It is a multi-disciplinary reflection on urban development, encompassing strategies, governance models, guidance instruments and assessment tools, all considered in the wider framework of current European policies on the city, housing and building technology. The looking glass of a two-year transnational exchange project, bringing together universities and local administrations, allows us to understand the great challenge lying ahead in the 21st century: the quest to create cities which are beautiful, healthy, and attractive places to live.