

# Structure and Power Struggle in Contemporary Nollywood: An Ethnographic Evaluation

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**Abstract**—Statements of facts have been made about Nollywood, a segment of the Nigerian film industry that has in recent times become phenomenal due largely to its quantity of production and specific production style. In the face of recent transformations reshaping the industry, matters have been arising which have not been given due academic attention from an industry player perspective. While re-addressing such issues like structure, policy and informality, this study benefits from a new perspective – that of a community member adopting participant observation to research into a familiar culture. With data drawn from an extensive ethnographic study of the industry, this paper examines these matters with an emphasis on structure and the industry's overall political economy. Drawing from discourses on the new and old Nollywood labels and other current matters arising within the industry such as the MOPICON bill redraft, corporate financing and possibilities of regeneration, this paper examines structure and power struggle within Nollywood. These are championing regenerative processes that bring about formalization, professionalism and the quest for a transnational presence, which have only been superficially evaluated. Focused essentially on Nollywood's political economy, this study critically analyses the transforming face of an informal industry, the consistent quest for structure, quality and standard, and issues of corporate sponsorship as possible trends of regeneration. It evaluates them as indicators of regeneration, questioning the possibilities of their sustenance in an industry experiencing increased interactions with the formal economy and an influx of young professionals. With findings that make sustained regeneration both certain (due to increased formal economy interaction) and uncertain (due to the dysfunctionality of the society and its political system), it concludes that the transforming face of the industry suggests impending gentrification of the industry.

**Keywords**—Formalization, MOPICON, Nollywood, Structure.

## I. INTRODUCTION

**N**OLLYWOOD is gradually taking its place in studies on global cinema. The fundamental difference between Nollywood and other national industries is the political economy within which the industries exist and operate, and one's dominance over the other or others is measured by the perceptive economic relevance accorded the industry both by individuals and the state. The existence of an intimate connection between nation statehood and its productive forces prompts questions over the Nigerian state's economic and infrastructural contribution to Nollywood [1]. A review of previous studies indicates that although Nollywood exists in the informal sector of the Nigerian political economy, there are significant attempts (both in the past and currently)

towards transforming its structures [2]. What remains indeterminate from these studies, however, is the extent of the power struggle within the industry and impact of this on the perceivable transformation currently reshaping the industry. This study draws from a previous attempt to put in context these transformations from the perspective of the now recurrent old and new Nollywood labels, questioning their relevance in the light of an emerging and developing industry. Although irrelevant to the development of the industry, these labels highlight the hankering for structure and the incessant power struggle which besides fuelling such separatist ideology, nurtures the regenerative process introducing formalization, professionalism and quest for transnational presence within the industry.

This paper aims at examining these transformations with a focus on power relationships that impact on and shape the industry. It addresses one of the research questions that seeks to understand Nollywood filmmakers' perception of and relationship to these transformations. One tacit reason for distinguishing a new Nollywood from an old one is to emphasize superiority, betterness, newness and otherness [3]-[5]. Newness and otherness is defined by who or what is left out rather than what characteristics, attributes or experiences make up those within it. Hence, new Nollywood is essentially about not being 'old' in style and practice. The new Nollywood identity is constructed by an other-ing - that of not being old Nollywood [3]. Such a lopsided definition creates an identity politics that informs of the power struggle within an industry; a power struggle resulting from the consideration of one identity as lacking and thus, subject to discrimination. Using a political economy analysis approach, this study shall discuss power relations and political dynamism that inform the formation, selection and implementation of evolutionary initiatives like the revived MOPICON bill proposal. Political economy as a methodology is an economic approach used to analyze and understand political behaviors and institutional dynamics. It is most suitable to understanding the structure and power struggle within media industries in general and Nollywood in particular, as its major features support that institutions, individuals and commitments matter. As this paper contemplates the journey from informality to formalization within Nollywood and the individuals and/or agents contributing to this change as well as their drive and motivations, political economy analysis becomes key since it responds strategically to existing structures and norms [7]. The essence of this study lies in the discovery of carefully analyzed political behaviors, institutions and structures that impact on industry agents and actors in order to determine the

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possibilities or not of a sustained regeneration within Nollywood.

## II. POLITICAL ECONOMY ANALYSIS AS A TOOL

Analyzing political behaviors, structures and institutions has become relevant to economic processes, agents and actors. Political economy analysis applies economic assumptions to the understanding of political behaviors. Three key steps in the analytical process are identifying the problem, discovering the power system, structure and/or institution that informs the problem and identifying the stakeholders, agents or actors and their interests. Political economy analysis concentrates thus on the interaction between the structures and power in place and the agents or actors. Its main features indicate that institutions and structures, individuals or actors and their motivations and commitment matter to the understanding of political economy and power struggle. Its major advantage and reason for its suitability for this discourse is its ability to dissect policy process into formulation, approval, implementation and monitoring stages. These stages are essential for discussing sections IV and V, although unfortunately, due to bureaucratic challenges and the problem of documentation within the Nigerian film industry, certain information remain inaccessible. This will pose a major challenge to the proposed analysis because at the time of data collection, a majority of the key agents of the MOPICON bill initiative for instance were unwilling to discuss it. While key actors and industry players willingly shared their sentiments over such a government strategy, the stand of the government as always remains unclear due to an existing communication gap. From this emerges another limitation. Lack of communication breeds uncertainty over the model of change expected with an initiative such as the MOPICON bill, for example. This uncertainty has generated mixed feelings, heated arguments, outright rejections and further separations within the industry. These sentiments draw from the established lack of faith and trust in the Nigerian government known to have consistently and successively formed new agencies on political rather than functional reasons [8], [2]. Industry critic, Prof. Shaka, forthrightly avers that “Nollywood is lucky that the government is not involved. Anything that the government is involved in comes with misgivings. I have no faith in the Nigerian state. Many things they go into, they bungle it” [9]. These limitations notwithstanding, political economy analysis suitably lends insight into understanding the structure and power struggle within Nollywood since it is concerned with how groups or individuals control others, how they gain acceptance to and retain such control and gives explanation to motivations to cooperate or not within and without groups. Political economy analysis has the capability to position “development interventions within an understanding of prevailing political and economic processes in society” such that it provides politically feasible analysis and effective development strategies by setting realistic expectations [10]. Acosta & Pettit [7] identify four key elements that shape power relations and these shall be adopted in this study as the

tenets of political economy analysis considering that they consist of quintessential segments under which structure and power struggle in the industry could be adequately discussed. These elements

- The formal and visible structures, norms and “rules of the game”,
  - The informal and invisible structures, beliefs and narratives,
  - The actors, interests and strategies, and
  - The processes of cooperation and contestation,
- will inform and structure the discussions under sections below which consider the interplay between visible and invisible powers in the state’s effort to identify and empower a private sector beyond oil. Contemporary Nollywood, usually identified under the informal sector of the Nigerian political economy is gradually positioning itself within the formal sector, especially with the recent appreciation of its significant contribution to the national gross domestic product.

## III. THE TRANSFORMING FACE OF AN INFORMAL INDUSTRY

Lobato [11], while discussing creative industries and informal economies, with Nollywood as the major example, maintains the stance of an author rethinking aspects of creative industries and media theories and not essentially mirroring a developed world’s image in a developing country. His concluding sentences “The way in which the Nigerian industry has sidestepped these obstacles is instructive. By opting instead for a cheap, televisual model of film production, and an innovative model of dispersed, informal distribution, it has broken this gridlock and found its own ‘third way’. Nollywood is now that rarest of things – a viable, popular, and accessible film culture. National film industries in the first world have much to learn from its example” [11] appreciate Nollywood as a unique national media industry that has set an example worth learning from. However, this uniqueness has generated arguments over the right nomenclature to describe the industry with. Brown [1] categorically submits that because the industry operates outside the tenets of conventional cinema [in the Euro-American sense of the word], it is no cinema. Lobato [11] does not describe the industry as a cinema nor does he envisage the likelihood of it being a conventional creative industry (again like the Euro-American model) or competing efficiently with Hollywood or Bollywood. Such comparisons, subtle or outright, and the industry’s cultural success [12] have cumulated to the changing face of contemporary Nollywood, a change directed towards inevitable formalization encumbered with uncertain consequences. The quest to distance itself from the “too informal to integrate into dominant networks” [2] description and register transnational presence beyond the pirates’ black market sale has brought about what has been called the new Nollywood – a step towards integration into Nigeria’s formal economy.

Besides the differences in production, distribution and consumption observable in the old and new Nollywood, a number of other transformations are reshaping the economy of

Nollywood leaving a before meets after effect on the entire industry landscape. Drawn from literatures as well as data gathered in the course of the fieldtrip, this paper highlights notable changes that have now taken place. This does not imply that these changes are complete and entire. They are in reality sparse, occurring among filmmakers determined to leave their signatures on their films.

#### *A. Investment and Re-Investment*

Nollywood began as a venture for private, informal investment like any other petty private, small-scale investment. Its existence in the informal sector of the national economy meant that no taxes are paid or accounted for by the filmmakers. Its high profitability and quick turn-over attracted investors leading to the video boom when the industry became an all comers' affair. The influx of filmmakers (essentially amateurs) took a negative toll on the industry. With reduced returns, private investors began to look for alternative investments. Because investments were mostly on small scale, infrastructure was minimal and little was invested in it. Thus, upgrade of equipment was a rarity and a lack of reinvestment into the industry was not unfamiliar. Earlier in 2007, Haynes noted how few physical spaces the industry had created for itself. In 2016, the author still reiterates these lacks. He submits "it has built no studios..., Nollywood productions cannot afford to rent (sound stages for shoot) and most producers and directors do not know how to operate in them efficiently. Production outfits seldom own much equipment, renting it as necessary from a network of suppliers" [5]. While this description forms a general backdrop in the industry, systems of operation are changing and filmmakers are becoming professional, availing themselves for trainings and reinvesting into the business of filmmaking. Unlike in the past, filmmaking has become some people's full time employment, occupying the place of business and passion. Kunle Afolayan [13] for instance indicates an interest in establishing KAP [Kunle Afolayan Production] Studio where every film business can be executed from pre-production to post-production. With a suitable location acquired in Ikeja, he makes his plans to gradually erect structures and move from his current detached one-storey office building. Although a more recent investor into the film business, Afolayan practically owns more updated equipment than most of his peers. He offers:

"70% of what we have realized [finance] in over 10 years has gone back into the company. Because we are trying to expand and serve the industry, we are not acquiring this equipment just for us [Golden Effects Productions], we also want people at the level of production to have tools to work with. We are not just into production; we are into services. We have postproduction facilities, we have an audio studio, we do basically everything that we need to do in terms of production" [13].

Afolayan maybe one among the few filmmakers who have the bigger plan to expand up to a studio system, other filmmakers are equally upgrading as their finances can permit.

A number of them are beginning to acquire physical, fully furnished office spaces for their businesses. While Haynes [5] notes that for 15 years Lancelot Imasuen operated "out of a few dark, cavernous rooms in a building shared with a Pentecostal church, with dusty odd objects lying around", he does not update his readers on the spacious bungalow Imasuen currently occupies.

#### *B. Definition and Re-Definition*

The definition of Nollywood as an industry of poorly made video films on low budget and speedy turn out has remained constant despite the transformations overtaking the industry. There is a recycling of established knowledge on how untrained amateurs and businessmen run the industry [27], causing a new wave among young professionals to distance themselves from the industry, opting to be dissociated from Nollywood. The quest for a new definition for the industry, a definition that recognizes fresh talent, professionalism, passion and effort in addition to commercial drive, has led to professional filmmakers opting to be no part of the industry. Pat Nebo, an award winning art director (as a Nollywood art director) submits "I'm new to (Nollywood) and I am not part of it. However, I respect it" [15]. The veteran of over fifteen years elaborates,

"Nollywood refers to people who so much commercialize the act of filmmaking that they can afford to produce up to three films in a week... So if Nollywood is about making many films at a time, then I am not part of it. But if it is about making a film that is worthwhile, then I'm part of it" [15].

The definition of Nollywood currently recycled in texts stems from a point in the history of the industry. With years gone by and transformations in place, the definition, besides being unpalatable to individuals making fresh effort to create a new history, has become a point in the history of the industry that is fast becoming a past. Hence, if Nollywood needs to be defined by the characteristics of films produced within it, rather than reuse definitions, fresh attempts must be made to define it using recent selections of films especially as the industry is still transforming.

#### *C. Informal Commerce, Yet Capitalism*

Nollywood is acceptably commercial and however far away 'professional' filmmakers wish to distance themselves from the industry on the basis of its pronounced commerciality, film across the globe is first business before anything else. As established earlier, every filmmaker is in the business for profit. It is equally established that Nollywood essentially operates an informal commerce, typical of African markets and uncharacteristic of developed world's industries. While McCall [12] and Haynes [5] like to argue against mirroring the industry in the image of the western world, they fall victims of their judgment. Their position that Nollywood is not a capitalist industry because "capitalism can only be mobilized under conditions of economic formality" [12] marked by official documentations and records, contradicts their argument. An industry controlled entirely by private owners

for profit qualifies as a capitalist industry. However, because of Nollywood's informality, lack of records and documentation and perhaps its variance from the operational systems of western world's capitalism, the industry is 'bluntly' described as non-capitalist.

From Hamilton [16] to Fligstein and Zhang [17], there have been changing perspectives on capitalism. The latter authors submit [in the case of Chinese capitalism] that every transition in capitalism produces a new form of capitalism. Positing that the nation has the capability to produce its own model of development, [16] submits, "what makes China cannot be learned from a theory about Europe". Nollywood is operating its own market economy model besides established market economies. It operates however, within the characteristic tenets of capitalism – it is an industry that allows private ownership and investment, freedom of economic choice in a competitive market with little or no government intervention. The industry is recording transformations among which is the gradual availability of reliable data, figures and information due to the gradual integration of the industry into Nigeria's formal economy. Haynes [5] notes some of these changes, yet he persists in judging the industry from its unconventional beginning, emphasizing the low budget and lack of documentation.

The Nigerian video phenomenon, which was once criticized before its projection as a creative industry, however informal, now represents an important method in the re-imagining of media studies for the developed world [11]. It is important that Nigerian capitalism should not be a mirror image of western capitalism. Instead, it should be adopted as a free-standing vision of how a society and its affairs are assembled and should thus be accepted on its own specificities. Inasmuch as cross-cultural juxtapositions are necessary in creating understanding, concepts and theories for determining such things as market economy ought to fashion their meanings from the given nation's historical experience. Therefore, an adequate view of Nollywood in the light of its many transformations and when unavoidably compared to other industries or economies, is to see it neither as capitalism nor not capitalism, but rather as different in operation and precepts. This is especially important as more reforms are underway which could introduce state interference and invariably place Nollywood in Nigeria's pre-dominantly mixed economy system.

#### *D. Record/Data Keeping*

Nollywood has not been known as an industry with reliable data or record. The industry's first commercially successful film, Kenneth Nnebue's *Living in Bondage* [1992] sets the record. Produced from only sequence outline with lines made up spontaneously on set [18], better record has not been kept on its economic success. Besides his meager earnings as an actor and hospital bill (at the end of production), Okechukwu Ogunjiofor, the major personality behind its production as writer, producer, art director and overall production manager, is unable to discuss the grossing of the Nollywood classic [18]. With such report coming from a major role player, both

as cast and crew, it is not uncommon to read about "manipulation of figures and improper record keeping" [19] among filmmakers and the industry in general. While this may not have changed much, a new wave of professionalism is introducing better recording keeping habits and organized calendar of activities among filmmakers. Lancelot Imasuen claims he has his yearly activities, including proposed productions lined up in a calendar from the beginning of the year. Industrial interactions with the formal sector of the national political economy require accurate documentation for positive responses.

An example is benefiting from the Project ACT (Advancing Creativity and Technology) Nollywood fund, managed by the Federal Ministries of Finance and Culture and Tourism, which aims at accelerating the industry's development onto a path of growth and sustainability. Professor Ekwuazi [19], a former member of the board offers that "what we tried to do was capture filmmakers in the tax nets, bringing them into the formal sector of the economy". This required a company registration, financial records and evidences of tax payment for one year. Among other requirements as gathered from the fund's website are a complete production budget, production schedule, and grant deployment plan [72]. This calls for better record keeping, better planning for pre-production, production and post-production and marketing strategy since one of the criteria for selection is a credible marketing and distribution plan. Recollecting some fundamental changes that have occurred within the industry over his years as an actor, Sam Dede remembers his fee "as an artiste being paid to me in cash which does not pass through any bank. So, the banking industry is out of it. Same applies to directors and producers. Companies were not registered as well. Yet there was a lot of money passing round the industry" [21]. Noting the challenges this caused the industry, but which are now being corrected, he concludes, "we need to have the correct data". Better record and data keeping evidences new knowledge and understanding of practice. Opa Williams [22] acknowledges, "when you start, you start within the frame of your understanding, but if you want to grow, you need to add value and more knowledge".

#### *E. From Business to Creative Hub*

The transformation of Nollywood from an exclusively business hub to one of creativity is remarkably observable in every ramification of its economy – production, distribution and consumption. In her ode to a Bollywood in transition, [23] notes how, among other agents, audiences and technology contribute significantly to the transformation of cinema. Illustrating with the Hindi industry, she narrates how the video revolution was welcomed with mixed feelings, being responsible for the decline in cinematic quality. Such has been the reaction to the Nigerian video revolution – Nollywood, with cinema veterans such Ola Balogun, Eddie Ugbomah always on hand to offer the industry ready critical sum-ups [24], [25]. Producing a number of classics, the revolution soon climaxed into what [23] describes as the antithesis of cool, where audiences, especially the elite middle and upper class

income earners, were quick to distance themselves from the industry, being embarrassed at the quality of videos produced [26], [27]. Evocative of Bourdieu's [28] logic of class, taste and the custom of distinction, condescension for the industry and its products by the elites soon extended to filmmakers. They eschew popular stories and themes [15], [3] for new, exciting and fast-paced genres, glorifying creativity in business rather than sacrificing it on the altar of business. A subconscious revolution aimed at ameliorating Nollywood film quality [14], judgment on social class, its identity and taste, remain a submerged element in discourses on quality and aesthetics in cinema [23]. From a marketing strategy perspective, [29] surmises that upper end producers and distributors in this category of filmmakers have diasporic and elite audiences as their major marketing target. Although a number of interviewees suggest their drive is to tell universal stories that appeal to audiences across all social class and to ensure these stories reach them all, market segmentation and audience target consideration are vital for artists to thrive. Evidently, they have a wide target market, but as [29] suggests and [31] agrees, the target audience determines the distribution channel opted for. In contemporary Nollywood, distribution negotiation is no longer solely business, but also a creative initiative as auteurs become informed about intellectual property rights and protection.

Production drive and purpose are becoming increasingly incentivized by creativity rather than profit which makes the divide between old and new Nollywood. Nevertheless, filmmaking is first business before anything else, hence Chris Ihedio of Amaka Igwe Studios states categorically, "yes, quality is key. But we should not stupidly, for the sake of quality, abandon volume... Our inroad to the international market at this point is quantity" [5]. In reality, the prefix 'new' in new Nollywood does not suggest or imply a new school of filmmaking or artistic movement, but rather a strategy and an aspiration [5] since it is only an extension of the so called old Nollywood. In a lecture delivered at the Pan-Atlantic University in 2013, Kene Mkpuru of The Filmhouse highlights that the general problem of overproduction in Nollywood is being replicated in the new Nollywood. However, the aspiration for creativity and quality in and innovative strategies towards film business feature in the changing face of the industry. Opa Williams [22], producer of Bank of Industry [BOI] funded *Three Wise Men* [2016] acknowledges the industry's need to adopt "best practice" and "meet international standard". He adds, "we are growing to that level. Young professionals are coming in too. Knowledge has come into the industry, theoretical and practical, and there is the desire to do things right".

Summarily, the persistent call for quality and standard against quantity within the industry, which began around 2007 with the video boom is currently being heeded. With a lot more transformations being anticipated, the much currently in place is worth commending. An African adage says if a champion is commended for a feat attained, he attains more. While the call has not ceased, there is noteworthy appreciation among filmmakers, both old timers and newcomers. With a

sizable number of what could be described as top-notch, high budget, cinema standard films being released to Nigerian cinemas, distributed in international cinema chains, satellite televisions and online platforms, the industry deserves, beyond commendations, dedicated state support. Besides tackling piracy and providing filmmakers with tax rebates, Steve Gukas [32], director of *93 Days* [2016] believes the government could contribute to improving production quality by supporting filmmakers with a better distribution network, exhibition infrastructure and production fund. The seeming neglect of such pressing issues and the Nigerian government's typical inclination towards abandoning projects begun by the preceding government, informs the pandemonium rising within the industry over the proposed MOPICON bill. Divided into two aggressively active groups taking to the media to lend their voices to the debate, the contention within the industry regards quality and regulation of the film practice. With the skepticism that trails state involvement and the general lack of faith in its activities, a question mark hovers over the relevance and timeliness of the MOPICON.

#### IV. MOPICON: BAIL OUT OR HINDRANCE

MOPICON –Motion Picture Practitioners' Council of Nigeria has been the subject of so much controversy since the inauguration of the review committee selected to revisit the content of the document drafted in early 2000 [20]. As the then Director General of the Nigerian Film Corporation (NFC), Prof. Hyginus Ekwuazi felt the need to create MOPICON based on two things. One was to align the motion picture industry to the larger industrial subsector of the national economy, and secondly, to professionalize filmmaking – making it bankable [20]. Reflecting on the initiative in 2016, an African Movie Academy Awards (AMAA) jury member posits that besides having been doctored, the industry does not need MOPICON anymore, but an endowment fund. Judging from the impact of the Nollywood Project fund (with all the fund mismanagement tales trailing it [34]), fund and infrastructure apparently are the industry's greatest needs. Industry practitioners who hold this line of argument are countered by those who insist that MOPICON, like other sister councils within the country, "is meant to fill the lacuna existing between the government and the practice" [35]. MOPICON, according to [2], seeks to formalize an informal industry by requiring that all practitioners have a license permitting them to work as a creative within the industry.

Currently existing in a house seemingly divided against itself, MOPICON is expected to function as a professional body for film practitioners just like the Nigerian Medical Association (NMA) for medical practitioners and the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) for lawyers. This expectation also signifies that MOPICON, like the Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON) parallels an anticipation for power to control and regulate the practice of motion picture production in Nigeria. A faction of the industry militating against its adoption argue against 'control' and 'regulation' of

practice or creativity, insisting that the Nigerian Film and Video Censorship Board (NFVCB) is sufficient having been bequeathed powers to censor films and videos produced and exhibited within the country. MOPICON, as envisaged by Lai Mohammed, Minister of Information and Culture (during the April, 2016 inaugural ceremony of the MOPICON draft review team), rather than stifle or regulate creativity, will stimulate professionalism and encourage standard practice within the industry. Suggesting the lack of these in the industry, the minister believes MOPICON is a requirement in addressing the industry's structural deficiencies. It is an avenue, he believes that would enable him to achieve outlined plans which include battle against piracy, establishment of national endowment fund for the art and tackle lack of policy issues within the industry [36].

As noble as these plans appear, they underscore and give credence to the people's lack of faith in the government and its activities. This lack of faith accounts for the people's preference for informal and invisible structures that are within their control over the formal and visible ones within state control. Lai Mohammed's plans harmonize with industry demands [32]. However, initial effort has been made by previous governments to make these demands reality. Nigerian Copyright Commission (NCC) set up Strategic Action Against Piracy (STRAP) in 2005 and Copyright Litigation and Mediation Programme (CLAMP) in 2006 as anti-piracy initiatives being belabored with the responsibility of administering, regulating and enforcing copyright within the country. With the Commission's survey on piracy which submitted a 58% piracy level within the country in 2008, came a call for further collaborations in the STRAP initiative [37]. Like most state-led projects, one of its strategies, the hologram stickers, was abandoned when the government ran out of stickers [11].

Project-ACT Nollywood, established in March 2013 and managed by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism suffices for an endowment fund for the industry with a mapped out three billion naira to cater for capacity building, film production and distribution grants [72]. In dire need of restructuring to ensure sustainability, the grant has sponsored the trainings 247 film practitioners, offered grants to 113 film projects and supported innovative distribution proposals [38]. Although welcomed with disparate reactions from film practitioners due largely to the lack of transparency in grant disbursement [39], [40], an endowment fund could be made of it with proper organization and transparency. With bodies, government bodies, already empowered to tackle issues like piracy and grants, further requirement entails empowerment and perhaps restructuring not duplications of office. Hence the fears and heightened disunity within the industry as some practitioners hold that with MOPICON, the industry would experience aggravated rather than shift away from its characteristic personality cult [cartel] system where individuals instead of structure matter [71].

The Nigerian film industry is made up of numerous guilds, some of them duplicated along cult [41]. According to [11], besides the ceaseless clash between the censor's board and the

various groups, a great deal of conflict exists between and within them. In 2007, the Nigerian Film Corporation lists sixteen guilds and associations within the industry, and by 2014, [41] lists over 30, acknowledging that a number of them had not been registered under the Corporate Affairs Commission (of Nigeria). Proliferation of guilds and associations has not contributed to the benefit of both industry and practitioners. In a study dedicated to technical workers within the Nigerian film industry, [42] establishes the ineffectiveness of the guilds, submitting that there is no incentive to being a guild member. In 2016, in the course of data collection, members of the Directors Guild of Nigeria re-echo the same sentiment. The guild's 2016 annual general meeting and election recorded a 65% attendance. An unmeasured proportion in this percentage attended out of obligation to vote for a candidate who had earlier promised to pay their annual dues [my sources here prefer to remain anonymous]. Run essentially for personal rather than collective interest, guilds are therefore not in the best position to establish and enforce standards [42]. The author hence believes MOPICON has the capacity to serve as a regulatory body monitoring the guilds' activities and that of the industry at large. He adds,

*"The council is intended to be the regulator of the industry and will be charged with... establishing the entry qualifications and production standards that must be met by practitioners in the industry. It will function as an arbiter in the disputes that might arise among those who work in the industry" [42].*

Eventually drafted in 2000, effort to set up the MOPICON, according to Lai Mohammed, Minister of Information and Culture during the review committee inauguration began in the early 1990s. He maintains that Nigerian motion picture practitioners then desired a council to foster sustainable development within the industry based on quality and best practice. Their desire for practitioners' right protection and a structure within the industry provoked the move for MOPICON. It is noteworthy that the video phenomenon in the Nigerian film industry began actively in 1992 after Kenneth Nnebue's *Living in Bondage* (1992) commercial success. The video phenomenon came under a torrent of criticisms from celluloid filmmakers who understood it as a damage to their industry [24], [25]. Effort to halt the embarrassment meets a dead-end with the collapse of celluloid filmmaking as a result of lack of fund. In 2005, according to the Minister, the first Steering Committee for the council was set up, headed by Chief Tunde Oloyede. A report was said to have been submitted by the committee to the Federal Government in 2006 [36]. However, as a result of discontinuation of projects started by previous governments, the actualization of MOPICON take off only materialized in April 2015. Although Tunde Oloyede is currently not an active player in Nollywood, he was a former producer on the NTA (Nigerian Television Authority) series *The Village Headmaster* (1958). During the fourth annual public lecture of the National Institute of Cultural Orientation (NICO), Prof. Ayo Akinwale underscored Oloyede's displeasure with the quality of films produced in

Nollywood. He produced *Tightrope* [2010] with a selection of trained and experienced cast and crew members and USAID and The Ford Foundation sponsorship. According to [44], *Tightrope* portrays “perfect acting, good directing, good choice of location and a story with such a suspense that will make one feel happy that Nigeria is moving forward in terms of film production”.

The impression put forth suggests that the quest for quality and practice standard is the reason behind agitation for MOPICON. However, judging from the trend of events, one can suspect a struggle for power disguised as a quest for structure and quality. Agitation for MOPICON first emerged with the wide spread of video filmmaking, following criticisms from celluloid filmmakers. With the collapse of celluloid, MOPICON was given little or no attention until 2005-2006, a period that marks the beginnings of the decline in video profitability [6]. After its failed kick-off by 2009 [2] and with less to no power struggle within the industry, MOPICON was abandoned until the new Nollywood rave. New Nollywood began to be topical in 2010 [30], suggesting a separation and resurrecting the need to agitate for and exert power and control. By April 2015, according to Lai Mohammed, an advisory interim council was set up to facilitate the take-off of MOPICON [36]. Apparently a power struggle between the old professionals [of video this time] and the young, newcomers who classify themselves as new Nollywood, the campaign calls for stakeholders in the industry to set standards for film production. Understood therefore as a reprisal attack and deliberate attempt to put the young incomers in their ‘rightful’ place, MOPICON falls out of favor with especially industry hopefuls as well as recent entrants who evidently belong to no established guilds within the industry. Equally in this category of young entertainers are musicians and comedians whose right to produce musical videos, comedy skits and video coverage of live performances, is on the line. During the fourth edition of the Nigerian Entertainment Conference held in Lagos in April 2016, there was a distinct disparity in the representation of the old and young entertainers. Consisting mostly of young industry hopefuls aspiring to be film or music stars, the event was hosted in a 10,000 sitting capacity hall. Resounding cheers of support followed arguments against MOPICON and echoes of disapproval boomed into and interrupted speeches and attempts to promote it. Querying the sensibility behind requiring an individual who desires to post a motion picture on YouTube to join a council, rap artiste cum actor, Folarin Falana (Falz), and comedian cum actor Bovi, summarily dismissed the move as ridiculous, elitist and restrictive to creativity. MTV Shuga producer, Chris Ihidero outrightly describes the proposal as a selfish advocacy for relevance by the old (Nollywood) filmmakers.

#### A. The Controversy

The controversy surrounding MOPICON stems from three major identifiable reasons that include structure, state involvement and the content of the bill. Copy of the proposed bill under review has been uploaded to the Internet. Despite

the minister, Lai Mohammed referring to it as “a certain MOPICON document” [36], the copy accessed in the course of this study was uploaded by Mahmood Ali-Balogun, deputy coordinator of the committee and was the same as that which has received mixed reactions. Further demonstrating the communication gap between leadership and the led, since inauguration, no attempt has been made to upload the “right” document if any different from the “certain MOPICON document”. The 28-man committee inaugurated in April 2016 and given a three-week deadline to submit a re-draft, is headed by Ms. Peace Anyiam-Osigwe, founder of the Africa Movie Academy Award. Despite the three-week timeframe given by the minister within which to submit a report, by August, the coordinator was not able to grant an interview, insisting the committee thinks it too early to speak on their assignment. Attempts are not made to correct what they perceive to be a negative impression [45] the public has about the bill. This highlights the industry’s major problem – structure.

#### B. Structure

Nollywood was established on an informal structure and over twenty years down the line, prominent director, Jeta Amata believes the industry still has no structure [46]. The arrangement or organization of relationships within the industry is jumbled such that individuals fend for themselves, a situation portrayed as “inhospitable to the entry of major multinational entertainment firms” [2]. From data collected, the problem of structure recurred prominently. Although seen from different perspectives, the need for orderliness, regulation, accountability, infrastructure, defined relationships, benefits and punishment feature conspicuously in the various interpretations of ‘structure’ gathered. Lancelot Imaseun appreciates structure as the established effort to give filmmakers [both local and foreign] an idea of what to expect in any given circumstance, cutting out surprises. Structure is also seen from the perspective of established bodies such as the guilds and associations who are meant to occupy a position to defend or represent the interests of members, and reward and sanction members appropriately. With guilds hardly meeting these expectations, some filmmakers decide to fend for themselves rather than belong to them [40]. Although justifiable, national award recipient and filmmaker, Teco Benson posits that such unchecked decisions contribute to the chaos within the industry. Advocating for passing of MOPICON into law, the award winning director forecasts, “everyone would have to conform to the stipulated standard. Practitioners would not wake up and walk to the media and say I am old or new [without sanction]” [47]. Advocates of MOPICON therefore believe that passing the bill into law would bring sanity, order, conformity, regulation and indeed structure within the industry. However, the failure of various bodies currently existing or created in time past to bring such anticipations to play leaves non advocates to wonder the necessity of a new establishment. Gukas [32] thus describes the bill categorically as an absolute waste of time and scarce resources. Aimed at creating the much desired structure, pro-MOPICON advocates conceive the initiative as a lobby for the

growth, development and welfare of both industry and industry players [36]. Anti-MOPICON advocates on the other hand understand it as a lobby for bureaucracy and an avenue to benefit from the national cake while creating with state support, a professional cartel within Nollywood. Onoshe [33], arguing its needlessness and no success guarantee, reasons that had the guilds and associations been better structured and functional, they would have provided the necessary regulation needed to boost professionalism and standards.

### C. State Involvement

Skepticism surrounds the MOPICON bill proposal due largely to the involvement of the government. While state involvement in the affairs of the industry has long been desired, its role in the initiative now comes across as restrictive and unwelcome. Hence the argument that the industry has existed effectively with little or no state intervention [2]. Sam Dede's [21] elaboration highlights the consequence of state interference; "the moment we hand over the industry to government regulation, it means the industry finds itself on the table of civil servants who are not filmmakers. Then as a filmmaker, you must comply with all regulations". These fears are justified from the content of the bill. For instance, the bill sets out to determine who qualifies to be a film professional, states clearly (in part 1 sections 10 and 11) how monies shall be accumulated and expended (essentially for and within the council including payment of salaries and allowances), but does not clarify how to determine the qualifications of the council staff members. Controversies have arisen in the past where supposedly 'unqualified' individuals are appointed into offices. The appointment of Dr. Danjuma Dadu as Managing Director of the Nigerian Film Corporation is regarded as an aberration as he has no specialist qualification in the area of film [49]. Accordingly, he 'cluelessly' occupies his office, collecting budgetary allocations that get diverted to "self-promotional activities" [50]. The MOPICON initiative comes across as an avenue to enrich a certain group of people in the guise of working for the industry's good. Being the usual trend in the corrupt Nigerian government prone to self-interest rather than service, there is a good cause to mistrust state involvement in the affairs of the industry. Ignoring these concerns and wondering why the bill is creating much divide, the president of the Director's Guild of Nigeria and member of the review committee, Jeta Amata [35] insists that MOPICON is imperative as Nollywood evolves into a sub-sector of the national economy. And indeed like most national affairs, it is fraught with communication gap. Although the committee coordinator Ms. Peace Anyiam-Osigwe promised an open session where documents would be made available to stakeholders to clear misunderstandings and misgivings, no such attempt has been made.

Further confirming the suspected hidden enrichment plans of a few, the coordinator offers that MOPICON is not a regulatory body but a lobby group between state and film practitioners. The fact that a lobby group only needs a government clearance to function questions the proposal to

pass the bill into law. Earlier in 2009, Ms. Anyiam-Osigwe opposed government involvement in Nollywood affairs. Querying their ability to affect positively an industry created out of tenacity and ingenuity considering their inefficiencies with basic infrastructures and amenities, the current coordinator of the review team called into question the billions of naira spent annually on the already existing agencies catering to film affairs in the country [2]. The attempt to establish a state approved mediatory lobby group, funded by the government and the people, comes with a hint of self-centeredness. MOPICON is not intended to be entirely in the state's control, but [2], as well as young and fresh incomers into Nollywood, understands the initiative as a move by established industry players to initiate, perpetuate and benefit from the clientelist association established by enforcing their powers and gaining endorsement from the state. Acknowledging that the scheme is opposed to the original Nollywood spirit, [2] notes that the main function the initiative appears to serve "would be to protect the already established movie-makers from competition from newcomers". With the influence, Nollywood practitioners now command, a clientelist relationship can be said to be budding between them and government officials. Industry prominent figures look to government to institutionalize their powers while the state hopes to explore opportunity to gain both revenue and loyalty [2]. Celebrities attract media and public attention [51] and their involvement in the past presidential electoral campaign was covered extensively by the media [52].

Considering the failure of the guilds to enforce regulation, the council may require state backing especially as MOPICON is being established to also solve problems of disunity within the industry and create a centralized body and a voice for the industry [53]. Past events that have involved the state have however, been short lived and short sighted. Instances include and are not limited to the NFVCB's (National Film and Video Censor Board) New Distributive Framework [54] and Bank of Industry's investment into establishing a formal privately owned national distribution chain for the industry [43]. Miller [2] hopes it is too soon to determine the level of success with displacing informal distribution system, but [45], the beneficiary and CEO of G-Media confirms her anticipated failure of the move. He offers:

*"I set up [branches] in 21 states through the help of Bank of Industry. I finished productions of Phone Swap, Tango with Me and Onye Ozi and pushed them to these states. They were never bought. Why? They already had them. Pirated copies. Yesterday, one thousand copies of Invasion 1897 were returned unsold from Jos".*

Although G-Media has not given up, setting up national distribution chains does not effectively root out piracy and its perpetrators. State involvement does not end at releasing money into a given sector. An enabling environment, monitoring, as well as planned sustenance is relevant. Kunle Afolayan [13], to this effect, believes that the past administration (under president Goodluck Jonathan) with its pro-Nollywood crusade had an improperly executed agenda as it "simply threw money at the industry creating a lot of chaos



and causing filmmakers to become lazy. They stopped filmmaking and delved into the politics of the industry". And MOPICON could be one of those. A visible effort to formalize and sanction compulsory guild membership, MOPICON, has the capacity to "ingrain clientelist relationships between Nollywood heavyweights and politicians, at potential benefit to both parties" [2]. Although her study was conducted in 2009 and details the failure of the initial MOPICON proposal, Miller highlights inconsistencies and short-sightedness in governance and government affairs that do not suggest a successful second attempt. Illustrating with FCON (Filmmakers Cooperative of Nigeria) whose history [51] puts in an extended narrative, [2] contends that the constituent membership of a body does not determine its success. Constituted of members who are mostly pro-MOPICON film practitioners (some of them currently members of MOPICON review committee) like Peace Anyiam-Osigwe, Mahmood Ali-Balogun, Ralph Nwadike, Fred Amata, Tony Anih, Kingsley Ogoro [55], FCON, an idea rather than an ideal, failed to restructure distribution or financing as anticipated.

While not forecasting the performance of this initiative based on an effort made way back in 2003 (i.e. the FCON attempt), the discordance over the bill, the committee membership, the philosophy behind MOPICON [36], but fundamentally, the involvement of government is tantamount to a failure license. While their involvement in the affairs of the industry remains a contentious debate, initiatives such as MOPICON, even with state support have the "inability to realize their professed goals" [2]. This could be as a result of the self-interest with which leaders occupy positions. A bigger brawl than that recorded by [2] during a certain Association of Movie Producers' (AMP) election campaign is anticipated should MOPICON bill be adopted. Haynes [5] observes that guilds and associations are the industry's point of interaction with the government. Hence, only those in leadership positions reach the monies quicker. Gabosky, beneficiary of BOI's 1.8 billion naira Special Entertainment Fund mapped out to restructure distribution was "one of the leading early exponents of the original Framework" [54] created to regulate Nollywood marketing.

#### *D. Bill Content*

Besides negative reactions arising from state involvement and suspicions of self interest among bill proposers, greater criticism follow the document based on its content. The document, (attached in the appendix as uploaded by Ali-Balogun in September, 2015), dated 2006, is broken into seven parts that detail the function, mission and goal of the council. Part one states the council composition and required qualifications, its functions and avenues for accumulating and expending resources. Part two elaborates on registers and registrations of membership both for nationals and non-citizens. As noted in part three, the council has rights to approve or disapprove qualifications, accredit awarding institutions and vet their examinations. The council shall therefore provide interested members with list of institutions whose degrees or certifications are acceptable. The benefits of

membership and disadvantages of not belonging to the council are contained in part four. Part five indicates that interested guilds must be accredited and every practitioner must belong to a privileged guild in order to be part of the council. While codes of ethics are marked out in part six, part seven contains miscellaneous items. Containing other supplementary provisions relating to the council, the 49-page document, has undergone extensive doctoring [20].

Aimed at restructuring the industry [2], [42], the document's opening introduction as an act poised to "regulate the profession of motion picture and for related matters" raises much controversy as young industry incomers as well as hopefuls resist the term 'regulate'. Understood as controlling affairs and conduct by means of rules and regulations, regulation of art is seen as a misnomer [56]. Prof. Shaka [9], Nollywood film scholar, submits that "in a liberal democracy like the one we proffer to be running, artistic endeavor should not be regulated by the government". President of the Directors' Guild of Nigeria and member, MOPICON draft review committee, Fred Amata [35] insists that practice and not content needs be regulated. Sharing the fears of the people over government's involvement in the process of providing structure, he proposes the intention of MOPICON as a solution. Guild membership allows individuals have a say in the review process. Since all guilds are represented in the committee, members take feedback to and from their various guilds. However, as noted earlier, guild membership remains unbeneficial as member interest remains unpromoted [42], [40]. Camouflaged compulsory guild membership thus becomes the council's first step in regulating the industry. Non-guild members who are not compelled to register now in order to make contribution in the re-draft process will eventually join a guild upon the bill's adoption since non-guild, and therefore non-council members are, according to the bill, prohibited from making cinema or straight to DVD/VCD projects (Part IV section 32 No.1).

Resembling the battle for supremacy that ensued among filmmakers following the advent of video filmmaking in Nigeria, the present power struggle within Nollywood, beyond the quest for structure, intends to curtail the excesses of the industry's 'upstarts' [34]. Associate membership requires a minimum three-year training period under a production company or mentorship under a veteran with at least 10 years' industry experience. Such company or mentor must be recognized, accredited and registered by the council. Full membership requires a minimum of one-year full time film education in recognized institutions or three years' experience before adoption of the act. With membership stratified under associate, full and fellow members, class and hierarchy become inevitable especially since older filmmakers have the advantage of many years' experience. Only full and fellow members are qualified to make commercial projects and this is monitored via a bi-annual publication of named practitioners qualified to practice. This has the potential to structure and formalize Nollywood if effectively conducted. Registration of individual production companies and filmmakers has the prospect of making tax evasion difficult. Checkmating

filmmakers' qualifications and portfolios can potentially address the overemphasized issue of standard and global best practice. The insistence on formal professional qualification and/or prolonged informal training as eligibility to joining the council, and invariably to practice, goes against Nollywood's norm and can thus reshape the industry. But while such restrictions are conquerable, those on ex-convicts of fraud and dishonesty and minors below the age of eighteen are insurmountable. With such restrictions, Zuriel Oduwole, a 14-year-old teenager named world's youngest filmmaker having began her career at age nine, has no place in Nollywood [70]. With four films and five years' experience to her credit [66], she remains unqualified to join the council. In the course of data gathering, the researcher came across sixteen-year-old Paschaline Eze who employed the services of a registered DGN member to direct her first commercial campus film.

Of greater controversy is the prohibition of non-registered individuals from practice. As proposed, non-council members, in whatever professional capacity, are prohibited from making any project for cinema, straight to video, pay or satellite television. A breach of this rule is punishable by a 100,000 naira fine or two years' imprisonment. Without necessarily offering a clue as to possibilities of this being taken off the draft, the committee coordinator, Peace Anyiam-Osigwe, remonstrates against critics, "how can anyone think that another filmmaker will want a (fellow) filmmaker to go to jail, (except) whilst trying to destroy what is good for our collective life. In your self-centered egotistical need to prove that you know it all, you are actually showing your ignorance and it's annoying. Arrogance based on ignorance is not intelligence" [33]. Adopting the same fight for supremacy tune that has been used by other industry players [34] to address the supposed 'bad eggs' within the industry, Anyiam-Osigwe suggests jail term may still recur in the finished draft. Pirates have been infringing intellectual property rights, destroying filmmakers' sources of livelihood. While they do not go unpunished when apprehended, jail term for a filmmaker practicing without 'permission' is biased considering the history of the industry. Bearing a semblance to FCN to which she once belonged that aimed at toppling Nollywood marketers' cartel, MOPICON aims at controlling entry into the industry, thus making it a no all-comers' affair. Despite being profitless, joining a guild becomes compulsory with the adoption of the bill. Nonetheless, as this calls for active rather than passive membership (guilds endorse a list of members to be shortlisted in the bi-annual council list of qualified practitioners), there is a likelihood that guilds would become stronger and more functional.

With the controversies and discordance trailing the MOPICON bill, the secrecy surrounding its redraft and skepticism over state involvement as well as uncertainties over interests in money matters, there is much left to wonder about its implication on the industry. Although there is a genuine and incontestable aim to structure and formalize the industry, there is no ruling out hidden interests considering the doctoring the bill has witnessed. Like the FCN which aimed at toppling marketers rather than incorporating them

efficiently and formally into the distribution sector of the industry, MOPICON aims at controlling entrances and exits into the industry. A move with the capacity to hinder and stifle creativity, passing the MOPICON bill into law can serve as a bail out from informality and lack of standard as well as hinder talent and creativity. But what is interpreted as hindrance or inhibition could mean streamlining industry practitioners' activities and enforcing conformity as well as uniformity. MOPICON has the potential to provide a structure that makes it easy for corporate bodies to interact with the industry. Direct dealings with the council eliminates lack of transparency and unaccountability associated with engaging individuals and/or dysfunctional guilds and associations. While MOPICON does not promise transparency on financial matters, it poses an aptitude that promises equal representation for member guilds and associations. Thus, with MOPICON, issues such as the discordance, accusations, denials and secrecy trailing the Project ACT Nollywood fund [50], [57], [48] could be avoided. MOPICON has the potential to foster collaborations between long existing film practitioners and young incomers who despite their freshly acquired know-how, are more prone to funding challenges. Nevertheless, when considered against the backdrop of:

1. The failures of groups that have in the past masqueraded as interest representatives of the industry such as:
  - (a) FCN (Filmmakers Co-operative of Nigeria) –intended to topple marketers and unlicensed distributors of Nollywood films.
  - (b) CONGA (Coalition of all Nollywood Guilds and Associations) a group created for people interested in partnering and/or working with Nollywood industry players including guilds and associations.
  - (c) CMPPN (Conference for Motion Picture Practitioners of Nigeria) with Mahmood Ali-Balogun as its founding member, a guise of MOPICON.
  - (d) NDLF (New Distribution Licensing Framework) driven by Emeka Mba to regulate marketing and distribution of Nollywood films.
2. The discordant tune across the industry and the lack of unity,
3. The previous failed attempt at MOPICON implementation,
4. State's characteristic inclination to ignore projects began by previous government. MOPICON is meant to benefit the entire Nigerian film industry. Ignoring its developments and the in-dire-need of restructuring already established Project ACT Nollywood, the current president, Mohammed Buhari, proposes a three-billion-naira Kano film village project for Kannywood [58], [59],
5. Communication gap on committee activities further confirming fears of self rather than public interest,
6. The disquieting delays and silence since committee inauguration in April, 2016, the success of MOPICON appears slim. Its failure would mean MOPICON was an unnecessary disruption in the affairs of the industry.

In the eventuality of the bill's adoption or not, it is hoped that rather than disrupted, accessibility to existing corporate

funding available to practitioners would not only be sustained, but improved. Unlike the Project ACT Nollywood disbursed directly to individuals, corporate bodies, guilds and/or associations as grants with no set out plan on sustainability, corporate funding from banks are better structured as they are refundable, with discounted interest rate. An example is the NollyFund privately managed by the Bank of Industry (BOI) whose mission is to transform Nigeria's industrial sector through sustained financial and business support. Another is the AccessNolly Fund managed by Access Bank Plc and launched in the first quarter of 2016 [60]. While the fate of MOPICON bill is unlikely to affect the funds, better structure within the industry would attract more stable and reliable fund that is needed to sustain its current regeneration. Securing sustainability is a primary long-term objective for regeneration projects [61]

#### V. CORPORATE FINANCING: STEP TOWARDS SUSTAINED REGENERATION

Bearing in mind that regeneration is stimulated by secured, sustainable funding, this section considers the availability of such to the industry. While it has been argued that the process of regeneration is irreducible to the broad concept of gentrification [62], [63], it is worth considering also as the gradual process that brings about gentrification. According to Brown-Saracino [61], only sustained regeneration could lead to full blown gentrification. Considering Nollywood a gentrifying space, this section will evaluate the possibility of sustained funding that will result in larger, corporate bodies displacing individual and smaller actors as a result of the "rent gap". Rent gap measures the disparity between the current value of an entity and its potential value [64]. The value of such analysis attracts or dispels investors. With the potential value of Nollywood established with the re-basing of national economy in 2013, government has begun to intervene intentionally and with pride, albeit sporadically in the affairs of the industry.

The self-made success of Nollywood, both as the third largest film industry in the world and a significant contributor to the national GDP remains a fact proudly touted and circulated by both academia, industry players, critics and the state. Unlike the Hindi film industry Bollywood, Nollywood has, from its inception been recognized as a segment of the Nigerian film industry. Indian feature filmmaking, despite beginning in 1913, was accorded industry status in 1998 [23]. Unlike Nollywood however, this recognition transformed the industry from its essentially pedagogical and communicative capacity to a native ingenuity and contributor to economic growth and development. Only at the 2013 re-basing of the national economy was Nollywood, along with the entertainment industry, given a national recognition as contributor to economic development prompting the proposed three-million-naira presidential intervention fund by the president Goodluck Jonathan administration for the industry. Prior to 2013, Nollywood had remained a tool for communication, instruction, a native ingenuity and an example of a local product consumed locally. Being thus ignored, its

potentials remained untapped until the past government. Narrating the challenges, he encountered in the making of *Queen Amina* (expected 2017), [18] discloses the lack of interest past governments have shown the industry. He traces his chase for funding for the *Queen Amina* project starting in 1995 with the General Sani Abacha administration until the President Olusegun Obasanjo's. It was not until the launch in 2015 of the Bank of Industry's NollyFund that he began to make headway. The perfunctory appreciation of Nollywood as a sector of an industry and indeed, the perfunctory accordance of the Nigerian film industry a national industry explains the industry's inclination towards articulating regional rather than national ideologies.

As an industry surviving by itself, funding, taxation, piracy and structural issues have been Nollywood's major setbacks. President of the Directors' Guild of Nigeria, Fred Amata, admits finance is the industry's number one bottleneck. Other challenges such as piracy, unreliable informal structure and distribution setbacks aggravate funding problems and hence the low budget films. Unlike the industry's celluloid era and like all under-financed industries, Nollywood's video-boom was characterized by trashy films – bad stories, horrible sound, ham-acting and overall carelessness in the entire film production value chain, as was the experience of Bollywood in the 1980's [23]. At this time in the industry, filmmakers recorded poor turnover [30], investors were reluctant due partly to the informality of the industry and in part to the structural issues that surrounded it. Audiences, especially the learned and elite middle and upper class, were quick to distance themselves from the videos. The chief consumers thus became the housewives, unemployed and people who had excess unoccupied time [6] and no other option for entertainment. Recording similar scenario in the Hindi film industry before its gentrification, [23] records, "films started to deteriorate in their content because they had to appeal to the lowest denominator, which meant much more basic kind of films". With funding shortage being thus a general cause of inefficiencies in global film industries, strategic and sustainable investment becomes a remedy.

Corporate sponsorship has been minimal within Nollywood. Besides structural challenge, paperwork within Nollywood is not known to exist as in formal economies. According to [2], guild system, despite complaints of ineptitude from members and non-members alike, substituted for such important things as contract. She notes, "official contracts drawn up with the help of lawyers are of little use in Nollywood. Business relationships built on informal 'memorandum of understanding' and, even more, trust, respect, clout and handshakes, form the basis of collaboration in Nollywood". While marketers are able to invest in the industry not minding its informality and being protected by personal relationships, cartel and guild systems, corporate organizations are not able to do same. Requiring a lot of documents ranging from evidence of registration with Corporate Affairs Commission of Nigeria, tax clearance certificates, and audited company accounts to the business plan on the proposed film project, obtaining corporate sponsorship is rigorous for the average

Nollywood filmmaker. Hence, producing a film of global standard in the emerging Nollywood according to [5] is not “a game for the fainthearted”. The author goes on to note that corporate bodies connect with the industry in “fleeting and tangential fashion through occasional sponsorships and product placements” [5]. The slimness of corporate sponsorships contrast with the number of corporate brands and organizations existing within the country. Haynes [5] further notes that these companies have shown an appreciable level of involvement in the Nigerian entertainment [essentially music, live shows, competitions and tours, reality and television shows] via sponsorships. Beyond the selection of Nollywood personalities [primarily celebrities] as brand ambassadors, the industry has witnessed limited interactions with corporate bodies.

Corporate financing however, is the industry’s answer to the sustenance of its new found emergence. The quest to take the audiences back to the cinema calls for consistent production of good quality, cinema standard films. As Kunle Afolayan suggests, “Nigerians will not go to the cinema to see rubbish films, no matter how cheap they’re showing them” [5]. This suggests an audience migration. The urbane, educated audiences and sophisticated elites who essentially watch foreign movies in multiplexes now also watch Nollywood films exhibited in cinemas. Studies in Nollywood audience consumption habits have not been carried out in recent times, but on a visit to FilmOne in Ikeja, the ticketing hall as well as car park and walkways were littered with university age youngsters who had gone to see movies. Tickets were sold to students on concession at certain hours of the day. On another visit to SilverBird, Lekki, the over 20 audience members who waited amidst grumbles over delays to see Afolayan’s *The CEO* (2016) were working class adults, some coming straight from their workplaces. Nollywood is building a new class of audiences. While this attempt maybe concentrated in certain localities within the country (due to the limited availability of cinemas), it does not suggest that the targeted audience are limited or concentrated in such places only. Distribution channels especially multiplexes remain few across the country. While this constitutes a challenge to established filmmakers who currently distribute through them, it frustrates others who have to wait a long time before they get a slot to exhibit their movies. In the course of data collection, the researcher spoke with a young actor who had just produced his second film. It was August, but he has to wait until December before his film premieres in the cinema. While this affords him time to beef up on publicity, from a traditional Nollywood economic perspective, it ties up investment funds. Such delays may thwart corporate financing deals since it is essential to provide confirmation of acceptance of distribution before loans, grants or funds are released as is the case of the NollyFund. Multiplexes and audience redefinition are key gentrifiers of film cinema besides new and young talents and professionals. The Hindi film industry transformed from uncool to cool because of the presence of multiplexes that encouraged young filmmakers to make sophisticated films aimed at capturing a constantly sophisticating audiences [23].

The rate with which corporate organizations are contributing to Nollywood in recent times is commendable, but more needs to be done. Besides the Amstel Malta Box Office (AMBO), sponsored movies such as *Sitanda* (2006), *White Waters* (2008), *Cindy’s Notes* (2008), all directed by Izu Ojukwu, corporate bodies appear to support rather than completely fund or invest in movies. Mahmood Ali-Balogun’s *Tango with Me* (2010) was supported by MTN, Kunle Afolayan’s *Phone Swap* (2012) was co-financed by Glo and his recent *The CEO* (2016) was co-financed by AirFrance. The industry’s bigger investors remain individuals and, in recent times, Bank of Industry and other banks that have followed suit. Having co-financed Biyi Bandele’s *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2014) and Michelle Bello’s *Flower Girl* (2013), the Bank of Industry instituted the NollyFund early 2015 [65]. Set to make funding easily accessible to producers of commercially viable film projects, the NollyFund aims at bypassing issues of tangible collateral and basing loan collateral on the financed film and personal guarantees as well as other forms of non-conventional collateral [66]. In other words, the basis for releasing funds to a producer would be the sophistication and revenue potential of his script. Everyday, conventional Nollywood-style scripts would be outrightly disqualified. As tangible collaterals are not required, double measures are taken to ensure that scripts have the potential to yield not only investment, but also return on investment. The fund promises to be more sustainable compared to the 2007 Project Nollywood intervention fund, dreamt up by Charles Novia and launched by Ecobank [55]. With a team comprised of Ecobank, Charles Novia, Chico Ejoro, Fidelis Duker, Fred Amata and Barrister Emeka Utulu, the fund was from the point of inception closed to only the involved filmmakers. Formed on the spur of the moment, with interest based entirely on yield, certain important aspects of Project Nollywood were taken for granted. The hurriedness with which the project was executed and its eventual failure due to distribution lapses, was enough to discourage other banks from investing into a clearly structureless industry.

Bank of Industry’s NollyFund on the other hand has a clearly mapped out a plan for production and distribution. With selected production and distribution companies registered under the project, the bank is able to monitor fund utilization. Although publicity and advertisement is left to the expertise of the producer, its plan and cost are required by the bank. Zero collateral is therefore backed up by stringent measures to ensure accountability and success. Investing also in the distribution sector, the bank has in the past ensured the digitization of selected cinemas (Silverbird, FilmOne and Genesis) and DVD distribution. Chief Gab Onyi Okoye (Gobosky) [45] of G-Media was able to set up his distribution chain across 21 states with the help of the bank. Bank of Industry ensures that participating cinemas project sponsored films at primetime and remunerate the right amount for exhibition. A collection account is opened with a commercial bank where all proceeds are domiciled and from where loan repayment is charged. Bank of Industry remains the sole

signatory. Thus planned, continuity is assured as it is expected that films sponsored return both principal and interest.

What appears to be neglected remains the complications of piracy. There is a clear plan on protecting the master copy from pirates, but upon hitting the DVD market, the film runs its course like other Nollywood films. Okoye [45] reports poor sales on long awaited, high quality, 35MM cinema standard film like Mahmood Ali-Balogun's *Tango with Me* (2010) due to pirate operations. He submits "filmmakers of high budget cinema films do not recoup their expenses through DVD distribution... DVD is only a fulfillment of business passion. I encourage them to explore other channels of distribution – pay TV, internet, etc., before going on DVD". Judging the success of a film and hence its returns by script quality and strength of its proposed business plan, Bank of Industry considers checkmating piracy secondary and the responsibility of select governmental agencies.

Nwuka [66] believes that the initial fund size of one billion naira could be increased. In the eventuality of that not happening, sustenance is guaranteed from loan repayment and interests accumulated. Unlike private or individual sponsorship, corporate funding such as that provided by the Bank of Industry has the potential to further formalize the industry. Being accessible only to registered or incorporated businesses, accountability and reliable figures would no longer be farfetched. Although described as a strategic and sustainable investment on Nollywood [67] which takes hassles off the film producer, NollyFund provides producers limited choices of production and distribution companies. While working with them guarantees the safety of the master copy, quality of services rendered and promptness, [40] opines that rentals and services come at a much higher price than usually obtainable in the market. He surmises, "at the end of the day, you not only have a loan, but get told how to spend or invest the money. Eventually you may not realize any money since you spend more renting equipment than you ordinarily would". Knowing that 20 million naira is provided as a basic loan for equipment hiring, publicity and advertisement [45], production companies' inflated rates also mean an unnecessarily higher budget. Engaging the corporate sponsorship of Bank of Industry is a game for highly connected individuals. The fund is not for young, incoming professionals since an applying producer is required to provide at least three years' company audited accounts.

## VI. CONCLUSION

This study suggests that the clamor for the adoption of MOPICON bill, besides being aimed at providing structure, illustrates the incessant struggle for power and supremacy within the industry. It equally acknowledges that although the young, fresh incomers are united against the bill, it could be in their interest considering the endless challenges young, independent filmmakers face upon entering into an industry. MOPICON has the potential to provide them with a structure that makes funding, collaborations and alliances easier to come by. It could be their pass to sustained funding. Sustained

corporate sponsorship has the capacity to introduce further structure and formalize the industry. It also has the capacity of redefining quality and standard within the industry and so entice further corporate sponsors. The Bank of Industry's NollyFund has in recent times financed about five high budget films among them Kunle Afolayan's *The CEO* (2016), Okechukwu Ogunjiofor's *Queen Amina* (expected April 2017), Opa Williams' *Three Wise Men* (expected later in 2016) and Emem Isong's *Anyama* (expected 2017) besides previous sponsorships. Interestingly, other corporate organizations are emulating the Bank of Industry. Following the Bank of Industry's success, Access Bank Plc launched the AccessNolly Fund – a one-billion-naira initiative targeted at producers and distributors of quality and standard films. As illustrated with the BOI's NollyFund, better planning, production and distribution strategies are being recorded within the industry. Nwuka [66] therefore expects that the adoption of MOPICON will further bring structure, sanity and professionalism into the industry.

Despite the initial failure of MOPICON and current lack of faith in it, the industry is witnessing collaborations, albeit seemingly discordant, that could provide industry players an opportunity "to come together and structure something for the industry" [28] that may likely have the endorsement of the state. MOPICON and corporate sponsorships are among the recent happenings within the industry that promise to not leave the industry the same in a few years to come. The political economy of the industry will not remain the same after this current struggle for supremacy. Having considered transformations, structure as well as funding, this study concludes that sustained regeneration is possible within contemporary Nollywood. A critical evaluation of 'quality' and 'standard' is however, relevant to understanding the product of regeneration, i.e. gentrification within the industry. Beyond re-imagining a once not-so-cool industry, further studies should consider the change from regeneration/gentrification point of view. Inasmuch as it has been argued that gentrification and regeneration have become synonymous, conceptualizing the same phenomenon [63], [68], [69], regeneration could be evaluated from the point of view of the winners or beneficiaries and gentrification from the point of view of losers or the displaced.

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