The International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) is a wonderful place to work. I had the good fortune to be a Research Fellow there from 2010 to 2016, during which I finalised and wrote up the research for a monograph (based on my PhD thesis, which I defended in TU Delft in 2009). The book, The Shanghai Alleyway House: A Vanishing Urban Vernacular, was published by Routledge in 2013, and it was through contacts made at IIAS that it was translated into Chinese two years later.

While at IIAS I also organised a series of annual conferences around themes I was interested in. This proved to be not only a very effective way of getting in touch with people interested in similar topics (often from other disciplines – a good way of broadening horizons); it also proved a fecund generator of publications, with just over 50 percent of these events leading to books or special issues of journals.

The conferences themselves were usually one- or two-day events. If it was intended to lead to a publication, it was definitely two-day in order to have a larger pool of potential papers. The series continued even after I left IIAS, thanks to the generous support, Spring 2012 saw the latest instalment (the 13th): a conference on “Future Practices of Citizenship in Asia and the West.” This is the third in a series of publications, with just over 50 percent of these events leading to books or special issues of journals.

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