

# 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

## ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

- 2025 - Assistant Professor, Department of **Urban and Regional Planning**, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC)
- 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, food** 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 goods and 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.

## 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

## 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 **Farah, I.** “The Legitimacy Trap: Street Vending Heterogeneity and Selective Enforcement in San Francisco.” In: *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* (in press 2025), pp. 1–23
- 2025 **Farah, I.**, Devlin, R. T., Hartmann, C., Harvey, J., Hegel, C., “The Governance of Informal Street Work in San Francisco and New York City.” In: *Nature Cities* (2025), pp. 1–6. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1038/s44284-025-00321-y>
- 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. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/00420980211058331>
- 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 Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

2025 Cities: Planning & Urban Life

### 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

- 2025\* **Farah, I.** "Cities on the Edge: Urbanization, Sustainability, and the Future of Development in Mexico." In: *Today in International Politics: Speaker Series (TIPPS)*. Ohio State University. 2025
- 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

- 2025 Co-organizer: The Role of Political Intermediaries in Urban Governance in the United States. Five sessions. **Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning**, Minneapolis, Minnesota (with Ryan Devlin).
- 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)