Liberating Voices: A Pattern Language for Communication Revolution (MIT Press)

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In recent decades we have witnessed the creation of a communication system that promises unparalleled connectedness. And yet the optimistic dreams of Internet-enabled engagement and empowerment have faded in the face of widespread Internet commercialization. In Liberating Voices, Douglas Schuler urges us to unleash our collective creativity--social as well as technological--and develop the communication systems that are truly needed. Inspired by the vision and framework outlined in Christopher Alexander's classic 1977 book, A Pattern Language, Schuler presents a pattern language containing 136 patterns designed to meet these challenges. Using this approach, Schuler proposes a new model of social change that integrates theory and practice by showing how information and communication (whether face-to-face, broadcast, or Internet-based) can be used to address urgent social and environmental problems collaboratively. Each of the patterns that form the pattern language (which was developed collaboratively with nearly 100 contributors) is presented consistently; each describes a problem and its context, a discussion, and a solution. The pattern language begins with the most general patterns ("Theory") and proceeds to the most specific ("Tactics"). Each pattern is a template for research as well as action and is linked to other patterns, thus forming a single coherent whole. Readers will find Liberating Voices an intriguing and informative catalog of contemporary intellectual, social, and technological innovations, a practical manual for citizen activism, and a compelling manifesto for creating a more intelligent, sustainable, and equitable world.

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