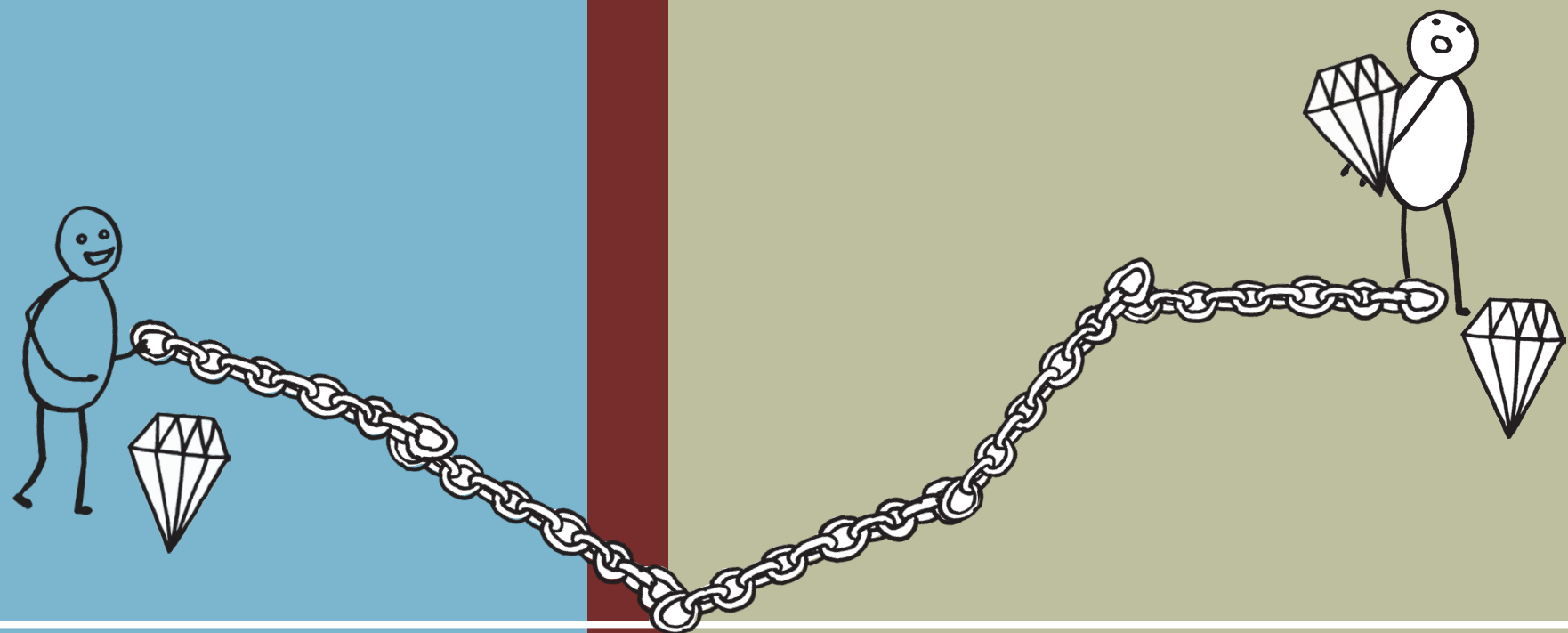


15th to 20th century

Colonial era

Since the end of the 15th century European states started to bring many areas in Africa, America, Asia, Australia and Oceania under their sovereignty. This often happened through subjugation, displacement or murder of the local population. The colonial rulers’ quest was to develop new settlements and markets and thus extend their power.

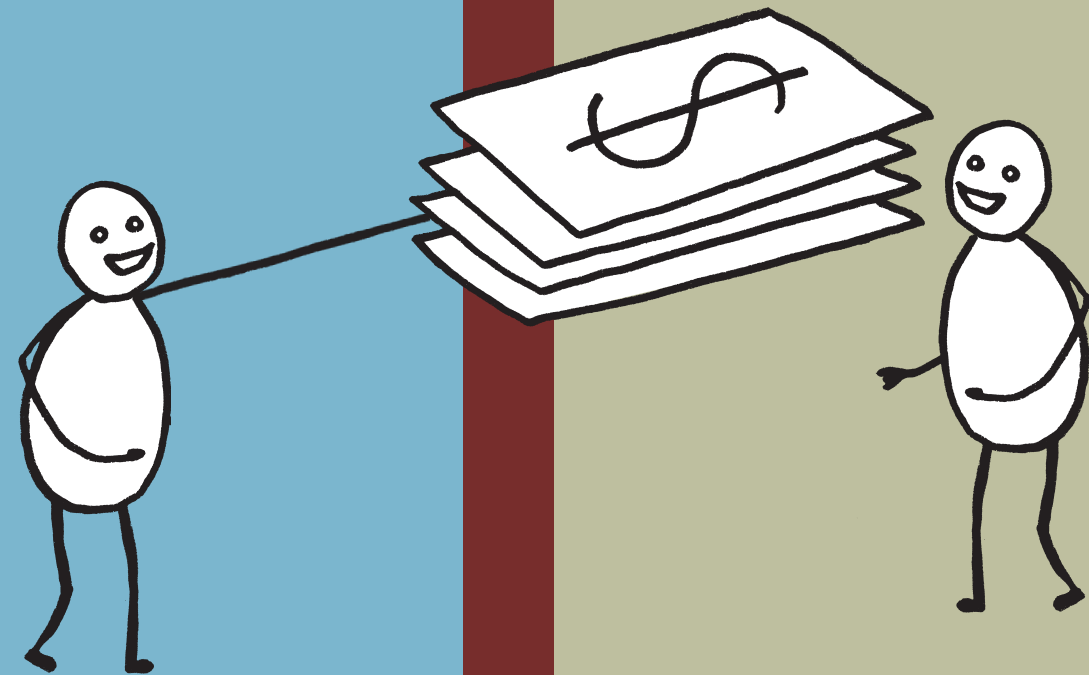


The European colonial powers not only murdered and enslaved many people but also spread their languages, religions and notions of culture. Moreover they built up political and economic dependencies. Although most colonies became independent by the end of the 20th century, occupied territories still exist.

1960s

Development through growth

In the 1960s it was believed that money could solve the problems faced by developing countries. Based on this assumption poor countries were supported through loans. The expectation from this was local economic growth, leading to a reduction in poverty and unemployment and effects of prosperity such as better education and health.

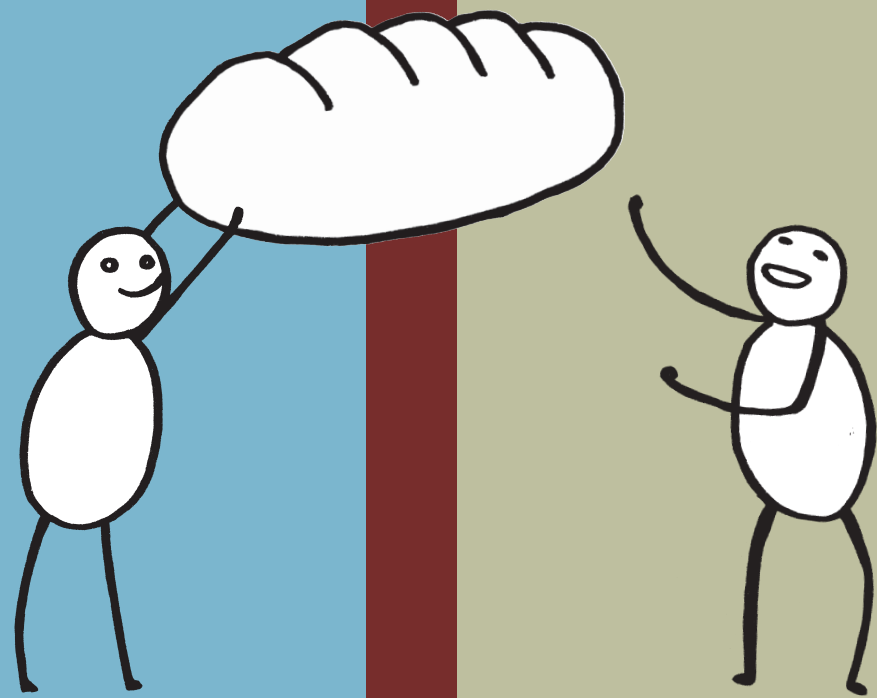


However, the loans that had been made ended up in the hands of the few while the majority of people remained poor. Moreover, in the hope of quick growth many countries had taken on loans which they could not pay back. As a result many developing countries almost went into bankruptcy and slipped into difficult economic, social and political crises.

1970s

Satisfying basic needs

As the strategy “development through growth” was unsuccessful, a new theory developed in the 1970s: It was presumed that growth would follow as soon as the basic needs of people were taken care of. Instead of money, food and other basic goods were sent to developing countries.



The strategy to satisfy basic needs was also not successful. In addition, a negative side effect of sending basic goods was the marginalisation of local suppliers from the markets, who were unable to compete against free aid supplies. Today we still have a similar situation where state subsidised products are exported from high-income countries to developing countries and are sold cheaply there.

1992

Helping people help themselves

In 1992 the United Nations adopted the Agenda 21 at the Rio Conference. Therein a new the principle of “helping people help themselves” was defined. Development policies were henceforward to enable disadvantaged beneficiaries to help themselves. Moreover, the conference marked a rethink away from “development aid” and towards “development cooperation”.



The collaborative understanding of development cooperation questioned the relationship between donors and recipients and increasingly took local circumstances into consideration. The focus shifted to economic autonomy in an attempt to reduce financial dependence. As a result it was possible to drastically reduce extreme poverty.

2000

Millennium Development Goals

In 2000 at the Millennium Summit the United Nations took stock of a sad state of affairs: there were still a lot of people who were affected by extreme poverty, had no access to education and lived in undignified living conditions. The aim of the “Millennium Development Goals” was to improve this situation by 2015, for example by halving extreme poverty and reducing child mortality.



Already by 2010 one of the targets of the “Millennium Development Goals” was achieved. Extreme poverty in the world was reduced by half. This came about not just through development politics but also through the economic boom that happened in countries such as China and India. Although not all of the goals could be achieved, many people’s living conditions were improved and many lives were saved.

2015

Sustainable Development Goals

In 2015 the “Sustainable Development Goals” were adopted. They include the ambitious proposition to end worldwide poverty and hunger by 2030. Besides social and economic aspects the agenda also addresses ecological sustainability, peace and security. The goals put a stronger focus on the idea of shared responsibility and demand that all countries make a contribution.



Strategies for tackling poverty were improved and developed over the course of the last decades. In this way extreme poverty has been substantially reduced despite many setbacks.

However, “help” from high-income countries remains limited. Even today high-income countries still benefit clearly more from developing countries than they help them.