

Personal Statement
ENTREPRENEUR 4.0 AWARD 2014

PLAMEN BONTCHEV+SOFIA BURCHARDI PUNTOPIA

PUNTOPIA is a place, where second-hand technology blends with stone-age solitude and breathtaking landscapes. It is where political ignorance, socio-economic struggle and the raw Himalayan terrain are challenged by persistent willpower and truthful commitment.

PUNTOPIA is the portrait of a new form of self-organized society, which exists independent of the governmental structure and is driven by the motivation for development.

Furthermore the photographic essay reveals that, when strong intentions bundle with the right amount of creativity, for the cause of social improvements, even modest resources can be enough to attain the purpose.

PUNTOPIA is also the story of Mahabir Pun - a visionary teacher from Nangi, Central Nepal - who in 1997 foresaw the benefits of introducing Internet to his home village and without any financial endorsement took the challenge of connecting it to the World Wide Web.

Starting in Nangi some fifteen years ago he has been successfully devoted to building and maintaining a network infrastructure, which nowadays covers a region larger than 500 square kilometers.

As a result the level of education and basic health-care services has improved in those areas. Trade and other businesses are benefitting from e-market platforms. In general digital communication has given locals the possibility to interact globally.

In Western culture the Himalayas are often depicted as “an earthly paradise or Shangri-La”... “a place isolated and hidden to modern man” (*). PUNTOPIA reasons with a present-day perspective, that these mountains are no longer a forgotten Garden of Eden, but a place full of awareness and action, eagerly catching up with the age of hyper connectivity.

(*) Shangri-La is a fictional place described by British author James Hilton in his 1933 novel “Lost Horizon”.

Plamen Bontchev + Sofia Burchardi, 2013