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TITLE: Conceptualisations of Place, Otherness and Cosmopolitan Encounters in Tropical Australia

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Openness is one of the hallmarks of cosmopolitanism although experiences of mobility and a readiness to embrace foreign cultures are more typically associated with the idea. Empirical studies of ‘ordinary cosmopolitanism’ turn the focus to how openness is performed in every day life by a diverse range of people. Certain configurations of places can also facilitate cosmopolitan practices, or conversely impose constraints on them. ‘Cosmoscapes’ and ‘cosmopolitan canopies’ are identified for instance in big global cities, some suburbs and even some rural areas. Comparatively speaking, tropical places rich in diversity remain largely under-examined. This article investigates possibilities for cosmopolitan encounters in three tropical locations, drawing on qualitative research conducted in Broome in Western Australia, Cairns in Queensland and Darwin in the Northern Territory. We explore how individuals imagine tropical places, respond to cultural differences, and narrate encounters with diversity. Our study identifies a ‘hierarchy of otherness’ and cultural rules of engagement underpinning encounters, generating exclusionary actions and attitudes. We argue that encounters are occasions with the potential to overcome those practices if individuals’ reflexive engagement with their biases results in the interrogation of such hierarchies. Consequently, cosmopolitan encounters go beyond the pleasurable, being experienced as mundane or even tenuous.