

## Regenerative Investing for Beginners

This is an example of an exercise I use to help people begin to develop holistic thinking. This exercise asks you to reflect on how you invest your time and money and the various connections these investments have to other parts of your life and to the world. It takes about 15 minutes to complete and can lead to a lively discussion with friends and family.

We define an investment as any outlay or expenditure of time, money or labor. Buying shares in a mutual fund, planting trees, driving in the car, and spending time with family are all considered investments in this sense. We use three concepts to help us evaluate these investments: regenerative, generative, and degenerative.

We are all familiar with degenerative investments, defined as any investment that begins to fall apart as soon as the investment is made, and requires on-going investment to stay functional. An automobile and the entire complex of roads, fueling stations, refineries and oil wells are an excellent example of degenerative investments.

A generative investment is one that requires some energy in the initial investment but saves more energy over its life than it took to create. I like to use a Smith & Hawken shovel as an example of a generative investment. It costs in the form of mined ore, wood for the handle, crafting it, but, if used well, will last for a lifetime, providing a high level of service throughout. Photovoltaic solar panels are another nice example of a generative investment.

A regenerative investment is one that can create more investment from the initial outlay. A well-designed and planted forest, a thriving herd and a community loan fund are excellent examples of regenerative investments. Some forms of information could also be considered a regenerative investment based on these criteria.

### **The Exercise**

Take a piece of paper and write the three headings regenerative, generative, and degenerative along the top. Take about 15 minutes and evaluate your life based on these concepts. How do you invest your money and labor? Is your time invested in regenerative, generative, or degenerative pursuits? How do you invest your time on the computer? We're looking for broad strokes here, you needn't get bogged down into too much detail. Once you've completed this, take a moment to step back from what you've written. How do things fall out? Where is most of your time and money invested? What's your Regen-Gen-Degen Ratio? Are there types of investment that don't fall into just one of the categories? How about the way the investment is used? How would you characterize time on the computer if you're doing research versus surfing for pictures of your favorite pop star?

Can you see some ways to begin to make the shift to more regenerative investments? How can regenerative relationships predominate in the world if all of us, myself included, continue to invest our time and money degeneratively?

This exercise encourages us to look at the world as a very large, totally connected whole that we play an integral part in. As we become more aware of these connections we can slowly become aware of how to change how we live, and the world will change with us.