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**SEMINARIOS DEL GRUPO DE INVESTIGACIÓN SOBRE  
Políticas e Instituciones Comparadas**

*Public Accountability and the Public Sphere of International Governance*

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## RESUMEN

In the literature on European and global governance there is a trend to conceptualize 'public accountability' as accountability to national executives, to peers, to markets, to ombudsmen, or to courts. While the empirical analysis of multiple accountability relations within governance networks has its merits the creeping re-conceptualization of 'public accountability' as an umbrella term tends to obfuscate one crucial dimension of it: the critical scrutiny of citizens and the collective evaluation of governance through public debate. This paper critically discusses the advance of managerial and administrative notions of accountability into international governance and advocates a return to a narrow conception of public accountability as accountability to the wider public. It then proceeds to investigate the public sphere of European and global governance, its actors, achievements and shortcomings, in order to assess the prospects for public accountability beyond the state. Evidence is found to support the claim that the transnational public sphere is capable of putting pressure on governance institutions in case of massive maladministration, and of generating and promoting new political concerns and demands that in turn are taken up by the institutions of governance.