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He received his PhD from the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETHZ) in Zurich in 1984. After working as a postdoc at Lund University, Sweden, MIT and Harvard University Medical School, he spent 12 years as a senior researcher at the Department of Materials of ETHZ. In 1999 he was appointed as the chair in experimental soft matter physics at the University of Fribourg. In 2006 he founded the Fribourg Center for Nanomaterials, and became the first director of the newly founded Adolphe Merkle Institute for Pure and Applied Nanoscience in 2008. He moved to Lund University at the end of 2010, where he became the founding director of the Lund Institute of advanced Neutron and X-ray Science in 2017.

He has been elected as a member of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences and the Royal Swedish Academy of Engineering Sciences, and he is a honorary member of the European Colloid and Interface Society. He is co-founder and board member of the company LS Instruments.