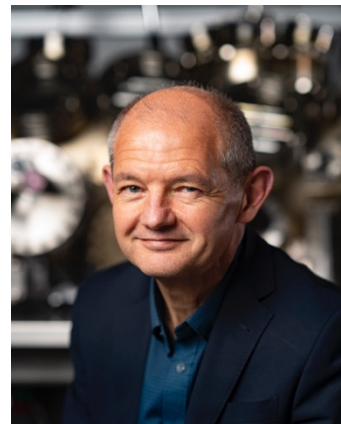


Leiden & Groningen, 30 May 2025

Dear Peter,

My time in your team in Göttingen has had a lasting impact on my professional and personal life. You probably know all of it, but let me summarize it anyway, including what came after...

The MPI für Strömungsforschung provided the best possible playground for my postdoctoral adventures. It got me deeply entangled in reciprocal space and reciprocal time. Thank you for allowing me to mess around with the He scattering machine, together with Christoff Wöll, Andreas Lock, Jane Hinch and many others. I had so many great experiences, learned so much, including a bit of Deutsch, and I got to know so many people, including my wife Martina!



It was only during the final part of my time in Göttingen, that I decided how to continue my career: I would stay in science, develop new instrumentation and address basic surface phenomena that are connected to well-known phenomena and relevant applications. After my return to Amsterdam (FOM-Institute for Atomic and Molecular Physics), I largely returned to real space, with my own research group, performing ion scattering experiments and developing scanning tunneling microscopy at low, high and sweeping temperatures, continuing my pursuit of phase transitions, diffusion, and other dynamic surface phenomena. Already after a few years, I got lured away to accept a full professorship at the Kamerlingh Onnes Laboratory of Leiden University. There, my team grew, we developed a wide range of scanning probe microscopes and surface x-ray diffraction equipment, with which we explored an ever wider range of fundamental and practical phenomena, also digressing into catalysis and into the fundamentals of friction. I stayed in Leiden for nearly two decades. Together with my team, I had the pleasure of a lot of recognition for our achievements, through awards and prizes, ambitious personal grants and ambitious memberships, e.g. of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Our collaboration with industrial partners grew ever more intimate and we actually founded two commercial companies ourselves, one bringing research instrumentation to the market and the other producing high-quality, wafer-scale graphene for industrial use.

Whereas I had always claimed never to become an institute director myself, I did become one. I had the honor to serve as the first director (and the first employee) of a brand-new national institute in Amsterdam, ARCNL: the Advanced Research Center for Nanolithography. Organized as a long-term collaboration between several universities, the Dutch national science council NWO, and the semiconductor equipment company ASML, ARCNL performs basic research on a broad variety of subjects that support the R&D at ASML in the development of future generations of their amazing lithography equipment. When ARCNL was fully up and running, with a thriving scientific program and good output, a solid bunch of ambitious and successful department and group leaders, and an army of talented PhD students and postdocs, adding up to a total of roughly 100 employees in a beautiful and well-equipped building, it was time for me to move on.

My last and final station is the University of Groningen, where I have been the Dean of the Faculty of Science and Engineering (roughly one third of the university) for the last three years. At ARCNL, I had already reduced my own research activities drastically. In Groningen, I no longer have research of my own; my job is to make sure that others can perform their research and educational work under the best possible conditions. Believe it or not, after having had the privilege to work under ideal conditions myself, for example in Göttingen, it feels good to provide that service to the next generation, even when that means that I cannot do any research myself anymore.

In just a few weeks, I will cross the 'best before' date, i.e. the formal retirement age of 67. Nevertheless, Groningen will 'tolerate' me for somewhat longer, so that I will be able to get a thing or two done there.



On the personal side a lot has happened too! Martina and I live in a beautiful house in the center of Leiden (I'm commuting quite a bit between there and Groningen). We have been blessed with two beautiful children, Darius (21) and Charlotte (18). Even though they are both much cleverer than their parents, they haven't done the obvious, by going to the university to study physics, chemistry or mathematics. Instead, they are both being trained to become professional dancers!

I remember seeing you and your wife in the crowd that attended a gig of the funk band, Fool Service, of which I was a member in my Göttingen time; we were performing in a tent in downtown Göttingen, as part of the Stadtfest, if I remember well. I guess it wasn't your kind of music and you must have found it much too loud. But for me it added a wonderful dimension to my existence in Göttingen. Unfortunately, after my return to the Netherlands, I have not been able to find the time anymore to play music.

Instead, in the free moments that I have, I now enjoy running: typically 10 km, 10 miles, half Marathon. Even though my legs are short, I turn out to be one of the faster runners in my age group (hahaha!). The run that I had this morning in and around Göttingen brought back many good memories.

Thank you, Peter, for hosting me, scientifically, inspirationally and as a member of your scientific 'family'. I wish you a happy birthday and many more inspiring years!

Joost Frenken