An analysis of urban development in post-independence India shows that the country has inherited an uneven regional distribution of city and town formations. No other region illustrates this better than the North East. This complex topic is examined with reference to the “tribal metropolis” of Shillong in Meghalaya, which is experiencing a rapidly changing urban landscape. How urban space is governed in Shillong is analysed. In doing so, contestations by various stakeholders regarding urban expansion and development along with its implications for the tribal population living in the vicinity of the city are examined.

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