

MIRO BORN IREM KURT

MOVIN' ON UP

A Social Mobility Comic



IMPRINT

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Miro Born

MOVIN' ON UP:

A Social Mobility Comic

This comic is set in Germany. The names may sound unfamiliar and the houses may look different, yet the story is one that extends far beyond the German context.



Illustrated by Irem Kurt
Translated by Will Kendall

NO GO AREA

GHETTO

SINKESTATE

ROUGH

NO GO AREA

sinkestate

Left behind

SI
ESTA

GHETTO

Scroungers

One of the most dangerous neighbourhoods in the country...

GHETTO

One of the most dangerous neighbourhoods in the country...



SINK

ESTATE

SINK

STATE

ROUGH

GHET

NO GO AREA

Scroungers

SHITHOLE

One of the most dangerous neighbourhoods in the country...

GHETTO

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GHETTO

NO GO AREA

Left behind

GHETTO

ROUGH

GHETTO

NO GO AREA



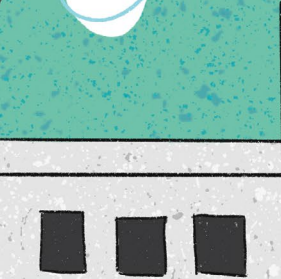
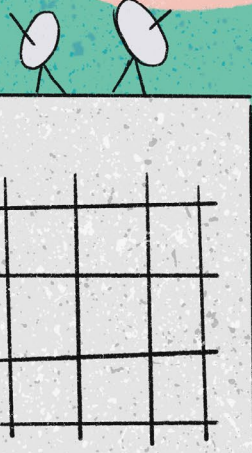


CLASS 4A

I think you should apply for that school we talked about. I know of a good scholarship.



I'm working Saturdays now as well. You know we need the money for Elin's school trip to France.





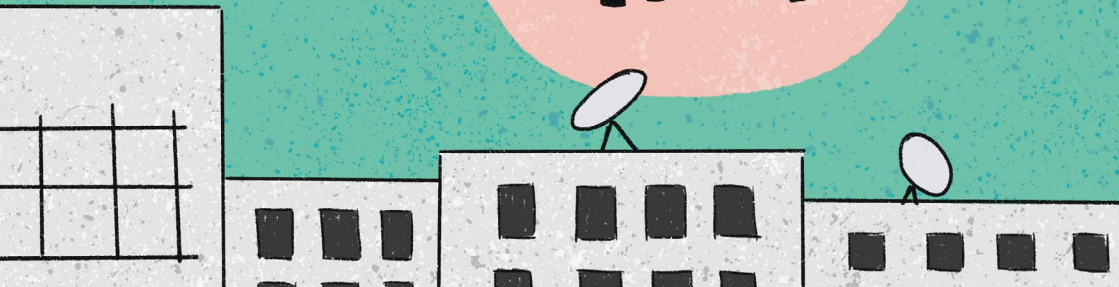
I have to study, sorry! But I'll join you next time...



You can always ask me if there's something you don't understand.



I'm so glad you're here!



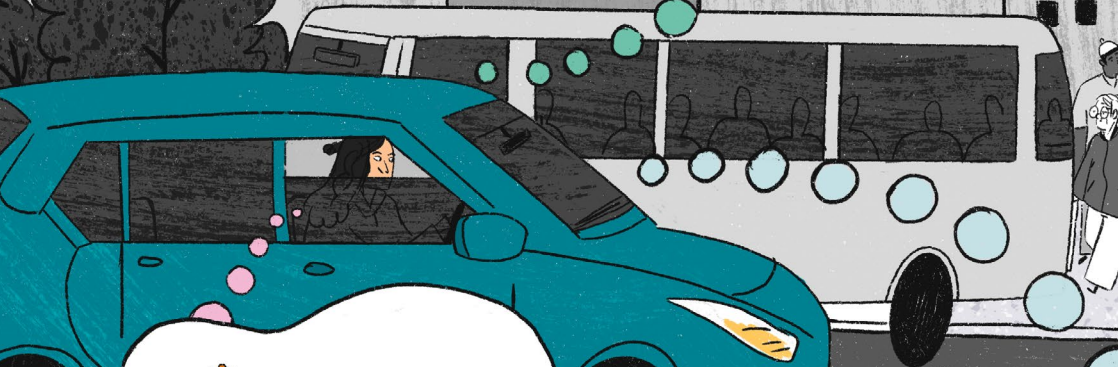
A few years later



A few years later



Elin on the way to her family...



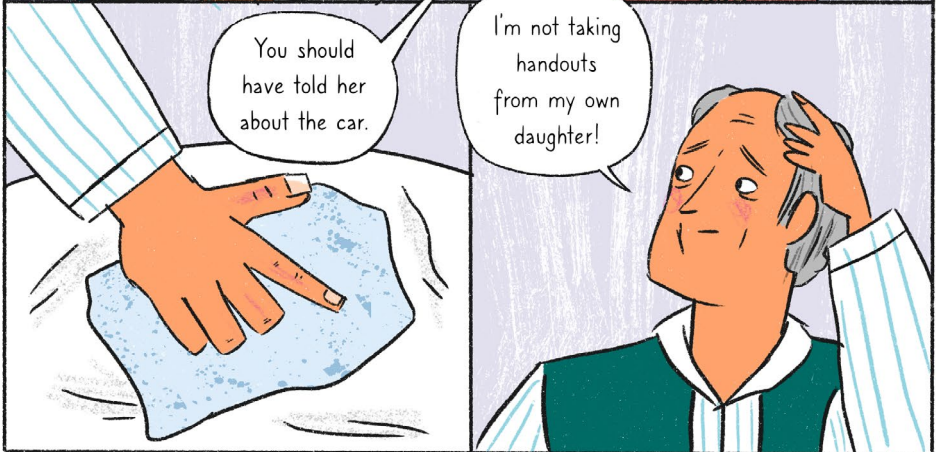
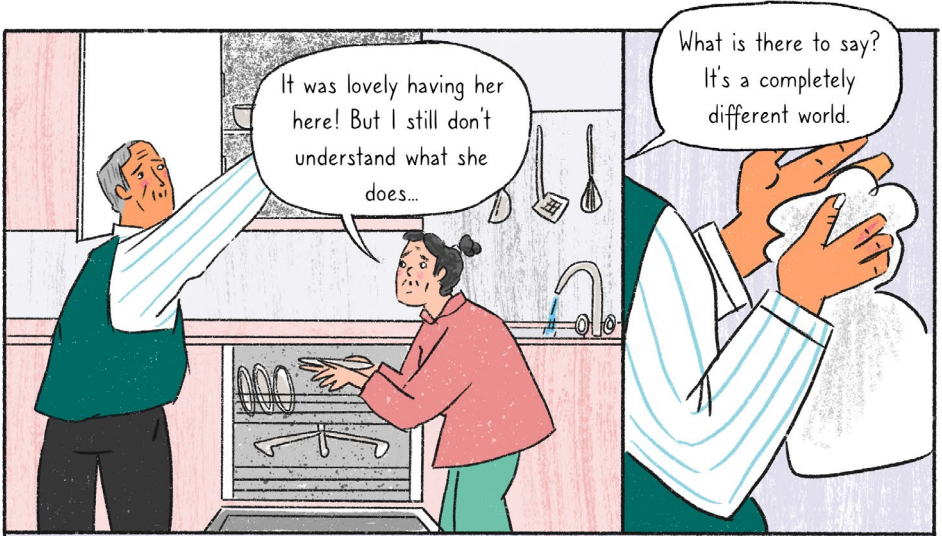
Come on, let's go into town and get you a new pencil case for September.















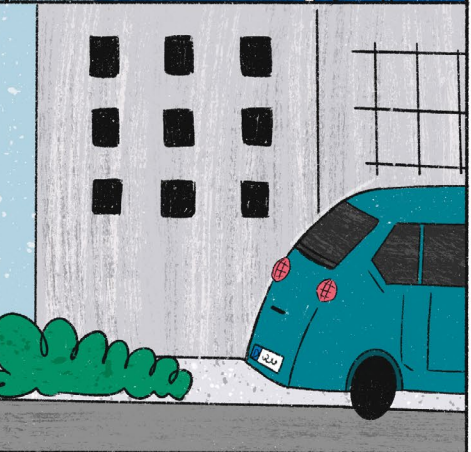
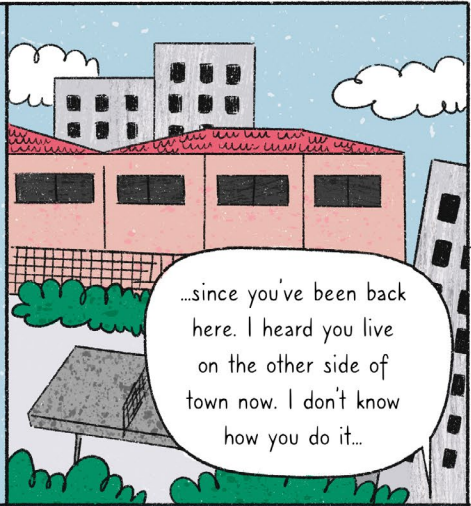
And Raul, what's he up to these days?

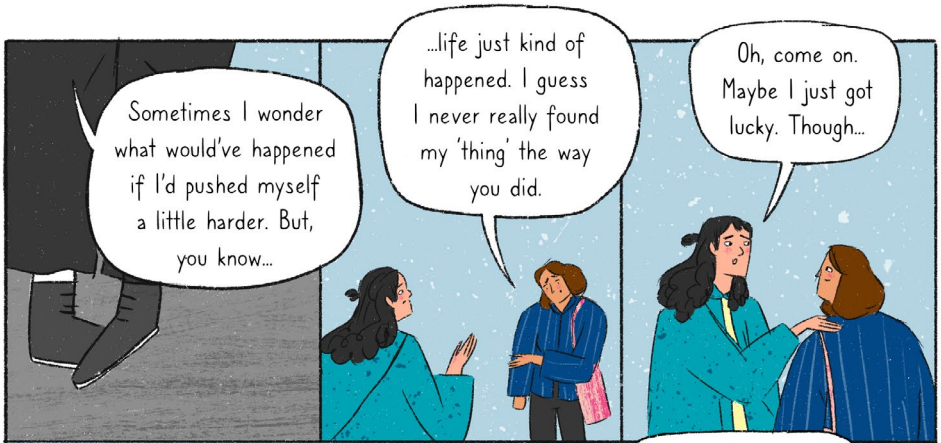
He works at the airport now. Mostly early shifts. Been there a while.

Two kids. She's looking for a flat - but even here, there's nothing affordable anymore.

And Esraa?









SCHOOL

IT'S NOT ABOUT WHERE
YOU START – IT'S
ABOUT WHERE YOU'RE
GOING.

Our neighbourhood,
our future – stand
together!

See you
tomorrow – let's
hope we actually
finish on time
for once.

FOODBANK



Kontra K
Success is not luck

Success is not luck –
it's just the result of
blood, sweat, and tears.
Life will pay everything
back someday...

MOVING UP 
New homes coming soon – creating
a thriving, mixed community.

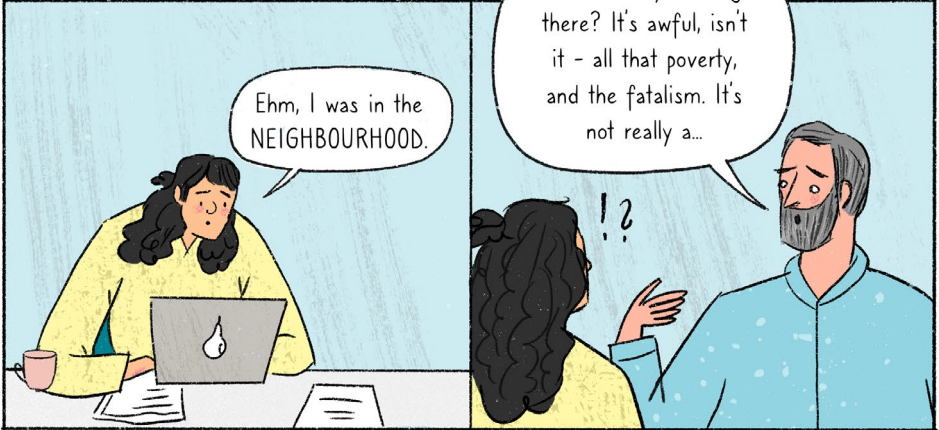


DON'T WORRY
ABOUT PAYING
ME BACK THIS
MONTH.

I wonder
when the
next time
will be.



A few weeks later...



A few days later



As part of the government, we take the issues and situation of the people here in the NEIGHBOURHOOD very seriously. And I'll tell you today: the solution is to promote more social mobility. We want to build a country where everyone has the opportunity to get on in life.

Our lift is still broken – it's been months now.

The youth centre is closed on weekends now – and the staff haven't been paid.

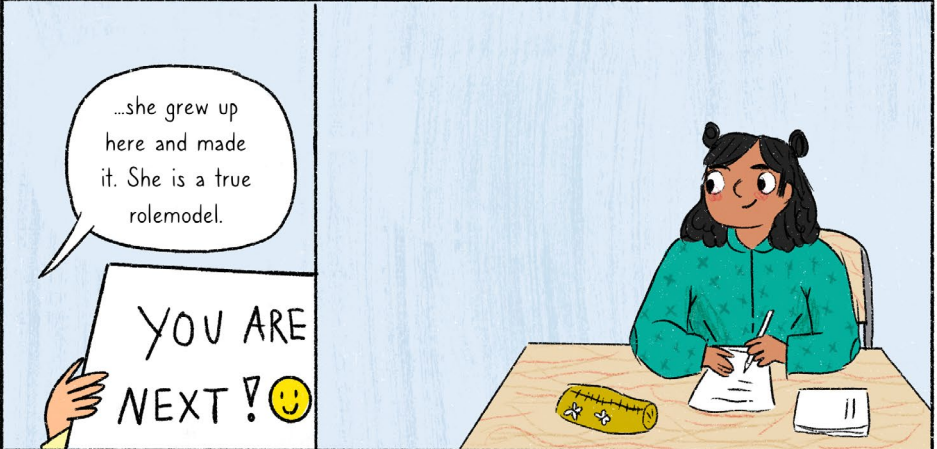
There's even a waiting list for the food bank!

Is there anything I could do to help?



I have an idea – though I'm not sure if you will like it.

A few weeks later





The foundation and inspiration for this comic is the research project *Placing Meritocracy: Urban Marginality and the Ideal of Social Mobility* (LSE, Department of Sociology, 2019–2023). As part of the project, over 60 interviews were conducted with so-called upwardly mobile individuals, their family members, and long-term residents of stigmatised neighbourhoods in Germany. This comic is an artistic project – all the characters, locations, and dialogues depicted are fictional.

The findings of the research project can be accessed here:

Born, A. M. (forthcoming). *Social Ladders. Urban Inequality and the Ideal of Social Mobility*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Born, A. M. (2024). The price of the ticket revised: Family members' experiences of upward social mobility. *The Sociological Review* 72(2), 394-411.

Born, A. M. (2023). The long shadow of territorial stigma: Upward social mobility and the symbolic baggage of the old neighbourhood. *Urban Studies* 60(3), 537-553.



Irem Kurt is a Berlin-based illustrator, comic artist, and creative workshop facilitator, focusing on socio-political and cultural topics.

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Miro Born is a social scientist currently working as a postdoctoral researcher at the London School of Economics and Political Science. His research explores the interplay between urban and social inequalities.

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Translated into English by Will Kendall.

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Economic
and Social
Research Council



Promoting social mobility in marginalised urban areas has become a widespread policy goal. But what does it really mean to move upward and outwards from stigmatised neighbourhoods? What are the consequences of individual upward mobility – for those who have „made it“ and for those who are seen as „left behind“? And does social mobility truly lead to social justice?

