

Future World Shapers

By Alireza Hejazi

Who will shape the future world? Will it be the politicians, military commanders, regulators, economists, or scientists? In fact, there are many other professionals who may shape our future world, in both positive and negative ways.

• **Grassroots Researchers.** In the near future, research will go beyond universities' walls and embrace general people of every social class. It is simple: Those who generate and own knowledge will lead the world. Those who don't will just be followers.

This will make an attractive competition for generating applied knowledge, and some scientists may even abandon universities in order to find more time for thinking. Academic degrees may no longer seem so valuable.

Research capacity in different societies will find new ways for growth. True democracies will encourage their people to be active partners in research, and research projects will be done by the people, not just the researchers.

• **Universal Ethics Proclaimers.** The endless war between believers and atheists has so far yielded no tangible result, and the same story may continue in coming years. Meanwhile, religious discussions on theological matters have caused other problems, such as groups of fanatical believers rising up against each other.

One type of future world shapers will be those pursuing universal ethics. Believers, secular humanists, and even atheists have in common a natural ethics that transcends their faiths or the ways of life they follow. This kind of ethics, regarded as universal brotherhood, will be proclaimed increasingly in different parts of the world as a way out of religious, tribal, regional, and even universal clashes.

• **Wiki Writers.** The world of general knowledge has come online, and wikis play a growing role in recording and retrieving that knowl-

edge. The Web is a powerful tool for sharing general knowledge, and yet a significant portion of its capacity is going to be discovered through linking to social media. In fact, a new generation of wikis is on the way, embracing multimedia and interactive capabilities.

This will open opportunities for wiki writers to launch new projects. For example, an intelligent Wikipedia will diagnose your knowledge needs by analyzing your searched key words.

Wiki writers will be quite an active community, and they will have to produce more articles in response to their clients' and users' needs. This will make wikis increasingly popular places to share information and knowledge. New wikis will be generated in other languages rather than just in English, French, Spanish, or Chinese.

• **Financial Technologists.** While information and communication technology impacts us in many ways, a major channel of its impact is going to be felt through the way in which it is reshaping finance. In coming years, increasing amounts of capital will come into the financial technologies market, stimulating development, breaking through access barriers, and bringing down transaction costs to a fraction of what they are today.

Financial technologists will enable mutual fund companies to sell and service much smaller investment units and insurance companies to sell much smaller policies than they are able to do now.

• **Post-Normal Jobs Counselors.** The problem of finding a proper job will never end, at least in the near future. Journalist Ziauddin Sardar has described today as the beginning of "the Post-Normal Era," a time of new uncertainties and different types of "ignorance."

One of the main kinds of ignorance will be simply an inability to identify possibilities, which will create op-

portunities for post-normal job consultants. These counselors will be masters at identifying and even creating post-normal opportunities in the market, such as those that create new cultural products and meet new needs. □



About the Author

Alireza Hejazi is founder and developer of the FuturesDiscovery Web site for Iranian futures scholars and a member of the Iranian Society of Futures Studies. His article "Futures Studies in Iran: The

Past and the Future" was published in the April-May 2010 issue of *World Future Review*. E-mail arhejazi@hotmail.com.