempted to forge a communal obligation towards traffic safety, focusing particularly on children in order to create consent by playing off of children’s vulnerability, and by reiterating the key role of all adults in protecting the GDR’s youngest citizens.

Traffic safety education, particularly as it was enforced in schools, was another key factor in shielding children against the dangers of street traffic. Students learned songs teaching them the rules of traffic safety, drew pictures, and read instructional posters.¹²⁴ One teacher also used toy cars to illustrate proper street safety, clarifying in the mind of one East German youth that “when the light is red, I must stay.”¹²⁵ State newspapers asserted that the relationship between students and their teacher was key here, as one reporter posited: “when children have a good base of knowledge with regard to traffic safety, this can be attributed to the hard work of their teacher.”¹²⁶ Similar examples were frequently repeated, constructing the image of concerned, compassionate teachers connecting with their students through various instructional methods. Teacher Christa

¹²² “Schmackhaft und altersgerecht Schülerspeisung nach neuen Plänen,” *Neue Zeit*, August 36, 1986. <http://zefys.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/ddr-presse/ergebnisanzeige/?purl=SNP2612273X-19860827-0-2-21-0>

¹²³ Karin Stemmler and Heiner Hein, “Jeder immer aufmerksam und rücksichtsvoll,” *Berliner Zeitung*, April 18, 1989. <http://zefys.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/ddr-presse/ergebnisanzeige/?purl=SNP26120215-19890418-0-12-338-0>

¹²⁴ Irina Mali, “Führerschein,” *Neues Deutschland*, September 10, 1988. <http://zefys.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/ddr-presse/ergebnisanzeige/?purl=SNP2532889X-19880910-0-10-159-0>

¹²⁵ “Mit ND dabei: Aufmerksam und rücksichtsvoll im Straßenverkehr,” *Neues Deutschland*, February 02, 1985. <http://zefys.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/ddr-presse/ergebnisanzeige/?purl=SNP2532889X-19850202-0-8-129-0>

¹²⁶ Ibid.

Kehr, quoted by a reporter for *Neues Deutschland*, epitomized this image, declaring that “we can’t begin helping the children to form good habits early enough.”¹²⁷

The ‘Golden One’ award, given to children who demonstrated exceptional understanding of traffic safety concerns, was another element in the education of East German youths. Indeed, the competition for this award gave structure to the traffic safety education of students from the first to fourth grades.¹²⁸ By 1987, *Berliner Zeitung* claimed that 1.5 million children earned the Golden One every year “for showing good understanding and [taking] proper actions with regard to traffic safety.”¹²⁹ The very existence of this award, as well as the sheer volume of students who were given it, reveals the significance of traffic safety to the East German government as well as to the population at large. Across the myriad elements of traffic safety education in the GDR, then, the state attempted to protect its citizens, both young and old, from the hazards of the modern city, providing information, education and attempting to create a culture, sometimes boldly enforced, of traffic safety.

The East German Traffic Police also participated in the population’s education through several initiatives ranging from visiting schools, holding instructional events, and issuing warnings. These initiatives show not only the importance of traffic safety concerns to the GDR, but furthermore illuminate the pervasiveness of traffic safety culture. Visits to schools were one of the most common ways traffic police contributed to

¹²⁷ Christa Drechse, “Mit ND dabei,” *Neues Deutschland*, February 28, 1987. <http://zefys.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/ddr-presse/ergebnisanzeige/?purl=SNP2532889X-19870228-0-8-160-0>

¹²⁸ “Neue Leitfiguren für Verkehrserziehung,” *Neues Deutschland*, September 15, 1984. <http://zefys.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/ddr-presse/ergebnisanzeige/?purl=SNP2532889X-19840915-0-10-186-0>

¹²⁹ Margarete Vierjahn, “Ampelmännchen allein schafft’s bei Kindern nicht,” *Berliner Zeitung*, November 14, 1987. <http://zefys.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/ddr-presse/ergebnisanzeige/?purl=SNP26120215-19871114-0--133-0>

the protection of East German youths. The methods police used were multi-faceted. In the district of Magdeburg, for example, “for a more vivid learning experience, the traffic police distributed... 15,000 book marks, 14,000 colouring books, and about 20,000 paper models of traffic lights.”¹³⁰ In another situation, police visited a school in a radio car, handing out illustrated books, winter hats and whistles. Afterwards the schoolchildren were quizzed: “they [the students] could already answer why one must find the quickest way to cross the street, not to play on traffic barriers and not to cross from behind parked cars.” As a reward for their knowledge, “they [the students] were allowed to go into the police radio car, speak into the microphone, and play with the siren.”¹³¹ Describing a similar event in Berlin, one reporter argued that “in this way, play and learning experiences are linked.”¹³²

Outside of the classroom as well, police helped to teach children about proper street precautions. In Lichtenberg, traffic police set up a series of games outside to advise children on traffic safety. In one of these called, “on the way to the playground,” a ball was rolled out into the street and children had to put it back safely into their net. In another, they had to help a “sick” schoolmate, whose eyes were covered, get safely home.¹³³ In this way, traffic police inserted themselves into the traffic safety education of the country’s youngest citizens, forging a connection with the children they instructed

¹³⁰ “Mit ND dabei: Aufmerksam und rücksichtsvoll im Straßenverkehr,” *Neues Deutschland*, February 02, 1985. <http://zefys.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/ddr-presse/ergebnisanzeige/?purl=SNP2532889X-19850202-0-8-129-0>

¹³¹ Irina Mali, “Führerschein,” *Neues Deutschland*, September 10, 1988. <http://zefys.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/ddr-presse/ergebnisanzeige/?purl=SNP2532889X-19880910-0-10-159-0>

¹³² Margaret Vierjahn, “Unfallgefahren vorbeugen,” *Neue Zeit*, June 21, 1986. <http://zefys.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/ddr-presse/ergebnisanzeige/?purl=SNP26120215-19860621-0-11-155-0>

¹³³ Dietmar Kroschky, “Es gibt keinen „bösen“ Ampelmann,” *Neue Zeit*, August 13, 1985. <http://zefys.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/ddr-presse/ergebnisanzeige/?purl=SNP2612273X-19850813-0-8-155-0>

through playful but pragmatic activities. The gifts given out by traffic police also helped to establish a link in the GDR between traffic safety and material culture, a trend which would appear again after East Germany's collapse.

Traffic police also used more traditional methods in order to reach out to the community and assist in furthering traffic safety. To this end, they frequently published messages in newspapers across the GDR, under the headline "The traffic police report."¹³⁴ With these, the traffic police warned citizens about, for example, icy road conditions, advised them to cross only at marked crossings, and warned pedestrians about paths blocked off by construction.¹³⁵ In October 1973 the traffic police even hosted a "traffic safety education week" where they held forums instructing drivers and pedestrians on how to prepare for winter conditions.¹³⁶ They also helped to alleviate early morning traffic jams: "...the traffic police spring into action... making it clear which driver has the right of the way. And when the modern traffic lights can do nothing, the traffic controller takes their [the officer's] scepter into their hand."¹³⁷ The traffic police focused their efforts on educating not just children but adults as well, extending even further the connection between the state and a detailed, extensive, compassionate, and paternalistic traffic safety education program.

¹³⁴ Occasionally, these announcements were also released by the *Volkspolizei*, although the content of these proclamations does not differ significantly.

¹³⁵ See, for example, "Die Verkehrspolizei meldet Unfallzeugen gesucht," *Berliner Zeitung*, August 25, 1972, <http://zefys.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/ddr-presse/ergebnisanzeige/?purl=SNP26120215-19720825-0-12-237-0>; or "Die Volkspolizei meldet," *Berliner Zeitung*, December 23, 1972, <http://zefys.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/ddr-presse/ergebnisanzeige/?purl=SNP26120215-19861223-0-8-110-0>

¹³⁶ W.H. Kraus, "Vor dem Schaden klug sein," *Neue Zeit*, September 21, 1973. <http://zefys.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/ddr-presse/ergebnisanzeige/?purl=SNP2612273X-19730921-0-6-118-0>

¹³⁷ Heiner Hein, "Kontrollfahrt im Morgengrauen," *Berliner Zeitung*, March 15, 1975 <http://zefys.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/ddr-presse/ergebnisanzeige/?purl=SNP26120215-19750315-0-8-143-0>

There was already a well-established traffic safety effort by the time Ampelmann emerged in 1984. Among these components of traffic safety, Ampelmann found a place as a tool to teach children about proper street caution. The traffic police were key in establishing the traffic light figure as a pedagogical instrument. Following Ampelmann's television debut in September 1984, the traffic police announced that

In order to better protect children from the dangers of traffic, the 'Ampelmännchen' has been chosen as a traffic education symbol for children up to the age of 7. In order to align with the psyche of children – learning through play – the red and green Ampelmännchen should help children cope with and acquire knowledge of traffic safety problems.¹³⁸

The framework was thus laid for the expansion of Ampelmann into the classroom. Traffic police distributed Ampelmann figurines to school children as the officers visited schools.¹³⁹ The figure quickly proved popular amongst East German children; following a lesson from local traffic police, "the children thanked the traffic police with the 'Ampelmännchen' song."¹⁴⁰ Officers even instructed parents how to use the figures to teach their children lessons: "These figures can also play a role during walks – if parents and children make a mistake, they should go over the advice of the green Ampelmann. Such playful education is useful as a warning."¹⁴¹ "With the leadership of the Ampelmännchen" one reporter declared "the first step in the traffic safety education of children is completed."¹⁴²

¹³⁸ "Das rote und das grüne Ampelmännchen," *Neue Zeit*, March 10, 1984. <http://zefys.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/ddr-presse/ergebnisanzeige/?purl=SNP2612273X-19841003-0-5-200-0>

¹³⁹ Margaret Vierjahn, "Unfallgefahren vorbeugen," *Neue Zeit*, June 21, 1986. <http://zefys.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/ddr-presse/ergebnisanzeige/?purl=SNP26120215-19860621-0-11-155-0>

¹⁴⁰ Christa Drechse, "Mit ND dabei," *Neues Deutschland*, February 28, 1987. <http://zefys.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/ddr-presse/ergebnisanzeige/?purl=SNP2532889X-19870228-0-8-160-0>

¹⁴¹ Margaret Vierjahn, "Unfallgefahren vorbeugen," *Neue Zeit*, June 21, 1986. <http://zefys.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/ddr-presse/ergebnisanzeige/?purl=SNP26120215-19860621-0-11-155-0>

¹⁴² "Das rote und das grüne Ampelmännchen," *Neue Zeit*, March 10, 1984. <http://zefys.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/ddr-presse/ergebnisanzeige/?purl=SNP2612273X-19841003-0-5-200-0>

The most pervasive representation of Ampelmann in the GDR was, nevertheless, the television show *Stiefelchen und Kompaßkalle* which debuted on 24 September 1984. Here, animated red and green figures appeared to warn the titular characters, a young girl and boy respectively, along with their dog Wuffi, about dangerous traffic situations and provide advice.¹⁴³ The show aired along with the popular evening program *Sandmännchen* and thus reached a wide audience of East German children. GDR officials first commissioned the show in 1982 as they decided to begin using television to teach traffic safety to children directly (previous shows had been aimed at an adult audience).¹⁴⁴ “We are assigning you,” declared the letter sent to the soon-to-be director of the show, Friedrich Rochow, “a child-friendly series for preschool and elementary aged children to appear once a month during the Sandmännchen program.”¹⁴⁵ It was aimed, in part, to fill the gap created by the “golden one” award, which was available for children in grades one through four but not preschool. Rochow recalled in 1997 that “Preschool children were not in the position to win this [the golden one]. They had to learn through play.”¹⁴⁶

The five minute stories which made up the Ampelmann show were taken, according to the show’s writer, Nils Werner, “right out of the lives of children” and were intended to “hold up a mirror before their faces.”¹⁴⁷ The characters in the show were also intended

¹⁴³ “Neue Zeit Kommentiert,” *Neue Zeit*, March 11, 1986. <http://zefys.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/ddr-presse/ergebnisanzeige/?purl=SNP2612273X-19860311-0-2-30-0>

¹⁴⁴ Markus Heckhausen, *Das Buch vom Ampelmännchen* (Berlin: Eulenspiegel, 1997), 32.

¹⁴⁵ Heckhausen, *Das Buch*, 32.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 29.

¹⁴⁷ “Neue Zeit Kommentiert,” *Neue Zeit*, March 11, 1986. <http://zefys.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/ddr-presse/ergebnisanzeige/?purl=SNP2612273X-19860311-0-2-30-0>

to be “representative of all children.”¹⁴⁸ The counsel given in the show was wide-ranging. The red Ampelmann sprang up on screen when the children walked out behind a parked car to chase after a ball, for example, crying “Stop!” The green figure, by contrast, appeared when the children showed proper caution such as safely crossing the street, declaring, “Well done!”¹⁴⁹ Research for the show was extensive as the creators consulted Rolf Wiczorek who did his Ph.D. research on traffic accidents involving children.¹⁵⁰ Wiczorek was given the task not only of coming up with themes for each film but even chose Ampelmann as the show’s star after determining that “children in this age group were best able to recognize the red and green Ampelmännchen.”¹⁵¹ Ampelmann’s television show, then, was key in establishing a connection between the figure and the children of the GDR.

Police also invited children to an “Ampelmännchen party” in Berlin.¹⁵² The preparations for this were extensive; police constructed mock streets, roadways and pedestrian crossings, even installing a traffic light. Aided by this elaborate practice area, police and educators coached students on proper street safety, rewarding those who did well with “a certificate and small gifts.”¹⁵³ In this way, Ampelmann played a crucial role in the education of young East Germans, as his image appeared both in the classes taught by traffic police and on a popular television show. Ampelmann’s friendly,

¹⁴⁸ Margaret Vierjahn, “Unfallgefahren vorbeugen,” *Neue Zeit*, June 21, 1986. <http://zefys.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/ddr-presse/ergebnisanzeige/?purl=SNP26120215-19860621-0-11-155-0>

¹⁴⁹ “Neue Zeit Kommentiert,” *Neue Zeit*, March 11, 1986. <http://zefys.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/ddr-presse/ergebnisanzeige/?purl=SNP2612273X-19860311-0-2-30-0>

¹⁵⁰ Heckhausen, *Das Buch*, 33.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 35.

¹⁵² Heiner Hein, “Ampelmännchenfest vor Schulbeginn,” *Berliner Zeitung*, September 03, 1988. <http://zefys.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/ddr-presse/ergebnisanzeige/?purl=SNP26120215-19880903-0-3-63-0>

¹⁵³ Dietmar Kroschky, “Es gibt keinen „bösen“ Ampelmann,” *Neue Zeit*, August 13, 1985. <http://zefys.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/ddr-presse/ergebnisanzeige/?purl=SNP2612273X-19850813-0-8-155-0>

compassionate, and sympathetic stature is thus not, as will be shown in the following chapters, limited to post-Wall Germany. Instead, his profile was forged, however briefly, in the GDR as the little man jumped out of the traffic lights and into the lives of children.

The GDR was intricately involved in traffic safety, taking various precautions in attempting to ensure the security of its population. To this end, the state instigated a series of pragmatic measures aimed at better regulating traffic lights, attempted to create a culture of traffic safety and encouraged traffic safety education. Along with teachers and the traffic police, Ampelmann appeared here as an educational tool, helping to reinforce lessons and connect with children. These points are crucial, as will be revealed in the succeeding chapters, to the way the GDR as a whole and Ampelmann specifically would be remembered after the state's collapse. The care, concern, and safety present in GDR life would become among the most popular traits that east Germans missed when comparing their lives in the Berlin Republic to East Germany. Indeed, through Ampelmann, east Germans, as we will see, attempted to resurrect some aspects of GDR traffic safety culture. Ampelmann, too, was shaped by his time in the GDR as easterners looked back to his friendliness, connection to children, and familiarity. Material culture, and Ampelmann's specific connection to it, would also prove significant in the figure's post-Wall career. In much the same way that the GDR attempted to improve its world through the use of the East German traffic light figure, easterners would use their traffic light figure to envision a brighter, safer, more egalitarian alternative to life in the neoliberal west.

Chapter 2: Recasting the Past: Ampelmann and the Creation of a Usable GDR

Ampelmann's television career and role as an icon of traffic safety were cut short by the fall of the Berlin Wall on 9 November 1989. As the cultural landscape of the GDR was ripped up, the hat-wearing traffic light man quickly found himself, like many other easterners, unemployed. Indeed, no special measures were taken to protect him. Things only got worse as the replacement of Ampelmann traffic lights began in 1992 when the federal government started an initiative to standardize traffic signals by implementing the more generic western figure.¹⁵⁴ Western-style logic fueled this, suggesting that a unified traffic light system made more sense and would be cheaper to produce. Furthermore, the western figure was supposedly easier to integrate into computer networks, allowing for the modernization of traffic systems.¹⁵⁵

During this time, with the idealized image of the west still burning bright, easterners accepted these ideas, repeating the economic and logistical rationale behind the spread of the western figure. Some saw this as a natural process, arguing that the "slim, tall, athletic and gender neutral" western figure "could guide everyone equally."¹⁵⁶ Here, 'gender neutrality' was praised as representing an equality not possessed by the 'male' eastern figure. Extending this logic, the western figure came to represent the modernity which the eastern one did not, the former being slim and fit while the latter was round and bulbous. This paints the image of a sleek, modern west and an antiquated, bloated GDR.

¹⁵⁴ "Ampelmann Hampelmann," *Der Spiegel*, June 01, 1997.

<http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/spiegelspecial/d-8719382.html>

¹⁵⁵ Anja Dilk, "Wer hilft dem Herrn mit Hut," *Die Zeit*, February 07, 1997.

http://www.zeit.de/1997/07/Wer_hilft_dem_Herrn_mit_Hut_

¹⁵⁶ "Bei Rot bleibe stehen," *Neues Deutschland*, December 30, 1992. <https://www.neues-deutschland.de/artikel/395151.bei-rot-bleibe-stehen.html?sstr=ampelm%E4nnchen>

Yet as the idealized image of the west faded and a paradoxical nostalgia for the GDR became increasingly apparent, popular sentiment in the east began to shift in favour of resurrecting the “funny man with the hat.”¹⁵⁷ These sentiments began to take hold in 1996 when Jörg Davids formed the Save the Ampelmännchen Committee (Committee zur Rettung des Ampelmännchens), and the western entrepreneur Markus Heckhausen began selling lamps fashioned from decommissioned Ampelmann lights.¹⁵⁸ The Committee funded its efforts by selling Ampelmann-adorned souvenirs ranging from coffee cups to T-shirts, from vodka (the ‘drink of pedestrians’) to an Ampelmann CD: “Berlin – Soundtrack to the City.”¹⁵⁹ Committee members made national headlines as they paraded through the streets of Berlin, shouting their slogan ‘lasst es laufen’ (let it run).¹⁶⁰ Davids himself became the subject of several interviews where he spoke out in favour of Ampelmann specifically and the former east in general. In one such interview with *Neues Deutschland*, Davids summarized his vision of the new Germany, saying that he saw himself not as an easterner or westerner but rather a Berliner and that “Today, I see in the new States new possibilities for this Republic [the GDR] to use its critical potential against the mindset of the Old States.”¹⁶¹ One later article looking back on this period even went so far as to claim that Davids’ art firm, Mondos Art (which was responsible for

¹⁵⁷ “Männchen mit Hut lustiger West-Ampelmännchen zu steif,” *Mitteldeutsche Zeitung*, February 07, 1995.

¹⁵⁸ Anja Dilk, “Wer hilft dem Herrn mit Hut,” *Die Zeit*, February 07, 1997.

http://www.zeit.de/1997/07/Wer_hilft_dem_Herrn_mit_Hut_

¹⁵⁹ “Der Ampelmann soll Leben,” *Mitteldeutsche Zeitung*, May 26, 1997.

¹⁶⁰ Maxim Leo, “Das Ampelmännchen,” *Berliner Zeitung*, December 23, 1996. <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/archiv/das-ampelmaennchen,10810590,9219188.html>

¹⁶¹ “Mondos Ampelmännchen und die Pionierrepublik,” *Neues Deutschland*, December 20, 1996.

<https://www.neues-deutschland.de/artikel/640253.mondos-ampelmaennchen-und-die-pionierrepublik.html?sstr=ampelm%E4nnchen>

many of the Ampelmann products at this time), invented the term *Ostalgie*.¹⁶² Officials, too, began to step up in defense of Ampelmann. In response to a slew of newspaper articles and cries for the return of Ampelmann, the transportation minister of Saxony-Anhalt decided to save the figure in 1997, saying that he was “very likable for many people” and stood in contrast to the “genderless” western figure.¹⁶³ For his efforts to save Ampelmann, the Save the Ampelmännchen Committee gave the minister an award. Similar initiatives spread across the east. In Weimar, for example, the decision to preserve Ampelmann was made on 27 July 1998 supported by a 2,000 Mark grant from the state Ministry of the Interior.¹⁶⁴

Perhaps more significant in the defense of Ampelmann, however, was the overwhelming popular support the figure rapidly gained following its resurrection. The public, it seemed, was drawn to Ampelmann because he was more likeable, cuter, easier to see, and more practical. As Ampelmann became the embodiment of those aspects of the GDR past worth preserving, he also served as a means through which east Germans could reimagine their former home.¹⁶⁵ Carrying the good aspects of the GDR into the present while simultaneously expressing resentment against the west, he served to recreate a sense of shared history and community amongst easterners. This identity was fostered not only by their shared, idealized past but also by communal rhythms (through both controlled traffic patterns and traffic safety education) and the hope that east Germans could contribute to the new Germany on their own terms.

¹⁶² “Kunstvolle Ostalgie,” *Berliner Kurier*, May 11, 1999. <http://www.berliner-kurier.de/archiv/kunstvolle-ostalgie,8259702,7744042.html>

¹⁶³ “Minister Heyer rettet Ampelmännchen,” *Mitteldeutsche Zeitung*, June 14, 1997.

¹⁶⁴ “Kurz Bericht,” *Mitteldeutsche Zeitung*, July 30, 1998.

¹⁶⁵ “Heimliches Wappen der DDR,” *Der Spiegel*, 06 01 1997. <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-8649686.html>

Easternness, Socialism and Ampelmann

Those characteristics of Ampelmann deemed practical and eastern formed the shape of this mould. Ampelmann embodied the message that “some eastern things are better than those in the west.”¹⁶⁶ Easterners applauded his large shape, which allowed him to give off more light and made him easily visible to pedestrians of all kinds: adults, but also children, the elderly, and the colourblind. The green man’s legs “energetically” stretched out “like an arrow” while the red man held his hands out, clearly indicating whether or not it was safe to cross.¹⁶⁷ In this way, the defenses of Ampelmann were not always emotional but also adopted the west’s own rhetoric in order to critique the capitalist order. Ampelmann’s bulbous shape, formerly criticized as being antiquated, now became a way to set him apart from the western figure, playing the westerners own ‘slimness’ and ‘athleticism’ against it. Easterners also began to adopt western economic rationale at this point. They argued that since the lights were already up, it made no sense to tear them down and that the Ampelmann lights did not cost any more to produce than those with the western figure.¹⁶⁸ Removing Ampelmann now became a sign of carelessness and inefficiency, destroying a character which was both more practical and more enjoyable than his bland western rival.

This practicality and likability were linked to the various origin stories of Ampelmann and, especially, his hat. By some accounts, the hat was introduced through the genius of his creator, Karl Peglau, who placed the hat on Ampelmann’s head in order to help him

¹⁶⁶ “Der Ampelmann soll Leben,” *Mitteldeutsche Zeitung*, May 26, 1997.

¹⁶⁷ Stefan Jacobs, “Karl Peglau Vater Ampelmann ist tot,” *Der Tagesspiegel*, December 01, 2009. <http://www.tagesspiegel.de/berlin/stadtleben/karl-peglau-vater-ampelmann-ist-tot/1641536.html>

¹⁶⁸ “Langweilige Wesen mit einem Kugelkopf,” *Mitteldeutsche Zeitung*, January 18, 1997.

give off more light and to make him more appealing to children.¹⁶⁹ Other origin stories say that the hat was jokingly added by Peglau's secretary and kept in order to introduce a bit of humour into everyday life.¹⁷⁰ Speaking of the decision years later, Peglau's wife, Hildegard Peglau, recalled her version: "Hair parted to the side? Not anti-fascist enough! Curly hair? Too southern! The solution smiled at us from state television on a summer's day: the sun was shining, it was quite hot, and Erich Honecker was wearing a straw hat."¹⁷¹ One writer commented on the practicality of this hat, saying that it: "blocks the sun in the summer and keeps his [Ampelmann's] head warm in the winter."¹⁷² Regardless of how Ampelmann's hat was introduced, these stories represent the complimentary images of the GDR being constructed through Ampelmann: a place of practicality and comforting warmth but also, more simply, a place where not everything was bad.

The connection to everyday life was also significant here. Instead of being part of the mechanism of the state or the Stasi, Ampelmann was a figure of the people, untouched by the GDR's corruption. As such, he quickly became a 'typical Ossi (Easterner)'. One article idealized Ampelmann saying that: "[...] because there was no joy in grey, socialist daily life, they [easterners] greeted the small, green Ampelmann everyday[...]" and

¹⁶⁹ "6 Bäckermännchen," *Der Tagesspiegel*, November 23, 2003. <http://www.tagesspiegel.de/wirtschaft/6-baeckermaennchen/467908.html>

¹⁷⁰ Daniel Meuren, "Ostalgie: Die rot-grüne Koalition," *Der Spiegel*, September 26, 2001. <http://www.spiegel.de/kultur/gesellschaft/ostalgie-die-rot-gruene-koalition-a-159072.html>; There are still other origin stories; another one depicted in a 2011 article in *Berliner Kurier* says that Peglau was originally torn between putting a hat on Ampelmann's head or having him wear one of several hairstyles. Even after the hat was decided upon it was criticized during the long testing process (from 1961-1969) as being 'bourgeois'. Peglau defended the hat, however, preserving it by claiming that it was not a hat of the bourgeoisie but rather a straw hat, like the one Erich Honecker wore. "Der Weltstar der aus dem Osten kam," *Berliner Kurier*, October 13, 2011. <http://www.berliner-kurier.de/leute/50-jahre-ampelmaennchen-der-weltstar--der-aus-dem-osten-kam,7169134,11000316.html>

¹⁷¹ Juliane Wienß, "Ampelmann mit Kultstatus," *Neues Deutschland*, October 13, 2011. <https://www.neues-deutschland.de/artikel/208793.ampelmann-mit-kultstatus.html?sstr=ampelm%E4nnchen>

¹⁷² Guido Korzonnek, "Eine Frage der Identität," *Berliner Zeitung* February 12, 2008. <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/archiv/eine-frage-der-identitaet,10810590,10538440.html>

because he is not gone, the easterners still greet him every day, their Ampelmann.”¹⁷³ The connection to uncorrupted everyday life in the GDR helps to explain the appeal of Ampelmann over other aspects of GDR culture; he represents a symbol of the GDR which was both untouched by the state and touched all residents equally. Ampelmann’s popularity is not surprising given his role in the GDR as an educational instrument which entered into the everyday lives of easterners through classrooms and television as examined in the previous chapter.

Efforts to save Ampelmann were not, however, uniformly successful. Indeed, the latter half of the 1990s was a mixed bag for Ampelmann. Although popular efforts had now massed in favour of the figure, supported by government officials, he was not saved just yet. In 1996, an article lamented the disappearance of Ampelmann but suggested that he would not go away: “...Ampelmann is disappearing from the streets to reappear in products such as postcards.”¹⁷⁴ This suggests that the commodification of Ampelmann may well have been the best method to preserve him, if governments continued to prove unwilling to step up. “Nothing is to come from tolerance and diversity,” asserted another writer in response to the continued replacement of Ampelmann lights when the Berlin city government chose a unified, western streetscape in 1997.¹⁷⁵ This was not to last, however, and just three days after the announcement on 19 February detailing Ampelmann’s replacement the city changed its mind. In defense of the earlier decision, transportation senator Jürgen Klemann declared that “our sources did not at first inform

¹⁷³ “Viel Lärm um nichts,” *Mitteldeutsche Zeitung*, February 2, 1997.

¹⁷⁴ Sabine Deckwerth, “Sex-Symbol und Fliegender Götterbote,” *Berliner Zeitung*, November 16, 1996. <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/archiv/ungezaehlte-fans-huldigen-dem-ost-ampelmaennchen---jetzt-hat-sich-in-der-hauptstadt-ein-komitee-gegruendet-sex-symbol-und-fliegender-goetterbote,10810590,9204428.html>

¹⁷⁵ “Guten Morgen,” *Berliner Zeitung*, February 19, 1997. <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/archiv/guten-morgen-,10810590,9242842.html>

us of the popularity of the eastern figure.”¹⁷⁶ Significant damage had already been done, however, and by the time the city chose to preserve Ampelmann, just 600 of his lights remained. Thuringia followed suit in August 1997 when the city of Erfurt, along with the majority of the state, decided to save Ampelmann.¹⁷⁷ Significant progress was made on a wider scale in the same year when the Federal Government declared that the western figure was only mandatory on federal roads; municipalities could do as they pleased.¹⁷⁸ Ampelmann’s popularity continued to surge during this time and demands for designer lamps fashioned from Ampelmann lights soared. The factory which produced the Ampelmann traffic lights (which were used in the making of the lamps), Roßberg GmbH,¹⁷⁹ was inundated with requests. Of the 5000 lights it produced in 1998, only 1000 were destined for actual traffic lights, a situation one worker described as “madness.”¹⁸⁰

Bridging Past and Present

More than just representing a physical link to the past, however, Ampelmann also grew into an ideological link with the GDR as east Germans selected ideals and temporally transposed them into the present. This involved a particular, very selective recalculation of the socialist past. Ampelmann’s ideological connection began with his transformation into a figure of socialism (as east Germans remembered it) one writer

¹⁷⁶ “Ampelmännchen hat eine Zukunft,” *Berliner Zeitung*, February 22, 1997. <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/archiv/ampelmaennchen-hat-eine-zukunft,10810590,9242866.html>

¹⁷⁷ Peter Schwarzbach, “Grünes Licht für alten Bekannten,” *Neues Deutschland*, August 28, 1997. <https://www.neues-deutschland.de/artikel/675043.gruenes-licht-fuer-alten-bekannt.html?sstr=ampelm%E4nnchen>

¹⁷⁸ “Heiteres Männchen,” *Der Spiegel*, May 12, 1997. <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-8715795.html>

¹⁷⁹ Roßberg is simply the name of the man who owns the company, GmbH stands for *Gesellschaft mit beschränkter Haftung* or Company with Limited Liability, the German equivalent of ‘Inc.’.

¹⁸⁰ Anka Seyfert, “Platz da Der Herr mit Hut kommt Groß raus,” *Berliner Kurier*, February 07, 1998. <http://www.berliner-kurier.de/archiv/platz-da--der-herr-mit-hut-kommt-gross-raus,8259702,7559874.html>

went so far as to call him a “socialist light comrade.”¹⁸¹ Ampelmann’s version of socialism was generally negatively defined as being against the genderless, faceless, capitalist image represented by the western traffic light figure. A group of Berlin theatre-goers agreed, staging a demonstration outside of a theatre in order to “act out against people who do not think about this [the replacing of eastern traffic lights],” referring to Ampelmann as representative of “class struggle.” They insisted that their figure was a “dynamic worker” in contrast to his western colleague.¹⁸²

Although Ampelmann’s socialist makeover began with the popular efforts to save him in the mid-1990s, this process rapidly gained momentum at the beginning of the new millennium. The aspects of this socialism, as east Germans perceived it, which Ampelmann came to represent were varied. The figure embodied those parts of the GDR that could evoke either joy or terror, or both. The most prominent ideal Ampelmann represented was the desire for control as well as for safety and simplicity. Ampelmann represented control in a direct way given his regulation of traffic flow, providing people with the safety introduced by organized traffic patterns.

This control, however, more than providing just physical security, also provided social security. East Germans borrowed these ideals from the collective traffic safety culture which Ampelmann helped to form in the GDR. In Berlin, for example, a writer for *Der Tagesspiegel* claimed that Ampelmann forged a sense of Berliner identity. All

¹⁸¹ Maxim Leo, “Das Ampelmännchen,” *Berliner Zeitung*, December 23, 1996. <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/archiv/das-ampelmaennchen,10810590,9219188.html>

¹⁸² Thomas Zander, “Ampelsignale,” *Berliner Zeitung* February 03, 1996. <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/archiv/ampelsignale,10810590,9077128.html>. Martin Blum’s idea that GDR products have become symbols of eastern heritage and continuing distinction because they possess a unique materiality which makes them immediately identifiable is also a potential explanation for Ampelmann’s defined ‘easterness’. Martin Blum, “Remaking the East German Past: *Ostalgie*, Identity, and Material Culture,” *Journal of Popular Culture* 34 (Winter 2000). Academic Search Premier, EBSCOhost (accessed September 15, 2012).

people, regardless of race, class or status must wait for the red man, providing a sense of order in the craziness of the new world of busy supermarkets, banks, and capitalism.¹⁸³

Ampelmann also “taught this to new Berliners who stubbornly disobey the red man and run into the street while more seasoned, wiser Berliners wait.”¹⁸⁴ A journalist from London had such an experience, noting:

I started to ignore them [the traffic lights] a bit and with my impatient London pedestrian skills, began hopping across the street if there was no traffic coming even when the man was red. It’s got me into hot water, though.

I had a fiery telling off from a middle-aged woman outside Kino International a few weeks back. I shrugged, pretended I couldn’t understand and secretly felt it was quite a good thing to break that rule. Berlin, it seems so relaxed and then you hit a huge knot of uptightness.¹⁸⁵

Ampelmann also preserved collectivist ideals from the GDR. In response to the commercialization of the figure, one author argued that Ampelmann ought not to belong to anyone “but rather to the East German people as a whole...he [Ampelmann] should not be a commodity but something owned by the eastern community.”¹⁸⁶ In this way, Ampelmann also served as a means through which selected aspects of the GDR were recreated in order to form a distinctive eastern community. In the absence of the GDR, the ideals transposed through Ampelmann helped easterners to cope with the loss of their former ways of life and the strong sense of community they felt during the GDR period, reviving a sense of collective responsibility born in their former state.

¹⁸³ Wolfgang Proisinger, “Was machen wir heute? Warten, lernen,” *Der Tagesspiegel*, February 21, 2001. <http://www.tagesspiegel.de/kultur/was-machen-wir-heute-warten-lernen/205070.html>

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Mark Espiner, “The Ampelmännchen’s protection is dangerous,” *Der Tagesspiegel*, May 17, 2010. <http://www.tagesspiegel.de/weltspiegel/in-english/espiners-berlin-the-ampelmaennchens-protection-is-dangerous/1840620.html>

¹⁸⁶ Mathias Wendel, “Ampelmännchen – Die Haut zu Markte,” June 09, 2005. <https://www.neues-deutschland.de/artikel/73057.ampelmaennchen-die-haut-zu-markte.html?sstr=ampelm%E4nnchen>

Re-establishing a sense of collective responsibility went hand in hand with the desire to reintroduce Ampelmann as a tool for traffic safety education. High accident rates and the desire for a return to the safety and security of the GDR fueled this. The director of Ampelmann's television show in the GDR described this sentiment, writing in 1997, that:

It's too bad that the two traffic figures no longer play a role as living figures...the figures from the traffic lights are excellently suited to teaching pre-school children about traffic safety. This is more important than ever. A look at the accident rates reveals this: In the Federal Republic approximately 400 children die due to traffic accidents every year.¹⁸⁷

In this way, East Germans began the transposition of their Ampel-ideals through their figure by looking back to the role Ampelmann played in the GDR and wishing for its return.

Easterners brought these dreams into action as Ampelmann emerged once again as a tool for traffic safety education. Reviving the relationship between Ampelmann and the police, Hans Grothe, a 'singing policeman' who instructed school children on traffic safety, used Ampelmann puppets (named "stop" and "go") as he sang songs and quizzed children about traffic safety in 1997 in Wittenberg.¹⁸⁸ Dessau police also reinforced the connection between Ampelmann and education, offering Ampelmann face painting during an event at a local school.¹⁸⁹ The Berlin city government participated as well, engaging in a campaign where local street cleaners distributed 12,000 orange Ampelmann-shaped reflectors to children across the city under the slogan, "We kehr for kids" (kehr here is a play on words, sounding like the English word "care." In German,

¹⁸⁷ Heckhausen, *Das Buch*, 30.

¹⁸⁸ "Hans sang von Gurt," *Mitteldeutsche Zeitung*, September 20, 1997.

¹⁸⁹ "Quiz, schminken und basteln," *Mitteldeutsche Zeitung*, September 13, 1997.

Verkehr means traffic or transportation).¹⁹⁰ The long wait in between the red and green Ampelmännchen was also an area of concern, with one school official in Berlin saying about the lights that: “There is a school close by. We don’t want the kids to expect a long wait,” thus highlighting the revived link between the traffic light figure and safety concerns.¹⁹¹ By reinstating their traffic safety rituals, easterners recreated the link between Ampelmann and childhood born in the GDR.

Indeed, this link to childhood was one of the key aspects of memory embodied in Ampelmann, forging a base upon which Ampelmann’s popularity could build; a GDR-centred community could be formed, and a new generation of easterners could be brought into it. Easterners attempted to pass on knowledge of the GDR, often very selectively, to future generations. A survey of 18-year-olds from Berlin in 2008 revealed that although they only covered the GDR briefly in class and that their parents had told them only a bit about it, they were able to identify Ampelmann as “one of the good things from the GDR.”¹⁹² One 10th Grade youth from Berlin repeated this, proposing a concrete plinth with the eastern and western traffic light figures on top when given an assignment to design a monument for German unity.¹⁹³ Children and the elderly also supported

¹⁹⁰ “BSR lässt Kinder „leuchten“,” *Neues Deutschland*, November 19, 1999. <http://www.neues-deutschland.de/artikel/790106.bsr-laesst-kinder-leuchten.html?sstr=ampelm%E4nnchen>. “Reflektoren lassen die Kids leuchten,” *Berliner Kurier*, November 19, 1999. <http://www.berliner-kurier.de/archiv/reflektoren-lassen-die-kids-leuchten,8259702,7840882.html>

¹⁹¹ Susanne Kröck, “Ampelmann, warum bist du so launisch?,” *Berliner Kurier*, 2007 08 03. <http://www.berliner-kurier.de/archiv/der-kurier-fand-raus--wo-er-troedelt--und-wo-er-schnell-die-farbe-wechselt-ampelmann--warum-bist-du-so-launisch-,8259702,3979268.html>

¹⁹² “Achtzehn 18-Jährige sprechen im KURIER über ihr DDR-Wissen und die Einheit,” October 03, 2008. <http://www.berliner-kurier.de/archiv/achtzehn-18-jaehrige-sprechen-im-kurier-ueber-ihr-ddr-wissen-und-die-einheit,8259702,3920980.html>

¹⁹³ Lothar Heinke, “Deutschland – ein Ampelmärchen,” *Der Tagesspiegel*, December 18, 2007. <http://www.tagesspiegel.de/berlin/schule/ein-denkmal-fuer-die-einheit-deutschland-ein-ampelmaerchen/1123390.html>

Ampelmann, aiding in his preservation.¹⁹⁴ A sporting program aimed at supporting disadvantaged children further reinforced this link by putting Ampelmann on their soccer uniforms.¹⁹⁵ The GDR which passed on through this memory was thus not just one of safety but also simplicity and childhood innocence.

Karl Peglau, the man who invented Ampelmann in 1961, embodied this innocence. From the time of Ampelmann's revival until the inventor's death in 2009, Peglau was frequently mentioned across the country, attaining fame as a result of his compassionate and warm-hearted image. Drawing a connection between Peglau and average easterners, one author mentioned the former's brilliance before stating that "after unification he [Peglau] became unemployed."¹⁹⁶ Peglau, like all easterners, suffered from the ills of capitalism in the Berlin Republic.

Reporters frequently sought out the East German inventor to comment on the birth and post-Wall popularity of his traffic light figure, reinforcing his altruistic persona. Peglau's wife perpetuated this narrative: "My Husband was certain that pedestrians would only follow a traffic symbol that they liked and understood." Peglau wanted Ampelmann to "be person-like and give off a strong signal" in order to help pedestrians cross safely.¹⁹⁷ "Peglau even named his figures!" one publication explained, "The red one he called Stoppi while the green one was Galoppo." This augmented both the "cute" and

¹⁹⁴ "Ost-Ampelmännchen wird bleiben," *Neues Deutschland*, February 24, 1997. <http://www.neues-deutschland.de/artikel/648748.ost-ampelmaennchen-wird-bleiben.html?sstr=ampelm%E4nnchen>

¹⁹⁵ Volker Stahl, "Charity-Kick für Problemkinder," *Neues Deutschland*, September 24, 2005. <https://www.neues-deutschland.de/artikel/78473.charity-kick-fuer-problemkinder.html?sstr=ampelm%E4nnchen>

¹⁹⁶ Stefan Strauss, "Der Erinders des Ampelmännchens," December 01, 2009. <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/archiv/karl-peglau-starb-mit-82-jahren-in-berlin-der-erfinder-des-ampelmaennchens-ist-tot,10810590,10683450.html>

¹⁹⁷ Juliane Wienß, "Ampelmann mit Kultstatus," *Neues Deutschland*, October 13, 2011. <https://www.neues-deutschland.de/artikel/208793.ampelmann-mit-kultstatus.html?sstr=ampelm%E4nnchen>

“human” image of Peglau’s creation and his own sympathetic nature.¹⁹⁸ Going to the source, *Berliner Zeitung* turned to Peglau in 2007, asking him to explain the unexpected success of Ampelmann:

Peglau gives three reasons for the Ampelmann cult: the first is that the figure emits a warm glow, which people feel attracted to. The second is the attempts to remove the figure from the streets. The third is the successful marketing of Ampelmann in the capitalist system.¹⁹⁹

In this way, Karl Peglau was a significant source for the Ampel-curious, reinforcing his status as a caring, compassionate and insightful easterner who was quite aware of and actively involved in the post-Wall career of his beloved Ampelmann.

While most articles went out of their way to draw attention to Peglau’s dual status as an Engineer and Transportation Psychologist, they also drew attention to Peglau as ‘Vater Ampelmann’, Father Ampelmann, who diligently watched over his ‘son’.²⁰⁰ In a court case over who would have the rights to market Ampelmann (which will be explored in more detail in the following chapter), Peglau was expressed contempt for one claimant, Joachim Roßberg, who marketed Ampelmann-branded liquor. Peglau was vehement in his insistence that the good, likable Ampelmann, representing traffic safety, should not be mixed with alcohol.²⁰¹ He continued, saying after the case was settled that he hoped

¹⁹⁸ Eva Dorothee Schmid, “Aus die Ampel in der Welt,” *Berliner Zeitung*, October 12, 2011. <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/panorama/jubilaem-aus-der-ampel-in-die-welt,10808334,11001480.html>

¹⁹⁹ Silke Stuck, “Eine unpolitische Figur der Strasse,” *Berliner Zeitung*, September 11, 2007. <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/archiv/die-ampelmaennchen-feiern-ihren-vierzigsten-geburtstag--ihr-erfinder-glaubt-nach-wie-vor-an-sie--eine-unpolitische-figur-der-strasse-,10810590,9934682.html>

²⁰⁰ Stefan Jacobs, “Karl Peglau Vater Ampelmann ist tot,” *Der Tagesspiegel*, December 01, 2009. <http://www.tagesspiegel.de/berlin/stadtleben/karl-peglau-vater-ampelmann-ist-tot/1641536.html>

²⁰¹ In spite of this belief on Peglau’s part and its use in Heckhausen’s defense, several Ampelmann branded liquors have been marketed since the fall of the Wall. These include the vodka and schnapps already mentioned but also a non-alcoholic beer sold by a Berlin brewery in 2010, and liquor sold in a festival at Alexanderplatz in 1997 by Bockauer Liköre. Ampelmann beer, sometimes packaged with a bottle opener, is also available for sale in Ampelmann stores. Heckhausen commented on this in 2009, writing on the Ampelmann website, [Ampelmann.de](http://www.ampelmann.de), that: “Although Ampelmann and alcohol will not be a pair forever, we have made an exception.” As of July 2013, the beer is still available for purchase in Ampelmann stores.

Ampelmann could return to his “peaceful ambassadorship.”²⁰² In the period before his death, Peglau began to develop even grander plans for his creation, designing “Ampelland” – a “mini-Disneyland with restaurants, play areas and traffic safety education for children.”²⁰³ At the same time, he proposed the creation of an Ampelmann foundation which would fund traffic safety education for children across the country.

Peglau’s image became even more idealized after his death in 2009. Articles describing his life highlighted not only his genius and altruism in bringing Ampelmann into the world, but also talked about his humility and dedication. One article stated that Peglau frequently visited the Ampelmann souvenir stores run by Markus Heckhausen, consulting on new products but also keeping a list of all the employees who worked there, so that he could remember their names.²⁰⁴ Speaking to this, Heckhausen said that “it was very important for him [Peglau] to have something to work on.”²⁰⁵ Indeed, the relationship between the creator of Ampelmann and the shop owner was quite close, as Peglau became a “father figure” to Heckhausen’s children, often bringing them “pastry or

Quote: Ampelmann GmbH, *Nur für kurze Zeit: Ampelmann-Bier*, 2009 07 01, online: <http://ampelmann.de/html/pressemit.php>. Andreas Heinz, “Hanoi-Bier auf der Karl Marx Allee,” *Neues Deutschland*, August 06, 2010. <http://www.neues-deutschland.de/artikel/176886.hanoi-bier-auf-der-karl-marx-allee.html>; “von Acryl Wanne aus Brandenburg,” *Berliner Zeitung*, November 28, 1997. <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/archiv/von-acryl-wanne-aus-brandenburg-bis-dresdner-stollen---heute-oeffnet-die-weihnachts-ostpro-am-alexanderplatz,10810590,9368616.html>

²⁰² Sebastian Leber, “Grüne Welle,” *Der Tagesspiegel*, June 17, 2006.

<http://www.tagesspiegel.de/weltspiegel/gruene-welle/721520.html>

²⁰³ Norbert Koch-Klaucke, “Das Vermächtnis des Ampelmann-Papas,” *Berliner Kurier*, December 03, 2009. <http://www.berliner-kurier.de/archiv/karl-peglau-wollte-ein-ampel-land-bauen-das-vermaechtnis-des-ampelmann-papas,8259702,3866982.html>

²⁰⁴ Stefan Jacobs, “Karl Peglau Vater Ampelmann ist tot,” *Der Tagesspiegel*, December 01, 2009.

<http://www.tagesspiegel.de/berlin/stadtleben/karl-peglau-vater-ampelmann-ist-tot/1641536.html>

²⁰⁵ Eva Dorothee Schmid, “Aus der Ampel in die Welt,” *Berliner Zeitung*, October 12, 2011.

<http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/panorama/jubilaum-aus-der-ampel-in-die-welt,10808334,11001480.html>

fruit” on his visits, thus earning him the affectionate nickname “Ampelmann-Opa [Ampel-Grampy].”²⁰⁶

In addition to his, warm, kind-hearted public image, the media also portrayed Peglau as intelligent and forward-thinking. One article went so far as to compare him to Sigmund Jähn, the first German in space (from the GDR), saying that these two “represent a part of the GDR past which can be seen as progressive, modern, new and good.”²⁰⁷ Peglau was also a very relatable figure. Another reporter discussed Peglau’s reasons for creating Ampelmann, quoting the engineer as saying that in the GDR “there were not specific pedestrian traffic lights. The people were guided by the signals for cars and that was what brought them into danger.”²⁰⁸ More than being just caring and compassionate, Peglau was also seen as clever and intuitive.

Both Ampelmann and his creator came to represent the innocence, simplicity, and goodness lost since the end of the GDR. In response to the ‘craziness’ and alienation which capitalism brought, easterners began to imagine an idealized, simple, safe and innocent past, reflected in Ampelmann and Peglau. Part of this was an effort to preserve the childhood many remembered from the GDR through the conservation of Ampelmann and his role in traffic safety education. This also represented a desire to pass on this childhood experience, and the lessons learned from it, to the next generation.

²⁰⁶ Eva Dorothee Schmid, “Aus der Ampel in die Welt, *Berliner Zeitung*, October 12, 2011. <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/panorama/jubilaem-aus-der-ampel-in-die-welt,10808334,11001480.html>

²⁰⁷ David Ensikat, “Der halbierte Held,” *Der Tagesspiegel*, August 26, 2008. <http://www.tagesspiegel.de/zeitung/der-halbierte-held/1309870.html>

²⁰⁸ Daniel Meuren, “Ostalgie die rot grüne Koalition,” *Der Spiegel*, September 26, 2001. <http://www.spiegel.de/kultur/gesellschaft/ostalgie-die-rot-gruene-koalition-a-159072.html>

The image of Karl Peglau as Father Ampelmann does, however, have one key problem. If Ampelmann has a father, then surely he must have a mother as well. Indeed, Ampelmann does have a mother but Anneliese Wegner, Peglau's secretary often credited with Ampelmann's hat, is almost entirely absent from this discussion.²⁰⁹ She did, however, play a key role in the creation of Ampelmann and his subsequent popularity, sketching the original Ampelmann design (which had fingers!) according to Peglau's instructions, and helping to write *The Book of Ampelmann (Das Buch vom Ampelmännchen)*.²¹⁰ One of Wegner's rare mentions does, however, give her proper credit, saying that Peglau "was helped in the creation of Ampelmann by his graphically talented secretary Anneliese Wegner."²¹¹ In another, Peglau says that "she was a gifted illustrator who drew the hat [on Ampelmann] as a gag."²¹² Nor is this the only case of forgotten women in the Ampelmann story. Indeed, one of the most frequent questions posed to Peglau in 2001 was why there was no female Ampelmann. Peglau responded, saying that "I hadn't thought of it," quickly pointing out, however, "this is not a rejection of women – I love women."²¹³

As it turns out though, there is a female variant of Ampelmann. Created by graphic designer Hans-Jürgen Ellenberger in 1995, Ampelfrau quickly became a symbol of the aspects of gender equality lost with the collapse of the GDR.²¹⁴ This figure was first

²⁰⁹ "Die Vergessene Mutti des Ampelmännchens," *Berliner Kurier*, October 23, 2011. <http://www.berliner-kurier.de/kiez-stadt/anneliese-wegner-die-vergessene-mutti-des-ampelmaennchens,7169128,11049128.html>

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Stefan Strauss, "Der Erfinder des Ampelmännchens ist tot," *Berliner Zeitung*, December 01, 2009. <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/archiv/karl-peglau-starb-mit-82-jahren-in-berlin-der-erfinder-des-ampelmaennchens-ist-tot,10810590,10683450.html>

²¹² Claudia Wittke-Gaida, "Geliebte Männchen," *Berliner Kurier*, October 07 2001. <http://www.berliner-kurier.de/archiv/geliebte-maennchen,8259702,8138392.html>

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Frau, in German, means woman. Thus Ampelfrau is 'traffic light woman'

introduced as a traffic light in the city of Zwickau in Saxony in 2004, throughout Saxony in 2005 and in Brandenburg in 2012.²¹⁵ Easterners applauded the introduction of this figure, pointing out that her larger silhouette allowed her to give off even more light than Ampelmann.²¹⁶ “A new traffic light has been installed in Zwickau,” one paper declared on the introduction of Germany’s first Ampelfrau light, “but not the manly one who has become famous across the country.”²¹⁷ The practicality of the figure, much like that of Ampelmann, was the chief reason for her debut. Zwickau’s press officer anticipated Ampelfrau’s pragmatism, saying that “we will watch how the light is received for a quarter of a year” before regretting that “the economic situation would not allow us to replace all the lights.” Instead, only broken lights, once replaced, were to have the new symbol. Ampelfrau’s gender came as a secondary concern as the speaker continued: “if the female light receives even more attention that can only be a good thing.”²¹⁸ On the same occasion another paper reflected similar values, saying: “the East German Ampelmann doesn’t have to regulate the streets alone anymore; the Zwickauers have given him an Ampelfrau!”²¹⁹ Concerns over equality came to the fore upon the introduction of Ampelfrau in the Brandenburg town of Fürstenwalde, a place which was intended to serve as a model community for gender equality.²²⁰ The equality officer for

²¹⁵ Jörg Schreiber, “Ampelmännchen bekommt weibliche Verstärkung,” *Der Tagesspiegel*, March 06, 2012. <http://www.tagesspiegel.de/berlin/brandenburg/premiere-in-brandenburg-ampelmaennchen-bekommt-weibliche-verstaerkung/6293690.html>

²¹⁶ “Ampelmann: Seit 50 Jahren macht er seinen Job,” *Berliner Kurier*, April 03 2011. <http://www.berliner-kurier.de/archiv/ampelmann--seit-50-jahren-macht-er-seinen-job,8259702,8312724.html>

²¹⁷ Cornelia Geißler, “Gleichberechtigung auf den Straßen,” *Berliner Zeitung*, November 25, 2004. <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/archiv/das-erste-ampelmaedchen-gleichberechtigung-auf-den-strassen,10810590,10234526.html>

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ “Zöpfe statt Hut Grünes Licht für Ampelfrau,” *Der Spiegel*, November 23, 2004. <http://www.spiegel.de/auto/aktuell/zoepfe-statt-hut-gruenes-licht-fuer-ampelfrau-a-329328.html>

²²⁰ “Erste Brandenburger Ampelfrau in Fürstenwalde,” *Berliner Zeitung*, March 02, 2012. <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/brandenburg/gleichberechtigung-erste-brandenburger-ampelfrau-in-fuerstenwalde,10809312,11750072.html>

this town, Anne-Gret Trilling, proudly proclaimed that many schoolchildren walked by the first Ampelfrau light in the state. She claimed that now the students “will be able to see equality in action.”²²¹ Pragmatic considerations were also used to defend the female figure, as Trilling pointed out that the cost of Ampelfrau lights was the same as Ampelmann ones and that Ampelfrau had: “In relation to Ampelmann a larger light surface due to her skirt and pigtails.”²²²

The ideal of gender equality as embodied in Ampelfrau also proved exceedingly popular. In response to the spread of Ampelfrau in 2004, one Berlin state senator summarized this ideal, saying that “Ampelfrau is a great idea. Go, stay, go, stay, why should only men have a say?”²²³ A member of the post-socialist Linke Party agreed with this, arguing that: “Our conception of gender roles and what is typically male or female is strongly reinforced through public images,” thus expressing his belief that Ampelfrau would progress women’s status. *Berliner Kurier*, a Berlin periodical, was so elated with the introduction of Ampelfrau into the city that the paper even gave out Ampelfrau T-Shirts to the first people to visit its office.²²⁴

Although she was not popularized (or even created) until well after her male equivalent, Ampelfrau stood for an aspect of the GDR which many people missed. In the GDR, women’s employment was 78.1%. Single motherhood was also widely accepted

²²¹ Jörg Schreiber, “Ampelmännchen bekommt weibliche Verstärkung,” *Der Tagesspiegel*, March 06, 2012. <http://www.tagesspiegel.de/berlin/brandenburg/premiere-in-brandenburg-ampelmaennchen-bekommt-weibliche-verstaerkung/6293690.html>

²²² Andreas Fritsche, “Signal mit Zöpfen,” *Neues Deutschland*, March 08, 2012. <http://www.neues-deutschland.de/artikel/220653.signal-mit-zoepfen.html?sstr=ampelm%E4nnchen>

²²³ “Hallo Ampelweibchen,” *Berliner Kurier*, November 25, 2004. <http://www.berliner-kurier.de/archiv/neu-in-sachsen-schon-im-test--und-berlins-behoerden-sind-auch-interessiert-hallo-ampelweibchen-,8259702,4124998.html>.

²²⁴ “Her mit den lustigen Ampelfrauen,” *Berliner Kurier*, November 27, 2004. <http://www.berliner-kurier.de/archiv/endlich-in-berlin-der-kurier-macht-s-moeglich-her-mit-den-lustigen-ampelfrauen,8259702,4124660.html>

and motherhood in general was supported by child care services.²²⁵ Ampelfrau appeared here as a woman in the working world, infused with GDR ideals, earning her place amongst men on her own terms, supported and encouraged by state policies.

Within the larger spectrum of gender critique, however, Ampelfrau appears problematic. First, this critique is based on a comparison between the ‘male’ Ampelmann figure and the “genderless” western figure. Second, Ampelfrau has also been criticized as representing more repressive gender roles than those insisting on her as an agent of equality suggest. These critiques point out that although Ampelfrau is called a woman, she resembles a girl and that her pigtails and long skirt point to more traditional gender roles.²²⁶ One paper joked about her name (although it was clearly well aware of the common name Ampelfrau): “If it’s called Ampelmännchen, then should we call it Ampelweibchen (literally Ampelfemale)? Ampelfrauchen (Ampelwoman)? Ampelmädchen (Ampelgirl)?” The diminutive ‘chen’ here can also be read as derogatory.²²⁷ Another publication stated this more bluntly, declaring that Ampelfrau has “nothing to do with the theme of equality.”²²⁸ The public image of Ampelmann and Ampelfrau shows this as well, with Ampelmann giving his name to the chain of stores as well as being featured more prominently in advertising. Karl Peglau himself drew a peculiar distinction between the roles of the two figures, saying that: “I am of the opinion

²²⁵ Kolinsky and Nickel, *Reinventing Gender*, 8.

²²⁶ Ariane Lemme, “Abgeordnete finden Ampelfrau sexistisch,” *Der Tagesspiegel*, March 09, 2012. <http://www.tagesspiegel.de/berlin/brandenburg/brandenburg-abgeordnete-finden-ampelfrau-sexistisch/6308540.html>

²²⁷ Jan Thomsen, “Weibliche Männchen,” *Berliner Zeitung*, September 06, 2008. <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/archiv/weibliche-maennchen,10810590,10584672.html>. The suffix ‘chen’ can also be read as derogatory. It is most commonly translated into English as ‘dear’ or ‘little’ and can be used either patronizingly or endearingly (as it is used with Ampelmännchen).

²²⁸ “Ampelfrauen regeln Verkehr in Hamm,” *Hessen Niedersächsische Allgemeine*, July 15, 2011. <http://www.hna.de/nachrichten/panorama/ampelfrauen-regeln-verkehr-hamm-1324200.html>

that traffic markings should stay uniform. An Ampelfrau on products does not mean that she should also be in transportation.²²⁹ In this way, Peglau did, apparently, think about women and traffic lights together, although the lines that he drew between market success and practical applicability remained quite gendered. As such, the gendered aspect of Ampelmann is problematic. On one hand, it praises the gendered aspects of Ampelmann and Ampelfrau, suggesting that these stand against both ‘genderless’ capitalism and unequal gender roles. On the other, these figures can be seen to represent gender roles which are both traditional and unequal.

This gap may seem irreconcilable. Ampelfrau, cannot, it seems, be both a figure of hard working equality and feminine domesticity. Not by western logic at least. But Ampelfrau is not a western figure; rather the ideals she represents come from the GDR. In this understanding, Ampelfrau fits into the dual image of women propagated in the GDR. This image told women to be both workers and mothers, insisting that work was part of female liberation and equality but that they still had an integral reproductive role.²³⁰ To support this, the state supplied women with the health care and child services necessary to balance these two roles. The inequalities and unfairness of this double burden become clear when compared to the male role, which was to work but not much else. Indeed, the East German state never specifically defined the role of men in East German families.²³¹ Ampelmann, as it turns out, reflects parts of this role through the vagueness of his ‘masculinity’. Indeed, this is never defined except in contrast to the ‘genderless’ western figure. Ampelmann’s relation to gender replicates, whether

²²⁹ Jakob Schlandt, “Siegeszug des Ampelmännchens,” *Berliner Zeitung*, December 21, 2006. <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/archiv/gute-geschaefte-und-grosse-plaene-mit-dem-ostsymbol-siegeszug-des-ampelmaennchens,10810590,10443248.html>

²³⁰ Mary Fulbrook, *The People’s States*, 142.

²³¹ Kolinsky and Nickel, *Reinventing Gender*, 5.

consciously or not, GDR-era patterns of thought. Just as notions of childhood embodied in Ampelmann help to forge a sense of eastern community imbued with GDR values, so too does the gendered nature of Ampelmann and Ampelfrau. Ampelmann and Ampelfrau's gender roles are also used to suggest GDR ideals which can benefit modern society: greater gender equality and equality of opportunity for women. These idealized gender roles depart, however, from notions of childhood in that they are heavily centred in the ambiguous, vaguely defined, and frequently unequal gender roles prevalent in the GDR.

Conclusion: Ampelmann, Eingaben and Politics

As is natural across any diverse, widely spread community and as is indicated by the individuals critiquing the gendered nature of Ampelfrau, Ampelmann is not a universally or uniformly accepted centre of GDR memory. Indeed, as this paper has already stressed in the introduction, Ampelmann is often seen as a symbol of everything wrong with the memory of the GDR. Barbara Thalheim, a singer from the GDR, summarized this view, saying that there were many GDRs. On one extreme is the GDR of the Stasi, on the other is one with "jumping Ampelmanns who guide old men with hats across the street."²³² For her, the GDR lays somewhere in-between; she has good memories, certainly, but she also had encounters with the Stasi and their *Inofficial Mitarbeiter* (Unofficial Collaborators, or IMs).²³³ The director of the Stasi archives even warned against the danger of Ampelmann, suggesting that it causes people to focus too narrowly on the GDR while

²³² Bodo Mrozek, "Ich will eine Insel sein," *Der Tagesspiegel*, September 10, 2004.
<http://www.tagesspiegel.de/kultur/ich-will-eine-insel-sein/546044.html>

²³³ Ibid. IMs were critical to the operation of the Stasi, they were ordinary members of the population recruited to report suspicious activities. In this way, the Stasi was able to appear omnipresent without actually having to have agents around every corner.

ignoring the repressive nature of the state.²³⁴ Ampelmann is thus not a universal symbol for the good aspects of the GDR.

This is a valuable point; there are, of course, several aspects of the GDR which Ampelmann does not deal with or discuss. An Ampelmann T-shirt, now a rather mundane article of clothing, for example, would have been, in the words of one attendee of a conference dedicated to the legacy of the GDR, an “unthinkable” item of clothing for a youth to wear in the GDR, given its connection to the state.²³⁵ Whether an Ampelmann or Erich Honecker T-shirt, said one interviewee in a 2011 poll: “even playful contact with GDR history is very difficult for the victims of the SED regime.”²³⁶ It is important not to stretch this line of reasoning too far, however. There is, of course, plenty of room for pluralities across the landscape of German memory. Although Ampelmann provides a divergent memory from, for example, that of the dictatorship narrative, the existence of one does not preclude the other.

²³⁴ “Die DDR wird zum Disneyland,” *Der Tagesspiegel*, August 01, 2004.

<http://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/die-ddr-wird-zum-disneyland/535896.html>

²³⁵ Cornelia Geissler, “Die noch den Mangel kennen,” *Berliner Zeitung*, December 06, 1997.

<http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/archiv/gartenhaus-gespraech-ueber-die-guten-menschen-aus-der-alten-ddr-die-noch-den-mangel-kennen,10810590,9371886.html>

²³⁶ “Nudossi und Co Ostprodukte,” *Frankfurter Rundschau*, May 11, 2011. <http://www.fr-online.de/verbraucher/nudossi-und-co---ostprodukte-im-trend,1473052,8439104.html>. This is just a small sampling of sources suggesting that Ampelmann is a problematic bearer of eastern memory. Another such case occurred in 2013 when the Junge Union (Youth Union) instituted a ban on shirts bearing symbols of the GDR, many speculated that Ampelmann would be included because “we cannot simply allow for the downplaying of the unjust state of the GDR.” Markus Decker, “Junge Union will DDR symbole verbieten,” May 24, 2013. <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/politik/ddr-symbole-junge-union-will-ddr-symbole-verbieten,10808018,22844074.html>. An East German author, on a similar note, criticized a ZDF (a German news station) special on the GDR, declaring that “ZDF says that the GDR has become a cabinet of curiosities...but the GDR was a dictatorship.” “Fetisch DDR,” *Der Spiegel*, August 25, 2003. <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/a-262642.html>

Indeed, Ampelmann serves as a modern form of the *Eingaben* which were a crucial aspect of the GDR's "participatory dictatorship."²³⁷ In the GDR, *Eingaben* (a word without a direct English equivalent; it is usually translated as "petition" although this is not quite accurate as *Eingaben* do not necessarily involve multiple signatories) functioned as a line of communication between the state and society. *Eingaben* themselves were sort of 'customer complaints' pointing out flaws within the socialist system and suggesting improvements which could be made. These suggestions could include anything from complaining about the quality of toasters and clothing to requesting road work.²³⁸ Ampelmann functions in a similar manner; he represents a critique of western society while not aiming to undermine it. Instead, Ampelmann is used as an *Eingabe* from many easterners written to the modern German state. Ampelmann thus serves as a way for easterners to express their dislike of the disorderly, alienating, 'genderless', often exploitative nature of western society, suggesting an alternative informed by GDR-centred values, patterns of thought and ideals. Furthermore, Ampelmann helps to strengthen communal ties amongst easterners; he gives them a way to define and understand the significance of their past and he offers a means through which this significance can make a contribution to the modern German state.

As a result, Ampelmann has become a political figure. This reality stands in contrast to his image as presented by Karl Peglau and others. In response to the question, "Did you think Ampelmann would get so old, even surviving the state for which he was made?" Peglau responded: "Absolutely: Ampelmann is a non-political figure of the

²³⁷ This is a term coined by Mary Fulbrook in her book *The People's State*. She uses this term to describe the high level of involvement which East Germans had in the state. This included both the numerous functionaries of the state in lower positions as well as the general population through their usage of *Eingaben*. Fulbrook, *The People's State*, 271.

²³⁸ Fulbrook, *The People's State*, 274.

streets.”²³⁹ An East German author agreed with this sentiment, dismissing *Ostalgie* and Ampelmann in his work and saying that he “instead wishes to focus on politics.”²⁴⁰ But Ampelmann is political. A group of Prenzlauer Berg residents, for example, used Ampelmann in order to protest restaurants whose tables were cluttering up sidewalks. To do this, these residents painted green Ampelmänner on sidewalks used by the violators, sending a message that this ought to be a clear, public place.²⁴¹ A group of protesting workers in Schwerin used similar symbolism during their attempt to obtain pay equal to that of their western counterparts. To this end, a combination of police officers and workers from the Education and Science Union held signs with Ampelmann demanding that they “keep pace with” other workers.²⁴² In these ways, the socialist values which easterners see in Ampelmann are occasionally mobilized more directly. By defending public space from private intrusion and searching for wage equality, easterners are not just imagining their ideals in their traffic light figure but making real attempts to achieve them.

Oftentimes, however, politicians use Ampelmann as merely another empty gesture for political gain. One article questioned Senator Jürgen Klemann’s motives in preserving Ampelmann on Berlin streets in 1997, speculating: “perhaps he is an opponent of euro-

²³⁹ Silke Stuck, “Eine unpolitische Figur der Strasse,” *Berliner Zeitung*, September 11, 2007. <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/archiv/die-ampelmaennchen-feiern-ihren-vierzigsten-geburtstag--ihr-erfinder-glaubt-nach-wie-vor-an-sie--eine-unpolitische-figur-der-strasse-,10810590,9934682.html>

²⁴⁰ Andreas Fritsche, “Die SED hatte manchmal Recht,” *Neues Deutschland*, July 17, 2009. <http://www.neues-deutschland.de/artikel/152393.die-sed-hatte-manchmal-recht.html?sstr=ampelm%E4nnchen>

²⁴¹ Ampelmänner is one of the ways in which Ampelmann or Ampelmännchen can be pluralised. (Ampelmännchen itself can also refer to more than one Ampelmann). Stefan Strauß, “Ampelmännchen gegen volle Wege,” July 16, 2004. <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/archiv/ampelmaennchen-gegen-volle-wege,10810590,10194790.html>

²⁴² Wolfgang Rex, “Im Osten will sich keiner auf Dauer abhängig lassen,” *Neues Deutschland*, December 14, 2002. <https://www.neues-deutschland.de/artikel/28044.im-osten-will-sich-keiner-auf-dauer-abhaengen-lassen.html?sstr=ampelm%E4nnchen>

centrism or perhaps he was concerned about votes in the east.”²⁴³ Less ambiguously, Ampelmann was used by the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS, the successor to the East German SED) in a 1998 Bundestag election campaign which pitted them against the Social Democratic Party (SPD).²⁴⁴ The PDS used Ampelmann-adorned T-Shirts and badges in an attempt to overcome a 5% gap in electoral polls by encouraging contributions.

Outside of electoral struggles, Ampelmann’s image has become a symbol commonly evoked throughout the political system. One Berlin senator, for example, was seen wearing a green Ampelmann on his lapel; a member of the Brandenburg SPD hung an Ampelmann poster in his office, in order to show his mastery of East German things. Ampelmann ties, Christmas lights, wrapping paper, and shirts have also made appearances in the halls of German political power. These gestures seem to have little meaning beyond a recognition that Ampelmann comes from East Germany, is popular and safely ambiguous. Indeed, Ampelmann has become such a well-recognized figure in German politics that his absence (in favour of pictures of Willy Brandt and Helmut Schmidt) from the office of Chancellor Angela Merkel was noted by *Berliner Zeitung*. *Neues Deutschland* summed up the politicization of Ampelmann most succinctly, saying of the figure’s use by a right-wing party in an electoral campaign that “there is only badness in this, we have a name for this type of people today; copycats.”²⁴⁵

²⁴³ “Guten Morgen,” *Berliner Zeitung*, February 22, 1997. <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/archiv/guten-morgen-,10810590,9242842.html>

²⁴⁴ “Kurz Berichtet,” *Mitteldeutsche Zeitung*, July 16, 1998.

²⁴⁵ Karin Nölte, “Trittbrettfahrer,” *Neues Deutschland*, October 16, 2001. <https://www.neues-deutschland.de/artikel/6541.trittbrettfahrer.html?sstr=ampelm%E4nnchen>

The growing popularity of Ampelmann beginning around 1996 has revolved around the absence of the GDR and the desire to preserve the ideals, community, and identity of those with this shared past. Creating a usable East German past has involved careful selection as those ideals which are seen as absent in, but valuable to, contemporary Germany are remembered and, to some degree, resurrected. East German memorialization through Ampelmann expanded with the beginning of the new millennium as the distance from the GDR became greater, and thus more pressing, and as the image of the formerly idealized west began to conform more to reality. Ampelmann has come to represent the socialism, control, order, simplicity, and innocence easterners long for. Ampelmann has also become a way through which GDR ideals can be recreated through notions of childhood and gender and passed on to the next generation. This narrative has its heroes -- Karl Peglau, Jörg Davids and Markus Heckhausen -- as well as its villains: the western traffic light figure and the values it represents. Ampelmann-centred memory also serves as an unwritten *Eingabe*, a letter of complaint requesting changes to, but not a complete rejection of, the systems currently in place.

Ampelmann has not, however, been memorialized in a vacuum. Instead, the figure has been shaped, in part, by the west, its values, and its consumerism - an inevitable process given the fact that Ampelmann has now graced reunified streets longer than East German ones. This has led to the expansive commercialization of Ampelmann as a brand and an image adorning everything from t-shirts to flip flops, from pasta to dog collars.²⁴⁶

²⁴⁶ "Das Ampelmännchen wird zum Fall für die Justiz," *Der Tagesspiegel*, June 08, 2005. <http://www.tagesspiegel.de/weltspiegel/recht-am-mann/614612.html>

Even in the east, Ampelmann frequently appears in advertisements.²⁴⁷ This is often seen as an irreconcilable contradiction; the commodification of the eastern past is frequently viewed as a tool of exploitation which serves to re-exoticize the east, highlighting its continuing backwardness and otherness.²⁴⁸ Indeed, this interpretation has a great deal of logic behind it; the socialism of the GDR cannot possibly be compatible with the neoliberalism of the twenty-first century.

Yet oddly enough, in Ampelmann, these are simply two sides of the same coin. The next chapter will examine how Ampelmann has been used as a means through which not only a usable past, but also a usable present have been formed. It will argue that easterners have not been ignorant and passive in the commodification of their past, but rather that they are among its most active supporters. The process through which this is achieved bears many similarities to the commemoration of the GDR through Ampelmann. It is in this way that easterners can continue to form and maintain their identity in the face of their new reality, even adopting it to suit their own perception of how the world ought to be.

²⁴⁷ Lothar Heinke, "Von Tag zu Tag: Männchen machen," *Der Tagesspiegel*, October 12, 2001. <http://www.tagesspiegel.de/berlin/von-tag-zu-tag-maennchen-machen/263164.html>

²⁴⁸ Paul Cooke, "Ostalgie's Not What it Used to Be," 148.

Chapter 3: Crossing the West: Ampelmann, the West, and the Creation of a Usable

Present

Cameras rolled and journalists shoved their microphones through the air as people began to file into the largest room of the state courthouse in Leipzig, a room usually reserved for murder cases. The accused in this June 2005 case, Joachim Roßberg from Saxony, producer of the Ampelmann lights in the GDR and the owner of an online store where Ampelmann t-shirts, coffee mugs, and schnapps were available for purchase, managed to slide into the room unimpeded.²⁴⁹ The other claimant and owner of the massively successful Ampelmann souvenir stores, Ampelmann GmbH, Markus Heckhausen, from the western city of Tübingen, was not quite so lucky. Stopped by a camera crew, he was asked about his stake in the fate of the small figure whose image could be seen kicking a soccer ball on the bag slung over his shoulder. It seemed, then, like an all too frequently repeated story; the successful westerner, carrying the standard of capitalism, and the poor easterner, set to have his life's work taken away. This imagery was not lost on the crowd either; one commentator said the events were "like a scene from the Cold War."²⁵⁰

This idea, however appealing a narrative it may seem, does not, however, align with reality. Indeed, the two claimants had once been allies working together on the Save the Ampelmännchen Committee and both contributed articles to the Committee's publication: *Das Buch vom Ampelmännchen*.²⁵¹ Their positions in the case, too, seem to be reversed. This was not, as one article pointed out, "a story of a rich westerner and a

²⁴⁹ Ansbart Kneip, "Gefühlte Einheit," *Der Spiegel*, June 13, 2005. <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-40712938.html>

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ Heckhausen, *Das Buch*.

poor easterner.”²⁵² Instead, when Heckhausen first approached Roßberg in 1997 looking for glass to make his designer lamps, it was the former who, due to his comparatively meagre resources, drove a Trabant while the latter, enriched by his company Zwickauer Verkehrstechnik Roßberg GmbH, could afford a Mercedes. Their fortunes had changed quite a bit since those early days, however, as Heckhausen had earned 1.6 million Euros from his three Berlin stores in 2004, while Roßberg earned approximately 50,000 Euros a year from his Ampelmann side business.²⁵³ Heckhausen had even managed to secure the support of Ampelmann’s creator, Karl Peglau, who sat in the courtroom as an observer.²⁵⁴ Upon first meeting Heckhausen in 1997, Peglau was skeptical about westerners but changed his mind after just one coffee, as Heckhausen would later attest: “He [Peglau] found it quite strange that I wanted to use his transportation technology as a design for products... [but] once he realized that I didn’t want to sell off his little guy, he was excited.”²⁵⁵ Following this meeting, Peglau agreed, in 1997, to grant Heckhausen the rights to the figure. In exchange Heckhausen paid the inventor royalties. Peglau later became a consultant and friend to the shop owner.²⁵⁶

The court case made news across the country and in the early stages many continued to voice their support for Roßberg. Heckhausen was dismissed as a “Wessi” (a derogatory

²⁵² Cornelia Geißler, “Kleine grüne Männchen,” *Berliner Zeitung*, February 15, 2006. <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/archiv/verhaertete-fronten-im-streit-um-die-beliebten-ampelfiguren-aus-dem-osten-kleine-gruene-maennchen,10810590,10362702.html>

²⁵³ Stefan Jacobs, “Ein Männchen sieht Rot,” *Der Tagesspiegel*, April 26, 2005. <http://www.tagesspiegel.de/zeitung/ein-maennchen-sieht-rot/603462.html>

²⁵⁴ Ansbert Kneip, “Gefühlte Einheit,” *Der Spiegel*, June 13, 2005. <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-40712938.html>

²⁵⁵ Christine Cornelius, “Der Erfinder des Ost-Ampelmännchens ist tot,” *Hessen Niedersächsische Allgemeine*, December 01, 2009. <http://www.hna.de/nachrichten/panorama/erfinder-ost-ampelmaennchens-545587.html>

²⁵⁶ Stefan Jacobs, “Karl Peglau Vater Ampelmann ist tot,” *Der Tagesspiegel*, December 01, 2009. <http://www.tagesspiegel.de/berlin/stadtleben/karl-peglau-vater-ampelmann-ist-tot/1641536.html>

term for a westerner), and referred to as Roßberg's enemy.²⁵⁷ This continued a trend begun by earlier publications which made fun of Heckhausen, the ludicrous prices of his lamps (200 Marks), and their English slogans "Don't stop me now" and "keep on walking." *Berliner Zeitung* jokingly suggested that one could read a newspaper in the bathroom with the help of these expensive toys.²⁵⁸ Others pointed out that the direction of the green Ampelmann on most of Heckhausen's products was wrong, pointing right instead of left. They also drew attention to Roßberg's early attempts to negotiate a settlement with the westerner, quoting the factory owner who stated that: "I will see which rights I can do without" before offering to sell his excess rights.²⁵⁹ Roßberg's authenticity was highlighted as people began referring to him as the "original manufacturer of the Ampelmann," underscoring his passion and drive in maintaining the rights to the traffic figure he had worked with for so long.²⁶⁰ Roßberg seemed, then, to have a good shot at securing the rights to his hat-wearing business partner.

Roßberg did little, however, to foster these sympathies. He handed out business cards claiming that his factory was the "cradle of the East German Ampelmännchen"²⁶¹ and even went so far as to claim that he was the creator of the traffic light man. If this did not earn Peglau's disapproval, Roßberg's marketing of Ampelmann schnapps certainly did. Peglau was adamant that his figure, associated with friendliness, children, and traffic

²⁵⁷ "Wer darf mit dem DDR-Ampelmännchen Geld verdienen," *Mitteldeutsche Zeitung*, May 31, 2005.

²⁵⁸ Björn Wirth, "Lampe statt Ampel," July 27, 1996. <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/archiv/lampe-statt-ampel,10810590,9158162.html>

²⁵⁹ Anemi Wick, "Wem gehört das Ampelmännchen," *Die Welt*, June 08, 2005. <http://www.welt.de/print-welt/article675148/Wem-gehört-der-Ampelmann.html>

²⁶⁰ Mathias Wedel, "Die Haut zu Markte," *Neues Deutschland*, June 09, 2005. <https://www.neues-deutschland.de/artikel/73057.ampelmaennchen-die-haut-zu-markte.html?sstr=ampelm%E4nnchen>

²⁶¹ Ansbert Kneip, "Gefühlte Einheit," *Der Spiegel*, June 13, 2005. <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-40712938.html>

safety, ought not to be connected with alcohol.²⁶² Peglau's disapproval constituted a major factor in the decline of Roßberg's support since Peglau's grandfatherly image was more durable than the factory owner's popularity.

The case dragged on for another two years, moving from Leipzig to Dresden as Heckhausen argued that Roßberg was not using the rights granted to him by the Munich patent office in 1997 either correctly or continuously (thus violating the conditions under which the rights were granted).²⁶³ Roßberg, with increasing desperation, even attempted to dispute that the rights to Ampelmann, did not belong to him but rather to his son (who would have been nine at the time he received them) who shared his name.²⁶⁴ Although it delayed proceedings, this move proved disastrous for Roßberg who lost whatever public sympathy he had managed to hold onto. After the dust settled and substantial legal fees had been incurred the verdict was finally determined; Heckhausen, the western capitalist, was successful, securing the rights to the vast majority of Ampelmann products from clothing to office accessories to beer while Roßberg clung to his rights to Ampelmann schnapps, his most profitable product (among a few others).²⁶⁵

While Peglau's support for Heckhausen's use and expansion of the Ampelmann image did indeed play a significant role in the westerner's victory in the court case, it does not explain the adoration the westerner obtained among easterners and the population at large, in contrast to the less popular Roßberg. Papers across the country and

²⁶² Sebastian Leber, "Grüne Welle," *Der Tagesspiegel*, June 17, 2006.

<http://www.tagesspiegel.de/weltspiegel/gruene-welle/721520.html>

²⁶³ Anemi Wick, "Wem gehört das Ampelmännchen," *Die Welt*, June 08, 2005. <http://www.welt.de/print-welt/article675148/Wem-gehört-der-Ampelmann.html>

²⁶⁴ "Endlos-Zank um Vermarktungsrechte," *Berliner Kurier*, November 20, 2006. <http://www.berliner-kurier.de/archiv/neuer-prozess-ums-ampelmaennchen-endlos-zank-um-vermarktungsrechte,8259702,4015922.html>

²⁶⁵ "Streit um die Ampelfrau," *Die Welt*, January 09, 2007.

<http://www.welt.de/regionales/berlin/article707579/Streit-um-die-Ampelfrau.html>

particularly in the east characterized Heckhausen as a shepherd, praising the westerner's entrepreneurial spirit, ingenuity and concern for eastern values.²⁶⁶ Indeed throughout the case several papers referred to Heckhausen not as a Tübinger or a westerner but rather as a Berliner or a *Wahl-Berliner*, a Berliner by choice.²⁶⁷ Heckhausen contributed to this idea as well, as one paper commented that he was "avoiding any allusion to an east-west conflict."²⁶⁸ Another paper agreed, arguing that his Ampelmann shops in Berlin were "in truth not a western company at all," noting that most of their 30 employees came from the east and they were frequented equally by shoppers from the east and west.²⁶⁹ Others focused on the variety of products available at the Berlin stores, proclaiming that there were "about 600 products" while drawing attention to their popularity and the 2.4 million Euros his stores took in in 2005, up significantly from the previous year.²⁷⁰ One judge, when comparing Roßberg and Heckhausen sided with the latter, stating that there were "worlds between the activity of the two."²⁷¹ His shops' ethics were another popular topic. After his victory one reporter excitedly described how Heckhausen could expand his production and product lines, most of which would be based in the east. This included plastics in Thuringia, fruit gummies in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and baby clothes in Saxony.²⁷² Even the inverted direction of the green figure on most of his products was

²⁶⁶ "Ampelmann strahlt," *Mitteldeutsche Zeitung*, January 17, 1997.

²⁶⁷ Wolfgang Hübner, "Kampf der Ampelmänner," *Neues Deutschland*, April 26, 2005. <https://www.neues-deutschland.de/artikel/70971.kampf-der-ampelmaenner.html?sstr=ampelm%E4nnchen>

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁹ Ansbert Kneip, "Gefühlte Einheit," *Der Spiegel*, June 13, 2005. <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-40712938.html>; *Der Tagesspiegel*, *Bei der Koffer platzt*, December 05, 2006.

²⁷⁰ Jakob Schlandt, "Siegeszug des Ampelmännchens," *Berliner Zeitung*, December 21, 2006. <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/archiv/gute-geschaefte-und-grosse-plaene-mit-dem-ostsymbol-siegeszug-des-ampelmaennchens,10810590,10443248.html>

²⁷¹ "Justiz Versöhnliche Töne im Ampelmännchen Streit," *Der Spiegel*, June 07, 2005. <http://www.spiegel.de/panorama/justiz-versoehnliche-toene-im-ampelmaennchen-streit-a-359514.html>

²⁷² Sebastian Leber, "Grüne Welle," *Der Tagesspiegel*, June 17, 2006. <http://www.tagesspiegel.de/weltspiegel/gruene-welle/721520.html>

defended; one publication quoted Heckhausen as saying that “it was an aesthetic choice.”²⁷³

This praise was not limited, however, to the context of the court case itself. Before and after the verdict individuals on both sides received Heckhausen warmly. Early in 1997 one article painted Heckhausen and his quest to assemble lamps out of discarded Ampelmann lights in almost mystical terms, calling him a “saviour” and claiming that “the Ostalgic must no longer fumble around in the dark now that he is around, their hopes glow anew as he rises up out of the ruins.”²⁷⁴ This image shows not only Heckhausen’s popularity but also his acceptance by easterners: he might come from the west but he could still “rise up out of the ruins,” an allusion to the national anthem of the GDR, “*Auferstehen aus Ruinen*” or “Risen from Ruins.” Support for the shop owner continued to grow over the following years as Heckhausen merged eastern values with his Ampelmann stores while preserving the idealized image of the figure. In 2003, for example, Heckhausen showed his support for eastern concerns over traffic safety by having a sale at his stores where shoppers could buy a back-to-school package containing, among other things, an Ampelmann bike flag and a reflector which could be attached to either a bike or backpack. These were sold for “9.90 Euros instead of 17.30.”²⁷⁵ In another situation, Heckhausen was pitted against the Berlin zoning authorities who aimed to remove an illuminated Ampelmann sign he had hung outside of

²⁷³ Cornelia Geißler, “Streitobjekt in rot und grün,” *Berliner Zeitung*, 07 06 2005. <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/archiv/am-leipziger-landgericht-beginnt-am-dienstag-ein-prozess-um-das-ost-ampelmaennchen-streitobjekt-in-rot-und-gruen,10810590,10291294.html>. Heckhausen actually uses both directions across his range of products; in general, in products where Ampelmann is pictured alone, he is facing in the (incorrect) right direction but when featured on a traffic light, he can be seen walking along his typical, leftwards, path.

²⁷⁴ “Ampelmann strahlt,” *Mitteldeutsche Zeitung*, January 17, 1997.

²⁷⁵ “Nachrichten,” *Berliner Kurier*, September 06, 2003. <http://www.berliner-kurier.de/archiv/nachrichten,8259702,4204538.html>

his Prenzlauer Berg apartment. The media immediately began portraying Heckhausen as a victim, saying that “the owner of the building and the neighbours were excited” when Heckhausen put the sign up in 1998.²⁷⁶ One of his neighbours spoke out in his favour saying that “The sign is great, the children adore it. The authorities should leave the decision to those who see it every day!”²⁷⁷ Heckhausen’s status as a family man also aligned him with the idea of an innocent, caring Ampelmann. One paper pointed out that a new line of Ampelmann baby clothes was “inspired by his wife and three children; Theresa, Helena and Rosalie.”²⁷⁸ Following Karl Peglau’s death in 2009, Peglau’s widow warmly praised the westerner as well, arguing that: “Without Heckhausen and his business the Ampelmann would not have survived.” Heckhausen, his stores, and his values, despite their western origins, were made to fit with the image of Ampelmann, showing how westernness did not necessarily preclude the values of safety, security, family, innocence, and fun embodied in the eastern traffic light figure.

Indeed, the connection to eastern values was pronounced throughout the branding of Ampelmann. The convergence of eastern symbolism and values with selectively envisioned elements of western capitalism and modernity through Ampelmann refashioned the GDR so easterners could adopt capitalism and western values on their own terms. Creating this connection involved not only giving a western business permission to represent the eastern traffic light figure, but spread much more widely as

²⁷⁶ Elke Auer, “Streit um ein Werbeschild,” *Berliner Zeitung*, March 27, 2000. <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/archiv/ampelmaennchen-soll-weg-streit-um-ein-werbeschild,10810590,9784642.html>

²⁷⁷ “Ämter stur: Der Ampelmann soll verschwinden,” *Berliner Kurier*, March 18, 2000. <http://www.berliner-kurier.de/archiv/aemter-stur--der-ampelmann-soll-verschwinden,8259702,7893362.html>

²⁷⁸ Susanne Dübber, “Hallo,” *Berliner Kurier*, August 31, 2005. <http://www.berliner-kurier.de/archiv/strampel-maennchen-baby-kollektion--flottes-fuer-die-kleinsten-hallo-,8259702,4081832.html>

easterners actively reconstructed the world around them in order to make their new reality of commodification, capitalism, and neoliberalism understandable, manageable, safe, and even friendly. The image of a friendly, responsible, respectful capitalism was created not because of how these values were reflected in the systems of western governance but because of their absence.

The rapid transition to a neoliberal society from a socialist one left many easterners behind. Even in 1998 many adults in Leipzig, attempting to deal with bleak employment opportunities, continued to attend workshops teaching basic interview skills, something they would not have needed in the GDR.²⁷⁹ Other easterners showed their discontent in various ways, participating in anti-capitalist demonstrations, wishing for the Berlin Wall to come back or, most commonly, simply by being unhappy.²⁸⁰ Their dismal prospects conflicted directly with the formerly idealized image of the West and the glories of its capitalist system in which many from the GDR had once believed. Reunification, a process which was once seen as natural and desirable, now seemed to have imposed an alienating, exploitative and thoroughly uncaring world on East Germans.²⁸¹

Allowing for westernization and commodification to take place did not hinder Ampelmann's function as a paragon of eastern values and a tool through which this past was redefined. Quite the contrary, the adoption of western values allowed for the little traffic light man to succeed not only in the new *Länder* but the old western ones as well. As the language used to express the value of Ampelmann changed, and competition with

²⁷⁹ Daphne Berdahl, "The Spirit of Capitalism and the Boundaries of Citizenship in Post-Wall Germany," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 47, No. 2 (April 2005) JSTOR (accessed September 15, 2012) 246.

²⁸⁰ Patricia Hogwood, "How Happy Are You," 152.

²⁸¹ Diewald, Goedicke, and Mayer, *After the Fall of the Wall*, 72.

his western comrades became encouraged, the figure fulfilled what many perceived to be his destiny: conquering the west. Examining the court case over the rights to market Ampelmann, however, reveals that the convergence of east and west goes even further. The westernized ideals ascribed to Ampelmann may have, in some small way, furthered German unity as Germans on both sides of the former border have learned to understand the values of their counterparts in accessible terms. Ampelmann now represents a prism through which the present can be understood, improved upon, and made compatible with the East German past.

The capitalist concept of competition was one of the first western ideals to be negotiated through Ampelmann. The attempts by easterners to describe the value of their traffic light figure in these terms began unsteadily. As explored in chapter 2, the earliest iterations of these arguments focused on the less objective aspects of Ampelmann's superiority, referring to the western traffic light figure as "no-frills" and "static," "genderless" and "generic."²⁸² The western figure's image stood in contrast to their own eastern figure who was "loved not only by children but adults as well," "green, cheery,"²⁸³ and "guides people happily across the street."²⁸⁴ That "the traffic light man greets pedestrians in various forms; with an umbrella, as an explorer with a backpack and

²⁸² "Männchen mit Hut lustiger West-Ampelmännchen zu steif," *Mitteldeutsche Zeitung*, February 07, 1995.

²⁸³ Rolf Liebold, "Neue Grüne Welle," *Berliner Zeitung*, 06 10 1994. <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/archiv/neue-gruene-welle-auf-der-frankfurter-allee-mit-kinderkrankheiten---26-minuten-bis-hoppegarten--auf-berlins-strassen-soll-es-flotter-vorangehen---aber-nicht-fuer-alle-zwei-verschiedene-ampelmaennchen,10810590,8874350.html>

²⁸⁴ "Das Grüne Ampelmännchen," *Neues Deutschland*, June 17, 1997. <http://www.neues-deutschland.de/artikel/664520.das-gruene-ampelmaennchen.html?sstr=ampelm%E4nnchen>.

walking stick, and also as a football player,” also revealed Ampelmann’s sense of humour.²⁸⁵

In response to these subjective arguments, westerners constructed narratives of progress and modernity which rejected Ampelmann. Speaking of Ampelmann, *Der Spiegel* argued that he had no place in the modern city: “A traffic light today must be able to display more than red, green, or yellow. Our dream goal is a modern light system that could also regulate buses and trams in order to help solve traffic problems.”²⁸⁶ A similar argument was put forward by westerners claiming that the new western figure could be better integrated into computer systems.²⁸⁷ Some even suggested that the western one was cheaper to produce, and that unnecessary costs could be avoided by switching to this figure across the country so as to maximize production capacity.²⁸⁸ Some easterners resigned themselves to defeat, agreeing that the replacement of Ampelmann with his western counterpart was a modernization which would “get rid of the passé hats and shoes of the old man towards a new, more unified man.”²⁸⁹ In the early years, then, Ampelmann supporters were unable to successfully market their figure in a way westerners accustomed to the language of capitalism understood. Westerners legitimized the perceived superiority of their traffic light figure by suggesting that it was more practical, modern, and economical.

²⁸⁵ “Das Grüne Ampelmännchen,” *Neues Deutschland*, June 17, 1997. <http://www.neues-deutschland.de/artikel/664520.das-gruene-ampelmaennchen.html?sstr=ampelm%E4nnchen>. Several cities across the east have created their own versions of Ampelmann. This is done mostly as a joke. One city, for example, introduced an ice cream-eating Ampelmann during the summer to help ‘combat the heat’.

²⁸⁶ “Heimliches Wappen der DDR,” *Der Spiegel*, January 06, 1997. <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-8649686.html>

²⁸⁷ Anja Dilk, “Wer hilft dem Herrn mit Hut,” *Die Zeit*, February 07, 1997. http://www.zeit.de/1997/07/Wer_hilft_dem_Herrn_mit_Hut_

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ “Langweilige Wesen mit einem Kugelkopf,” *Mitteldeutsche Zeitung*, January 18, 1997.

Easterners began to adapt, however, by infusing their arguments more directly with the objective language of capitalism. A diagram in *Das Buch vom Ampelmännchen* illustrates just this. Here, the outstretched arms of the red man are compared to various other traffic symbols, such as the lights used to regulate trams, as well as signs governing the movements of ships and automobiles. In these symbols a horizontal rectangle for stopping is a common theme. This is mimicked by the red Ampelmann but not by the western figure, who stands stiffly at attention. The green Ampelmännchen is also shown in this diagram to have a significantly larger form than his western counterpart, making him more immediately recognizable (see appendix 3).²⁹⁰ Easterners began to point out Ampelmann's practical benefits particularly for "children and the colourblind" as "Ampelmann clearly shows when they can cross the street."²⁹¹ Karl Peglau himself began to accept the idea of capitalist-style competition, stating in 2001 that: "It would be wonderful if the federal Ministry for Transportation would form a commission to find out which traffic light figure is better," implying his belief that Ampelmann would triumph over his competitor.²⁹²

By adopting the language of the west in order to express the value of their eastern figure, easterners opened the lines of communication with their countrymen; allowing westerners to accept Ampelmann on their own terms and, increasingly, on the subjective terms first employed by their eastern neighbours. A significant advancement in the status of Ampelmann, particularly in the eyes of the west, came from a 2013 study by Jacobs University in Bremen. This study compared the eastern and western traffic light figures

²⁹⁰ Heckhausen, *Das Buch*, 79.

²⁹¹ Hans-Jürgen Neßnau, „Ampelmännchen, vereinigt euch!“, *Neues Deutschland*, 16 January, 1997.

²⁹² Daniel Meuren, "Ostalgie die rot grüne Koalition," *Der Spiegel*, September 26, 2001.
<http://www.spiegel.de/kultur/gesellschaft/ostalgie-die-rot-gruene-koalition-a-159072.html>

by showing participants alternating images of the ‘stop’ and ‘go’ figures, sometimes with their appropriate colours and sometimes with these colours reversed. The responses of the participants were measured when they pressed a button indicating whether or not they should cross. The eastern figure emerged triumphant from this, as individuals responded to him not only more rapidly, but much more accurately, particularly when the colours were reversed.²⁹³ The mention of this study in western publications is evidence of the eastern Ampelmann’s success when assessed by more empirical capitalist standards.

In conjunction with this, Ampelmann proved himself to be a dynamic figure of the modern age. This began quite early with the Save the Ampelmännchen Committee which gained support rapidly through its presence online. Here, the committee organized its efforts, discussed the values of its idol and determined how he could be saved. The internet not only gave the committee a more widespread voice but helped earn legitimacy and the respect of the western media. One paper listed the goods sold by the committee, defending them by saying that: “this movement is trying to be more than a commercial gag; 20 percent of the profits go into a savings account. With this, they are financing solidarity actions for the hat-wearing man.”²⁹⁴ This trend continued along with the success of Ampelmann as a commercial entity. Heckhausen himself defended eastern products against a critical article in *Der Spiegel*, saying that: “We want to show that aside

²⁹³ “Wissen Kompakt,” *Die Welt*, June 24, 2013.

http://www.welt.de/print/die_welt/wissen/article117387826/Wissen-Kompakt.html

²⁹⁴ Anja Dilk, “Wer hilft dem Herrn mit Hut,” *Die Zeit*, February 07, 1997.

http://www.zeit.de/1997/07/Wer_hilft_dem_Herrn_mit_Hut_

from Spreewald pickles there are also young, dynamic products which are often overlooked in the current economic situation.”²⁹⁵

On a pragmatic level, the modernity of Ampelmann shone through when several municipalities decided to change from incandescent lighting to LEDs. When the Berlin city council was first installing 80 of these lights at the cost of 1.5 million Euros, they used this as a vehicle to push Ampelmann further into western Berlin. One official stated that: “The money spent on modernization is a good investment as the new light signals are lower maintenance.”²⁹⁶ Another western municipality outlined how the modern lights would reinforce the effectiveness of the figure, declaring that: “The future is even brighter because he [Ampelmann] uses more affordable and effective LED lights.”²⁹⁷ An online campaign started by the western newspaper *Die Welt* used the eastern figure as well; in protest over a proposed EU internet tax, the paper established a website which people could join to show their dissatisfaction with each member adding a red Ampelmann to the site.²⁹⁸

Ampelmann has even entered into the mobile world. In addition to an official app from Ampelmann GmbH, there is also *Barcoo*, a barcode scanner intended to help parents with young children bypass the often deceptive labelling of food products in order

²⁹⁵ “Die Frankfurter Rundschau,” *Der Spiegel*, November 22, 2004. <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-37494755.html>; An earlier issue of *Der Spiegel* had specifically targeted those producing and marketing eastern products. In response, a group of these individuals sent care packages to the magazine. Heckhausen’s quote, shown above, was part of this.

²⁹⁶ Ela Dobrinkat and Michael Brunner, “Ost Ampelmännchen erobert den Westen,” *Die Welt*, July 15, 2007. <http://www.welt.de/print-welt/article682782/Ost-Ampelmaennchen-erobert-den-Westen.html>

²⁹⁷ “Mann mit Hut hat gesiegt,” *Hessen Niedersächsische Allgemeine*, January 29, 2010. <http://www.hna.de/lokales/kassel/mann-gesiegt-610815.html>

²⁹⁸ “Große Resonanz auf Demoaufwurf der Welt gegen Internetsteuer,” *Die Welt*, June 19, 2000. <http://www.welt.de/print-welt/article545395/Grosse-Resonanz-auf-Demoaufwurf-der-WELT-gegen-Internetsteuer.html>

to determine if these items are healthy or not.²⁹⁹ Foods with an excess of sodium and fat receive the foreboding red Ampelmann while only the healthiest products earn the green Ampelmann stamp of approval.³⁰⁰ Another app, called *Theo*, aims to help those preparing for their driving test, displaying a green Ampelmann when the candidate is ready to write.³⁰¹ In this way, Ampelmann has not only entered successfully into the modern world but has maintained his core values in doing so. His image highlights the best interests of the population, particularly people's safety and health.

Westerners have also begun to agree with their eastern neighbours on the emotional value of Ampelmann. One western writer admitted that:

the easterner [Ampelmann] is not only cuter looking when compared to his colleague but he is also better at his task of traffic safety. The western colleague stands thinly, with his arms stiffly along his side, while the eastern Ampelmännchen with outstretched arms gives off almost twice as much light. The 40 year old Ampelmännchen has a socialist character, combining beauty and charm with expediency, warmth with diligence.³⁰²

Other Berliners agreed. One shopper described her first encounter with Ampelmann after his spread into the famous shopping district, Kurfürstendamm (Ku'damm): "When I first encountered him, I was disconcerted for a second" "What are you looking for in our Ku'damm?" But she has since grown to like him: "He is dynamic and funny – much

²⁹⁹ "Handy Software Kinder Lebensmittelampel soll Eltern beim Einkauf helfen," *Der Spiegel*, November 05, 2012. <http://www.spiegel.de/wirtschaft/service/kinder-lebensmittelampel-unterstuetzt-eltern-beim-einkauf-a-865265.html>

³⁰⁰ "Rot oder grün App bringt Lebensmittel Ampel," *Die Welt*, November 06, 2012. http://www.welt.de/print/welt_kompakt/webwelt/article110665483/Rot-oder-gruen-App-bringt-Lebensmittel-Ampel.html

³⁰¹ "Graf Rotz und das Rotlicht," *Kölner Stadt Anzeiger*, August 08, 2008. <http://www.ksta.de/debatte/die-woche-in-koeln-graf-rotz-und-das-rotlicht,15188012,13137302.html>

³⁰² Daniel Meuren, "Ostalgie die rot grüne Koalition," *Der Spiegel*, September 26, 2001. <http://www.spiegel.de/kultur/gesellschaft/ostalgie-die-rot-gruene-koalition-a-159072.html>

more likable than our teetering Westman.”³⁰³ These statements, echoed throughout the west, reveal a confluence of ideals those studying *Ostalgie* seldom examine. Here, the narrative of capitalism has evolved to support and serve the eastern Ampelmann, forming a bridge which can allow for westerners to appreciate the emotional aspects of the figure, even seeing them as practicality of a different sort. A writer for *Die Welt* summed this up most succinctly: “One can instantly see that he is simply *better* than his old and new western competitors.”³⁰⁴ Although the relationship between east and west Germans remains patently unequal, the convergence of eastern and western language surrounding Ampelmann shows that mutual acceptance between the two is possible.

His familiar and likable face has even made occasional appearances on the campaign trail, proving his ability to function within western systems. A group of students from the Hellersdorf district of (formerly East) Berlin used Ampelmann in an effort to get young people to vote in an upcoming election. To this end, they created posters bearing the figure walking to the local polling station along with the slogan “everyone has their cross to carry.”³⁰⁵ The creator of the campaign said he wanted to combat election apathy, choosing Ampelmann because he is “funny,” and claiming that “the more people who vote, the more representative our democracy will be.”³⁰⁶ This political use of Ampelmann appears positive, showing how easterners are able to use a symbol from their past in order to adapt to and engage with the democratic present.

³⁰³ Ela Dobrinkat and Michael Brunner, “Ost Ampelmännchen erobert den Westen,” *Die Welt*, July 15, 2007. <http://www.welt.de/print-welt/article682782/Ost-Ampelmaennchen-erobert-den-Westen.html>

³⁰⁴ Holger Wild, “Was von Osten übrig blieb und was nicht,” *Die Welt*, September 30, 2000. <http://www.welt.de/print-welt/article536163/Was-vom-Osten-uebrig-blieb-und-was-nicht.html> (original emphasis)

³⁰⁵ “Wahlwerbung mit dem Ampelmann,” *Berliner Zeitung*, September 04, 1999. <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/archiv/plakat-soll-jungwaehler-mobilisieren-wahlwerbung-mit-dem-ampelmann,10810590,9703968.html>

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

Ampelmann has also, however, been used disingenuously. The neoliberal Free Democratic Party (FDP) once infamously used Ampelmann in an election campaign. 130 posters bearing a blue running Ampelmann (the colour of the FDP), the leader of the party, Rexrodt, and a red stopping Ampelmann, proclaimed support for the party.³⁰⁷ People across the country were quick to speak out against this, highlighting the contradiction between the socialism of the traffic light figure and the free market capitalism of the party.³⁰⁸ Heckhausen himself responded to this, calling the use of the figure “insolent.”³⁰⁹ Later, Ampelmann was declared the “secret winner” of the election when the FDP, who abused his symbolism, lost all of their seats.³¹⁰ The exchange between east and west through Ampelmann has not always been a smooth, easy, or even respectful process. Although the figure can represent an exchange of ideas and an integration of lifestyles, his image is also open to abuse.

Ampelmann, then, has become an increasingly malleable and open figure in the post-reunification years. He has become a tool through which the values of capitalism, the traumas of a modernizing world, and the desire for understanding can be broken down, digested, and given a friendly face. His use as a beacon of friendly, responsible capitalism and modernity has not only allowed easterners to adapt to their often desperate situation but has also permitted westerners to appreciate and use some aspects of the eastern past. More than this, however, with the reforming of Ampelmann into an image compatible

³⁰⁷ Elmar Schütze, “Streit um den Ampelmann,” *Berliner Zeitung*, October 13, 2001. <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/archiv/streit-um-den-ampelmann,10810590,9942772.html>

³⁰⁸ “Ärgert sich die FDP wegen des Ampelmännchens bald rot?,” *Berliner Kurier*, October 13, 2001. <http://www.berliner-kurier.de/archiv/aergert-sich-die-fdp-wegen-des-ampelmaennchens-bald-rot-,8259702,8140304.html>

³⁰⁹ Elmar Schütze, “Streit um den Ampelmann,” October 13, 2001. <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/archiv/streit-um-den-ampelmann,10810590,9942772.html>

³¹⁰ Matthias Deutschmann, “Heimlicher Sieger,” *Berliner Zeitung*, October 22, 2001. <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/archiv/heimlicher-sieger,10810590,9945032.html>

with capitalism and modernity, easterners have also given their figure a foothold so that he may cross not just streets but the border into western Germany.

Ampelmann's Westward March

Ampelmann's westward journey began in a rather unlikely place. In celebration of the Day of German Unity, the first western traffic light bearing the eastern Ampelmann figure was erected in the city of Überlingen in Baden-Württemberg in 1997.³¹¹

Describing the decision years later, the head of the Civil Engineering Department for the city proclaimed that "We saw the little guy in our Saxon sister city Bad Schandau and found it much more attractive than the western man" adding that "our kids adore it." Indeed by 2004 Ampelmann directed traffic from 3 of the 4 lights in the lakeside city.³¹²

Despite this early victory, however, Ampelmann's march into the west was not a uniform or easy process, in part due to the federal government taking no official stance on the issue, instead permitting municipalities to choose whichever signal they wished. Berlin, in particular, was contested ground for Ampel-advocates. Being at once Germany's largest city and capital as well as the spiritual home of Ampelmann, the actions decided upon by the Berlin city council often served as a microcosm for the course of Ampelmann's activities. Coinciding with the anti-Ampelmann narratives of progress and modernity already examined, the replacement of Ampelmann lights in the

³¹¹ "Ost-Ampelmann auf Westkurs," *Berliner Kurier*, October 04, 1997. <http://www.berliner-kurier.de/archiv/ost-ampelmann-auf-westkurs,8259702,7391862.html>

³¹² Susanne Kröck, "Am Bodensee beliebt, im alten West-Berlin Total-Boycott," January 25, 2004. <http://www.berliner-kurier.de/archiv/am-bodensee-beliebt--im-alten-west-berlin-total-boycott-ampelmaennchen--im-westen-nichts-neues,8259702,4182514.html>

city began in 1994 as an effort towards a unified streetscape.³¹³ Following this, the Save the Ampelmännchen Committee formed in the city in 1997 when the number of Ampelmann lights dipped to 500, down from their peak of 1300.³¹⁴ A motion in the next year saved the little green man, dictating that when repaired, traffic lights were to bear whichever symbol was there before.³¹⁵ The dreams of Ampelmann supporters were not yet satisfied, however, and the push continued towards a Berlin unified under the eastern traffic light man. These dreams were finally fulfilled in 2004 when Petra Rohland of the Senate Committee for City Development declared that: “In the future, all of the 1400 traffic lights in the western section of the city will bear the eastern Ampelmännchen when they are repaired.”³¹⁶ She explained this decision, stating that “we want to present a unified image on all Berlin traffic lights. And the eastern figure gives off more light and has a better symbolic function, particularly for children.”³¹⁷ Ampelmann achieved this victory, then, on terms appropriate to the dual purpose of Ampelmann as both a vehicle of eastern values, such as children’s traffic safety, and as a tool to make capitalism more manageable by showing how eastern products could be judged and succeed on capitalist terms.

³¹³ Juliane Wienß, “Ampelmann mit Kultstatus,” *Neues Deutschland*, October 13, 2011. <https://www.neues-deutschland.de/artikel/208793.ampelmann-mit-kultstatus.html?sstr=ampelm%E4nnchen>

³¹⁴ Hans-Jürgen Neßnau, “Ampelmännchen, vereinigt euch!,” *Neues Deutschland*, January 16, 1997. <https://www.neues-deutschland.de/artikel/643486.ampelmaennchen-vereinigt-euch.html?sstr=ampelm%E4nnchen>. Finding exact figures on the number of traffic lights present in Berlin has proven quite difficult, discerning how many of these have which traffic light figure more difficult still. The numbers shown here are taken from the cited article. In this article, it declares that the number of eastern Ampelmännchen on traffic lights has declined to 1000 from 2600. Assuming two men for every light, the numbers given above were reached.

³¹⁵ Anka Seyfert, “Platz da Der Herr mit Hut kommt Groß raus,” *Berliner Kurier*, February 07, 1998. <http://www.berliner-kurier.de/archiv/platz-da--der-herr-mit-hut-kommt-gross-raus,8259702,7559874.html>

³¹⁶ Susanne Kröck, “Go West,” *Berliner Kurier*, December 10, 2004. <http://www.berliner-kurier.de/archiv/siegeszug-ab-januar-gibt-es-das-ost-ampelmaennchen-auch-im-westteil-unserer-stadt-go-west,8259702,4122432.html>

³¹⁷ Ibid.

After securing a foothold in the western half of Berlin, Ampelmann began his campaign to make a mark on the west more broadly. He succeeded perhaps most significantly of all in the Hessen city of Kassel, where he debuted in 2007. By 2010, 60 traffic lights in Kassel shone with the eastern figure, with plans for an Ampelmann monopoly by 2022. Bernd Noll of the transportation department supported this, stating that due to his “burliness” Ampelmann “gives off a third more light, is easier to see, and is also easier to see in bright sunlight.”³¹⁸ Locals agreed: “The resonance among the population is greatly positive” said Noll, continuing that when a light is replaced officials are told, “that is great, that you are doing this now.” This does not mean, however, that Ampelmann will spread outside the city: officials from the neighbouring district declared that: “we do not see any reason to make a change [from the western figure].”³¹⁹

Ampelfrau claimed another victory in the western campaign of the eastern figures when she first appeared in the west in 2008 in Cologne to celebrate international women’s day.³²⁰ Petra Bossinger of the local Christian Democratic Union (CDU) donated this light, intending it to replace the “gender neutral character” which stood there before and to become a “brilliant little leader for gender equality.” Her skirt and pigtails, Bossinger stated, were not intended to represent conservative values but instead aimed to remind pedestrians of the movement for women to gain the vote in the 1960s.³²¹ Ampelfrau’s introduction in Hamm, North Rhine-Westphalia, however, was a bit more

³¹⁸ “Mann mit Hut hat gesiegt,” *Hessen Niedersächsische Allgemeine*, January 29, 2010. <http://www.hna.de/lokales/kassel/mann-gesiegt-610815.html>

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*

³²⁰ “Hosen runter her mit dem Ampelfrauchen,” *Kölner Stadt Anzeiger*, February 26, 2008. <http://www.ksta.de/koeln-uebersicht/-hosen-runter--her-mit-dem-ampelfrauchen--,16341264,13249782.html>

³²¹ “Kölns erste Ampelfrauen leuchten,” *Kölner Stadt Anzeiger*, March 09, 2009. <http://www.ksta.de/koeln-uebersicht/verkehr-koelns-erste-ampelfrauen-leuchten,16341264,12979498.html>

controversial. When the first Ampelfrau light was installed in the city for the 100th anniversary of international women's day, one representative said that Ampelfrau has “nothing to do with the theme of equality.”³²² The mayor thought otherwise, referring to the light saying that: “the symbol for the forward motion of women in our city is now green.”³²³ Although this was not intended to be a new standard for the city, the light did show how westerners accepted eastern traffic light figures for the values they represented, even those adapted to fit into a western narrative.

Over the next few years, Ampelmann continued to spread across the west to cities such as Bremen, Tübingen (the birthplace of Markus Heckhausen), Esslingen, Heidelberg, Hanau, Ahrensburg, and even Aachen.³²⁴ This was not always intentional; in Stadtbergen, Bavaria, for example, a company hired to replace a traffic light accidentally installed an Ampelmann light. This led to a town-wide debate as the police, state government, mayor, and several residents gathered to discuss the fate of the figure. Eventually, they decided to keep it, pleasing the mayor who declared that: “I have always emphasized that I would like to keep the figure.”³²⁵ One article later described this as a manifest destiny of sorts, saying that: “He [Ampelmann] moves towards the left, almost as if his creator knew that he would one day take over the west. Perhaps Peglau was so excited with his figure that he sent it away to take over...”³²⁶

³²² “Ampelfrauen regeln Verkehr in Hamm,” *Kreiszeitung*, July 15, 2011.

<http://www.kreiszeitung.de/nachrichten/welt/ampelfrauen-regeln-verkehr-hamm-1324200.html>

³²³ *Ibid.*

³²⁴ Eva Dorothee Schmid, “Aus der Ampel in die Welt,” *Berliner Zeitung*, October 12, 2011.

<http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/panorama/jubilaem-aus-der-ampel-in-die-welt,10808334,11001480.html>

³²⁵ Kristian Schulze, “Honecker an der Schwaben Ampel,” *Die Zeit*, December 06, 2012.

<http://blog.zeit.de/ost/2012/12/06/honecker-an-schwaben-ampel/>

³²⁶ Eva Dorothee Schmid, “Aus der Ampel in die Welt,” *Berliner Zeitung*, October 12, 2011.

<http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/panorama/jubilaem-aus-der-ampel-in-die-welt,10808334,11001480.html>

The ‘left’ movement here refers to the direction which Ampelmann faces on traffic lights.

The implications of Ampelmann's acceptance into the western milieu are powerful. As an immediately recognizable symbol of the GDR, and a paragon of its ideals, Ampelmann and his western march show that east and west are not as oil to water but rather capable of intermixing, compromising and coming to mutually beneficial agreements, although the terms of these are unequal. This Ampel-ambassador also reveals a degree of normalization from both sides of the old divide; Ampelmann is able to function simultaneously in the seemingly unnavigable torrent between east and west, socialism and capitalism, between genders and between the walls, both tangible and intangible, which seek to divide these things. This figure, praised as an embodiment of everyday life under the GDR, is now becoming a figure for everyday life in the Berlin Republic; regulating the incoherent streams of daily life as easterners and westerners alike welcome him into their lives.

Despite this surprising success, the western movement of the eastern Ampelmann has not been a uniformly positive experience as attitudes held by some in the west have collided with this socialist hat-wearer. Aside from merely respecting the technical achievements represented in Ampelmann, some westerners have gone one step further, either pointing out the western involvement in his post-Wall career or otherwise taking credit for some of the more notable Ampel-achievements. The conservative publication *Die Welt* did this when discussing the role of Ampelfrau in post-Wall Germany. By this time, Ampelfrau was shining on street corners in Dresden and Zwickau. Engaging in an unusual twist of logic, the paper warned that Ampelfrau might give little girls the wrong idea that "red signals are just for boys." Continuing on, the paper took aim at western feminists, arguing that:

In the GDR where women's employment was higher than in the west, no one attempted to destroy the patriarchal dominance of the Ampelmann. First they needed the West German jargon to infect their heads before anyone could come up with the idea for Ampelfrau. Now, she has become a symbolic political tool for legislators who cannot do much for women. A traffic light is cheaper than a place in kindergarten.³²⁷

The paper coloured Ampelfrau as a hollow gesture, an action taken by those unwilling to do more to further women's equality. This is by no means a new critique, but this article sets itself apart from others by blaming "West German jargon." This is a disturbing and toxic sort of western arrogance suggesting Ampelfrau's post-Wall success can be credited to westerners as easterners could not possibly have come up with this on their own. This article, although more strident than others, is not, however, unique. As already implied by the roles of Jörg Davids and Markus Heckhausen, westerners played a key role in the popularization and triumph of Ampelmann beginning in the mid 1990s.³²⁸ While this may be portrayed positively – the coming together of east and west to save something of value – one article takes this to an extreme, saying about the figure that: "He [Ampelmann] was featured along with Sandmännchen on GDR television, entering into the hearts of a generation of kids, frequently not only in the GDR but also in the old states. The initiative 'Save the Ampelmann' which was active a few years ago was staffed mostly by western citizens."³²⁹ This shows, although to a lesser degree, the same attitude which inspired the former article; in this case Ampelmann's success seems entirely inexplicable without some significant degree of western involvement. These incidents, along with the

³²⁷ Matthias Heine, "Das Ampelmädchen," *Die Welt*, January 26, 2005. <http://www.welt.de/print-welt/article386988/Das-Ampelmaedchen.html>

³²⁸ Anja Dilk, "Wer hilft dem Herrn mit Hut?" *Die Zeit*, February 07, 1997. http://www.zeit.de/1997/07/Wer_hilft_dem_Herrn_mit_Hut_

³²⁹ "Ost Männchen mit besonderer Leuchtkraft," *Kölner Stadt Anzeiger*, October 12, 2001. <http://www.ksta.de/panorama/ost-maennchen-mit-besonderer-leuchtkraft,15189504,14541898.html>. Sandmännchen is the titular character in a formerly East German children's program which remains popular across modern Germany.

suggestion that Ampelfrau represents western attempts in the 1960s towards women obtaining the vote, show that the forging of collective memory through Ampelmann and his extended family are not limited solely to nostalgic easterners.³³⁰ Ampelmann has not saved Germans on both sides of the old border from their own ignorance; although he has played a part in increasing the lines of communication between Germany's formerly estranged halves, it is important not to exaggerate the subtle societal shift he represents.

Nevertheless, Ampelmann illustrates a coming together of a remarkably rare variety. He has managed to open connections and lines of communication between east and west as Germans on both sides begin to appreciate the figure on each other's terms while recognizing the values of the hat-wearer and, by extension (although to a much more limited degree), of one another. However limited the extent of this interaction may be, the acceptance of Ampelmann into the daily lives of Germans on both sides shows that such a unified recognition, communication, and existence, far from being myth, is occurring on street crossings across the country as Germans collectively reconstruct the meaning of the little man on the traffic lights. Indeed, the success of Ampelmann has been so pronounced that it has led many to ask (jokingly): "when will the committee to save the western Ampelmann come?"³³¹ Most submit that this is, however, unlikely.

Illuminating Similarities; Ampelmann and German Unity

Through opening these lines of communication, and through his successful movement into the west, Ampelmann has become a force for furthering German unity.

³³⁰ "Kölns erste Ampelfrauen leuchten," *Kölner Stadt Anzeiger*, March 09, 2009. <http://www.ksta.de/koeln-uebersicht/verkehr-koelns-erste-ampelfrauen-leuchten,16341264,12979498.html>

³³¹ Eva Dorothee Schmid, "Ampelmann auf Westkurs," *Berliner Zeitung*, December 11, 2004. <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/archiv/ampelmann-auf-westkurs,10810590,10239358.html>

Although Ampelmann is not necessarily unique in his ability to appeal to concerns shared on both sides of the former border, his symbolic power accentuates his functionality above others, allowing for him to simultaneously project eastern values inherited from a reconstructed past and to bring together otherwise more divergent peoples and ideals in order to help craft a usable present. His entrance into the common language and culture of a unified Germany is evidence of this, as Ampelmann becomes increasingly commonplace he also becomes more profound, able to bring people together in increasingly subtle ways. His success does not, however, come without reservations. Indeed, Ampelmann has proven a rather problematic representative for the east as westerners reconstruct his image while, in the minds of some, representing a destructive misinterpretation of the eastern past which serves only to further the divide first solidified by the Berlin Wall.

Ampelmann's ability to give form and expression to otherwise divergent schools of thought extends outside of his merging of narratives of capitalism and nostalgia, converging similar but parallel beliefs surrounding traffic safety. This began through the connection between Ampelmann and childhood traffic safety education in the GDR, as discussed in chapters 1 and 2. Here, the hat wearing figure became emblematic of the safety, security and innocence lost with the collapse of state socialism.³³² The continuation of Ampelmann's pedagogical role in the east after the fall of the Wall has been mirrored in the west. Reiner Niersmann, for example, much like his eastern counterpart, Hans the singing policeman, sang to elementary school children across the west, instructing them about the importance of, among other things, wearing bicycle

³³² Sebastian Leber, "Grüne Welle," *Der Tagesspiegel*, June 17, 2006.
<http://www.tagesspiegel.de/weltspiegel/gruene-welle/721520.html>

helmets.³³³ Ampelmann featured prominently in his presentation, even when visiting the small town of Westrup where there were no traffic lights. Western police engaged in this as well, such as in the city of Hamburg where safety-conscious officers instructed children through a game where children had to identify symbols according to whether or not they were associated with traffic safety (of which Ampelmann was one).³³⁴ There is good reason for this. *Der Spiegel* reported that Germany has an unusually high accident rate among children. In 2004, for example, 328 of every 100,000 children were involved in a traffic accident compared to 261 in the UK, 159 in Italy and 62 in Denmark.³³⁵ This shows there was a need for a solution at the very moment Ampelmann began to spread into the west. On one hand, these concerns, mirrored in the east, help to account for the rise of Ampelmann in the west, particularly once pragmatic arguments became accepted on both sides of the Wall. On the other, this set of common dilemmas can also account for the functionality of Ampelmann as a means for opening communication networks between the former halves. By providing an effective solution to a shared issue Ampelmann has become a means through which Germans can talk to one another, if only in a limited context, and appreciate the eastern figure on similar terms.

Ampelmann, although exceptional among eastern paraphernalia in his acceptance and spread into the west, was not the only solution to these traffic safety problems. The green arrow, another widely used traffic symbol from the GDR which told motorists when they could turn right, has also achieved a notable degree of success in post-Wall Germany.

³³³ “Gerlernt, geübt, gefeiert,” *Kreiszeitung*, October 09, 2010. <http://www.kreiszeitung.de/lokales/minden-luebbecke/stemwede-Rahden/gelernt-geuebt-gefeiert-953335.html>

³³⁴ “Hamburg am Mittwoch,” *Die Welt*, March 12, 2008. http://www.welt.de/welt_print/article1789760/Hamburg-am-Mittwoch.html

³³⁵ Martin Brinkmann, “Verkehrserziehung fit für die gefährlichsten pisten Europas,” *Der Spiegel*, November 21, 2005. <http://www.spiegel.de/auto/aktuell/verkehrserziehung-fit-fuer-die-gefaehrlichsten-pisten-europas-a-385645.html>

Hamburg in particular has taken to the eastern traffic symbol, overtaking Dresden, in the words of one paper, as the “Capital of the green arrow.”³³⁶ Much like its hat-wearing colleague, the green arrow has won its place in the west through the sheer force of its own practicality. Experts and city officials across the country point out its ability to reduce accidents, help traffic flow more smoothly, and minimize congestion.³³⁷ The arrow is frequently compared to Ampelmann and listed among the handful of still useful things left over from the GDR. One commenter asserted that: “The GDR did it [the green arrow] first; not just the green Ampelmännchen has earned its place.”³³⁸ As a result, the green arrow has gone along with the acceptance of Ampelmann on capitalist grounds; it has achieved success and spread into the west due simply to its functionality. Various other solutions have been considered, such as an all green phase where pedestrians could walk freely through intersections, a timer to go along with pedestrian signals, and an extension of the green phase to give less agile pedestrians time to cross so that they may not be stuck in the middle of the road.³³⁹ Each of these, regardless of their ability to solve traffic related issues, has failed, however, to achieve the same ubiquity, renown and adoration which Ampelmann has obtained. Although these all have the potential of uniting Germans through their common concerns, the discussions regarding these, unlike those surrounding Ampelmann, have remained disjointed, unable to evoke the same zeal and energy. It is thus through his combination of personality and practicality that

Ampelmann has been able to function as a device through which eastern and western

³³⁶ “Hamburg wird Hauptstadt des Grünen Pfeils,” *Die Welt*, July 02, 2002. <http://www.welt.de/print-welt/article397676/Hamburg-wird-Hauptstadt-des-Gruenen-Pfeils.html>

³³⁷ “Wer nicht anhält muss 100 Mark zahlen,” *Berliner Zeitung*, December 07, 1998. <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/archiv/wer-nicht-anhaelt--muss-100-mark-zahlen,10810590,9520734.html>

³³⁸ “Hamburg wird Hauptstadt des Grünen Pfeils,” *Die Welt*, July 02, 2002. <http://www.welt.de/print-welt/article397676/Hamburg-wird-Hauptstadt-des-Gruenen-Pfeils.html>

³³⁹ “Rundum grün soll Unfällen vorbeugen,” *Berliner Zeitung*, January 24, 2012. <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/auto/rundum-gruen-soll-unfaellen-vorbeugen,10808684,11503552.html>

Germans can explore their commonality, reflecting on their pasts and determining what value this has, thus finding security in an increasingly insecure world.

Ampelmann has also achieved a subtle yet significant degree of cultural ubiquity coinciding with his successful importation into the west. This shows the appeal of the figure and speaks to a more understated expression of togetherness. One of the most significant ways in which this has occurred is through the German lexicon. The first outright recognition of this came in 2000 when the Duden dictionary included *Ampelmännchen* among its newest additions.³⁴⁰ This reflects the use of the word not only to identify the figure but as a common expression. Indeed, *Der Spiegel* asserted that visitors to the 2006 FIFA world cup must “feel like the eastern Ampelmann, having to spread out before security officials.”³⁴¹ Another article celebrated the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Wall by listing a series of “phrases only Germans will understand,” including: “The GDR was an illegitimate state (*Unrechtsstaat*)³⁴² but the Ampelmännchen were so sweet!”³⁴³ The use of Ampelmann in such a way appears to further support the role of the figure as a force for inner reunification, creating a common, Ampelmann-inclusive language – a secret known by everyone.

Indeed, Ampelmann’s appeal has broadened as he has entered ever further into German popular culture. The German version of *Who Wants to be a Millionaire?* (*Wer wird Millionär?*) participated in this process, featuring the eastern figure in 2011 with the

³⁴⁰ Mira Gajevic and Cornelia Geissler, “Der Duden wird dicker,” *Berliner Zeitung*, July 26, 2000. <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/archiv/-praezisierung--der-rechtschreibreform--aber-keine-grundlegende-aenderung-der--duden--wird-dicker,10810590,9819450.html>

³⁴¹ Oliver Lück, “WM sicherheit das Risiko heiß Goleo,” *Der Spiegel*, July 07, 2006. <http://www.spiegel.de/sport/fussball/wm-sicherheit-das-risiko-hiess-goleo-a-425623.html>

³⁴² This word has no direct English equivalent; it refers to a state which does not have the right to exist.

³⁴³ Christoph Amend, Matthias Kalle, Matthias Tolz and Tillmann Prüfer, “Phrasenland,” *Die Zeit*, October 08, 2009. <http://www.zeit.de/2009/42/Deutsche-Phrasen-42>

question, “In comparison to his western colleague, the East German Ampelmännchen is: a) well-bred b) assured c) cheerful d) hat-wearing.” The contestant, although earning the sympathy of the news reporter, was incorrect (although 99% of the audience got it), choosing ‘c’ instead of ‘d’.³⁴⁴ Rewe, a popular chain of supermarkets, contributed to this as well, including Ampelmann in its “declaration of love [to Germany] in 180 stickers” where for just 2 Euros, one could get a collection of stickers from “A, for Ampelmännchen to Z for Zoologischer Garten Berlin [the Berlin zoo].”³⁴⁵ The federal government also created a series of stamps featuring Ampelmann.³⁴⁶ One article compared Ampelmann to another well-known figure, the young boy whose face adorned Kinder chocolates for over 30 years.³⁴⁷ Ampelmann, then, has become normalized to an extent shared by few other eastern exports; he has become a symbol not just of the east, but for the country as a whole, showing that something representing eastern values, ideals, and hopes can enter into an otherwise western cultural landscape.

Coinciding with this, the selective reconstruction of Ampelmann, in particular his relationship to his western colleague, has transformed the figure into one emblematic of the German unity many wish for. The two Ampel-figures have recently been featured in a

³⁴⁴ A. Proisinger, “Was für eine Idee,” *Die Welt*, February 07, 2011.

http://www.welt.de/print/die_welt/debatte/article12467955/Was-fuer-eine-Idee.html

³⁴⁵ Richard Kämmerlings, “Deutschland zum Sammeln,” *Die Welt*, April 23, 2013.

http://www.welt.de/print/die_welt/kultur/article115517563/Deutschland-zum-Sammeln.html

³⁴⁶ Franziska Schubert, “Fälscher zocken Pin ab,” *Frankfurter Rundschau*, August 29, 2009. <http://www.fr-online.de/wirtschaft/postdienstleistungen-faelscher-zocken-pin-ab,1472780,3283492.html>

³⁴⁷ Cornelia Geißler, “Das süßeste Lächeln seit es Schokolade gibt,” October 14, 2005. <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/archiv/eine-ikone-der-bundesrepublik-verabschiedet-sich-das-suesseste-laecheln--seit-es-schokolade-gibt,10810590,10327638.html>. Due to his being featured on kinder chocolates for such an extended period of time, and given the West German ties to this chocolate brand, the paper argues that this boy has achieved a degree of recognition similar to the eastern traffic light figure. In contrast, however, Ampelmann remains while the face of kinder chocolate has changed.

theatrical production, called *Hinterm Horizont* by Udo Lindenberg.³⁴⁸ Partway through the show, meant to educate youths about the GDR through a cross-Wall love story, the eastern and western traffic light figures are shown on stage together, dancing as a sign of German unity. This performance elicits an immediate reaction from theatre goers:

when Ampelmännchen runs across the stage...when tears of memory and emotion run from the audience...and when the actor playing Udo says: “Now we just need to fold away the rest of the wall in our heads” then it is clear: For Udo Lindenberg it is not about the Udo Lindenberg musical. It is about East and West Germany and Germany, the eternal fatherland.³⁴⁹

On a similar note, a flag featuring Ampelmann triumphed in a competition entitled, “visions of German Unity,” winning Berlin artist Myriam Lucas the first prize. When providing images to represent the 15th anniversary of German reunification, *Neues Deutschland* also included an image of the eastern and western traffic light figures holding hands.³⁵⁰ A book published in 2004 makes a similar argument, discussing the work remaining to complete German unity on both sides while sporting an Ampelmann on its cover. Commenting on this publication, one reporter stated that the book “bears his [Ampelmann’s] sponsorship.” Yet another article celebrated Ampelmann’s 50th birthday with the compliment that he “does not quite look his age” before boasting that: “indeed he [Ampelmann] is now more than a traffic light figure; he is also a foundation of identity, a bestseller, and a winner of unity.”³⁵¹ Ampelmann, and his success in both the east and west, has then become, for many, a symbol for German unity. This has been

³⁴⁸ Kristian Schulze, “Hammer und Sichel in Ehrenkranz,” *Die Zeit*, October 31, 2013.

<http://blog.zeit.de/ost/2013/01/31/hammer-und-sichel-im-ehrenkranz/>

³⁴⁹ Stefan Kuzmany, “Lindenberg Musikal Alles unterm Udo Hut,” *Der Spiegel*, January 14, 2011.

<http://www.spiegel.de/kultur/musik/lindenberg-musikal-alles-unterm-udo-hut-a-739417.html>

³⁵⁰ “Männchen mit Vision,” *Berliner Zeitung*, October 06, 2001. <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/archiv/maennchen-mit-vision,10810590,9941196.html>

³⁵¹ “Das Ost-Ampelmannchen wird 50,” *Berliner Zeitung*, October 11, 2011. <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/auto/das-ost-ampelmaennchen-wird-50,10808684,10992006.html>

aided on several fronts: by his privileged status amongst eastern exports, by his ability to open lines of communication along common concerns, and through his entrance into German mass culture.

Ampelmann is not, however, as is frequently pointed out by Germans of all persuasions, a panacea to the problems still facing German unity. The responses of Germans on both sides point to several key limitations of Ampelmann and his ability to represent and forge inner unity. The most common among these concerns is also perhaps the most simple; many, although not necessarily lamenting the success of Ampelmann, express a desire that Germany could have, in the words of CDU member Thomas de Maiziere, “adopted a bit more than Ampelmännchen or the green arrow” from the GDR.³⁵² The federal government voiced a similar complaint, implementing education programs across the country to teach students about the GDR so that “the memory of the GDR won’t simply be based off of Ampelmann and Trabis.”³⁵³ Others point out that Ampelmann, although perhaps the most popular thing left over from the GDR, is not alone as many suggest a visit to the Stasi prison Hohenschönhausen as an antidote to Ampelmann-centric history. “The GDR,” in the words of another article, “was not a land

³⁵² “Merkel lobt den Mut der Ostdeutschen zur Einheit,” *Die Welt*, August 31, 2010. <http://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article9315972/Merkel-lobt-den-Mut-der-Ostdeutschen-zur-Einheit.html>

³⁵³ Renate Oschlies, “Jeder Fünfte wünscht sich die Mauer zurück,” *Berliner Zeitung*, September 09, 2004. <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/archiv/nach-15-jahren-sind-die-erinnerungen-an-die-alltagsprobleme-in-der-ddr-verblassen-jeder-fuenfte-wuenscht-sich-die-mauer-zurueck,10810590,10211272.html>

of Ampelmann but a dictatorship.”³⁵⁴ The director of the Stasi archives agreed, saying that Ampelmann memory threatens to turn “the GDR into Disneyland.”³⁵⁵

Other concerns surrounding Ampelmann express disdain for his commercialization, question his ability to act as a figure of more than a surface-level unity, and even reject the post-Wall status he has obtained. The first of these concerns is the most frequently vocalized, particularly by those who point out the crippling irony of commodifying a figure from a socialist country. *Neues Deutschland* made such a point in 2005, expressing dislike for both the western and eastern traffic light figures before arguing that the latter “ought not to be a commodity but rather something owned by the eastern community.” Unfortunately, the article lamented, Ampelmann “needs to carry his hat to market.”³⁵⁶ On a similar note, one paper pointed out many shops which violate laws demanding they close on Sundays by selling souvenir items such as Ampelmann T-shirts. Here, Ampelmann represents nothing more than a legal loophole.³⁵⁷ Others have focused on the inability of Ampelmann to make significant changes; one author, addressing the problems integrating Muslims into German society, suggested that “after the completely failed integration of the easterners, they [westerners] should perhaps try with Muslims. Do Muslims have something like an Ampelmann in their culture? We could introduce

³⁵⁴ Thomas Rogalia, “Ungezogene Aufarbeitung,” *Berliner Zeitung*, September 10, 2004. <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/archiv/schulsenator-boeger-will-mehr-ddr-geschichte-im-unterricht---aber-keine-indoktrination-ungezwungene-aufarbeitung,10810590,10211610.html>

³⁵⁵ “Die DDR wird zum Disneyland,” *Der Tagesspiegel*, August 01, 2004. <http://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/die-ddr-wird-zum-disneyland/535896.html>

³⁵⁶ Mathias Wedel, “Die Haut zu Markte,” *Neues Deutschland*, June 09, 2005. <https://www.neues-deutschland.de/artikel/73057.ampelmaennchen-die-haut-zu-markte.html?sstr=ampelm%E4nnchen>

³⁵⁶ Ansbert Kneip, “Gefühlte Einheit,” *Der Spiegel*, June 13, 2005. <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-40712938.html>

³⁵⁷ “Sonntags Nicht,” *Neues Deutschland*, November 01, 2011. <http://www.neues-deutschland.de/artikel/210066.sonntags-nicht.html?sstr=ampelm%E4nnchen>

one.”³⁵⁸ This scathing assault attempts to point out the perceived emptiness which the success of Ampelmann represents; by arguing that German-German integration failed, and by suggesting that an Ampelmann-like figure simply be made up for another group, the author questions the authenticity and effectiveness of Ampelmann as a symbol while emphasizing the foreignness of the east.

Several other sources speak to this same point. *Berliner Zeitung* typified this in a 1998 article beginning with an all too common question; “What is left from the GDR?” The list, as ever, is regrettably small and specifically focused: “Trabants, Ampelmännchen, the green arrow and Rotkäppchen sekt.”³⁵⁹ Of these, Ampelmann is the one most typically selected for criticism, particularly because he represents the GDR in an ideological, personified, and thus more widely accepted way. Although many criticise Trabant enthusiasts as misrepresenting the GDR, none refer to this version of the GDR as a “Trabant dictatorship” or a history with “driving Trabants” as they do with the hat wearer who represents an “Ampelmann dictatorship” or a history with “jumping Ampelmännchen.”³⁶⁰ It is Ampelmann’s likability and success, along with the hopes and values transposed upon him, which elicit this response. Ampelmann’s privileged position as one of the few exports from the GDR to survive comes as both a blessing – allowing for the figure to succeed and be valued more than he would otherwise be – as well as a curse – arraying against the figure scorn which he might not receive if the post-Wall landscape was not so empty of eastern icons. Although Ampelmann can help to work

³⁵⁸ Mathias Wedel, “So ein Tag so wunderschön,” *Neues Deutschland*, October 05, 2010. <http://www.neues-deutschland.de/artikel/181155.so-ein-tag-so-wunderschoen.html?sstr=ampelm%E4nnchen>

³⁵⁹ Peter Ensikat, “Die Spur der Broiler,” February 05, 1998. <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/archiv/die-spur-der-broiler,10810590,9393718.html>

³⁶⁰ Bodo Mrozek, “Ich will eine Insel sein,” *Der Tagesspiegel*, September 10, 2004. <http://www.tagesspiegel.de/kultur/ich-will-eine-insel-sein/546044.html>

towards the ideals which the most passionate Ampel-enthusiasts envision, and can serve as a means through which east and west can communicate, appreciate, and understand each other on acceptable terms, he cannot do everything.

Conclusion

The integration of Ampelmann into the western milieu is not simply a narrative of western exploitation and commodification but instead a more complex process through which eastern values and memory are adapted to present situations in order to create the image of a usable capitalism and open previously closed lines of communications between east and west. Rather than passive, docile, and tactless victims of a structure they do not comprehend, easterners are actively engaged in meeting with, adapting to, and combating the challenges of western capitalism. In so doing, they not only are reforming the image of their traffic light figure, but also creating a usable present where the systems which form their new society are not arrayed, terrifyingly, against them, but rather appear friendly, safe, and even desirable. This adaptation is not limited to merely making some carefully picked elements of the capitalist system compatible with the memory of state socialism. Indeed by adopting western values, easterners have perhaps earned the approval, recognition, and acceptance of their western countrymen, allowing their figure to be judged on its own merits and to spread underneath the former boundaries of the Iron Curtain into the heart of the west itself.

By accepting the socialist Ampelmännchen, westerners have assessed him not just on their own terms by focusing on the practical aspects of the figure but have also validated eastern arguments centring around the 'cuteness' and 'likability' of the hat wearing

guardian. This acceptance, along with the adapted ideological ethos surrounding Ampelmann, may have furthered the project for internal German unity by giving Germans on both sides of the old border the ability to assess and appreciate each other in terms they can understand. Ampelmann is not, however, a panacea for the innumerable problems which plague the Berlin Republic. Indeed, many see the figure less as a means through which past trauma and experience can be used towards the forging of a more acceptable future but rather as a tool of naivety at best or outright distortion at worst. These voices, polarized along the lines of the nostalgic and anti-nostalgic, are, however, in the minority. By focusing on selected aspects of Ampelmann's commodification, East Germans have reconstructed the capitalist present, proposing improvements influenced by their socialist past. By providing a point at which eastern and western values can converge, Ampelmann has perhaps furthered German unity by giving those on both sides of the former divide the opportunity to understand and appreciate each other on their own terms.

Chapter 4: Ampelmann Goes Global

If one were to wander curiously into the Ampelmann store on Unter den Linden just past Berlin's Pariser Platz, one is likely to find a small booklet entitled, *Ampelmann Reise Durch Japan* (Ampelmann Journeys through Japan). This colourful booklet tells the story of a green sponge Ampelmann and his adventures in Japan. With text in both German and Japanese, Ampelmann is shown playing with a small child on a Japanese street crossing, telling her: "Come! I will help you cross the street" when she picks him up (see appendix 4).³⁶¹ Through the rest of this publication, Ampelmann visits Japanese spas, samples the goods at Japanese stores and visits famous landmarks such as the Golden Temple in Kyoto, Mount Fuji, and even one of Central Berlin's sister cities, Tsuwano.³⁶² Amidst photos of the green Ampelmann and locals mimicking his pose, he can also be seen greeting his Japanese traffic light colleague: "Hello colleague, I see that you also wear a hat."³⁶³ The pamphlet ends as Ampelmann declares: "Japan was fun, but now I have to see what's going on at home"³⁶⁴ and his red counterpart, holding a suitcase, says "Matane!" (Goodbye!).³⁶⁵

This pamphlet, assembled during a 2010 trip by a group from Ampelmann GmbH, appears at first to be an unusual artifact.³⁶⁶ It seems at the very least odd that the eastern traffic light figure would make a journey abroad, let alone to a distant capitalist country which East Germans would not have even been able to visit during the GDR era. A description in the back raises even more questions:

³⁶¹ Ampelmann GmbH, *Ampelmann Reise Durch Japan*, 2010, 4.

³⁶² *Ibid.*, 24, 20, 27.

³⁶³ *Ibid.*, 38.

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 40.

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, back cover.

³⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 41.

In October 2010, the Ampelmann sponge, along with his bosses, went on a business trip to Japan. The occasion was a presentation at the German embassy in Tokyo on October 3rd. Those who came along for the trip then set out to look at potential locations for the first Ampelmann shop in the country, and to obtain an impression of the local culture. Everywhere we photographed Ampelmann the Japanese were quite pleased to be there.³⁶⁷

Understanding just why an Ampelmann shop opened in Tokyo shortly after the 2010 trip, why the Japanese were so excited to meet the East German traffic light figure and why, given all of this, a colourful pamphlet was made to document the experience helps to explain yet another way Ampelmann has been used to make the modern world appear accepting, appreciative, and friendly to easterners who may otherwise see globalization as cold, alienating, and destructive.

Part of the appeal of this pamphlet can be explained by East Germans' experiences of vacationing in the GDR and the gap between principle and practice with regard to vacationing in post-Wall Germany. Holidays, much like all leisure activities in the GDR, revolved around patterns distinctly different from those in the capitalist West. The overwhelming majority of vacations were state organized, either through trade unions or through the state travel agency.³⁶⁸ These vacations were cheap, providing access to fresh air and leisure facilities, and surprisingly widespread with as much as 80% of the population vacationing every year by the 1980s.³⁶⁹ But these holidays were also characterized by poor or insufficient facilities, and choice destinations were reserved for those in the upper echelons of the GDR's *de facto* class system. Opportunities for those with special requirements, such as diabetics, were also severely limited. The choice of destinations was restricted: only around 20% of vacationers left the GDR, and those that

³⁶⁷ Ampelmann GmbH, *Ampelmann Reise Durch Japan*, 41.

³⁶⁸ Mary Fulbrook, *The People's State*, 77.

³⁶⁹ Fulbrook, *The People's State*, 78. In spite of the volume of East Germans who vacationed during the GDR period, the choice of destination even within the Eastern Bloc was quite limited.

did generally visited neighbouring Eastern Bloc countries.³⁷⁰ This contrasts with the opportunities available in capitalist society. Theoretically, east Germans are now free to vacation wherever they wish although, given the various economic issues still facing the new states, many cannot afford to do so. On one level then, *Ampelmann Reise Durch Japan* can be seen as a sort of wish fulfillment, superseding the limitations in place in both the GDR and in the Berlin Republic. But this is not the only explanation.

Indeed, in much the same way that Ampelmann has been used to recast the GDR past and the westernized present, he has also been used, primarily by easterners but also by those in the west, to reconstruct the image of a rapidly globalizing world. He reshapes the world into one which can appreciate east German values, communicate globally on familiar terms, and be understandable to those who could once only dream about poking out from under the Iron Curtain. This process, which began surprisingly early in the post-Wall Ampelmann narrative, has its roots in the tourist culture surrounding Berlin in particular as Ampelmann's popularity as a souvenir and figure of the streets permitted fluid interactions between visitors and local culture. Problems arose from this as Ampelmann's image, as perceived by tourists, has developed a particularly Berlin-centric bias, resulting in the 'Berlinification' of the East German figure.³⁷¹ Nevertheless, the responses of easterners, conflated with those of peoples around the world, has allowed for Ampelmann to represent a friendly, welcoming vision of globalization by working to resolve the natural conflict between local and global by making the local global. Ampelmann's journey outside of the east has expanded in rapid, unexpected ways as the

³⁷⁰ Fulbrook, *The People's State*, 78.

³⁷¹ This is a term which I will be using in this chapter to describe the process through which Ampelmann has become synonymous with the city of Berlin above and beyond his actual presence in the city, thus neglecting his status across the east more generally.

traffic light figure makes his mark on the traffic lights and symbolic landscapes of the world. Ampelmann has thus managed to reconstruct and export the GDR's past and its perceived values across the world while simultaneously providing an antidote to the pangs of globalization by presenting an alternative where the world appears to look to the east with an understanding, appreciative, and accepting gaze, even if Ampelmann's "cuteness" is his main attraction.

Much like the adoption of capitalist arguments in support of Ampelmann, the internationalization of the traffic light figure began quite early in his post-Wall career. Elements of this were already present in the 1997 publication *Das Buch vom Ampelmännchen* as a result of the committee's online presence. A concerned citizen of Papua-New Guinea contributed a letter to the book, declaring that the elimination of Ampelmann lights "...cannot seriously be in the interests of a society which is so fraught with problems."³⁷² Other "internet pedestrians" of which there were about 50,000, agreed.³⁷³ One visitor to the website from the United Kingdom left a message declaring that: "I can't understand a word of this, as I don't speak German. But if, as I suspect, it is a campaign to save the little men on the street crossing, then I am all in favour."³⁷⁴

Another visitor from Denmark had big dreams for the little figure, writing:

To whom it may concern, I would like to express my support for Das Ampelmännchen. He's the most human of traffic-lights and in my humble opinion he should be used as a standard in the European Community. For kinder and gentler traffic!³⁷⁵

³⁷² Heckhausen, *Das Buch*, 10.

³⁷³ Almut Schröter, "Das Buch vom Ampelmännchen," *Neues Deutschland*, July 22, 1998. <http://www.neues-deutschland.de/artikel/722119.das-buch-vom-ampelmaennchen.html?sstr=ampelm%E4nnchen>

³⁷⁴ Heckhausen, *Das Buch*, 59.

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 61.

A fold out in the back of the book contributes to Ampelmann's internationalization as well, depicting the East German Ampelmann alongside his colleagues from West Germany, Belgium, Poland, Canada and even the new 'West German' Euromann, among others.³⁷⁶

Other early articles reveal similar trends. Several sources refer to one of the founders of the committee, Jörg Davids, in response to the planned removal of Ampelmann lights in eastern Berlin. Appalled by the suggestions made by the European Union that Ampelmann "cannot be integrated into the new codex [for traffic lights],"³⁷⁷ Davids revealed plans to appeal to the whole of Europe in order to save the figure, while simultaneously drawing on an international, socialist spirit, under the slogan, "Traffic light figures of the world, unite!"³⁷⁸ In 1998 Ampelmann even managed to make it into the *New York Times*, which ran an article on him declaring that he "has even arrived in the United States where Ampelmann key chains are sold in design stores like Moss in SoHo."³⁷⁹ It then goes on to explain that Ampelmann "has really struck a chord in Germany... East Germans had the lamp man drilled into their heads from Kindergarten on. Oddly, West Germans love the lamp man, too."³⁸⁰ Next, the author describes the appeal of the figure saying that Ampelmann "is a symbol of a simpler, happier past. He is a relic from an inhumane regime that in retrospect seems in some ways more human than

³⁷⁶ Heckhausen, *Das Buch*, 70-75.

³⁷⁷ "Heimliches Wappen der DDR," *Der Spiegel*, January 06, 1997. <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-8649686.html>

³⁷⁸ Hans-Jürgen Neßnau, "Ampelmännchen, vereinigt euch!," *Neues Deutschland*, January 16, 1997. <https://www.neues-deutschland.de/artikel/643486.ampelmaennchen-vereinigt-euch.html?sstr=ampelm%E4nnchen>

³⁷⁹ Phil Patton, "Public Eye; Little Man With a Past," *The New York Times*, May 21, 1998. <http://www.nytimes.com/1998/05/21/garden/public-eye-little-man-with-a-past.html>

³⁸⁰ Ibid.

the capitalist regime East Germans have joined.”³⁸¹ The globalization of Ampelmann comes out here, too, as the author declares that defending Ampelmann is the same as “[defending] local dishes against McDonald’s” and that “The conflict between Euro and regional is part of the wider conflict between global and local.” The piece concludes with amazing foresight, arguing that:

The common currencies, common markets and common products of the global economy promise to make us all richer but not necessarily happier. The more people are asked to reason globally, it seems, the more they are driven to feel locally.³⁸²

Ampelmann’s internationalization thus began surprisingly early on. From the start, Ampel-advocates put their struggle into an international context, drawing support and inspiration from pedestrians around the world while using Ampelmann against the forces of globalization, winning international recognition and praise along the way.

This process continued over the following years, with tourism playing an increasingly significant role. The most powerful force in this domain has been, as one might expect, the series of souvenir stores run by Markus Heckhausen, as well as others that sell Ampelmann products, often from Ampelmann GmbH but occasionally not. Since the popularization of Ampelmann through the Ampelmann stores, he has become at once one of the most popular, resented, beloved, and emblematic symbols in the tourism sector. This has taken place particularly in Berlin where, according to *Der Tagesspiegel*, shops make 18% of their revenue off of tourists (other major cities, by comparison, can attribute 10-15% to this).³⁸³ As a result of their popularity, Ampelmann goods have become

³⁸¹ Phil Patton, “Public Eye; Little Man With a Past,” *The New York Times*, May 21, 1998.
<http://www.nytimes.com/1998/05/21/garden/public-eye-little-man-with-a-past.html>

³⁸² Ibid.

³⁸³ Dorothee Schmidt, “Bei der Koffer Platz,” *Der Tagesspiegel* December 05, 2006.
<http://www.tagesspiegel.de/zeitung/bis-der-koffer-platz/782754.html>

stereotypical for Berlin tourists. Sometimes this is presented positively, with some depicting Ampelmann as a “classic” purchase for visitors while others grudgingly admit that the typical Berlin tourist would “have Ampelmann merchandise with them.”³⁸⁴ As a result, Ampelmann is often one of the aspects of Germany which makes the most significant impression upon visitors. One journalist from the UK referred to the figure as “a gentle historical allusion at the traffic lights.”³⁸⁵ Another visitor from California, while showing off his bag of Ampelmann sweets, mentioned how a German friend told him that: “Eastern traffic light figures are now taking over the west and that they are quite excited about this.”³⁸⁶ On a school trip, a group of students from the UK were so excited by Ampelmann that their teacher complained that “at every crossing we have to stop to take photos.”³⁸⁷

Some more well-known visitors to the country have also expressed their fondness for the eastern figure. While filming in Berlin, director Steven Spielberg was seen wearing an Ampelmann t-shirt.³⁸⁸ A Mexican Opera singer of Austrian decent, Ronaldo Villazon, also revealed his affection for Ampelmann, pointing the traffic light man out as one of the first things he saw during his visit to Berlin and including Ampelmann among the things

³⁸⁴ Stefanie Paul, “Hip ist, wo Berlin draufsteht,” *Berliner Zeitung* September 03, 2010. <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/archiv/touristen-suchen-ihre-souvenirs-nicht-nur-nach-dem-preis-aus---besonders-beliebt--mauerstuecke-hip-ist--wo-berlin-draufsteht,10810590,10742232.html>; Daniela Pogade, “Rätsel Tollkofferträger,” *Berliner Zeitung*, August 26, 2010. <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/archiv/raetsel-rollkoffertraeger,10810590,10738604.html>

³⁸⁵ Mark Espiner, “Kulturcheck – ein Londoner testet Berlin, heute: Ampelmännchen und Volksbühne,” *Der Tagesspiegel*, November 28, 2008. <http://www.tagesspiegel.de/kultur/taegliche-serie-folge-4-kulturcheck-ein-londoner-testet-berlin-heute-ampelmaennchen-und-volksbuehne/1383972.html>

³⁸⁶ Constanze Haase, “Mit Senf im Koffer,” *Berliner Zeitung*, August 09, 2005. <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/archiv/der-berliner-baer-hat-ausgedient---immer-mehr-touristen-nehmen-lebensmittel-als-souvenirs-mit-mit-senf-im-koffer-ueber-den-grossen-teich,10810590,10308932.html>

³⁸⁷ Brenda Strohmaier, “Viele Gedenkstätten und billige Eiskrem,” *Berliner Zeitung*, March 19, 2005. <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/archiv/worueber-englische-teenager-60-jahre-nach-kriegsende-bei-ihrer-berlin-visite-so-staunen-viele-gedenkstaetten-und-billige-eiskrem,10810590,10268370.html>

³⁸⁸ Maxim Leo, “Zeitreise mit Blanchett und Clooney,” *Berliner Zeitung*, February 10, 2007. <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/archiv/steven-soderbergh-wollte-einen-film-machen-wie-vor-sechzig-jahren--nur-seine-stars-stoeren-ihn-dabei-zeitreise-mit-blanchett-und-clooney,10810590,10454790.html>

which “look just like from my textbooks!”³⁸⁹ More recently, reporters spotted the first daughters of the United States, Malia and Sasha Obama, enjoying an Ampel-experience. Accompanied by a substantial security outfit, the two visited the Potsdamer Platz Arkaden (a mall in central Berlin).³⁹⁰ “The Obama daughters” in the words of one article

did not get to enjoy Berlin like normal tourists...they did, however, get a break from their otherwise serious schedule of visiting the Holocaust Memorial and the Berlin Wall Memorial to visit the Potsdamer Platz Arkaden. There are thousands of malls like it in the USA but they did get to visit one store which there probably is not in the US: the Ampelmann store which is loved by tourists from around the world.³⁹¹

Malia was seen leaving the Ampelmann store with “an Ampelmann bag filled with Berlin souvenirs” including an Ampelmann key chain, a black hat and a Berlin T-shirt.³⁹² Eastern interpretations of Ampelmann’s international adoration reflect a desire already seen in the western response to Ampelmann’s success. Here, the figure itself and, by extension, the eastern ideals he has come to represent, are shown to have a value which tourists from around the world can appreciate. Rather than being cast off as an ancient relic or otherwise diminished by globalization, Ampelmann is instead frequently portrayed as a victor in the struggle to win the hearts of international pedestrians.

The role and authenticity of Ampelmann as an object of tourist adoration has, however, occasionally been brought into question. One shop owner from Heidelberg, whose shop includes Ampelmann merchandise among its wares, mentioned the popularity of the figure with Japanese tourists, stating that: “the tourists often do not

³⁸⁹ Frederik Hanssen, “Hommage an die Heimat,” *Die Zeit*, September 15, 2010.

<http://www.zeit.de/kultur/musik/2010-09/rolando-villazon-mexiko>

³⁹⁰ “Abflug aus Obama City,” *Kölner Stadt Anzeiger*, June 19, 2013. <http://www.ksta.de/politik/chronik-obama-in-berlin-abflug-aus-obama-city,15187246,23433530.html>

³⁹¹ “Ampelmännchen für die Präsidenten Mädchen,” *Berliner Zeitung*, June 20, 2013. <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/jfk-in-berlin-obama-toechter-ampelmaennchen-fuer-die-praesidenten-maedchen,23269764,23473008.html>

³⁹² Ibid.

understand the language and have just a little time on their vacation so they enjoy buying whatever they want from one place.”³⁹³ This implies that these people buy Ampelmann products not because of experience with or understanding of the figure, but instead because his merchandise is simply there and is intrinsically appealing. Markus Heckhausen admitted something similar, saying that: “tourists are absolutely crazy for the small Ampelmann with the round nose. They think that he is the typical Berlin Ampelmann, they don’t know the eastern history at all.”³⁹⁴ The merchandising manager for Humboldt University, commenting on tourists who buy Humboldt t-shirts, agreed, declaring that: “it is far better than a dumb Ampelmännchen.”³⁹⁵ The popularization of Ampelmann as an object of tourist desire has not always been an expression of appreciation for his easternness. Nevertheless, his popularity still shows a value which can be ascribed to eastern ideas; when faced with the often intimidating forces of globalization, the local does not always have to be subjugated.

A peculiarity which has arisen from the popularity of Ampelmann as a tourist icon is his Berlinification. Although Ampelmann began in Berlin, with the first light on Unter den Linden Boulevard, his image could be seen across the GDR, both before and after the fall of the Wall. Indeed, as we have already seen, other areas, such as Thuringia, moved more quickly in defense of the eastern figure than did the German capital.³⁹⁶ Despite this, the popularity of Ampelmann as a tourist figure has resulted in his automatic

³⁹³ Kurt F. de Swaaf, “Heidelberg Real existierende Romantik,” *Der Spiegel*, February 02, 2009. <http://www.spiegel.de/reise/europa/heidelberg-real-existierende-romantik-a-604159.html>

³⁹⁴ Claudia Wittke-Gaida, “Geliebte Männchen,” *Berliner Kurier*, October 07 2001. <http://www.berliner-kurier.de/archiv/geliebte-maennchen,8259702,8138392.html>

³⁹⁵ Georg Etscheit, “Im Hemd von Humboldt,” *Die Zeit*, March 20, 2009. <http://www.zeit.de/2009/14/C-Unimarketing>

³⁹⁶ “Heimliches Wappen der DDR,” *Der Spiegel*, January 06, 1997. <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-8649686.html>

identification with Berlin, its culture, and its streetscape. Ampelmann's Berlinification began with the Ampelmann stores themselves. Although Ampelmann goods can be found across the country, such as the shop in Heidelberg mentioned earlier, all five Ampelmann stores in the country are located in Berlin. Furthermore, a great deal of the Ampelmann goods available there are associated with Berlin. The shops sell, for example, a postcard featuring a stork carrying the red and green Ampelmann proclaiming that Berlin is "the birthplace of the East German Ampelmann" (see appendix 5).³⁹⁷ A different postcard features Ampelmann standing in front of the Berlin skyline, in another one he walks alongside a stylized TV tower.³⁹⁸ There is, then, a great deal of paraphernalia suggesting a connection between Berlin and Ampelmann which excludes the traffic light figures' easternness more generally.

Many artistic and cultural representations support the connection between Ampelmann and Berlin. The Blue Man Group's first European show in Berlin, for example, featured Ampelmann alongside the Brandenburg Gate as part of their desire not to simply import their American show.³⁹⁹ Another theatrical production depicted the life of a disgruntled Ampelmann. This show, entitled "Green boys – the traffic light is not enough" opened in Berlin's Admiralpalast and tells the story of the eastern traffic light figure who has had enough of his light and decides to break free on a journey of discovery through Berlin.⁴⁰⁰ An Ampelmann store has also been chosen to do business in

³⁹⁷ Ampelmann GmbH, *Die Geburtsstadt*, postcard.

³⁹⁸ Ampelmann GmbH, *Ampelmann in Berlin*, postcard. Art Domino Berlin, *Berlin: Ampelmann und Fernsehturm*, postcard. The TV tower is an iconic East Berlin landmark located in Alexanderplatz, Berlin.

³⁹⁹ Gabriele Isringhausen, "Blue Man Group," *Berliner Kurier*, May 02, 2004. <http://www.berliner-kurier.de/archiv/blue-man-group--show-der-superlative-am-potsdamer-platz-mach-mal-blau-,8259702,4166568.html>

⁴⁰⁰ "Zu gutter Letzt," *Die Welt*, September 25, 2013.

http://www.welt.de/print/die_welt/vermishtes/article120358649/Zu-guter-Letzt.html

a large shopping complex in the Berlin Brandenburg Airport meant to showcase local goods.⁴⁰¹ One article lamented that many locals and long-time residents no longer appreciated the beauty of Berlin: “The people who realise this [the beauty of the city],” by contrast, “are those who notice Ampelmann, begin to walk across the street but then go back, smiling to take a photo of him with their camera.”⁴⁰²

More commonly, Ampelmann is depicted as emblematic of the city and its former division. On this note, one article focused on Berlin’s Rosa-Luxembourg street where a signal on the corner depicted both the eastern and western figures.⁴⁰³ A *Berliner Zeitung* writer advised that the eastern parts of the city could be identified by the “green, cheery Ampelmann with the hat” whereas the west contained a figure that “...marches straightforward without head movements, but is strong like a Bundeswehr soldier.”⁴⁰⁴ As a result, the replacement of western lights with the eastern figure, while generally positively received, has occasionally been met with disapproval as “it reduces the visibility of the two former halves of city, particularly to tourists who may be interested in the history of the city.”⁴⁰⁵ Indeed, this last point may very well impact the experience of tourists given the disappearance of many other distinguishing features of Berlin’s former division. The distinction between the two figures was a common tip for those

⁴⁰¹ Peter Neumann, “Gurkenlikör und Bio-Currywurst,” *Berliner Zeitung*, October 22, 2010. <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/archiv/in-den-geschaeften-des-neuen-flughafens-wird-es-viele-regionale-angebote-geben-gurkenlikoer-und-bio-currywurst,10810590,10750172.html>

⁴⁰² Clausia Fuchs, “Die Fremden,” *Berliner Zeitung*, September 21, 2010. <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/archiv/die-fremden,10810590,10744102.html>

⁴⁰³ Bettina Friedenber, “Ampel-männchen West und Ost zum ersten Mal vereint,” *Berliner Kurier*, July 14, 2007. <http://www.berliner-kurier.de/archiv/ampel-maennchen-west-und-ost-zum-ersten-mal-vereint,8259702,8101308.html>

⁴⁰⁴ Rolf Liebold, “Neue Grüne Welle,” *Berliner Zeitung*, 06 10 1994. <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/archiv/neue-gruene-welle-auf-der-frankfurter-allee-mit-kinderkrankheiten---26-minuten-bis-hoppegarten--auf-berlins-strassen-soll-es-flotter-vorangehen---aber-nicht-fuer-alle-zwei-verschiedene-ampelmaennchen,10810590,8874350.html>

⁴⁰⁵ Guido Korzonnek, “Eine Frage der Identität,” *Berliner Zeitung* February 12, 2008. <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/archiv/eine-frage-der-identitaet,10810590,10538440.html>

wishing to know which side of the former Wall they were on: “if it’s wearing a hat, you’re in the east” advised one commenter in response to a *Guardian* article.⁴⁰⁶

Nevertheless, the Berlinification of Ampelmann, although lacking any sense of subtlety, seems to have gone largely unnoticed. Focusing on Ampelmann’s connection with Berlin to the exclusion of his relationship to the east more generally is problematic. Ampelmann’s Berlinification shows that as he becomes a figure of globalization he is beginning to lose the easternness and sense of eastern unity which helped save him and spread his popularity. Nevertheless, tourists, much like the smiling people in *Ampelmann Journeys through Japan*, have become a way through which easterners focus on the love for and value of their figure in the eyes of people from around the world.

East Germans have also used Ampelmann to make globalization and the world at large appear smiling, friendly and welcoming. This process, as we have already seen, began quite early as the Save the Ampelmännchen Committee globalized the movement to save their beloved figure by drawing in international supporters through the internet and situating their Ampelmann within a worldwide context of traffic light figures.⁴⁰⁷ This representation expanded rapidly in the 21st Century as the Ampelmann stores began to sell postcards, posters and other paraphernalia placing Ampelmann among his worldwide

⁴⁰⁶ Matthew Tempest, “The Berlin Wall 15 Years On,” *The Guardian*, November 09, 2009.
http://blogs.theguardian.com/news/archives/world_news/2004/11/the_berlin_wall_15_years_on.html

⁴⁰⁷ Helfried Liebsch, “Parteiauftrag für das Ampelmännchen,” *Neues Deutschland*, July 16, 1998.
<https://www.neues-deutschland.de/artikel/721086.parteiauftrag-fuer-das-ampelmaennchen.html?sstr=ampelm%E4nnchen>

comrades.⁴⁰⁸ One poster, depicting the eastern figure alongside light people from Mallorca, Cuba, China, and several other countries, sums up the thrust of these images:

Regardless of which land one visits they are everywhere and bring us safely across the street: The Ampelmännchen. Whether thick or thin, elegant or awkward, by themselves or in a pair, with hat or pants; they are so different, just like the people for whom they work. Ampelmann [GmbH] presents here a small sample of the worldwide colleagues of the East German Ampelmännchen.⁴⁰⁹

This shows a significant shift in the Ampelmann narrative; whereas earlier he was in competition with his western colleague, now they stand together, part of a red-and-green coalition of traffic light figures of all conceivable shapes and sizes. Ampelmann is able to walk among these, an equal surrounded by a world of brightly lit, friendly, and unique colleagues (see appendix 6). Other products portray similar images, although sometimes with a more competitive tone; one postcard shows a globe with running green men and a red one in the centre declaring: “Go north, east, south or west, ‘Berlin-Ampelmännchen’ are the best”⁴¹⁰ (see appendix 7). Ampelmann products thus portray a world which is understandable – one where traffic light figures watch over the patterns of daily life and direct, in their own special way, the peoples of the world who are united in their crossing of streets, if nothing else.

Ampelmann’s globalization, however, extends well beyond the products of the Ampelmann stores. Indeed, numerous East German publications have idealized Ampelmann’s globalization. Upon the construction of a new Ampelmann restaurant in Berlin serving Italian food, one paper went on to describe how “the colours of

⁴⁰⁸ These products are truly numerous; many depict Ampelmann amongst his worldwide comrades, such as the poster mentioned below and a smaller, postcard sized version while another shows Ampelmann next to his Japanese counterparts declaring: “You guys in Berlin?”

⁴⁰⁹ Ampelmann GmbH, *World Wide Ampelmann*, poster.

⁴¹⁰ Ampelmann GmbH, *Die Ampelwelt*, postcard.

Ampelmann go quite well with the Italian flag,” saying that the restaurant will include “bread baked in stone ovens, handmade pasta and, of course, Ampelmann noodles.”

“There is even,” the author described “a special table in the front of the restaurant for children.”⁴¹¹ Another discussed an international running competition held in Berlin in 2009. After multiple false starts, the attention of those watching was drawn to the red East German Ampelmann being used to guide the runners. “Now,” the paper stated, “the GDR-greeting has spread through the world from the Olympic Stadium.”⁴¹² The Vancouver Olympics also became part of this narrative; one article referred to the mascot for the events, Inuksuk, as a “type of Ampelmann,” as it “showed native Canadians the way.”⁴¹³ There is a problem with this, however, as the article asserts that Inuksuk “was not a symbol used by aboriginal peoples in that area, but rather in the north. Totem poles were more common in the Vancouver area.”⁴¹⁴ In a less conventional comparison, one author referred to a female North Korean traffic officer given a Hero of Labour award by Kim Jong Un as “Kim’s Ampelfrau.”⁴¹⁵

West Germans have joined in the internationalization of Ampelmann as well. *Die Welt*, for example, described the similarities between Berlin and Seoul, saying that “Although Seoul lays 8000 kilometers from Berlin, there is still quite a lot in the South Korean Capital which reminds one of the German metropolis,” including Ampelmann,

⁴¹¹ Sabine Nöbel, “Der Ampelmann hat nun auch ein Lokal,” *Berliner Zeitung*, June 26, 2008.

<http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/archiv/der-ampelmann-hat-nun-auch-ein-lokal,10810590,10568702.html>

⁴¹² Jürgen Holz, “DDR Gruß Weltweit,” *Neues Deutschland*, August 22, 2009. <http://www.neues-deutschland.de/artikel/154432.ddd-gruss-weltweit.html?sstr=ampelm%E4nnchen>

⁴¹³ Jörg Michel, “Eine Art Ampelmännchen,” *Berliner Zeitung*, February 17, 2010. <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/archiv/wird-schon-schiefgehen---olympische-winterspiele-erfordern-geduld-und-improvisationskunst--was-passiert--wenn-das-eis-zu-weich-wird--die-maschinen-streiken-und-ploetzlich-die-narzissen-bluehen--eine-art-ampelmaennchen,10810590,10699460.html>

⁴¹⁴ Ibid.

⁴¹⁵ Bernhard Bartsch, “Kims Ampelfrau,” *Berliner Zeitung*, May 10, 2013. <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/politik/nordkorea--kims-ampelfrau--,10808018,22724876.html>

buddy bears and currywurst.⁴¹⁶ The scholars responsible for the study out of Bremen's Jacob University also participated in the internationalization of the eastern figure, planning another study to "prove the effectiveness of the European Ampelmann," which meant, according to one paper: "to recommend the eastern Ampelmann across Europe."⁴¹⁷ In this way, Ampelmann has become a tool with which easterners and Germans as a whole can understand and analyze the world at large. These narratives do not focus on what sets different places apart but rather the shared concerns and traffic light figures which bring them together.

The globalization of Ampelmann is, nevertheless, not limited to Germans looking outward, but rather extends as people across the world express their appreciation of the traffic light man. The Ampelmann stores which opened in Tokyo, Japan and Seoul, South Korea, embody perhaps better than anything else the acceptance and success of the eastern traffic light figure. These stores are frequently cited in publications across Germany and help to further explain the smiling, excited locals in *Ampelmann Journeys Through Japan*.⁴¹⁸ Indeed, Ampelmann has become one of the mascots for the Japanese

⁴¹⁶ "Auf der Suche nach einem Stück Heimat in Seoul," *Die Welt*, July 16, 2013. <http://www.welt.de/reise/staedtereisen/article118101371/Auf-der-Suche-nach-einem-Stueck-Heimat-in-Seoul.html>

⁴¹⁷ Bettina Seipp, "Das Ost Ampelmännchen soll EU Karriere machen," *Die Welt*, June 04, 2013. <http://www.welt.de/motor/article117703093/Das-Ost-Ampelmaennchen-soll-EU-Karriere-machen.html>

⁴¹⁸ A sampling of articles referencing Ampelmann in Japan and South Korea follows; Susanne Kröck, "Ampelmann, warum bist du so launisch?," *Berliner Kurier*, August 03, 2007. <http://www.berliner-kurier.de/archiv/der-kurier-fand-raus--wo-er-troedelt--und-wo-er-schnell-die-farbe-wechselt-ampelmann--warum-bist-du-so-launisch-,8259702,3979268.html>; "Der Weltstar der aus dem Osten kam," *Berliner Kurier*, October 13, 2011. <http://www.berliner-kurier.de/leute/50-jahre-ampelmaennchen-der-weltstar--der-aus-dem-osten-kam,7169134,11000316.html>; Berliner Zeitung: Jakob Schlandt, "Siegesszug des Ampelmännchens," *Berliner Zeitung*, December 21, 2006. <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/archiv/gute-geschaefte-und-grosse-plaene-mit-dem-ostsymbol-siegesszug-des-ampelmaennchens,10810590,10443248.html>; "Das Ost Ampelmännchen wird 50," *Berliner Zeitung*, November 11, 2011. <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/auto/das-ost-ampelmaennchen-wird-50,10808684,10992006.html>; Die Welt: Bettina Seipp, "Das Ost Ampelmännchen soll EU Karriere machen," *Die Welt*, June 04, 2013. <http://www.welt.de/motor/article117703093/Das-Ost-Ampelmaennchen-soll-EU-Karriere-machen.html>; "Auf der Suche nach einem Stück Heimat in Seoul," *Die*

airline ANA (All Nippon Airways), where he can be seen adorning airport shuttles, depicted alongside Tokyo landmarks and wearing a pilot hat.⁴¹⁹ The UK has also developed a fondness for the eastern figure. One writer in *The Guardian* criticised the western figure, saying that “he or she is not considered to be a tourist attraction, much less a classic of everyday design” while calling Ampelmann “chubby and cartoonish.”⁴²⁰ The *Daily Mail* also referred to the study out of Bremen, praising Ampelmann and suggesting that he “may soon become the norm across the whole of Europe including the UK.”⁴²¹ The UK Department for Transport shot back, however, “we’ve no plans to change... The one we’ve got works very well and are [*sic*] easily understood.”⁴²² Other countries have joined the ranks of Ampel-enthusiasts. According to *Berliner Kurier*:

It is amazing how many people are interested in the East German Ampelmann. The British Financial Times did a full page on it, Japanese and Brazilian papers also reported on it and Ampelmann was featured on Spanish television.⁴²³

Ampelmann may even be crossing into the New World. Heckhausen and city officials in Los Angeles have discussed plans to bring the light figure to Hollywood.⁴²⁴ The

Welt, July 16, 2013. <http://www.welt.de/reise/staedtereisen/article118101371/Auf-der-Suche-nach-einem-Stueck-Heimat-in-Seoul.html>.

⁴¹⁹ Philippe Debionne, “Ampelmännchen, wo läufst du denn hin?,” *Berliner Kurier*, March 07, 2010. <http://www.berliner-kurier.de/archiv/fluglinie-aus-japan-holt-es-sich-als-neues-maskottchen-ampelmaennchen--wo-laeufst-du-denn-hin-,8259702,8308366.html>. Ampelmann stores have also been quick to capitalize on this development. A blue Ampelmann with a pilot hat and stripes on the sleeve of his outstretched arm can be purchased as a reflective keychain in the stores. While there is no sign or other marking to indicate that this figure is indeed the one from the airline, when purchased the receipt calls it the ANA Ampelmann.

⁴²⁰ Matthew Tempest, “The Berlin Wall 15 Years On,” *The Guardian*, November 09, 2009. http://blogs.theguardian.com/news/archives/world_news/2004/11/the_berlin_wall_15_years_on.html

⁴²¹ “Green man Ampelmännchen in the UK?” *Daily Mail*, August 04, 2013. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2396839/German-green-man-Ampelmann-UK--German-pedestrian-crossing-introduced.html>

⁴²² *Ibid.*

⁴²³ Jakob Schlandt, “Siegessäuge des Ampelmännchens,” *Berliner Zeitung*, December 21, 2006. <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/archiv/gute-geschaeft-und-grosse-plaene-mit-dem-ostsymbol-siegessäuge-des-ampelmaennchens,10810590,10443248.html>

⁴²⁴ Juliane Wienß, “Ampelmann mit Kultstatus,” *Neues Deutschland*, October 13, 2011. <https://www.neues-deutschland.de/artikel/208793.ampelmann-mit-kultstatus.html?sstr=ampelm%E4nnchen>

international response to Ampelmann reveals that the image of a friendly, welcoming and appreciative world as envisioned by easterners (and westerners) through Ampelmann often reflects reality.

For those both within Germany and abroad the international appreciation of Ampelmann has had even further implications as Ampelmann has become a means through which certain aspects of German and eastern culture can be understood and expressed. The death of a young German Broadway star in New York as the result of a driver who didn't heed proper street safety allowed an east German reporter to extol German traffic safety values. The reporter blamed the performer's death on the disrespect for traffic lights in New York City, saying that the American Ampelmann has "nothing to say. One can cross on either red or green, one simply has to make sure that no cars are coming." The reporter then compared this to Berlin:

It is amusing to watch how faithfully most Berlin pedestrians wait for their traffic light. When I let a pedestrian cross the street here [in Berlin] because he has green, he looks at me mistrustfully...as if he will cause me pain, not I him. This whole Berliner Ampelmännchen discussion would not be possible here [in New York].⁴²⁵

A New Yorker visiting Berlin commented on a similar topic; describing how he "tries running, but is stopped every few minutes by the Berliner Ampelmännchen" and that he

wants to go by red – like any normal New Yorker, but that doesn't work here. When you cross on a red...the drivers do not drive slower when they see you, like in New York, but instead they press the gas down as if they want to run you down.

⁴²⁵ Alexander Osang, „Tod eines Mädchens,“ *Neues Deutschland*, February 01, 2003.

“Whoever breaks the law,” he quoted one lady as saying, “earns death.”⁴²⁶ One author contrasted this strictness with the cuteness of Ampelmann, explaining how one local yelled “child murderer” at him when he was jay-walking, saying about the traffic light man that:

Some Germans may say that the way easterners cherish Peglau’s design is a case of pure “Ostalgie” . . . , yet there is no getting away from the fact that the Ampelmännchen continues to save lives, even if they seem far too friendly to yell “child murderer” at a jay-walking foreigner.⁴²⁷

In this way, Ampelmann has also become a means through which foreigners can understand, appreciate and, sometimes poke fun at the German values surrounding traffic safety. Ampelmann has thus succeeded as a vehicle through which ideals of traffic safety held by Germans in both the East and West can be preserved, distilled, and rewritten into a friendly language acceptable to people around the world.

While this reconstruction of globalization’s image may, at first, appear to be an innocent, generally harmless endeavour, literature on new social movements suggests that Ampelmann is, in some small but significant way, being used to challenge globalized neoliberal hegemony. These social movements are “informally organized, leaving to participants a high degree of autonomy,” they focus on “neoliberal globalization” and they show an “understanding of global problems and their causes.”⁴²⁸ Reimagining the process of globalization through Ampelmann aligns with the definitions of these social movements presented above and by S.A. Hamed Hosseini in his book *Alternative*

⁴²⁶ Tuvia Tenenbom, “Ich verstehe die Deutschen auch wenn ich der Einzige bin,” *Die Zeit*, October 15, 2012. <http://www.zeit.de/sport/2012-10/tuvia-tenenbom-demonstrationen-deutschland>

⁴²⁷ “Classics of Everyday Design no 49,” *The Guardian*, May 22, 2008.

<http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/artblog/2008/may/22/classicsofeverydaydesignno40>

⁴²⁸ Nicola Montagna, “Social Movements and Global Mobilisations,” in Vincenzo Ruggiero and Nicola Montagna eds., *Social Movements: A Reader*, (New York: Routledge, 2008) 349.

Globalizations (2010).⁴²⁹ Hosseini describes these movements as having “...some common features. Among them is the common sense and experience of ‘globality’ – i.e. the quality of having worldwide inclusiveness, reach...”⁴³⁰ He continues that solidarity between these movements allows for the “promoting [of] an egalitarian and democratic form of globalization.”⁴³¹ This definition is one which Ampelmann easily conforms to; those reconstructing the image of globalization through him certainly have a sense of “globality,” as seen through the internationalization of the figure through tourism, culture, and (paradoxically enough) his commercialization. Their aims, promoting selected values from their past and forming a usable, more egalitarian and representative present, also align with the aims of social movements: a criticism of the status quo as it stands and a suggestion that changes, however moderate or radical they may be, are necessary to achieve a more equitable existence.

But the Ampelmann-centric reimagining of the globalizing present, due perhaps to its origins in the socialist past, does not align perfectly with typical understandings of new social movements. Perhaps the most crucial element lacking in this respect is, well, movement. David McNally, in his call for revolutionary action against the neoliberal ruling class, describes this movement: “It is in the course of mobilizing – in the process of reclaiming the streets...that people gain a sense of their own power, expand their horizons and begin to imagine that another world is truly possible.”⁴³² This explanation contrasts with the lived reality of Ampelmann-enthusiasts. Although they may well have

⁴²⁹ The scholarship on mass social movements is extensive and can only be touched on quite briefly in this paper. Although a general definition is provided later in this paragraph, I would encourage those interested to turn to other, more detailed, works on the subject.

⁴³⁰ S.A. Hamed Hosseini, *Alternative Globalizations: An integrative approach to studying dissident knowledge in the global justice movement*, (New York: Routledge, 2010) 8.

⁴³¹ Hosseini, *Alternative Globalizations*, 8.

⁴³² McNally, *Global Slump*, 175.

imagined a better present (and future), they have not engaged in its construction as actively as those staging protests, strikes, and demonstrations.

East Germans are also more moderate than their revolutionary sisters and brothers, given their calls not to get rid of, but rather to work within the capitalist system. East German moderation can most likely be attributed to the memory of state socialism itself. Those using Ampelmann have, for the most part, experienced state socialism; they have seen the terror and oppression upon which the East German system was founded. As a result they seek not to return to the past or the entirety of its ideals, but instead aim to find a middle ground between the extremes of state socialism and unchecked neoliberal hegemony. In the same way that protesters, for instance, have used the memory “of the great strikes that had won the union, of the times when workers fought police or troops”⁴³³ to fuel their cause, easterners and others have used the memory of socialist oppression to suggest a more egalitarian, responsible, and friendlier future. This is done not through organizing strikes or demonstrations but rather through the simple act of crossing the street and tipping your hat to little man who helps you along the way.

Ampelmann Journeys through Japan is not an anomalous creation. It rather reflects a much larger trend as eastern and western Germans have used the eastern traffic light figure as a means through which the globalizing present can be recast into a usable form with a friendly face. The smiling locals, playful interactions, bright colours and destinations depicted in the pamphlet show an image echoed throughout the modern discourse on Ampelmann: a world accepting of the eastern figure, willing to consider the values he represents, and thus one which appears playful, connected, respectful, and

⁴³³ McNally, *Global Slump*, 149.

human. This image, constructed through Ampelmann but occasionally mirrored in reality, shows a world of common values, particularly with regard to traffic safety. This world also has a strongly defined sense of local differences and variations, be they Kyoto's golden temple or the hat-wearing traffic light figure who guides people across the street on their way to visit it. The discourse surrounding Ampelmann's globalization aligns with the western interpretations of Ampelmann examined in the previous chapter as both capitalist-style pragmatic arguments and nostalgic appreciation are taken into consideration and accepted by people throughout the country, the continent, and the world. In an effort to fulfill the desires born in a restricted society and to cope with the limitations of a neoliberal, globalizing present, easterners have turned to their traffic light figure, imbued him with their values and used him to examine the present, forge a usable narrative of the past and create a realm where these are in harmony.

Conclusion: Crossing Past and Present

The ability of Ampelmann to link past and present, to merge memory and nostalgia, to bring forth socialist values and point them towards the modern world is considerable and significant. From his comparatively humble origins in the GDR as a traffic guardian, pedagogical instrument, and television star, Ampelmann has expanded. Eastern discontent, while critical, is not the sole fuel for this; the schism between the socialist values of the past and the capitalist ones of the present and the desire to find a middle ground in-between is also significant. More than just a token a longing for the past or a vehicle of capitalist exploitation, then, Ampelmann has become a multivalent representative of eastern values, traditions, identity, and hopes.

The GDR's response to the pressing problems of traffic and traffic safety beginning in the early 1960s played a significant role in the way Ampelmann developed after reunification. In response to the 'modern' problems arising from increasing street congestion, the GDR unleashed a thorough, deeply involved campaign aiming to collect data regarding traffic safety and to respond to this problem. Their solution involved more direct measures, such as improving the quality and co-ordination of traffic lights, and less pointed ones aimed at educating the population and creating a culture of traffic safety. Part of this solution involved the public praising and shaming of drivers and pedestrians in state publications. Another saw teachers and traffic police instructing children on the importance of traffic safety. Ampelmann emerged here as an instrument of traffic safety education as his image adorned objects given to children and his face graced television screens across the country. In this way, he was intricately tied to GDR traffic safety

culture, a portion of the East German past where the state appeared concerned and caring and which would later be deemed valuable to the Berlin Republic.

The fall of the Berlin Wall shook up this Ampel-narrative as the little man quickly found his position threatened by the faceless western figure. Once eastern apathy subsided, however, Ampelmann's transformation into a *lieu* of East German memory began. This involved resurrecting GDR rituals of traffic safety and infusing Ampelmann with a sense of easternness and eastern values. These values included the control, safety, simplicity, innocence, and equity (particularly between genders) easterners perceived as being absent from but valuable to the modern republic. In doing so, easterners turned Ampelmann into an *Eingabe*, a sort of customer complaint about their position in contemporary Germany.

The values of the present have also shaped Ampelmann's function. His collision with capitalism has undoubtedly resulted, as many scholars have pointed out, in an often problematic commodification of the eastern past. Nevertheless, in reflecting on Ampelmann's commodification, easterners have used their traffic light figure to imagine a more usable form of capitalism where local production, values, and identity are respected. Such a reimagining has opened the gates and allowed for the east German traffic light figure to spread into the west. It has also permitted an alternative view of German unity where eastern history, innovation, and identity are valued by the west and where western capitalism is adapted, albeit in a moderately altered form.

Ampelmann's popularity worldwide has functioned similarly, allowing easterners to understand and envision modifications to globalization. In this narrative, Ampelmann is

able to stand amongst his worldwide traffic light comrades, a symbol of respected and appreciated eastern distinction in a globalized world. Here, the world appears welcoming, friendly, and open in a way it was not during the GDR's existence. This is not entirely constructed either as international publications have released articles praising the characteristics of the traffic light man. Although lacking any real movement, this alternative image aligns roughly with those involved in new social movements as east Germans suggest alterations to the present infused with their own ideals from the socialist past. This image is, however, more moderate than those proposed by many others. Having experienced both neoliberal capitalism and state socialism, easterners now envision a world in-between the two.

Those assuming the emptiness of the East German traffic light figure thus do so at their own peril. Honestly examining the past and present of this complex *lieu de mémoire* reveals a great deal about the GDR, the way it is remembered, and the way this memory functions. This also reveals east German attempts to make their past and present compatible as they select ideals and rituals for preservation in an attempt to create continuity, identity, and to refashion the present so that it can accept these. Cast in the GDR and reborn in the globalized Berlin Republic, the happy, hat-wearing Ampelmann is thus a bridge to the past and over the troubled waters of the present.

Appendices

Appendix 1:



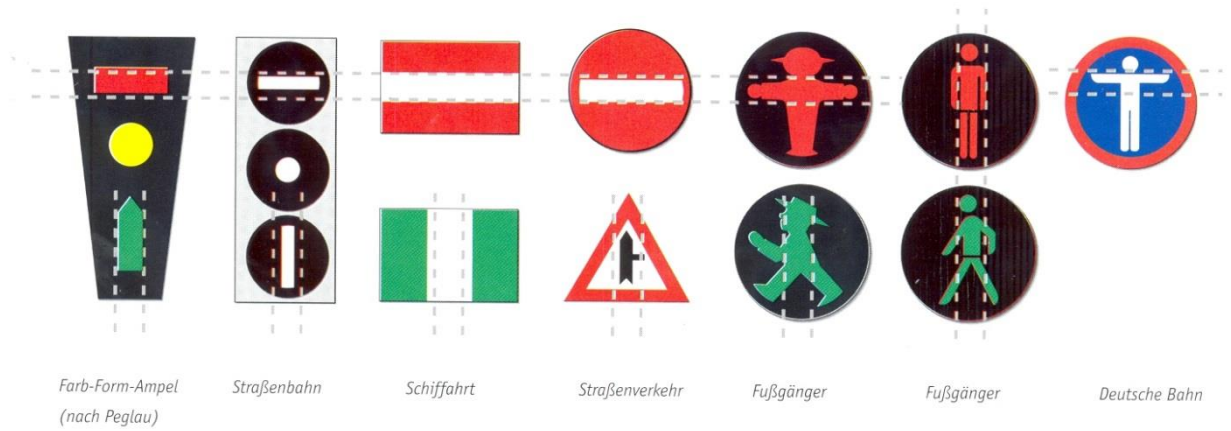
A green Ampelmann light. Photo by author.

Appendix 2:



A red Ampelmann light. Photo by author.

Appendix 3:



A diagram comparing different traffic symbols, proclaiming Ampelmann's superiority over his western counterpart.⁴³⁴

Appendix 4:



Ampelmann helps a young girl cross a Tokyo street.⁴³⁵

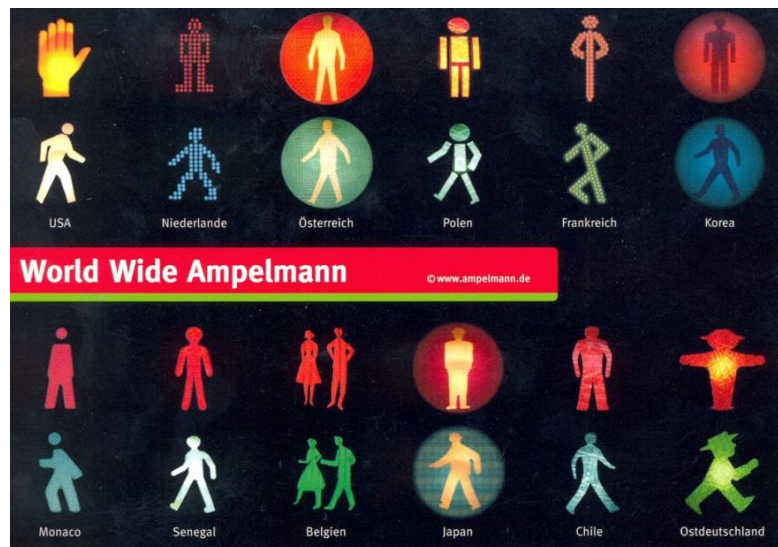
⁴³⁴ Heckhausen, *Das Buch*, 79

Appendix 5:



A postcard declaring “Berlin: Birthplace of the East German Ampelmann.” Collection of the author.⁴³⁶

Appendix 6:

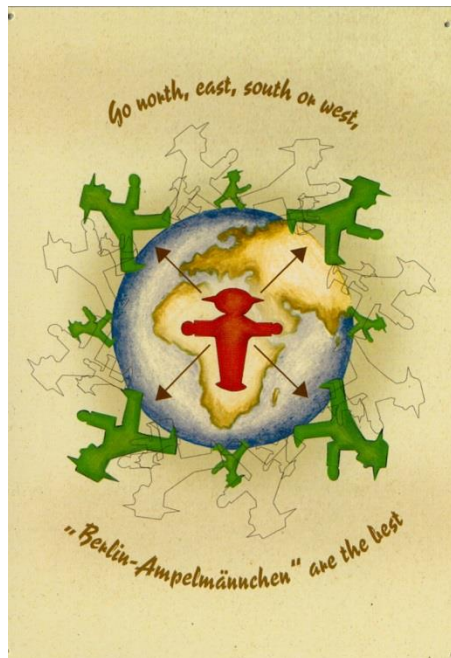


A postcard, much like the poster mentioned in chapter 4, depicting Ampelmann alongside his worldwide colleagues.⁴³⁷ Collection of the author.

⁴³⁵ Ampelmann GmbH, *Ampelmann Reise Durch Japan*, 2.

⁴³⁶ Ampelmann GmbH, *Die Geburtsstadt*, postcard.

Appendix 7:



A postcard sold in Ampelmann stores. Collection of the author.⁴³⁸

⁴³⁷ Ampelmann GmbH, *World Wide Ampelmann*, postcard.

⁴³⁸ Ampelmann GmbH, *Berlin-Ampelmännchen*, postcard.

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<i>The Daily Mail</i>	www.dailymail.co.uk
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<i>Die Welt</i>	www.welt.de
<i>Frankfurter Rundschau</i>	www.fr-online.de
<i>The Guardian</i>	www.theguardian.com
<i>Hessen Niedersächsische Allgemeine</i>	www.hna.de
<i>Kölner Stadt Anzeiger</i>	www.ksta.de
<i>Kreiszeitung</i>	www.kreiszeitung.de
<i>Mitteldeutsche Zeitung</i>	www.mz-web.de
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