Haiti is a country plagued by uncertainty – from uncertainty when the next natural disaster will strike to who owns the land settlements are built on. Such uncertainty makes planning future development difficult – some would say impossible. And yet, it is precisely this uncertainty that makes planning for the future so important. Strategic interventions can play a key role in buffering against the many problems that arise when building livelihoods and settlements in such an uncertain landscape.

On January 12, 2010, a 7.0 magnitude earthquake rattled Port-au-Prince, killing over 300,000 people and displacing over 1.5 million more all over the country. Though more than $1.2 billion has been spent to temporarily house those affected by the earthquake, over 340,000 still live in tent camps and much less has been spent to help those affected transition to safe, long-term housing. Lacking the resources and technical assistance to „build back better”, most residents have resorted to building anywhere they can – often on unplanned, unsafe, and marginal sites.

One marginal site, Canaan, is the focus of this studio. Shortly after the earthquake informal settlers began arriving and settling in Canaan, an area just outside Port-au-Prince. Though an estimated 60,000 people live on the site today, land ownership remains contested and much of the site is at risk of serious erosion and flooding. Several large-scale development plans have been brought forth by NGOs, businesses, and international land development groups. Other NGOs are working at a smaller scale to build basic necessities such as water and sanitation.

While the future of Canaan’s landscape remains uncertain, any successful proposal for the site must plan for the many people who now live there. This studio asks how can we as landscape architects work with residents to shape future development in a socially and ecologically productive way despite this uncertainty? Students will be asked to propose a design strategy that rethinks the traditional project model of a single-scenario masterplan. Instead, students will anticipate multiple future scenarios to find appropriate moments where landscape infrastructure can intervene to guide sustainable development patterns and build the adaptive capacity of local populations to future risk.

Experts and organizations on the ground in Haiti will be brought in to offer their perspectives and advice throughout the studio. Students have the option to collaborate with environmental engineering students of the Technical University Munich who have studied and travelled the area. The studio is part of a long-term research initiative of the ILA that explores the role of landscape architecture in post-disaster conditions of lowest developed countries. Selected products of the studio may be presented to Haitian government agencies, residents and NGO’s working in Canaan.

ORGANISATION
This Masterprojekt course will meet in Room B061 in HH-Str. 8 on Thursdays from 14:00-18:00, beginning April 11. The course will be given in English, but students will NOT be graded on their English proficiency. Up to 12 students will be accepted. If there are questions about the course, please contact Christina Milos: milos@ila.uni-hannover.de.