

The Theory of Affinity and Proximity in Peace and Conflict Studies in Africa: Prisms and Parameters for Analysis

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Abstract

I have developed and postulated the theory of affinity and proximity based on observation and my own experiences as a citizen, scholar and public intellectual. The theory is predicated on the recurrence of economic and political dualities that we see in all our neighborhoods, in both urban and rural areas and their attendant dependency, tranquility, tensions and violence. The main reasons for postulating this theory is that peace and conflict is one of the most recent disciplines in social sciences and one that has few theories, especially those developed in Africa and by African scholars. Many of the theories used in peace and conflict have been developed in Western scholarship and often fail to capture some of the germane issues affecting peace and conflict in places such as Africa. The theory of affinity and proximity seeks to explain causes of conflict in Africa, using geographical proximity as a major variant. The theory seeks to demonstrate that affinity and proximity are intimately intertwined to the point that they sometimes affect people in ways that we cannot disentangle which one of them has caused the change. We are not able to tell whether it is affinity or proximity that brings about peace or conflict and vice versa. Using African case studies and examples, this article demonstrates that sharing geographical space has implications on how groups relate to each other. The article uses examples from Kenya, to show that the rich and poor are always juxtaposed and interlocked in social, cultural, economic and political relations that promote or undermine peace. The theory focuses on spaces, sites and locations in which protagonists are sometimes living side by side, such as those in slums and those in affluent neighbourhoods. These groups are usually perpetually pursuing antagonistic goals largely as a result of mutual suspicion. What is interesting is that the groups that engage in violence against each other often live side by side but often hide their intensions during periods of positive peace and engage in violence during periods of negative peace. The people in these poor and rich neighbourhoods have different interests and aspirations, with the poor preoccupied with survival through quest for basic needs, while the rich pursue issues of self actualization. In such societies, the antagonistic forces are often represented by the ‘haves’ and ‘have nots’ existing in the same neighbourhoods in urban areas or same enclaves in rural areas. Sometimes the boundaries between them are invisible, because they are social. At many times, the boundaries are visible though infrastructure and quality of economic, social and political institutions and circle of friends and relations. These groups have capacity to camouflage their intentions. They can hide or unleash the violence from time to time and when they choose to. The affinity and proximity theory fits the Kenyan situation and all other situations where two or more groups are antagonistic to each other based on geographical and other forms of identity. Although scholars have captured the ethnic identity as a cause of conflict in Kenya, they have not mapped out urban and rural dualisms, and residential dualities in urban areas where rich and poor neighbourhoods are antagonistic against each other and survive under periods of suspicion and mutual respect. It is always easy to tell when relations have soured or normal based on level of access, movement and tolerance.

Key terms: Theory, Peace, Conflict, Kenya, Africa, affinity and proximity

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Introduction

Herders and farmers have lived side by side for millennia in many parts of Africa, pursuing two different economic modes of production that are diametrically different from each other. And yet, conflicts between herders and farmers are not as violent as those among pastoralists. Despite sharing similar terrain and economic pursuits, affinity and proximity have not prevented pastoralists from engaging in some of the most violent conflicts in Africa where millions have lost their lives. Economic affinity and proximity to each other for hundreds of years has not prevented herders or pastoralists from engaging in conflict against each other despite many areas of reciprocity where they engage in loaning or lending of livestock as well as sharing pasture and water during times of scarcity, among themselves. The theory of affinity and proximity seeks to explain conflict arising from geographical and environmental closeness between groups. It also seeks to illuminate the meaning seen in dynamics that underpin relations of groups who share close social, economic and political surroundings. It echoes what Frantz Fanon (1968) describes in his book *The Wretched of the Earth*, where societies deal with contestations, between colonizer and colonized, which are not always exploitative and violent (Fanon, 1968). Many scholars before me have assessed oppositional binaries in development. Thomas Allen (1992) has made strong connection between poverty and development, in ways that are very interrelated. Like Andre Gunder Frank and other dependency scholars argued, someone is developed at the expense of someone else (Frank, 1967). It is also possible that someone is poor because someone is rich at his expense and should not necessarily create a crisis.

The contention is that groups may have different orientations and identity but the fact that they live close to each other allows them to develop mutual relations and understanding, as well as tensions. In many African societies, oppositional binaries exist but they do not prevent symbiotic and mutual relations that promote mutual existence. We need to study these societies and see what structures and institutions have existed in the past and what they did in order to see what can be retained or abandoned (Nafukho, Amutabi and Otunga, 2005). In many African societies, societies learn from each other and pick out the best practices that promote life, by borrowing and copying good things (Amutabi and Oketch, 2009). Societies also mimic from each other, usually less dominant society mimicking that of the dominant culture (Bhabha, 1998). This is a similar argument which Bandura has advanced in social cognitive theory, about ways and forms of knowing, through comparing (Bandura, 1988). Herders and pastoralists in Africa have always had reciprocal relations, where farmers give cereals to herders in exchange for livestock products. But this symbiotic relationship has not eliminated violence between the two groups (Amutabi, 2013a).

Crawford (1998) has cautioned against blind dismissal of ethnicity in Africa, saying that we need to be cautious by not assuming that all ethnic groups in Africa fight against each other. Thus, affinity and proximity can be used to explain many of the relations that exist between groups with similar economic and social pursuits, as well as tensions that often emerged between affluent and less affluent groups and communities, where the rich provide money and employment while the poor provide goods and services. The affinity and proximity may explain why there are sometimes conflict between the rich and the poor arising not out of economic tensions but factors from other overlooked sectors and relational trajectories. Although Walter Rodney seemed to suggest that relations between Africa and

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outsiders were by and large exploitative, this is not entirely true because there were some forms of exchange even if they were unequal (Rodney, 1972). I therefore agree with Matunhu's critique of some aspects of dependency theory that was rather homogenous while at the same time not apportioning blame for the role of African elites in our continued exploitation (Matunhu, 2011).

All societies exist in places where there are those who are affluent or rich and others who are less affluent or poor. Affinity and proximity can be used to explain violence and violent relations and its escalation, and the various phases that these trajectories sometimes take. The theory of affinity and proximity seeks to explain relations between poor and rich groups, or nations and the processes that underpin such relations. We must be alive to these social and psychological ethnic tensions if we have to make meaning of our surroundings in Africa (Kelman, 2007). Thus, this theory focuses on mutual and reciprocal relations while at the same explaining how affinity and proximity can also be causes of tensions and conflict. The theory borrows from other theories that look at relations from economic dynamics (Marxist theory), or from productive perspective (structural and functional theories) or social dynamics (social change theories). The theory emanates from my experiential views, observations and conversations with various stakeholders in Africa's development landscape. Brecher, Costello and Smith (2000) have noted how solidarity can come out of oppression. In discussing globalization from below, they have demonstrated how poorer nations band together in order to resist domination. My slight difference from them is that solidarity does not always mean agreement and lack of tensions.

Conceptualization and Contextualization of the theory

The affinity and proximity theory is predicated on two principles. First, that the rich and poor have mutual and reciprocal relations with each other in which they all realize that they need each other in order to survive. The poor need the salaries and wages for which they are paid for their labour, while the rich receive goods and services in return. This symbiotic relationship has to be promoted by both sides. The poor need the salaries and wages for their own survival or existence and the rich need the services (Amutabi, 2013a). The second principle is that there are always undercurrents of tensions between the rich and the poor which always remain beneath until they transform into open conflict or hostility. One needs both inside and outside knowledge in order to dissect areas of potential and real tensions in such historical relations. Like Edward Said has noted, it is only when we both inside and outside knowledge that we can begin to compare and know where we rank (Said, 1978). Europeans borrowed from Egyptian civilization for being close to it through the Mediterranean (Matunhu 2011).

The theory of affinity and proximity seeks to demonstrate that groups that enjoy close proximity to each other always develop affinity and relations that over time create bonding while at the same time making the relation become complex and hard to disentangle. The relations acquire lives of their own and soon become routinized and normalized in the day to day relations to the point that they become normal and not questioned. Like Berman has noted, ethnicity may affected how democracy is practiced but the two are not mutually exclusive (Berman, 2010). Some ethnic groups in Africa create mutual and reciprocal relations, where some provide grains while others provide milk and meat (Reno, 1998). There are also cases where some provide fish while others provide cereals. There are also cases where rich people may demand services in their homes and in exchange provide cash or other agreed upon benefits. Many relations between groups are in this stage, this normalized stage, where

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the rich people employ the poor to give them service in various areas and no one asks how long this has been going on and if in fact the relations have always been mutually beneficial.

The need for a theory that uses Africa in order to map and interrogate relations that are largely African has been there for some time now, advocated for by scholars such as Walter Rodney, Claude Ake, Thandika Mkandawire, Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, Toyin Falola, V. Y. Mudimbe, Achille Mbembe, among others. There is need to understand the local ethos and epistemologies in order to disentangle some of the complex relations between people or groups who share locales or live in the same neighborhoods. It is not easy for outsiders to understand why the Maasai in Mugogodo Division of Laikipia County of Kenya have always had tensions and conflicts with the white farmers and ranchers in Laikipia plateau of Kenya. The Maasai know that through cultural practice, access to water is never denied to anyone because water is life, while the white farmers and ranchers have a different perception defined by a Eurocentric principle of ownership through a title deed and fencing, where access is granted to the owner and those the owner gives permission. Cultural understanding and use of resources has always created antagonism between these two groups and many years of proximity to each other has not helped matters. My contention is that many theories in peace and conflict studies are classical and framed in western theoretical orientation in which the explanations are often from the point of view of elites and not the masses or *hoi polloi*. The agency and voice of the poor is often subsumed and marginalized, while those of the dominant actors are valorized and even embellished. It is for this reason that I sought to produce a theory that seeks to represent both sides equally while paying attention to local dynamics that produce different results between different groups. In some places, relations become so friendly that a reciprocal and symbiotic relation develops while in others, hostility and aggressive fencing and policing are deployed by the dominant groups or the rich in order to keep off the poor or marginal groups.

African scholars have often been accused of not theorizing and simply aping and copying theories provided by scholars from the West. Very rarely are African scholars recognized as founders of any theory because their ideas are often stolen by other scholars and quickly published in Western journals. Such theories are quickly embraced and used and the originators from Africa are replaced and never to appear even in the footnotes of such theories. It is for this reason that I propose to use this theory using African examples, even though I am aware that other parts of the world can be mapped onto this theoretical canvass and easily fit. Many of my students in peace and conflict classes are sometimes forced to use theories postulated in different parts of the world, where the structures and institutions are so different from those in Africa. I have seen cases where some students force theories to conform to their studies instead of it being the other way round. The relationship is only healthy and good only when both sides believe that they are benefitting from the relation. When suspicion emerges, whether real or imagined, violence or tensions break out.

The conflicts so often witnessed among pastoralists in Africa are a result of the value they associate with cattle. Similarly, conflicts witnessed between slum dwellers and residents of rich suburbs are often predicated on the notion that poor and needy people can easily steal compared to rich people. Thus, the affinity and proximity theory seeks to explain the phenomenon in which protagonists are sometimes living side by side and pursuing perpetually antagonistic goals and aspirations, while harbouring fears and suspicion against each other. In such societies, the antagonistic forces are often represented by the haves and have-nots existing in the same neighbourhoods in urban areas or same enclaves in rural areas. The groups that engage in violence against each other often live side by side but often hide their intentions during periods of positive peace and bring them out during periods of negative

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peace. Neighbours have capacity to hide or unleash the violence from time to time and when they choose to. This is a point that Johan Galtung based on for his peace theories (Galtung, 1980). The affinity and proximity theory fits many African cases where there is conflict because the antagonistic forces are sometimes driven by politics of identity even when they live in the same terrain. This has often been the case for places such as Rwanda and Burundi where affinity and proximity come strongly into play.

Cultural and Social Understanding for Affinity and Proximity Theory

Theories are always influenced by social, economic, cultural and political dynamics. Theories of Karl Marx were influenced by the Industrial Revolution and its aftermath. Being born and raised in rural Kenya and moving out to Nairobi and other global spaces has created dynamics inside me and around me, which have triggered my thinking. We cannot therefore be ambivalent to our environment. I first conceived the idea of the theory of affinity and proximity in 1992 when I was a lecturer at Moi University in the 1990s. Over the years, I had seen in major cities of the world, poor estates tended to be juxtaposed next to rich suburbs. There were many reasons for this and which were well articulated in various urban studies. But there was something else that books did not capture, and that was the tendency of appearance of mutual engagements and reciprocity between rich and poor and how their relations were governed by invisible laws and rules of engagement. There were tensions and suspicion but these never came to the surface. I was astounded by the similarity between Muthaiga rich suburb in Nairobi and its proximity to Mathare slums, few hundreds of meters away. In the morning, there were hundreds of Mathare residents who crossed over to Muthaiga where they worked as domestic workers, to cook for their employees, open their gates as guards and sentries or as drivers to drive their children to school. There were deeper relational issues, some of which were historical. Rich residential areas in Nairobi were all doubled up with slum areas. The rich suburbs of Karen and Langata had Kibera (Kenya's largest slum) very close by. Lavington, Loresho and other rich suburb in the western part of Nairobi were doubled by Kawangware and Kangemi slums.

When I moved to Eldoret town, the proximity of the rich Elgon View estate seemed to have a similar relationship with its poor slum neighbor Langas residential area. Langas provided a reservoir of labour for Elgon View estate and the relation was much deeper and much more complicated due to the fact that the guards and domestic workers in Elgon View suburb resided and lived in Langas. The fascinating phenomenon was that the two residential areas were like day and night, with one more affluent with wonderful houses, social infrastructure and paved streets while the other was stinky with blocked sewers and bad roads and poor schools. Elgon View was spacious, green and beautiful while Langas was congested, dirty and ugly. One day my colleague who taught with me at Moi University reported that his fence had been vandalized, whereby some of his fencing posts were uprooted and taken away. He strongly believed that the thieves came from Langas, because that is where people used firewood to cook. He changed his fence and replaced the wooden posts with iron posts so as to discourage the thieves from Langas. But people in Elgon View admitted that life would be miserable for them without people from Langas majority of who were their domestic workers.

I have always been puzzled by the type of violence that attends pastoralist livelihoods in the Horn of Africa where groups fight each other mercilessly due to cattle. This violence has taken to new and more dangerous dimensions from the 1970s due to the introduction of small arms and light weapons. Since early 1990s when I started researching on herders of Northern Kenya and the livestock complex, it has emerged to me that affinity and proximity can minimize but also escalate tensions and conflict. The traditional raiding as carried out in

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many parts of Africa, were reciprocal. Groups which raided others for cattle did so, on scale that allowed that which was raided to recover. The raiders did not take the old cattle and calves, which they left behind for the raided group to build on, and restock. There was a mutual respect for the existence and survival of others, largely due to affinity to their livelihoods and proximity to each other. They realized that they needed each other and did not want to engage in annihilation of their neighbors, for they strongly believed that they needed each other. Groups never killed each other. In some occasions, some groups secured their prized breeding cattle above hill or in deep trenches while leaving regular cattle in any place, where raiders could be allowed to take them. Similarly, there have been cases where pastoralist groups have created structures through which they loan each other breeding animals whenever one group's livestock is ravaged by diseases or raiding. Others have allowed for mutual sharing of resources such as water and pasture.

Similarly, I have always been fascinated by the communal reciprocity that has attended affinity and proximity, leading to rise of markets in which herders, farmers and fisher communities exchange goods, with little violence. Take the case of centuries old Sondu market in South-Western Kenya which has been the meeting point for pastoralist Kipsigis, fisher Luo community and farming Abagusii community. Over the years, Sondu emerged as a meeting point for exchange of products among these three communities. There were cases where Kipsigis warriors raided the Luo and Abagusii for cattle but they always pursued peace and hostilities ended when realizing how the communities needed each other for survival. This reciprocity continues, which has made Sondu become prosperous as a town, in which the three communities interact. It has created triple linguists who speak Kipsigis (Kalenjin), Luo and Kisii languages. The theory of affinity and proximity of peace and conflict sees the triple linguists as middle people or mediators who are useful intermediaries in mediating tensions among the three communities. What is more is that Sondu becomes an example of a place where affinity can create conditions for both peace and tension or conflict.

Sondu Township is similar to Kiboswa Township in western Kenya. It is a border town on which three communities converge – the Luo, Luyia and Nandi (Kalenjin). Many residents of Kiboswa speak Luo, Luhya and Kalenjin besides Kiswahili and English. Majority of the traders at Kiboswa market will quickly switch into the language of their buyers who are mainly Luo, Luhya and Kalenjin. This area has not been volatile and conflict scholars attribute this to the nature of relations at Kiboswa where through intermarriage, it is not easy to say who is a Luo, Luhya or Nandi (Kalenjin). The area has always enjoyed tranquility and stability even as other areas experience violence. The major advantage of Kiboswa is that due to the triple language advantage, one cannot discuss the enemy and pass coded messages on when to attack the enemy because all groups understand each other. Affinity through language and proximity by being found in the same geographic location has worked to the advantage of all groups resident in the area.

Affinity and proximity theory seeks to explain why an area that suffers from triple problems of scarcity of water, insecurity and livestock-related banditry would not come together and resolve century old problems once and for all. It suggests that despite sharing this hostile terrain, and creating exchanges among various groups, they still raid and kill each other for cattle. For example, all the ethnic groups that inhabit northern Kenya practice pastoralism as their main livelihood and yet they go after each other, violently (Falola and Amutabi, 2011). Cattle's rustling is a major pastime in the region and many cattle are stolen and hundreds killed annually in northern Kenya. This region has been in the backwater of Kenya's development since the colonial period largely due to insecurity.

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Affinity and proximity have not helped these groups to develop structures of resolving conflicts leading to raids and counter raids, which makes the places almost inhabitable. Besides its harsh climate and physical terrain, northern Kenya was isolated because the British found the desert and semi-deserts of northern Kenya unattractive; at the same time the colonial government was unable to keep track of the nomadic pastoralists. It is largely as a result of this isolation that northern Kenya became isolated from the rest of Kenya, creating social, economic, political and cultural divide that has created tensions between people from northern and southern Kenya. Northern Kenya also suffers from many problems, mainly lack of water and drought. In parts of Kenya where proximity has created affinity and mutual exchange of goods and services, water is shared equitably without any tensions. Take for example the case of Eldoret which gets 90% of its water from Chebara Dam in Elgeyo-Marakwet county through mutual understanding that they are both Kenyans. There is also the case of Nairobi County which gets 90% percent of its water from Ndakaine Dam in Kiambu County. What makes others parts of Kenya share water equitably while in northern Kenya, water sharing is often resolved through the gun? Some scholars think that the reason why northern Kenya is prone to violence despite affinity and proximity is due to high levels of poverty, low levels of education and high illiteracy levels.

Affinity and Proximity Explained

Affinity comes close to similarity or likeness in meaning and its deepest manifestation conveys empathy, sympathy and consideration for members of the group. People located in the same space, place and geographical location share certain aspects of attachment or affinity, creating a kind of solidarity. Despite sharing attachment to a certain locale or economic pursuits, other factors come into play that make them act against the interests of the geographical, ethnic, social and political solidarity. Although affinity is important in defining human relations and feelings, it does not always strengthen human relations. Affinity can explain some of the causes and phases of conflict. Groups that have high affinity to each other and located in close proximity can either create positive or negative relations. Through economic affinity the rich create collective solidarity and may come up together to form vigilantes and militias to protect each other against their imagined common enemy, the poor. There are times when the rich may not act in solidarity with members of the group. This often happens due to identity issues, such as between Christians and Muslims, or in differences in political affiliation such as between conservatives (such as Republicans in the US and Tories in the UK) and Liberals (such as Democrats in the US and Labour in UK). Economic affinity is the weakest because it disappears when stronger elements of identity come into play such as ethnicity and religious affiliation. There are also times when gender can create or undermine economic affinity, with men or women siding with their gender or being indifferent. The rich often create rules and regulations that stifle the operations of the ordinary people who often respond by resisting, sometimes violently. The poor also have their own forms of solidarity.

From the 1940s, Fanon engaged in analytical discourses which formulated the idea that a true universalism has to include all human beings, dominating or dominated (Fanon, 1968). This is also mapped out by Edward Said in *Orientalism*. Power relations that form oppositional binaries also exist in affinity and proximity relations. They also exist in ideas, such as freedom and democracy or freedom and development. We must be cognizant of the binaries, which leaders such as Julius Nyerere discussed, in looking for possible ways of development for Africa. Nyerere made a strong connection between freedom and development (Nyerere, 1973), his argument being that freedom is at the centre of development. Many would now

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disagree, arguing that freedom needs qualification. Some can argue that Africa has been ‘free’ for over 50 years but with very little to show for it.

We must be aware about relations and understand who seeks to benefit from such relations. For example in African societies, relations between elders and youth can be seen through power relations, but also through reciprocity. These relations are historical both for the elders and youth. There is oppression through age and culture, but at the same time one can see elements and aspects of reciprocity, where youth are given land and cattle. Although Marxist analysts always see antagonism in relations, we should not always see them in that light. We should always look at the other, side of reciprocity between groups. For example, we cannot say that relations are always violent between men and women. In feminist analysis of bell hooks for example, the relation between man and woman is reciprocal although it is replete with tensions.

During civil wars or conflict the poor often band together as mob and loot and rob the rich. The mobs will ransack rich neighborhoods and loot homes. They often burn cars and barricade roads to against the rich. Their affinity is promoted through collective poverty, where they feel they are in the same social class and therefore have a common enemy, the rich. The poor often come out in support of each other through collective action in trade unions, or through civil society demonstrations. The poor often share grievances and are usually forced to act together against oppressive laws or systems. During national calamities and when they feel that the government has not acted fast enough to rescue their lot, the poor will band together to articulate their grievances. During floods or drought, the poor would always band together and press the government to do more. There are certain times when the poor may not act in solidarity. Just like the rich, religious and ethnic affinity is sometimes stronger than economic solidarity. This can lead to the poor doing violence against each other.

In Kenya, just like in other African countries, ethnic alliances are often built around ethnic affinity more than religious, economic and other affinities. Even where religious affiliation is strong, the relations often break down to ethnic affiliation. Affinity is rarely built around any ideological solidarity and agenda in many African countries including Kenya. At independence the Kikuyu and Luo interests were articulated through Kenya African National Union (KANU) in which the two then dominant ethnic groups of Kikuyu and Luo sought to dominate other minority ethnic groups. The domination of the Kikuyu, of the social, political, economical landscape was based on their monopoly in education. They dominated social, economic and political process largely through educated awareness of the techniques and process of mobilizing the masses. The two ethnic groups enjoyed very high literacy levels and were, therefore, able to mobilize their constituents easily for political support. Jomo Kenyatta the leader of Kikuyu interest at the time used *Muigwithania* a political newspaper (Jomo Kenyatta, 1928-1929) as a mouth piece of articulating Kikuyu interests. Through the Luo thrift and Lolwe Jaramogi Oginga was able to mobilize the Luo constituency to a common cause. The affinity and proximity of the Luo and Kikuyu did not last long. It broke up in 1966 as a result of the breakup of Jomo Kenyatta and Oginga Odinga alliance (Amutabi & Nasong’o, 2012).

Proximity is often explained through nearness or closeness. Sharing geographical location can create some form of solidarity among people or groups. In the settling of many parts of Africa during migration, some groups settled close to each other and formed solidarity against other groups. The case of the Hausa and the Fulani is a case in point. There have also been cases where people of the same ethnic group may bond against others when they are found in the same area. In the US, various European groups such as Irish, Germans, and Italians and so on, settled in certain parts of the US and created strong alliances due to

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proximity. There have also been cases of intermarriage that have led to intermingling and even assimilation. The Abasuba of Kenya intermarried with Luos and almost lost their identity. However, in many nation states, there are many examples of groups that have formed formidable alliances once they find themselves sharing a geographical location.

The Hausa and the Fulani were initially separate and distinct groups but finding themselves in the same geographical space and made to confront rivals from the south in the same nation, they created solidarity and have always acted as a block. They also share religious identity besides sharing a geographical location. Proximity has worked to create or minimize tensions. There are groups such as the Hausa and Fulani who have minimized conflicts as a result of coming together, but there have been cases where this has created the opposite result. In Kenya settling of some ethnic groups in certain places has elicited strong reactions against them. Despite many years of residing in close proximity, divisions have remained. This is especially in Kenya's Rift Valley where some groups are still referred to as foreigners. There have been cases where hostility has escalated between neighboring groups especially in northern Kenya despite having lived together for many years.

In Kenya, the Karen and Langata Residents Association whose members come from the rich suburb in Nairobi is the best example of the influence of proximity and may help us understand issues of peace and conflict. This association has been responsible in unifying residents of Karen and Langata on factors of proximity, because they happen to live in the same residential area. Unlike Fukuyama's ambivalence about the last man and the end of history, we can learn from the past and see evolution of more affinities and proximities between states and individuals and which shall continue to emerge and prosper. We shall continue have the poor next to the rich and vice versa.

Conclusion

The theory of affinity and proximity has been developed based on observation and my own experiences as a citizen, scholar and public intellectual. The theory is predicated on the recurrence of economic and political dualities that we see in all our neighborhoods, in both urban and rural areas and their attendant tranquility, tensions and violence. The main reasons for postulating this theory is that peace and conflict is one of the most recent disciplines in social sciences and one that has few theories, especially those developed in Africa and by African scholars. Many of the theories used in peace and conflict have been developed in Western scholarship and often fail to capture some of the germane issues affecting peace and conflict in places such as Africa. The theory of affinity and proximity seeks to explain causes of conflict in Africa, using geographical proximity as a major variant.

The theory has demonstrated that affinity and proximity are intimately intertwined to the point that they sometimes affect people in ways that we cannot disentangle which one of them has caused the change. We are not able to tell whether it is affinity or proximity that brings about peace or conflict and vice versa. Using African case studies and examples, this article demonstrates that sharing geographical space has implications on how groups relate to each other. The article has used examples from Kenya, to show that the rich and poor are always juxtaposed and interlocked in social, cultural, economic and political relations that promote or undermine peace.

The theory has focused on spaces, sites and locations in which protagonists are sometimes living side by side, such as those in slums and those in affluent neighbourhoods. These groups are usually perpetually pursuing antagonistic goals largely as a result of mutual suspicion. What is interesting is that the groups that engage in violence against each other often live side by side but often hide their intentions during periods of positive peace and

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engage in violence during periods of negative peace. The people in these poor and rich neighbourhoods have different interests and aspirations, with the poor preoccupied with survival through quest for basic needs, while the rich pursue issues of self actualization. In such societies, the antagonistic forces are often represented by the ‘haves’ and ‘have nots’ existing in the same neighbourhoods in urban areas or same enclaves in rural areas. Sometimes the boundaries between them are invisible, because they are social. At many times, the boundaries are visible though infrastructure and quality of economic, social and political institutions and circle of friends and relations. These groups have capacity to camouflage their intentions. They can hide or unleash the violence from time to time and when they choose to.

My conclusion is that affinity and proximity theory fits many situations across the world. It can be mapped to all other situations where two or more groups are antagonistic to each other based on geographical and other forms of identity. Although scholars have captured the ethnic identity as a cause of conflict in Kenya, they have not mapped out urban and rural dualisms, and residential dualities in urban areas where rich and poor neighbourhoods are antagonistic against each other and survive under periods of suspicion and mutual respect. It is always easy to tell when relations have soured or normal based on level of access, movement and tolerance.

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