

## Dr.-Eng. Zahra Breshna

Architect | Urban Planner | Researcher

### Profile

Zahra Breshna is an architect, urban planner, and researcher with more than 20 years of experience across cultural contexts, scales, and institutions. Her work bridges theory and practice, tradition and innovation, ranging from architectural design to large-scale urban development. Based in both Berlin and Kabul, she integrates academic research, planning expertise, and institutional leadership. She has contributed to post-conflict reconstruction, urban governance reform, and cultural heritage safeguarding. Zahra founded URBAN STEPS as a means to rethink planning in rapidly evolving, often fragile urban environments through responsive and context-based strategies.

### Selected Professional Milestones

- **Founder & Director, URBAN STEPS | 2021-present**  
a cross-cultural urban learning and applied research program. Developed five methodological approaches, to strengthen planning systems in fragile contexts.
- **Director, Breshna Foundation for Culture | 2021-present**  
Nonprofit platform to preserve, promote, and pioneer Afghanistan's 20th-century cultural heritage.

- **Head of Urban Planning, Kabul New City / DCDA | 2010-2012**  
Strategic planning for a new metropolitan area of over 3 million inhabitants; inter-agency coordination in post-conflict conditions.
- **Founder & Consultant, ZBC - Zahra Breshna Consulting | 2007-present**  
Transnational planning and architecture consultancy with cross-sectoral cooperation and award-winning designs.
- **Head of Urban Heritage, Ministry of Urban Development (Afghanistan) | 2003-2006**  
Initiated and led Afghanistan's first national safeguarding program for urban heritage; with regulation guidelines, field-based surveys and training formats.
- **Co-Founder, Breshna & Thiele Architects, Berlin | 1997-2007**  
Architectural projects, competition awards, and large-scale project management in collaborations.

## Academic Background

- **PhD in Urban and Regional Planning (Dr.-Ing.), Technical University of Karlsruhe (now KIT), 2004**  
Dissertation: "Das historische Zentrum von Kabul - Grundlagen für eine Strategie der Wiederbelebung" (Strategic guidelines for revival of Kabul's historic center), published 2007, ISBN 978-386644-104-0)

- **Diploma in Architecture (Dipl.-Ing.), KIT, 1995**  
Thesis: “Reorganization of Industrial Wasteland - Linz, Austria,” exhibited in “Die Herausforderung,” (The challenge, 1995)

## **Contributions**

- Author of monographs and journal articles on urbanism and resilience
- Speaker at international conferences and expert panels
- Expert evaluator and advisor to governmental and cultural institutions
- Award-winning designer and evaluator