

Irene Farah

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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)

ADDITIONAL RESEARCH AFFILIATIONS

- 2023 Visiting Research Associate, **Center for Demographic, Urban, and Environmental Studies**, Colegio de México (COLMEX)

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 goods and services.

Spatial Dynamics: Using computational and spatial techniques, I also examine informality, the ways people inhabit urban space, retail dynamics and their impact on 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

PUBLICATIONS

Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles

- 2026 Farah, I. "The Legitimacy Trap: Street Vending Heterogeneity and Selective Enforcement in San Francisco." In: *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* (2026), pp. 1–23. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2427.70052>
- 2025 Credit, K., Farah, I., Talen, E., Anselin, L., Ghomrawi, H., "The Walkable Accessibility Score (WAS): A spatially granular open-source measure of walkability for the continental US from 1997 to 2019." In: *Environment and Planning B: Urban Analytics and City Science* (2025), pp. 1–18. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/23998083251377116>
- 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* 2 (10 2025), pp. 918–923. 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](https://doi.org/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](https://doi.org/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](https://doi.org/10.1017/S1368980022002324)

Under Review

- 2026 Farah, I., Kelling, C., Leng, X., Zhao, Y., "Building a Longitudinal Geospatial Dataset of Micro-businesses in Mexico City." In: (in press), pp. 1–18
- 2026 Farah, I. "Organizational Scale and the Coalition Dilemma: Street Market Associations Governing Public Space in Mexico City." In: (under review)
- 2026 Farah, I. "Mercado Cananea: resistencia, autogestión y conflicto en la Ciudad de México." In: *Mercados públicos, tianguis y comercio informal en América Latina*. Ed. by Ma. Susana Rosales and Verónica Crossa. Mexico City, Mexico: CEDUA, Colegio de México. Chap. (under review)

Book Chapters

- 2026 Farah, I. "The Informal Economy and Urban Design." In: *The Routledge Handbook of Urban Design Practice*. Ed. by Molly O'Neill Robinson, Michael Angelo Larice, Allen Penniman, and Amanda Haycox. London: Routledge, 2026. Chap. (in press), pp. 27–46
- 2025 Farah, I. "La coexistencia de la planeación urbana con el comercio popular en la Ciudad de México." In: *Retos de la agenda urbana en México*. Ed. by Sussy Keosseyian. Mexico City, Mexico: Bonilla Artiga Editores, 2025, pp. 97–128. ISBN: 978-968-97-2807-8

- 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

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

- 2021-2022 Graduate Student Fellow, **Berkeley Food Institute**, UC Berkeley
- 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

TEACHING

University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

- 2026 Introduction to Urban Data Science
- 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.** "Nonprofits as Political Intermediaries: Street-Level Organizations in the Mission District of San Francisco." In: *Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning*. Minneapolis, Minnesota. 2025
- 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 luncheon 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. 2022
- 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)

Departmental Service

Ph.D. Admissions Committee, Department of Urban and Regional Planning, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, 2024–2025; 2025–2026.

Grant and Proposal Reviewer

- 2021 Invited External Reviewer, Urban Challenge Grant “Climate, Justice, and Cities”, **School of Cities**, University of Toronto

Professional Development

- 2026 Invited Professional Development Speaker. “Career Strategies for International Students (Early Career)”. **International Conference of Urban Affairs (ICUA)**, Chicago, Illinois.
2025 Invited Panelist. “From ABD to Tenure-Track Planners of Color Interest Group (POCIG) Roundtable. **Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning (ACSP)**, Minneapolis, Minnesota.
2025 Invited Panelist. “El Movimiento Sigue”. **Latinx Heritage Month in La Casa Cultural Latina**, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.

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; International Journal of Family Business and Management; International Journal of Public Administration; 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 STEAM (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)