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Math Across Time

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Tom Zetterstrom’s discussion enlightened me about elimination of a New England icon because of irresponsibility of humans. I find it remarkable that towns and communities would ignore the natural diversity of their local ecosystem in order to overcrowd their streets or shade their lawns with American Elms. Therefore Mr. Zetterstrom’s talk opened my mind to think about how influential and powerful humans have in disrupting an ecosystem and our responsibility to maintain its natural balance.

 I was surprised by the effect that humans and their local communities can have on the widespread inflection of Americans Elms. When Mr. Zetterstrom mentioned the importance of diversifying our collections of plants and trees in our communities, I found it interesting that humans have such an enormous role in crafting an ecosystem. In nature there exists a natural balance within its ecosystem which humans are constantly disrupting and transforming. As humans we have the power and the ability to intrude and change our ecosystems for our own aesthetic pleasure, such as landscaping and gardening, which goes against the ecosystem’s natural balance. In the case of the America Elms we have used this power irresponsibly without considering the negative side effects on the local ecosystem.

Through the introduction of the Dutch elm disease, nature has successfully rebalanced the ecosystem, so that less abundant trees are once again able to diversity an ecosystem. As a result our love of the American Elm, has now been replaced with a void in our neighborhoods caused by our own actions. American Elms that were once so prevalent in our communities are now almost non-existent. Luckily humans are taking responsibility for our disruptive actions and are trying to prevent future spread of this disease. As humans if we have the power to distribute an ecosystem, we also have the ability and the responsibility to correct it as well. I was glad to hear about the measures current environmentalists are taking to inoculate surviving Elms and plant hybrid Elm trees, so that the American Elm isn’t eliminated from the New England landscape.