When the devastating earthquake hit Haiti on January 12, 2010, its rising, fragile democracy was, once again, profoundly reminded of its own weakness. The magnitude 7.0 quake hit the most densely populated region of the country causing the death of more than 300,000 people, injuring 300,000 more, leaving more than 1.3 million people homeless, and destroying large parts of the country's habitat and infrastructure. Relief and reconstruction in the aftermath of the catastrophe revealed many lessons to learn for future post disaster management in Haiti or around the globe. Many mistakes had been committed by hasty decisions, lack of communication, and collaboration deficits among both international and national actors. One of the most striking was opening a camp to relocate displaced families in the remote outskirts of Port-au-Prince—causing the rise of Canaan, a vast urbanization that was declared the “biggest land grab of Latin-America” (Valencia 2013). A manifestation of institutional weakness, the case of Canaan will show if Haitian and international decision makers (in joint efforts with the Haitian civil society) will take the opportunity to develop livable and resilient neighborhoods or if
the country will be stuck proceeding down the path toward further uncontrolled sprawl. This chapter tries to uncover preconditions, perspectives, and threats to reflect on. Academia’s possible role is discussed in the context of community-based development in Onaville, one of the sectors of Canaan. On the basis of exemplary samples, the authors examine how volunteers and students can contribute to an improvement of the neighborhood’s living environment by supporting participatory activity, knowledge-exchange, and self-aid.