

# Irene Farah

Department of Urban and Regional Science  
University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign  
312 Temple Buell Hall, 611 E. Lorado Taft Drive, Champaign, IL 61820

irenef@illinois.edu  
+1 773 717 3517  
ifarah.github.io

## EDUCATION

- Ph.D.     **City & Regional Planning**, University of California, Berkeley, USA, 2019-2024  
Dissertation: *The Scramble for the City: Street Vending, Politics, and the Governance of Public Space in Mexico City and San Francisco*  
Committee: Daniel Rodríguez (co-chair), Alison Post (co-chair), and Carolina Reid
- M.A.     **Social Sciences**, University of Chicago, Illinois, USA, 2016-2017  
Thesis: *A Geospatial Analysis of Mexico's Distal Effects on Food Insecurity*  
Advisor: Luc Anselin
- B.A.     **Political Science**, Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México (ITAM), Mexico City, Mexico, 2009-2013  
Thesis: *Social Mobility of Women in Technical Schools in Mexico*  
Advisor: Vidal Romero

## ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

- 2025     Assistant Professor, Department of **Urban and Regional Planning**, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC). *Starting in August*
- 2024     Illinois Distinguished Postdoctoral Research Associate, Department of **Urban and Regional Planning**, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC)

## RESEARCH AREAS

My research focuses on **urban governance**, **informality**, and **spatial dynamics**.

**Urban Governance:** With a particular focus on political intermediation and coordination between multiple scales of government, I examine how bureaucracies, nonprofits, and other actors implement laws, and shape access to public services.

**Spatial Dynamics:** Using computational and spatial techniques, I also examine informality and the ways people inhabit urban space, retail dynamics and its impact in the food system.

## RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

- 2019-2020     Graduate Researcher, **Institute of Urban and Regional Development**, UC Berkeley
- 2016-2019     Research Associate, **Center for Spatial Data Science**, University of Chicago
- 2014-2015     Research Advisor, **National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy (CONEVAL)**, Mexico City

## PUBLICATIONS

### Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles

- 2025 Domínguez-Barreto, A. P., **Farah, I.**, López-Olmedo, N., Pérez-Ferrer, C., Ramírez, Y., Langellier, B. A., Colchero, M., Rivera, J. A., Barrientos-Gutierrez, T., Stern, D., “Changes in the healthfulness of food and beverage purchases from 2006 to 2022 by outlet type in Mexico.” In: *BMC Medicine* (2025), pp. 1–23. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12916-025-04036-8>
- 2023 Ju, Y., Dronova, I., Rodríguez, D., Bakhtsiyarava, M., **Farah, I.**, “Recent Greening May Curb Urban Warming in Latin American Cities of Better Economic Conditions.” In: *Landscape and Urban Planning* 240 (2023), pp. 1–11. DOI: 10.1016/j.landurbplan.2023.104896
- 2023 Domínguez-Barreto, A. P., **Farah, I.**, López-Olmedo, N., Pérez-Ferrer, C., Ramírez, Y., Barrientos-Gutierrez, T., Stern, D., “Trends in Food and Beverage Purchases in Informal and Formal Outlets in Mexico: ENIGH 1994-2020.” In: *Frontiers in Public Health* 11 (2023), pp. 1–12. DOI: 10.3389/fpubh.2023.1151916
- 2022 **Farah, I.**, Stern, D., Ramírez, Y., López-Olmedo, N., Pérez-Ferrer, C., Langellier, B., Colchero, M. A., Barrientos-Gutierrez, T., “Food and beverage purchases at formal and informal outlets in Mexico.” In: *Public Health Nutrition* 26 (5 2022), pp. 1034–1043. DOI: 10.1017/S1368980022002324

### Book Chapters

- 2025 Hayden, T. B., **Farah, I.**, “Urban Governance and the Regulation of Street Food Vending In Latin America.” In: *Urban Food Systems in Latin America: Territories, Mobilities and Governance*. Ed. by Tiana Bakić Hayden and Joaquín Pérez Martín. London: Routledge, 2025. Chap. 1, pp. 1–17
- 2023 Anselin, L., **Farah, I.**, “The Life and Death of Retail: Insights from Firm Demography.” In: *Streetlife: The Future of Urban Retail*. Ed. by Emily Talen and Conrad Kickert. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2023. Chap. 1, pp. 27–46
- 2023 Credit, K., **Farah, I.**, Anselin, L., “The Ups and Downs of Retail, 2000 – 2015.” In: *Streetlife: The Future of Urban Retail*. Ed. by Emily Talen and Conrad Kickert. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2023. Chap. 2, pp. 47–74

### Book Reviews and Miscellanea

- 2021 **Farah, I.** Rev. of *Forbearance as Redistribution: The Politics of Informal Welfare in Latin America*, by Alisha Holland. In: *Urban Studies* 59.2 (2021), pp. 469–471
- 2019 **Farah, I.**, Koschinsky, J., Noel, L., *Computing Travel Times and Spatial Access Metrics at Scale*. Documentation for Python package spatial\_access 1.0.0. Center for Spatial Data Science at University Chicago. July 2019
- 2018 Anselin, L., **Farah, I.**, *Methodological Issues in the Analysis of Local Patterns in the Retail Sector*. Working Paper. Chicago: Center for Spatial Data Science, 2018

## TEACHING

### University of California, Berkeley

- 2022 Planning Methods Gateway: Part I (graduate), Graduate Student Instructor.
- 2022 Maps as Social Justice Interventions, Instructor and created course with Karen Chapple.

- 2021, 2022 R Geospatial and US Census, Workshops. D-Lab.
- 2020, 2022 Urban Informatics and Visualization (graduate), Graduate Student Instructor.
- 2021 Introduction to City Planning, Graduate Student Instructor.
- 2021 Introduction to Urban Data Analytics, Graduate Student Instructor.

## Colegio de México

- 2023, 2022 Introduction to Spatial Econometrics (graduate, in Spanish).

## SELECTED PRESENTATIONS

(\*) = Invited

- 2024 **Farah, I.** "Street Vending Inspectors: Public Administration and the Politics of Public Space in Mexico City." In: *Urban Politics in the Global South*. Luskin Center for Innovation at UCLA, the APSA Urban, and Local Politics section. 2024
- 2024 **Farah, I.** "Multilevel Governance: The Regulation of Street Vendors in Mexico City." In: *Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning*. Seattle, Washington. 2024
- 2024 **Farah, I.** "The Scramble for the City: Beyond Clientelism: Street Vendor Bodies as a Form of Territorial and Political Power in Mexico City." In: *Latin American Studies Association*. Bogotá, Colombia. 2024
- 2024 **Farah, I.** "Street Vending Governance: Comparative Insights from Mexico City and San Francisco." In: *Urban Affairs Association*. New York City, New York. 2024
- 2023\* **Farah, I.** "The Scramble for the City: Street Vending and the Politics of Public Space in Mexico City." In: *Urban and Regional Planning Program's lunchtime seminar*. University of Michigan. 2023
- 2023 **Farah, I.** "Lightning talk: Street Vending Intermediation and Political Transformations in Mexico City: Exploring Urban Governance Dynamics." In: *Urban Politics in the Global South Workshop*. Luskin Center for Innovation at UCLA, the APSA Urban, and Local Politics section. 2023
- 2023 **Farah, I.** "Using Location-based Data to Understand the Governance Implications of Street Vendors' Location in Mexico City." In: *Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning*. Chicago, Illinois. 2023
- 2023 **Farah, I.** "Understanding the Travel Behavior of Street Vendors Using Location-Based Data and its Impact on the Regulation of Public Space in Mexico City." In: *Movilidad urbana, sustentabilidad y justicia social en América Latina: saberes, prácticas y políticas*. Mexico City, Mexico. 2023
- 2023 **Farah, I.** "Governing the Governable: The Political Economy of Street Vending in San Francisco." In: *Urban Affairs Association*. Nashville, Tennessee. 2023
- 2022 **Farah, I.** "The Regulation of Informal Work in Mexico City and San Francisco: Analyzing Recent Shifts in Governance Structures." In: *Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning*. Toronto, Canada. 2023
- 2022 **Farah, I.** "Beyond Informal Politics: The Regulation of Work in Public Space." In: *American Political Science Association*. Montreal, Canada. 2022
- 2020 **Farah, I.** "Food & Beverage Purchases by Store Type in Mexican Cities." In: *Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning*. Online. 2020
- 2019 **Farah, I.** "Local Patterns of Co-Location in the Retail Sector: A Descriptive Study of Spatial Firm Demography." In: *American Association of Geographers*. Washington, D.C.. 2019
- 2019 **Farah, I.** "Mexico's Distal Effects on Food Insecurity." In: *Western Regional Science Association*. Napa, California. 2019
- 2018 **Farah, I.** "The Death and Life of Mom and Pop: A Preliminary Analysis of Small Scale Retail in Chicago." In: *North American Regional Science Association*. San Antonio, Texas. 2018

- 2015      **Farah, I.** “Intergenerational Educational and Occupational Mobility: A Descriptive Study of the Impoverished in Mexico.” In: ***Human Development and Capabilities Association***. Washington, D.C.. 2015

## AWARDS

### Awards and Honors

- 2024      Political Economy Network Fellow, Network for a New Political Economy, UC Berkeley  
 2023      Graduate Student Fellow, Institute for the Study of Societal Issues, UC Berkeley  
 2023      Student Travel Scholarship, ACSP  
 2022      Outstanding Graduate Student Instructor Award, UC Berkeley  
 2022      Michael B. Teitz Fellowship, UC Berkeley  
 2021      Graduate Student Fellow, Berkeley Food Institute, UC Berkeley  
 2021      Graduate Student Fellow, D-Lab, UC Berkeley  
 2021      Tinker Field Research Grant, CLAS, UC Berkeley  
 2020      Summer Research Grant, Global Metropolitan Studies, UC Berkeley  
 2019      Outstanding Reviewer, Housing Policy Debate  
 2016      Fellowship, University of Chicago  
 2015      Award *La Flecha Al Aire* for BA thesis on education, ITAM  
 2013      Scholarship on Social Mobility Research, Centro de Estudios Espinosa Yglesias (CEEY), Mexico

## ACADEMIC SERVICE

### Sessions Organized

- 2024      Co-organizer: Housing and Land Regulations in the Political Economy of Urban Latin America. Five sessions. **Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning**, Seattle, Washington (with Flávia Leite).  
 2024      Co-organizer: Urban Governance of Informal Work: Perspectives Across the North-South Divide. Five sessions. **Urban Affairs Association**, New York City, New York (with Ryan Devlin).  
 2023      Organizer: Computational Approaches to Urban Planning and Management: Innovations and Challenges. Four sessions. **Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning**, Chicago, Illinois.  
 2023      Co-organizer: Informal Work and Public Space during COVID-19. Five sessions. **Urban Affairs Association**, Nashville, Tennessee (with Ryan Devlin)

### Manuscript Reviewer

Berkeley Planning Journal (co-editor 2021-2022); Environment and Planning B: Urban Analytics and City Science; Regional Studies, Regional Science; Food Security; Journal of Urbanism: International Research on Placemaking and Urban Sustainability; Journal of Planning Education and Research; Housing Policy Debate; Transportation Review Board; Geographical Analysis

### Memberships

Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning (ACSP)  
 Urban Affairs Association (UAA)  
 American Political Science Association (APSA)  
 Latin American Studies Association (LASA)  
 American Association of Geographers (AAG)

## **Volunteer Work**

2020-2023 Women Leaders in STEM (US-Mexico Leaders Network), Mentor  
2018 CompileHer (UChicago Tech Capstone), Instructor  
2018 Scopeathon (South Side Civic), Community Outreach  
2005 Alfabetiza! (ADECO), Instructor and Organizer

## **SKILLS**

**Statistical Analysis and Computation:** Python, R, STATA, PostgreSQL, Google Cloud Console

**Spatial Analysis and GIS:** GeoDa, QGIS, ArcGIS, PostGIS, Google Earth Engine

**General Tools:** MS Office, LaTeX, Git

**Languages:** Spanish, English, German (A2), French (A1)