Abstracts
Invited Session: Methodology

From nowhere, from here now, or from there then.
A tale of success-to-truth inferences along perspectivalist lines.
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Success-to-truth inferences have been the realist stronghold for long time. Scientific success has been the parameter by which realism has claimed to be able to discern true theories from false ones, via the No Miracles Argument. But the notion of scientific success has not been scrutinized as much as it should, and the exact nature of the success-to-truth inferences has been the target of famous antirealist arguments. In this paper, I tell the tale of success-to-truth inferences three times, by taking success from nowhere, success from here now and success from there then as my respective starting points. I ultimately argue for a suitable version of success from there then that can do justice to the historically situated nature of scientific knowledge while also delivering on the promise of realism. The outcome is a new way of thinking about realism: perspectival realism.

But how should the perspectivalist notion of success be understood? I argue that it should be understood ‘from within’, rather than ‘from above’, namely it should be assessed on the basis of the historical context in which the theory was formulated (including the available rivals and predecessors), rather than from our current vantage point. The challenge then for the perspectival realist consists in spelling out the criteria of success ‘from within’ and explain how it can still deliver on the promise of truth (without any Whiggish leanings). I offer a positive proposal and consider possible objections.

Fact, Fiction, and Finance: Methodological Aspects of Econophysics
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In this talk I discuss some methodological aspects of econophysics (roughly, the application of statistical physics to economics). Econophysics is believed by many of its advocates to have an advantage over more orthodox economist’s approaches both on account of its more ‘data-first’ approach and its more realistic modelling in terms of notions from complex systems theory and the theory of cooperative phenomena: economic phenomena (of various kinds) are understood to be emergent/collective phenomena of a kind found in natural systems. I’ll present examples of such models and consider their workings to see to what extent the econophysicists’ claims can be upheld. Recent work on modelling and the transference of models between different contexts will be brought to bear on the matter.