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Experimental physics as an embodied achievement: a first take

This contribution is based on an ongoing ethnography in a STM laboratory. STM stands for 'Scanning Tunnelling Microscopy', an experimental technique, based on a quantum effect and developed for the microscopic inspection of superconducting materials, at the atomic level. The ethnography addresses the social organisation and temporal order in experimental practice. The proposed contribution focuses on a critical aspect of its procedural description: the embodied achievement(s) the described practice require and hinges upon in its daily routine. The highlighted aspect is critical in two respects. First, it points to the experimental skills that - though they escape analytic ethnography by and large - have to be acquired by becoming physicists. Second, their ethnographic unavailability provides instructive evidence as to the temporal ordering of experimental practice itself. Said that, the contribution is designed to deliver a non-trivial notion of 'embodied achievement' in the domain considered, notably by specifying how accountable work and social organisation are intertwined.