Solicited diary methods with urban refugee women: Ethical and practical considerations

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Urban refugee women are a challenging research population to contact as they typically prefer to remain discreet and anonymous in their host cities due to concerns over their status and security. Building trust and rapport can be challenging and researchers need to balance issues such as negotiating gatekeepers and time scales alongside ethical demands to do no harm and avoid extractive and exploitative research. As a result, refugee women’s individual and quotidian experiences are rarely examined and foregrounded and their emotional responses to their host cities and host communities are overlooked. In light of this, considered methods, such as solicited diaries, which allow refugees the space and time to reflect on their emotional experiences and these associations with space and place, could be beneficial. However, there has been little written on the use of this method with refugee participants in deeply marginalised circumstances. Alongside some practical and ethical considerations of using solicited diary methods with urban refugee women, this paper considers two main issues. First, the practical role that instructions play in guiding participant responses and engagement in the diary process, and second the ways in which diaries can illuminate the relationship between emotion and spatiality. Diaries were found to have much to offer in advocating refugees as knowledge holders, whereby written excerpts act as “evidence” of their experiences. Analysed alongside other qualitative methods, and if used appropriately and considerately with refugee participants, diaries have the potential to be insightful, empowering, and cathartic.

KEYWORDS
emotional geographies, ethics, gender, Middle East, solicited diaries, urban refugees

1 | INTRODUCTION

In cities of the majority world, urban refugee women are often challenging to find and engage in research projects. Little is known about these women’s experiences in their host cities and their voice is often missing from research accounts. Feminist methods, which minimise potential harm to participants, provide avenues of reciprocity between participant and researcher, respect participants’ emotions, and position these women as knowledge holders, are necessary in such contexts (England, 1994; Hugman et al., 2011a, 2011b; Jacobsen & Landau, 2003).
This paper explores the use of solicited diary methods with Syrian refugee women living in refugee receiving neighbourhoods of Amman and Beirut in 2016–17. Used alongside focus groups and interviews, solicited diaries were envisioned as a method that would amplify women’s personal voices, allowing them space and time to reflect on their lived experiences of identity, space, and security. Solicited diaries were used with the intent that they would create space for emotional reflection from participants, aiding a deeper understanding about their emotional and embodied relationships with space and place in their host cities (Bondi et al., 2005; Davidson & Milligan, 2004).

Alongside some ethical and practical considerations of using this method with refugee women, this paper highlights two major findings. First, instructive directions in solicited diaries influence participants’ responses and their inclusion or exclusion of emotional reflection; and second, solicited diaries offer important comparative insights into refugee women’s gendered and emotional geographies. In presenting excerpts from each spatial context, this paper considers gendered spatial negotiations and experiences of host cities, foregrounding women’s experiences and reflecting on insights that are sometimes lost or overlooked in interviews and focus groups. As a method, solicited diaries have the potential to be insightful, empowering, and cathartic, if used appropriately and considerately.

This paper begins with an exploration of the potential benefits and challenges of using solicited diaries with refugee participants, including reflections on the ways in which researcher positionality affects knowledge production in such contexts. This is followed by Syrian refugee women’s decisions on whether to partake in the solicited diary element of the research project and the insight that this offers into participants’ agentic capacity and decision-making in such contexts. After providing a brief background on Syrian refugees’ position in each country, the paper considers how differing solicited diary instructions and oversight resulted in initially striking contrasts of emotion and spatiality between participants’ solicited diaries in Amman and Beirut. Finally, the paper examines and compares women’s solicited diary excerpts and the ways in which emotional reflections aid in understanding the people–place relationship. The paper argues that solicited diary instructions play an important role in providing participants with a sense of autonomy and direction, alongside a reassurance to participants to examine and express their emotional responses. These emotional reflections, in turn, provide a deeper insight into emotional and embodied experiences of space and place that can be overlooked in other methods.

2 | REFUGEE PARTICIPANTS AND SOLICITED DIARIES

Solicited diary methods have not yet reached the profile and employment of interviews and focus groups. Yet they have much to offer in the way of richness of data. They can elicit understanding of both “everyday” activities as well as participants’ emotions regarding challenging topics, which they may be less inclined to divulge in face-to-face methods. Additionally, solicited diaries provide insight into the relationship between embodied emotions and space, which can be difficult to expose and analyse (Bondi et al., 2005; Thomas, 2007).

Solicited diaries provide an avenue that prioritises refugee voices and their position as knowledge holders. They can offer insight into the social power that is present in the everyday and can reveal the emotional connections, relationships, and associations with place, space, and activity (Davidson & Milligan, 2004; Latham, 2003; Myers, 2010). They have scope to be a participatory method and provide an opportunity for often marginalised subjects to “have their say” and occasionally (but not always) “contribute to a more empowered relationship” between a researcher and subjects of research (Meth, 2003, p. 154; 2004).

Although the researcher determines the agenda, the diary keeper is able to identify, express, and highlight their key concerns, allowing for greater control over data collection (Bartlett & Milligan, 2015; Thomas, 2007). This is particularly valid in refugee research, as researchers seek to ensure that their work is not purely extractive at the expense of vulnerable participants. This approach could also assist with over-researched refugee populations, where participants are asked similar questions by a multitude of researchers and suffer their own aspect of research fatigue (Pascucci, 2017). The opportunity to change conversations and determine the scope and agenda could empower participants and allow them an opportunity to ensure their individual voices and experiences are heard.

Several studies have documented how solicited diary methods reveal the emotional perspectives of participants. Diaries allow for participants to delve into deeper and more intense sentiments (Filep et al., 2015; Latham, 2003) and provide important insight into the ways in which everyday life and emotions reflect on understanding space and place. This is an opportunity that is not often presented to participants in the context of temporally constrained interviews or focus groups. Solicited diaries present participants with the space and time to reflect, consider, and express unfamiliar, affecting, or traumatic experiences in a safe and controlled setting. Furthermore, in my own context, since I was working alongside a translator, I would often be receiving an approximation of participants language and perspectives. (Tribe, 2005). In such situations I believe there is potential for emotion to be filtered out in favour of detail.
My research was based predominantly on the use of focus groups and interviews (see Linn 2020). However, considering my positionality as a white, Western, female researcher from a foreign University and the contexts in which I was working, I was concerned that these methods might not build rapport or elicit emotional insights into women’s experiences in their host cities.

For example, as an “outsider,” I worked alongside NGOs, community workers, and an interpreter when interviewing refugee women. Thus, I anticipated a potential sense of distance between myself and participants. I wanted to use solicited diaries as an additional method that might allow participants more freedom, flexibility, and ownership over the research process, allowing them space and time to reflect on their emotional responses to their urban environment and host community.

Beginning fieldwork, I found that my positionality could occasionally result in a confused relationship with participants, who associated me with the wider refugee humanitarian framework. In certain circumstances, participants would insist that I was from UNHCR. This resulted in some focus groups becoming disruptive as women spoke over each other, disapproving of perspectives that were seen to be distracting (for example, discussing sexual harassment when other participants wanted to highlight exploitative rents). Additionally, on a handful of occasions, some women would express disbelief at other participants’ experiences. It was clear to me that, in these contexts, some women might be averse to sharing their honest perspectives and experiences, especially if others were hostile to their views. Therefore, I decided that using solicited diaries alongside other methods would allow for a more personal aspect of voice to emerge from participants.

Solicited diary methods do present some ethical challenges. They delve into participants’ emotions and thus may be a source of emotional distress, which a researcher is unable to mediate during the diary process (Meth & Malaza, 2003; Thomas, 2007). Solicited diaries are also critiqued for being open to embellishment or purely subjective and not reflective of grounded realities (Meth, 2003). Issues of embellishment are important to consider in relation to refugees. Refugees are positioned within local, regional, and global institutions and processes that are constantly arbitrating their “right” to refugee-ness (Zetter, 2007). As discussed above, there can be confusion over a researcher’s positionality, whereby they are perceived as possessing power, position, and influence over refugees’ status and opportunities. Thus I believe it is important to ensure that solicited diaries are weighed alongside interviews or focus group discussions and that deep care is taken in communicating researcher positionality and the purpose of the diary in such contexts and with such groups.

3 | FINDING DIARY PARTICIPANTS: A PAINFUL EXERCISE IN MEMORY OR A CATHARTIC OUTLET?

The prospect of solicited diary keeping divided participants. Some felt that the method would be a cathartic opportunity for reflection (Meth, 2003; Morrison, 2012), while others considered it as a painful reminder of their day-to-day lives. These comments reflect on some of the ethical deliberations that other researchers have raised in using this method (Morrison, 2012; Thomas, 2007). Some participants firmly stated that it would be “too hard” to reflect on challenging and painful experiences and memories. They expressed undertaking a mental decision-making to “live in the moment.” Keeping a diary was perceived to be morose record keeping, looking back, and a reminder of ongoing difficulties and pain. Many participants expressed active and ongoing concerns related to family still in Syria, the continuing war, and frustration at their personal situations. Women were apprehensive that keeping a diary would encourage them to engage in these anxieties and wanted to actively avoid this.

One participant pragmatically stated that she wouldn’t be up to the task as she easily became bored and felt she would quickly get irritated with having to update her diary (similar to participants in Jacelon & Imperio, 2005). Another was deeply concerned about the written nature of the diary, expressing reluctance about being involved in case her diary “fell into the wrong hands.” As she was nervous about her position within her host neighbourhood, she didn’t want any personal, written record of her thoughts, feelings, and experiences about the wider community, although she did not mind partaking in a recorded interview.

These decisions undertaken by refugee women to not participate in the diary process reflect ethical concerns of coercion and power in contexts where the researcher is in a privileged position (Hugman et al., 2011a, 2011b). Decisions not to partake in this process emphasise the optional nature of the exercise and reflect women’s agentic capacity to consider, deliberate, and decide against solicited diary keeping, if they felt it necessary to protect themselves.

Additionally, it was challenging to find participants who were literate and therefore could participate in this aspect of the study. Many women had not continued their education past adolescence, stopping their attendance at the request of their parents or due to early marriage. Thus, although I was working with marginalised women, this method doesn’t have the capacity to include the most marginalised and other solutions that would facilitate regular record keeping (such as an audio diary) could be considered to enhance their inclusion.
In contrast, others expressed great pleasure in the opportunity to keep a diary. Participants explained that they were bored and that a diary would give them something to do. Women reflected on the breakdown and disintegration of family and kinship ties through war, flight, and asylum. Many emphasised that often there was “no one to talk to” about their lives and they missed their social networks and visits. The diary was perceived as something that would provide an outlet for their feelings, a place to articulate themselves and reflect on their ongoing circumstances. One potential participant was illiterate but asked her sister if she would write her entries on her behalf as she very much wanted to take part (sadly, I never received her entries due to her sister’s time constraints). Others expressed enthusiasm at the possibility of being involved in an activity that would show what life was really like “as a refugee.” Some women stressed to me that their experiences were true and asked if I believed them, having been dismissed by refugee agencies as telling the “same story” as others. As such, solicited diaries were perceived as having weight as evidence: a written account of daily realities of refugee women’s lives. Thus, the diary provided an avenue of empowerment and participation for women.

Diary methods should be utilised considerately, in such a way that does not endanger the participant or create a risk of violence. Many participants were living in crowded conditions with extended family, and privacy and personal space were often compromised. Women often suffer violence within the home, particularly in contexts of war, flight, and asylum (Alsaba & Kapilashrami, 2016; Krause, 2015). All women were interviewed, or partook in focus groups, before engaging in solicited diary keeping. They were also known personally by local community contacts, who had facilitated contact between me and the participants. As such, I did not have specific concerns over domestic violence (including familiar violence) regarding these participants. If such a situation did emerge, I would have been reticent to allow participants to engage in the process due to the written nature of the diary, which may have compromised their safety further.

4 | RESEARCH CONTEXT: SYRIAN REFUGEES IN LEBANON AND JORDAN

Over 5 million Syrian refugees have been displaced through the civil war that began in 2011. Over 1 million have sought asylum in Lebanon, while approximately 650,000 have settled in Jordan (3RP Regional Refugee & Resilience Plan, 2017). Approximately half of these refugees are girls and women, and a significant majority are living in urban areas in their host countries.

Lebanon and Jordan are situated within the wider geopolitical structure of the Levant, sharing histories of colonialism, conflict, and refugees, and linked by economies, faiths, kinship ties, and movements of people. These two States have approached the ongoing Syrian refugee crisis in different ways, largely shaped by a cross-section of these issues (Janmyr, 2016, 2017; Turner, 2015). Neither nation is a signatory to the 1951 UNHCR Refugee Convention, nor its 1967 Protocol, resulting in both nations attending to incoming Syrian refugees at their discretion. Syrian refugees are routinely referred to as “guests” or “migrant workers,” and experience different policies on their right to remain and their right to work in each State. These policies have direct implications for refugees’ sense of security and belonging in their host communities.

For example, Syrian refugees in Lebanon are required to pay for a US$200 annual permit for anyone over the age of 15. This provides legality to remain, and work, in Lebanon. However, most marginalised refugee families are unable to pay this and thus work informally and attempt to live anonymously (NRC, 2014). In contrast, most urban Syrian refugees living in Jordan have acquired legality to remain in the country through the 2015 Urban Verification Process. However, at the time this research took place, they were also limited in accessing livelihood opportunities, as they required a sponsor (kafala) and were only permitted to work in particular jobs (Achilli, 2015).

At the time of this fieldwork, communities in Amman and Beirut had hosted Syrian refugees for over five years, and as a result tensions over resources, space, and security were heightening (Achilli, 2015; Guay, 2016). It is important to emphasise the incredible efforts of these communities in how they have supported refugees, while also highlighting issues and concerns over refugees’ marginality and insecurity.

This wider geopolitical and legal context directly interacts with women’s refugee identities, creating an emotional landscape of obstacles, fears, and insecurities, in both public and private spaces. Solicited diaries were envisioned as a means of gaining further insight into these experiences.

5 | SOLICITED DIARIES IN PRACTICE: THE IMPORTANCE OF INSTRUCTIONS

The solicited diary method was intended to be outlined, approached, and used in the same way in both contexts. Participants were to be briefed about the diary task and given a notebook (with a set of instructions at the front), which they would update regularly over four weeks. However, in each city, the method developed differently.
In Beirut, after jointly identifying potential participants, my local community contact eagerly approached participants in advance of me outlining the diary task to them. The community contact encouraged participants to write about their experiences in diary format, before I was able to further communicate this aspect of the research. As such, the women had already begun keeping their diaries, focusing on similar themes that were discussed in interviews and focus groups (this included impressions of host neighbourhoods, daily activities, negotiating and accessing security providers, negatives incidences of sexual and verbal harassment, as well as positive experiences – building new networks, experiences of empowerment). Thus, the women were not provided with appropriate notebooks, or given written instruction, as is typical in diary methods (Latham, 2003). However, following discussions with the community contact and other researchers, it was decided that it would be best to let the women continue. It was hoped that this less regimented approach might enable women to feel a greater sense of independence and personal ownership over their solicited diaries, and to be less self-consciousness regarding diary entries.

In contrast, participants in Amman were given a brief, alongside notebooks with written instruction at the front. These instructions encouraged them to write regularly about both positive and negative experiences in their homes and their wider communities, reflecting on issues of space and security.

Solicited diaries in both cities were collected after 4–6 weeks. They had been written in Arabic and translated in each context by the interpreter who had worked locally with me. Eleven women agreed to take part in keeping diaries, but only eight managed to contribute (see Table 1).

Upon completion of the task, solicited diary contributions were notably different. Women in Amman wrote specific entries that were dated and were more intimate in scope. In contrast, diary entries in Beirut were akin to a stream of consciousness, listing negative encounters within their host communities, largely devoid of emotional reflection. Typically, entries were undated, although women did refer to times of day (“this evening”; “last night”). My further interpretation for this difference in women’s entries is included in the conclusions. However, my predominant impression was that the lack of instructive direction led women to assume I was only interested in their specific, everyday experiences and not their wider emotions and feelings about life in exile. As they had no instructions to refer to, they focused on issues that had emerged during focus groups and interviews, filtering out their explicit emotional responses. As a result, after receiving and translating the solicited diaries, I asked these women if they would write some brief, emotional reflections on the experiences they had written about (Figure 1).

Despite varied and brief contributions, women’s emotional and socio-spatial engagement with their host cities emerged from their diary entries. When read alongside interviews and focus group discussions, solicited diaries enriched comparative understanding of women’s lived experience, particularly highlighting their day-to-day realities in their host cities, drawing relationship between identity, space, and security.

6 | SOLICITED DIARY ENTRIES: EMBODIED AND SPATIALISED EMOTIONS OF ISOLATION AND UNBELONGING

Despite differences in explicitly emotional reflections, solicited diary accounts in both Amman and Beirut demonstrated the embodied and spatialised relationship between security, identity, belonging, and isolation.

| Participant name | Location | Brief bio |
|------------------|----------|-----------|
| Nasim            | Beirut   | Sunni, mid-thirties, married mother, not working, from Aleppo |
| Fatima           | Beirut   | Sunni, late twenties, married mother, not working, children with health complications, from Aleppo |
| Iman             | Beirut   | Sunni, late twenties, married mother, not working |
| Najat            | Beirut   | Sunni, early forties, married mother, not working |
| Amira            | Beirut   | Sunni, early forties, married mother, not working |
| Fahira           | Amman    | Sunni, early thirties, married mother, not working, from Homs |
| Rahima           | Amman    | Sunni, early twenties, married mother, not working, from Homs |
| Hanan            | Amman    | Sunni, mid-thirties, married mother, works sporadically, from Homs, ongoing health issues |
In diary excerpts from Amman, women expressed a sense of disconnection from wider society, a lack of places to visit and people to socialise with. This was coupled with concerns about their long-term future in Jordan, particularly the future of their children, many of whom had lost valuable years of schooling. These feelings and experiences were exacerbated by a longing to return to Syria and regain a “normal life,” which resulted in isolated lives, tinged with hopelessness. Women commented on the daily rhythms of their lives and expressed a strong sense of loneliness and boredom, alongside ongoing concerns relating to the safety and security of extended family and friends living in Syria:

“I got back to my house chores, but my mind was elsewhere, I was thinking about Aleppo, and the people stuck there, how are they going to get out?? (Rahima, Amman)²

While daily activities can create a sense of home and of purpose in exile, the monotony of daily chores when also burdened with concerns and worries of future stability transformed this experience into a pointless, repetitive task that enhanced women’s pessimism:

Daily house chores … Nothing new, nothing new … Tired soul. Wounded country, sick with an incurable disease. A future without an identity … Till when? (Hanan, Amman)
I live a lonely life in my house, the children go to school, I do my chores, and I sometimes visit my relatives …. [today] I sat in my room and cried, I talked to my family and my siblings on the phone, I’m constantly reminded of my isolation when I talk to them. (Fariha, Amman)

These accounts reflect participants’ expressions in interviews that they felt like a “stranger” in their own lives because they could not recognise their ongoing existence, which felt hopeless. The lack of variety and activity resulted in stagnant and suspended lives, which quickly became suffocating and exacerbated by worries.

In contrast to diary excerpts from Beirut, interactions within public space were perceived neutrally and often served as a backdrop to the outplaying and reflection of emotional feeling. For example, Hanan discusses her need to ‘walk out her

![Figure 1: Homes in a refugee receiving neighbourhood, Beirut.](image-url)
feelings’, using the city streets as a method of coping with her emotions of distress, while Fariha reminisces and hopes for a future as her family play in a park in Amman:

I hate this day, but like any other day … it will pass and another day will come. I got dressed to take a walk, I walked down the street with tears in my eyes, I felt like I weighed a hundred kilograms, my legs barely able to hold me, but I kept walking. (Hanan, Amman)

My husband and I took the kids to the park. The children were really happy, they played and they had loads of fun. All the while I wish I can watch them play in Syria’s parks, and for home to be safe again. (Fariha, Amman)

During interviews, women’s experiences and perceptions of public space, security services, and daily activities in Amman were all discussed. However, when it came to diary entries, women predominantly reflected on their private spaces of home, hopes, and hopelessness of the future:

I want [my children] to go to school, get an education …. maybe I’m dreaming … it’s just a dream. (Rahima, Amman)

While interviews and focus groups naturally developed into an attention on public spaces, host communities, and encounters in the city, solicited diaries revealed the private realm – both the intimacy of thought and of home. These contributions address notions of the idea of private space or the home as a haven. In these accounts, it emerges as a monotonous prison of repetitive tasks that punctuate daily existence while women “wait,” either for war to end, or for better opportunities and a sense of familiarity in their host community. The diary exercise emphasised the importance of women’s embodied relationships with private space and isolation. These did emerge in interviews, but were often overlooked or dominated by more “dramatic” accounts of harassment and arrest that occurred in public space (Nelson, 2013).

Solicited diary entries from Beirut focused predominantly on experiences of negotiating public space, whereby women recounted active experiences of being othered through verbal and non-verbal cues. Entries revealed women’s deeply embodied awareness of their public presence, primarily because of their gender and their Syrian nationality. Thus, women negotiated the hegemonic gaze of both masculinity and citizenship in public space (Fenster, 2005). Excerpts revealed a pervading awareness of public bodily presence, which resulted in a sense of discomfort and alienation:

I go to a public place, [locals] see us, they stay away from us, they keep their distance as if we have a dangerous, [contagious] disease. (Amira, Beirut)

Women wrote of a sense of being perceived as ‘dirty’ and ‘unclean’. Solicited diary excerpts referenced experiences of shopping and browsing whereby participants were regularly refused to touch merchandise and specifically not permitted to try on clothes at stores. This was attributed to their Syrian nationality, as was their everyday encounters with verbal and sexual harassment:

Yesterday I was out, and someone was screaming at a Syrian: ‘You [people] ruined the whole country!’ They had a [big altercation]. (Nasim, Beirut)

Women also expressed discomfort and resentment as being perceived as sexually available because of their status as refugees:

On so many occasions men have approached me, spoken to me … given me their number. (Najat, Beirut)
When I was walking on the street a guy began catcalling me because I was veiled and wearing the Abaya, and he started speaking not nice words, saying: ‘Go with me, on a small trip, he thought I was a whore [that I don’t have values]. (Amira, Beirut)

Experiences of harassment and othering, such as these detailed above, frequently arose during focus groups and interviews. While this did also feature in participants’ accounts from Amman, in Beirut it was far more prevalent and relentless.
Solicited diary entries provided numerous accounts of women’s discomfort and confusion navigating their host communities, whereby women expressed an embodied sense of being mocked, ridiculed, exploited, or objectified in public space.

When contributing additional emotional reflections on these experiences, women linked these encounters and experiences to a wider perception of their unbelonging and lack of safety within their host city, which resulted in an everyday sense of insecurity and instability. This culminated in women expressing a desire to leave Lebanon as soon as possible for a place of safety:

I get very sad and depressed [that] I would stay in a country like this that doesn’t have security for us. I want a country where I could secure myself and my family in … I always have fear about the things that are coming. (Amira, Beirut)

When I face any problems … I feel hopeless … I feel sad for many days. I wish that I would emigrate to any country that has freedom and security and no discrimination, even if I risk my life and the life of my family like those who [travelled across] the sea. And I wish that I live in any country [where] I feel like a human and I have rights. (Najat, Beirut)

Negative daily encounters chipped away at an embodied sense of security for refugee women, which built into larger perceptions of host cities as a location where safety and stability was compromised and their future uncertain. This resulted in refugees exploring more extreme ways of enhancing their long-term sense of security, such as being smuggled across the Mediterranean.

7 | CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Examining diary excerpts from each context, it was clear that providing participants with their own diary and instructions gave them a greater sense of autonomy and direction. Despite an expectation that participants might feel more “in control” of the diary process with verbal rather than written instruction, comparing the responses from Beirut and Amman it emerges that this is not strictly the case. Without instructions and guidance, women were more inclined to discuss topics that arose during focus groups and interviews, avoiding emotional reflection. It was only when women in Beirut were asked to reflect personally on how experiences had made them feel that a more explicit emotional response to their host cities and their ongoing situations emerged. These additional contributions provided deeper insight into the emotional relationship between participants’ status as refugees, their wider mobility, and their sense of security and unbelonging in their host cities. Therefore, participants benefit from written instruction which provides clarity and guidance, allowing them to explore a range of experiences and emotions.

Women in Amman were given broad, written instruction regarding the content and focus of their solicited diaries. What emerged was a predominant focus on emotion and intimate spaces of home, daily chores, and activities and few remarks about host communities and public space. These themes did emerge in interviews but were often sidelined or overlooked. Solicited diaries pushed these issues to the forefront and demanded an attention to both the public and private spaces that refugee women occupied and negotiated in their daily lives and show the advantage of diary methods.

Responses from both contexts demonstrate the worth in examining emotional responses to marginalisation. They reflect the importance of considering embodied, emotional accounts of belonging and the everyday, and show how issues of security, belonging, and isolation are both intimately embodied and spatialised and deeply intertwined for refugee women.

As a method, solicited diaries utilise feminist principles. They focus on refugees as individuals, highlighting their challenging experiences of trauma and violence alongside interludes of family life and hope. Solicited diaries heighten refugees’ perspectives and voices and therefore have great potential if used considerately and patiently, conscious of issues of participant safety and protection. Ensuring that participants have the space to consider whether partaking in this research method would benefit and assist them, solicited diaries undoubtedly have potential to empower refugees through emphasising their position as knowledge holders. Solicited diaries act as evidence and provide an outlet for daily frustrations, concerns, and hopes. They also create opportunities for refugees to control the conversation, to focus attention onto topics and issues that they want to highlight and reflect on. Diaries deepened understanding between refugees’ embodied and emotional experiences in two related but different cities and opened further avenues of thought on public and private spaces and the ways in which women negotiate and experience them.
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DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

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ENDNOTES

1 It was suggested that women could perhaps record their diaries on their mobile phones. However, most families only had one phone, which was typically in the possession of the family patriarch.

2 In order to protect participants, all participants’ names in this paper are pseudonyms and bio details are not specific.

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**SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

Additional supporting information may be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of the article.

**Table S1.** Diary participants.

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