

My Katarsis Adventure

Richard J Catherall, February 2020

Catharsis refers to the purification and purgation of emotions, particularly pity and fear, and achieved through art or another extreme change in emotion, that results in renewal and restoration.

I would like to acknowledge the courage, creativity and credibility of the entrepreneurial change-makers that offered me the privilege to walk in their shoes, see our world through their eyes, and connect with each other through hospitality, humour and honesty. Being a change-maker for change-makers is who I wanted to be, who I have become and how I have come to belong.

Katarsis Ventures was founded in 2011 to walk with entrepreneurial people pursuing human rights and making peace profitable in hard places; counter-acting pity and fear, with empathy and collaboration.

I needed to be as close to the endeavours of these entrepreneurial people as I dared. To reduce costs like them, to be resilient like them, to face the challenge of how to grow with them.

My support network shifted, seeding and then growing roots in north Africa, the Levant, sub-Saharan Africa and south Asia. I have benefited from the cultural strengths and diversity of leadership, that is forged in these parts of the world. We have supported each other to achieve things in the most complex contexts and fragile situations; the hard places.

Some of what we inspired and incubated could not persist. Creating value did not mean everyone could pay. The business case for further development was not feasible. And so I have decided to cease operations and pursue a new direction.

Once settled and having had the chance to reflect, I plan to author and publish a book to share the learning from this time and these ventures. I will be inviting support to produce and share this content in due course.

First there is a “return” to leading change and development through effective local government leadership. I will advise and nurture social innovation for Auckland Council, in New Zealand.

I will be taking a different approach to curating my digital profiles. I will continue and increase communicating content through twitter using a new handle @RichardJCatherall which matches my existing Instagram Account. All other accounts will be closed between now and September 2020 when websites will also expire.

I will remain involved and dedicated to supporting the growth of our social enterprise in Nigeria. From 2014 we have been developing a sustainable business model for primary and secondary schools. We plan to develop a social-entrepreneurship-based polytechnic. We have ambitious plans to scale all this as a system going forwards. Donations and expressions of interest for venture philanthropic support for this venture are well received. A website to introduce the next stage of this venture will be launched soon and publicised through existing and the new digital channels.

I am deeply grateful to the clients who commissioned work from us as a team and from me personally.

They trusted us with some of their most sensitive change and strategic challenges, and engaged with our recommendations. As well as delivering results for our customers, this model enabled us to pipeline more than USD15 million; catalysed and mobilised by ambitious, mainly youth-led entrepreneurial ventures in hard places. Though we did not achieve the scale we wanted, this did enable us to discover models which do prove our concept and vision at scale, even at our boldest. This is humbling and exciting in equal measure.

It means I have even more hope now than I did at the outset of this experiment back in 2010.

Hope; what a profit!