The modalities and practices of contemporary global governance are in flux. Rising states and rising institutions (Alexandroff & Cooper, 2010) are bringing a host of previously excluded interests and actors to the top tables of international negotiations. Ongoing discussions about reform of the United Nations (Thakur & Weiss, 2012), as well as the World Trade Organization (Steger, 2009) and the emergence of the G20 as the premier forum for global economic governance (CIGI, 2011), reflect an increasing recognition that traditional forms of diplomacy (Cooper, Heine, & Thakur, in press) and international problem solving must change to reflect awareness of the multi-stakeholder nature of the twenty-first century.

Digital Solidarities, Communication Policy and Multi-stakeholder Global Governance: The Legacy of the World Summit on the Information Society brings to light the increasingly networked nature of international diplomacy (Heine, 2008) and summitry. Picking up where the book's earlier companion piece—Civil Society, Communication and Global Governance: Issues from the World Summit on the Information Society (Raboy & Landry, 2005)—left off, Digital Solidarities explores the processes and outcomes of the UN’s World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS). With respective focuses on Phases I (Geneva in 2003) and II (Tunis in 2005), these books will be of interest to scholars in communication policy, the digital/information economy, and global governance.

Extending and addressing questions posed in Civil Society, Digital Solidarities is structured in three main parts, with sections focusing on matters of process, policy, and legacy. This structure gives the authors the space to present a comprehensive overview of the myriad issues at stake in the WSIS process while also providing detailed analyses of key issue areas and complicating factors. As the authors point out, by helping to open the doors of UN summitry to non-governmental organizations and other civil society groups, the WSIS represents an innovative form of global governance negotiations. The breadth of issues discussed at the WSIS—such as Internet governance, financial mechanisms for the information society, intellectual property concerns, the eradication of the digital divide, and a host of others—entails a further level of policy-related complexity.

In keeping with the organization of the book, this review begins by addressing each of the three sections (process, policy, and legacy) independently before concluding with the overarching issues and concerns the book highlights.

After tying the Tunis Summit to the earlier Geneva Summit, the authors detail the multi-stakeholder processes at play in the WSIS. They focus mostly on civil society involvement, leaving a gap concerning the political and negotiation tactics of state actors. This is not surprising or unwarranted, given the framework of the book and the authors argument that “[t]he internal organization processes used to organize and co-
ordinate civil society participation at the WSIS will undoubtedly remain one of the more significant legacies of the summit in the long term” (p. 88). Sanctioned civil society participation in international summits is a relatively recent phenomenon, with the result that internal civil society negotiations and processes are often unaddressed or overlooked. By bringing the WSIS’s civil society component to the fore, the authors help address this research gap in global governance studies.

While detailed and concise, these discussions would have been strengthened by unpacking the diverse makeup of both the non-state and state actors involved at the WSIS, to bring to light the heterogeneous nature of these groups. As the authors’ recap of the Summit points out, differing perspectives and priorities among civil society groups and state governments made it difficult to forge a consistent and united front. Detailed discussions of the internal composition of these broad groupings would help demonstrate where and why rifts occurred and how they impacted the larger agenda.

The policy debates that *Digital Solidarities* focuses upon demonstrate that competing visions presented by both state and non-state actors are critical components of international negotiations. Individual chapters in the book focus on important issue areas, namely the Digital Solidarity Fund and the Task Force on Financial Mechanisms, Internet governance, and implementation and follow-up. These simultaneously divergent yet intersecting issues highlight how differing policy stances complicate summit processes. Buy-in and commitment from groups is critical to overcoming differing opinions. It is telling for the WSIS context that, in the authors’ words, “[m]ost of the high-level figures who attended the event came from countries and regions of the world that have been adversely affected by the digital divide. Very few high-level delegations from the developed North attended the summit, which implicitly demonstrates the lack of enthusiasm from countries that did not stand to gain much from a political event dedicated to eradicating the digital divide” (pp. 99-100). As the authors demonstrate, progress on important issues was made at the WSIS, however, substantive reforms and binding commitments have proven elusive.

The success or failure of an international summit cannot be determined by the final declaration or communiqué alone. The highly politicized and interrelated nature of international negotiations means that most statements are drafted to provide interpretative nuance throughout the global arena. Instead of looking solely at these statements of summits, it is important to also delve into the processes, best practices, and normative implications these processes and the resulting statements generate. In this respect, *Digital Solidarities* is useful, as the authors look beyond the WSIS’ final product and present a comprehensive picture of the summit’s development. Learning from the WSIS, the authors then examine the summit’s impact on future multi-stakeholder initiatives in other international forums, ranging from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). Subsequent research about multi-stakeholder prospects in international fora less dependent on the UN system, such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the G8/20 groupings, will offer further and compelling insights into the legacy of the WSIS.

*Digital Solidarities* offers a cogent reminder of the issues at stake as the world moves...
to an informational economy. Intellectual property, access to information/knowledge/health, Internet governance, tackling the digital divide, and a host of other related issues will continue to attract attention in the years to come. According to the authors, the substantive legacy of the WSIS is that it has demonstrated that “multi-stakeholder governance may be the least imperfect model yet developed for making global politics more fair, transparent and legitimate to the concerns of the global public” (p. 235). Multi-stakeholder and network diplomacy will prove critical for bringing actors and issues to the high table of global governance negotiations. The WSIS, then, serves as a telling example that transparency, inclusiveness, and international commitment are necessary for addressing the evolution of the information society and other global problems in the years to come.

References

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