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Group Consumption and Ecological Footprint: The Effect of Habits and Lifestyle

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Abstract: Different religious communities seem to tell different tales about the influence of consumption on the ecological footprint, and the boundaries created between consumption and places. Our case study, Ramat Shlomo neighbourhood in Jerusalem, is highly segregated and provides us with a unique opportunity to examine the consumption habits of essential products and disposable utensils, as well as the circumstances, barriers, and facilitators that contribute to the production and maintenance of ecological footprints. Using a door-to-door survey, our findings hint at a link between multi-generational consumption habits of certain essential products, including unhealthy food and disposable utensils and low family income, health, and environmental impacts. Aside from affecting an individual's health, these choices also have a greater footprint. As the Haredi demographic becomes more prominent in Israeli society, its influence on the environment grows. lifestyle characteristics and habits are not merely a product of limited resources and residents may prefer to consume low-quality foods or spend money on plastic even when they can afford other alternatives. Such preferences at the household level affect the larger components of the neighbourhood and affect the entire urban matrix as a whole.

Keywords: consumption habits; essential products; disposable utensils; ecological footprint; Haredi

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1. Introduction

Earth is experiencing an environmental crisis as a result of disproportionate anthropogenic pressure. Global warming and resource overuse are consequences of this crisis [1]. As a result of human consumption of natural resources and very low repair and recycling rates, the National Footprint Accounts [2] estimates humanity's Ecological Footprint at 1.7 Earths. However, due to their reluctance to participate in surveys and censuses, it is difficult to measure many close-knit communities and identify their footprint characteristics. The overarching aim of this study is to understand what the circumstances, barriers and facilitators for ecological footprint and its relation to plastic consumption for individuals within Haredi are (strictly Orthodox Jews) communities. This information is elicited from eight close-knit population groups that are similar in many ways, while each represents different socio-economic circumstances. While the majority of studies focus on one type of plastic disposable [3–5], this study examines the declared consumption of essential products by each group of this conservative society and contributes to the understanding of the factors that might influence the use of disposable plastic, individuals' behaviours and habits regarding plastic waste disposal, their awareness of plastic pollution and their knowledge of alternatives.

Recent years have seen a dramatic increase in the production and use of plastics. Disposable plastics include grocery bags, bottles, straws, and utensils [6]. While these items are inexpensive, they have high functionality: much of which is designed to be used once before being thrown away. In addition to their low recyclability, disposable plastics are a significant source of pollution in the natural environment [7]. Despite few measures

against this consumption, such as bans enacted in China or France, the global disposable utensil market is estimated at 29.7 billion USD [8]. According to the World Wildlife Fund for Nature, Israel is the second-largest consumer of plastic disposables per capita in the Mediterranean. Recent studies report high levels of plastic waste along the Mediterranean coast of Israel that are two orders of magnitude higher than those reported in other parts of the Mediterranean [9], indicating the overuse of plastic disposables. However, few studies have investigated both ecological footprint and plastic disposables consumption of a conservative society in Israel from a behavioral perspective—lifestyle and habits [10].

Religious lifestyle shapes both individual daily life and the public space [11,12]. Unifying forces that motivate groups to congregate and carry out most of their interactions within their own group, combined with separatist forces that cause them to segregate themselves from their surrounding society, have led to self-imposed concentrations of these groups in enclaves around the world [13]. Spatial congregation reflects the religious communalism, which is characterized by mutual support and a complex system of social and consumer services unique to these communities [14]. For the groups' members, belonging to the group's territory reduces conflicts arising from contact with the modern world, strengthens social exchanges, and encourages cultural partnership [15]. As to the leadership, spatial dispersal has ramifications for management and preservation of the community [16]. Territorial concentrations of sect members facilitates control of lives and allows the leadership to maintain social dominance within a defined area [17].

The Haredi Jews are known to be a large consumer of plastic disposables. Plastic utensils and 1.5L single-use PMP bottles make day-to-day eating routine easier for large families, which also hosts members of their extended family on a regular basis. Plastic utensils are safe for children to use and their uniformity suits the ascetic lifestyle that these families adopt. Many Yeshivas use disposables regularly because it is cheaper than hiring a full-time employee to wash dishes and hence, Haredi neighbourhoods have dozens of disposables stores. As countries worldwide attempt to reduce plastic consumption, in Israel the demand for disposable tableware is on the rise. The Haredi population is characterised by early marriage and an average rate of seven children per woman, and thus the use of this growing population in disposables creates an ever-increasing burden on the environment. Due to their reluctance to participate in surveys and censuses, it is difficult to measure this close-knit community and identify its environmental characteristics [18,19].

There has been little attention paid to the consumption of plastic in faith-based communities, both in academia and in practice [18]. Le Roux found that respondents in South Africa regarded environmental stewardship as a Christian virtue [19]. Amel et al. address climate change activism and argue that faith communities are capable of driving climate change by bringing people together through shared values and rituals [20]. The environmental/waste behaviors of Jewish religious minorities in Israel and elsewhere have not been studied extensively. In an urban residential neighborhood of Israel, Mark et al. examined environmental awareness among Haredi residents and found that despite some interest, environmental issues are perceived to be a pointless, physical preoccupation in everyday life [21]. A large amount of research has been conducted by Yoreh, who examined attitudes toward consumption, the environment, wastefulness and recycling among Haredi communities in Israel and Canada [22–24]. Using Ramat Shlomo as a case study, it is possible to distinguish the consumption behavior of population groups that are similar in some respects but are interested in maintaining their unique lifestyles and habits.

Based on extensive field surveys at the household level (2010–2011), we assessed the consumption tendencies of families by evaluating the number of persons per residential unit. Our first aim is to determine whether or not these consumption tendencies are typical. Our second aim is to evaluate how consumption tendencies differ by group. We seek to ascertain whether certain tendencies are a characteristic of specific groups. The third aim of our study is to determine how uniform consumption tendencies are and whether disposables and other products are correlated with essential food consumption. Our

fourth and final aim is to describe the motivations and experiences of families with regard to disposable utensils. As this survey offers the only data on consumption tendencies in Ramat Shlomo, the findings add to the literature on the ecological footprint of conservative communities with broader socio-spatial policy implications. The rest of the paper has the following structure: Section 2 presents the case study of Ramat Shlomo, followed by sections describing the Haredi populations in Ramat Shlomo and the methods. The Results section consists of five subsections: Section 5.1 presents the consumption of essential food items considered unhealthy by group; Section 5.2 presents the consumption of essential food items considered healthy by group; Section 5.3 presents consumption levels of disposable products and household characteristics; Section 5.4 presents the consumption of electricity and water; Section 5.5 presents the consumption of transportation; Section 5.6 presents levels of recycling; Section 5.7 presents the consumption of disposable utensils; Section 5.8 presents levels of awareness of the links between plastics and climate change, and Section 5.9 describes habits regarding disposable utensils. The paper concludes with a discussion and conclusion.

2. The Case Study of Ramat Shlomo

Ramat Shlomo, the first of a series of Haredi neighborhoods allocated by the local and central governments, is located on the northeastern edge of the greater Haredi enclave in Jerusalem. The neighbourhood (see Figure 1) was developed on land that had been expropriated from the adjacent Arab village of Shuafat and populated by the Haredi community in one fell swoop during the mid-1990s. The development of Ramat Shlomo was geared toward young families given the large average household size of nine people [25]. Inter-group arrangements maintained strict segregation through a divided apartment market. In common with other suburban locations, Ramat Shlomo provided people travelling from smaller, more expensive apartments in the inner city with a relatively larger living space. Twenty years later, Ramat-Shlomo remains a highly segregated area populated by distinct Haredi groups. There was a recent development connecting the neighbourhood with the Haredi neighborhoods to the south, with Mount Hotzvim's industrial area and especially with Sanhedria's Torah educational institutions. Data from the Jerusalem Municipality estimates that the neighborhood is home to 15 thousand people living in 2691 apartments.

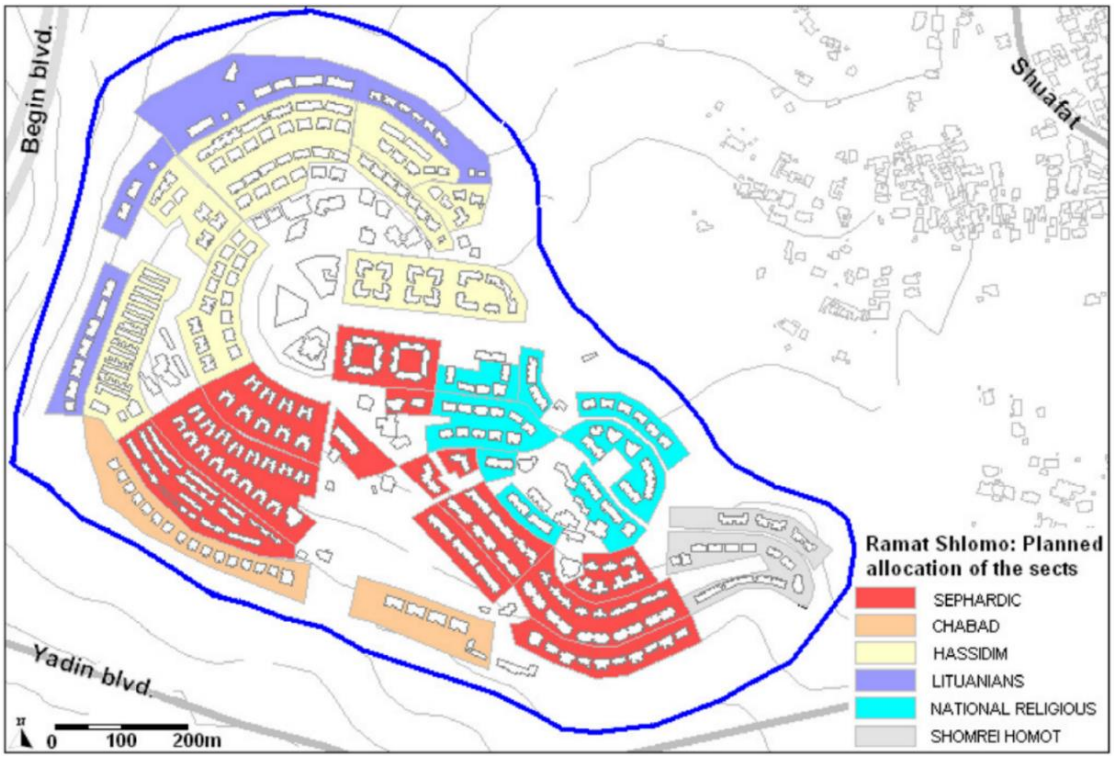

Figure 1. Initial group allocation plan for Ramat Shlomo, early 1990s (source: courtesy of rabbi and municipal council member during Ramat Shlomo's construction, Municipality of Jerusalem. First appeared in Ref. [44].

3. The Haredi Populations of Ramat Shlomo

Ramat Shlomo is primarily populated by groups who traditionally inhabited Jerusalem. The lifestyle and ritual orientation of each group is determined by its affiliation with one of three Haredi streams: Litvish, Hassidim and Sephardim [26]. Additionally, Ramat Shlomo includes Neturei Karta, Chabad, and Foreign Litvish newcomers. The neighborhood house also a minority group that identifies with the National Religious movement, a modern, non-Haredi, pro-Zionist religiosity. Names of groups reflect internal distinctions. Despite not addressing theological distinctions in this article, we provide some insight into the types of consumption behavior of the subgroups, as described below.

Litvish

Traditionally, Litvish represented the Haredi elite, set the norms for Haredi society, aiming to rule adherents' minds rather than their emotions, and emphasizing religious studies as the core value of an individual's life [27]. Under the broad umbrella of the Litvish group, which is spread globally, the Haredim of Jerusalem distinguish between foreign and Israeli Litvish. Litvish sub-groups differ further in terms of their affiliation with a yeshiva (institution of higher religious learning):

- *Israeli Litvish*: The Israeli Litvish view Holy Studies as an integral part of daily life [28]. Hence, the yeshiva, a higher religious-studies institution, occupies a central position in men's lives. According to Etkes and Tikochinski [29,30], Israeli Litvish wear modern black suits and speak Hebrew.
- *Foreign Litvish*: This term refers to American and Western European Litvish. Most Foreign Litvish comes to Israel to study at a yeshiva for several years. Foreign Litvish continues to speak their native languages and maintain their original cultures despite sharing the same faith as local Litvish [30].

Hassidim

Among various Hassidic groups, emotional religious fervour is based on their awe of God. The Hassidic lives are centred on the Admor's court (the religious leader), which

fulfils both religious and active leadership functions in the community [31]. They maintain social relationships, including marriage, within their specific court [32,33].

- *Chabad*: There is a need to distinguish Hassidic courts from Chabad Hasidim. The Chabad, a sub-group of the Hassidic movement, adheres to a theology derived from the Kabbalah (Jewish mystical texts). Its openness to modernity is a sign of compartmentalization [33]. The community's missionary vision can be seen in its demography: more than 30% of its members were not born into it but joined it later in life.
- *Neturei Karta*: Ramat Shlomo also contains another Hassidic subgroup, the Neturei Karta, whose members adhere to a Haredi lifestyle, almost completely avoiding modern life. The members of this subgroup are known for their ideological opposition to Zionism and rejection of the establishment of the state of Israel before the coming of the Messiah [34]. There is often hostility and isolation between this community and other Haredi groups, which they accuse of conciliating with the state's existence.

Sephardim

In common usage, the term 'Sephardim' refers to a broad religious continuum that includes descendants of Jews from Islamic countries, Old City Jerusalem residents, and Ladino speakers. The broad term encompasses secular, observant, and Haredi Judaism. This study uses the term Sephardi (singular) or Sephardim (plural) only to refer to Haredim. Conservative and secular Sephardim often belong to the National Religious movement.

- *Sephardic Litvish*: Sephardic Litvish are becoming more prevalent in the Haredi community's Sephardic segment. This new group emerged after the Holocaust when the majority of European Litvish yeshivas were emptied of their students. Attempting to repopulate the yeshivas, Litvish leaders invited students from Arabic countries and educated them according to European religious traditions [35]. Thus, many Sephardim adopted Lithuanian culture and made Torah study their primary occupation [36].

4. Methodology

Our research data encompasses the consumption preferences of households and differentiates between the consumption of essential food items considered healthy or unhealthy by groups and the consumption levels of disposable products, electricity, water, transportation, recycling, and the use of disposable utensils by household characteristics. In addition, our database contains information on the relationship between plastic use and climate change, as well as habits regarding disposable utensils. The fundamental layer of the database was obtained as part of a comprehensive study aimed at examining micro-residential dynamics in Ramat Shlomo. Due to their reluctance to participate in surveys and censuses, it is difficult to measure many of these groups and identify their environmental characteristics. However, we found that Haredi families are more willing to share their opinions and participate in surveys when they explain the community's attitudes to 'outsiders' whom they trust. As part of the broader study, a door-to-door survey was conducted in 2008 to collect detailed spatial-demographic information. While these data are not new, it allows General Data Protection Regulation compliance to strengthen residents' data protection while being highly relevant to distinguish between the various groups in the neighbourhood assuming that the residential patterns are fixed (see limitations).

From September 2010 to August 2011, three young male Haredi interviewers, funded by the Israel Foundation Trustees Award, conducted a door-to-door survey in the entire neighbourhood of Ramat Shlomo. This area was divided into three survey sections and the interviewers were required to conduct three pilot surveys to refine the closed questionnaire. Each surveyor then conducted an independent survey within his section to gather quantitative and qualitative data at the individual apartment level. There was a 5–10% overlap between the sections in order to evaluate the received data and improve ac-

curacy and credibility. Interviewers' field notes were also reviewed weekly to ensure consistency across the research. The occupants were anonymously questioned about their consumption of essential food items including fruits, vegetables, cooking oils, eggs, dairy products, cereals, eggs, and other edible items. They were also questioned on their motives for choosing disposable utensils, the circumstances in which they may consider reducing the use of these products, their awareness of the link between the use of plastic and CC, their awareness of environmental changes in their local area, the use of plastic tableware in their home when they grew up and the relative importance of the product's price, ease of use and "environmental friendliness". This questionnaire also aimed to collect data about the product cost, the location of the stores where they buy the products, the quantity, type and quality of products purchased and the occasions on which they use them. Despite early apprehensions regarding cooperation, the response rate reached 78%. The total number of families reported is 2414. Our survey indicates that within the Jewish orthodoxy, families' composition was quite diverse with Litvish (N = 528 households); National Religious (N = 146); Sephardic (N = 602); Sephardic-Litvish (N = 330); Neturei Karta (N = 221); Hassidic (N = 323); and Chabad community (N = 264), living in 1871 residential units in 283 buildings and 89 institutions.

Lastly, to complement Ramat Shlomo's 2008-11 data and following the Bayesian efficient design [37] that does not require large samples, we sampled 190 residents via phone-based questionnaire in April-May 2018 to validate the ecological footprint of the current occupants. The sample was representative regarding affiliation with a specific group, gender, and residential place within the neighborhood.

Concerning its limitations, the residents did not answer all the questions, and a number of questions remained unanswered. Additionally, the Haredi society is known as a society of institutions [38], but the data we have only refer to households. There is no similar data for yeshivas and kolels. In addition, the survey relied on the group identity of the populations as declared in the 2008 survey, and ignored population dynamics. We assumed that residential patterns within the sub-neighborhood have not changed and that the division patterns of the neighborhood according to sub-groups (Litvish, National Religious etc.) have remained largely the same. This assumption is based on the importance given to identity issues and prevents a high turnover of residents [39]. Specifically for Ramat Shlomo, this tendency is exacerbated by the direct involvement of community leaders in residential dynamics and the extreme social structure that maintain such few transactions and "frozen" real estate markets [40].

5. An Ecological Footprint of a Conservative Society: Lifestyle or Habit?

In order to distinguish between the footprint that is made in the different areas of life, a distinction has been made between the consumption of products considered unhealthy and healthy by groups, the consumption levels of disposable products and household characteristics, the consumption of electricity, water, transportation, recycling, and the use of disposable utensils. In addition, we studied awareness of the link between plastic use and climate change, as well as habits regarding disposable utensils.

5.1. The Consumption of Essential Food Items Considered Unhealthy by Group

Examining the average number of unhealthy products consumed by one family of each group per month (Figure 2) revealed consumption habits differ among the groups. The main chosen products that come in a can are processed meat, vegetables, and legumes (mainly corn, chickpeas, peas, and mushrooms), as well as canned fruits. The national religious community consumes the most canned food (27 units per month), followed by the Hasidic groups (Neturei Karta (24), Hassidim (23) and Chabad (25 units per month). Foreign Litvish consume significantly less canned food (16 units per month). Tomato paste was not included in this calculation. Snack consumption (e.g., 80g Chips packaging), cookies (e.g., 100g plastic bag), and chocolate spread (e.g., 250g plastic tubs) varies among Israeli groups (about 12–17 units per month) and only Foreign Litvish consume less than

2 units per month. Sweetened and fizzy beverages (e.g., Coca-Cola 1.5 litre Plastic Bottle) are clearly consumed by all groups (16–19 bottles per month). It is only the national religious (10 bottles per month) and the Foreign Litvish (4 bottles per month) who consume less than the average. Concentrated flavour syrup (e.g., 1 litre Plastic Bottle for 85 glasses of ready drink apple juice) is also consumed by all groups. However, while Litvish consume over six bottles per month, Foreign Litvish and National Religious consume about two bottles per month. A focus on the number of consumed products revealed differences between Israeli-born (about 56 units per month) and foreigners (about 23 units per month), with the Sephardic groups (Sephardic Litvish (about 59 units per month) and Sephardim (about 61 units per month)) declaring that they tend to consume the highest number of unhealthy products.

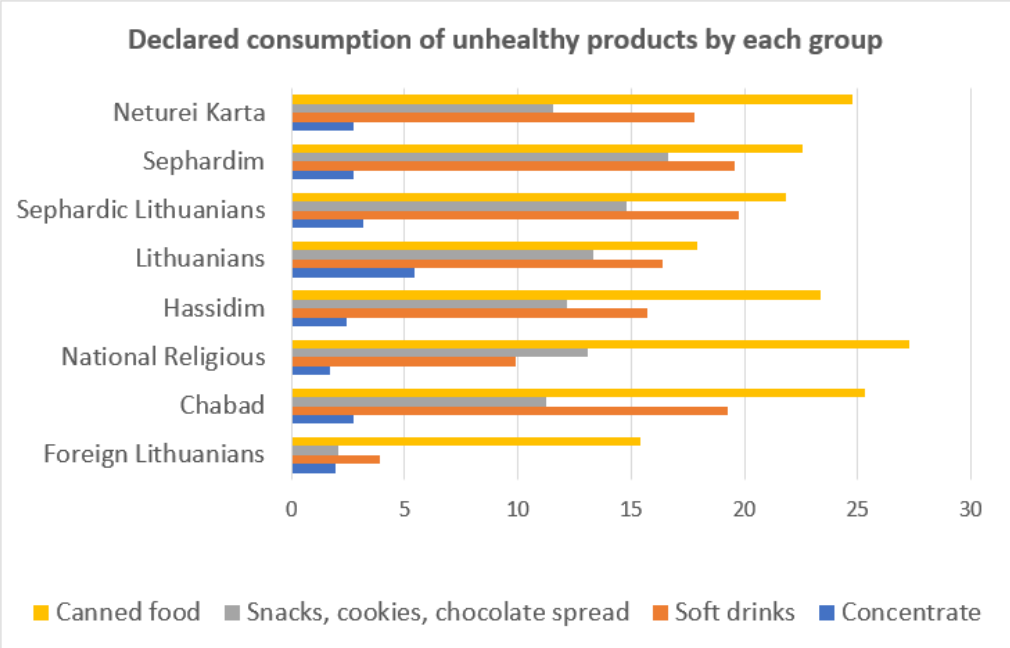

Figure 2. Declared consumption of unhealthy products by each group, 2011.

5.2. Consumption of Essential Food Items Considered Healthy by Group

Examining the average number of what considered as a healthy product consumed by one family of each group per month (Figure 3) revealed consumption habits differ among the groups. Within the vast area of animal source foods (ASF), we found that the average consumption of meat, chicken, and fish per family per month is 8 kg. While the Foreign Litvish consume 2.6 kg, the Chabad, Neturei Karta and Sephardim consume more than 10 kg.

Egg consumption is correlated with this data, with Foreign Litvish consuming 6 packs (each contains 12 eggs), and the Chabad, Neturei Karta, and Sephardim consume 14 packs per family per month. The average Sephardim family consumes 16 packs. An average family consumes 10.5 litres per month of dairy products. Again, Foreign Litvish consume 4.5 kg of milk per family per month, while Chabad, Neturei Karta and Sephardim consume over 14 litres per family each month. The consumption of cream and soft cheeses is between 6.3 (Foreign Litvish) and 9.5 packs per family per month (Sephardim).

The average family consumes 22 kg of vegetables a month (Hassidim, Chabad, and Neturei Karta) to 33 kg a month (Sephardic Litvish and National Religious). Seasonal vegetables and those that are cheapest are preferred. If salad vegetables are expensive, families will prefer vegetables for baking or cooking instead. Vegetables are usually eaten whole (e.g., cucumber) as a snack. Potatos and sweet potatos are preferable among the vegetables commonly used for baking. An average family purchases a limited variety of

vegetables and shows relative conservatism when it comes to innovations (vegetables in a different form or colour from usual). The purchase of damaged (thus cheapest) vegetables was almost without reluctance.

The differences in fruit consumption between the groups are higher compared to the consumption of vegetables, and range from 10 kg per month (Chabad, Hassidim, Neturi Karta) to 37 kg per month (National Religious). An interview with a local fruit & vegetable shop owner (Veg-hut), fruit consumption is intended as a treat for pregnant women and small children due to their relatively high price. He also suggests that most of the fruit eaten daily is seasonal and relatively cheap, as well as all-year-round fruits and that the shelf-life of fruits is not usually considered when purchasing them.

The data indicate differences between the groups regarding the consumption of other essential food items. The declared consumption of rice, flour and pasta is particularly high among the Sephardim and the Sephardic Litvish, who consume about 35 kg per family per month. Relatively low consumption of these products appears among the National Religious with a consumption of 20 kg per family per month. This data is consistent with reports on the consumption of bread, pita bread and rolls. The Sephardim and the Sephardic Litvish lead the average consumption with 35 kg per family, while the National Religious declare a relatively low consumption, of 20 per family. Consumption of cooking oil ranges from 1.7 to 2.8 L per month, with Litvish and Sephardic Litvish declaring a relatively low consumption, while Chabad has a high consumption.

Wine is also consumed by all group members, with an average of 4.25 litres per month. However, National Religious consume 1.6, mainly for worship purposes, while Foreign Litvish consume 6.85 L, where drinking wine often accompanies main meals. Since plant-based milk prices are decreasing and kosher milk is more convenient, plant-based milk consumption is becoming more popular (Parve permits allow plant-based milk to be consumed alongside dairy and meat foods). The most popular plant-based milk is soy milk followed by almond milk. Despite this, many Sephardim and Sephardic Litvish families hardly ever consume plant-based milk. National religious families consume about four litres a month, in addition to the ASF milk consumption.

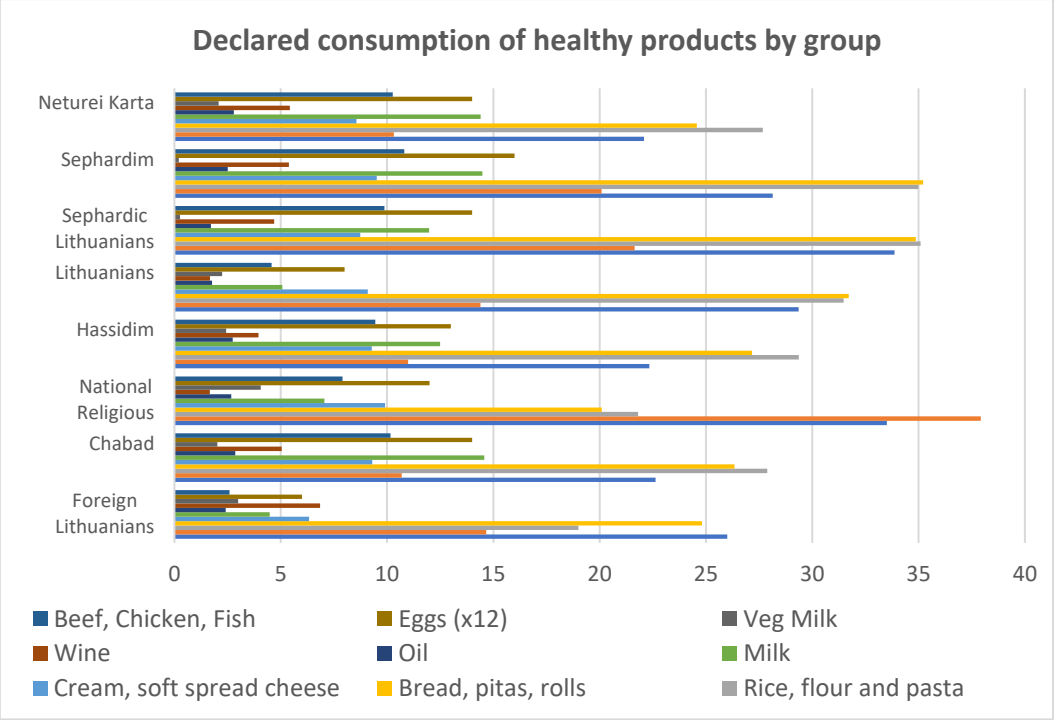

Figure 3. Declared consumption of healthy products by each group, 2011.

5.3. Consumption Levels of Disposable Products and Household Characteristics

Disposable products are considered a standard lifestyle characteristic among these communities, and the data on this reflect this as well. A hundred plates is normalized to one hundred grams, and Figure 4 represents the average number of plates per person, a measure of their number in grams as well. Apart from the National Religious and Foreign Litvish, whose plastic utensils consumption is about 60 units per household a month, members of the other groups report a particularly high consumption of plastic utensils between 240 and 370 units. The unit includes a plastic plate, a knife, a fork, a spoon/teaspoon, and a glass.

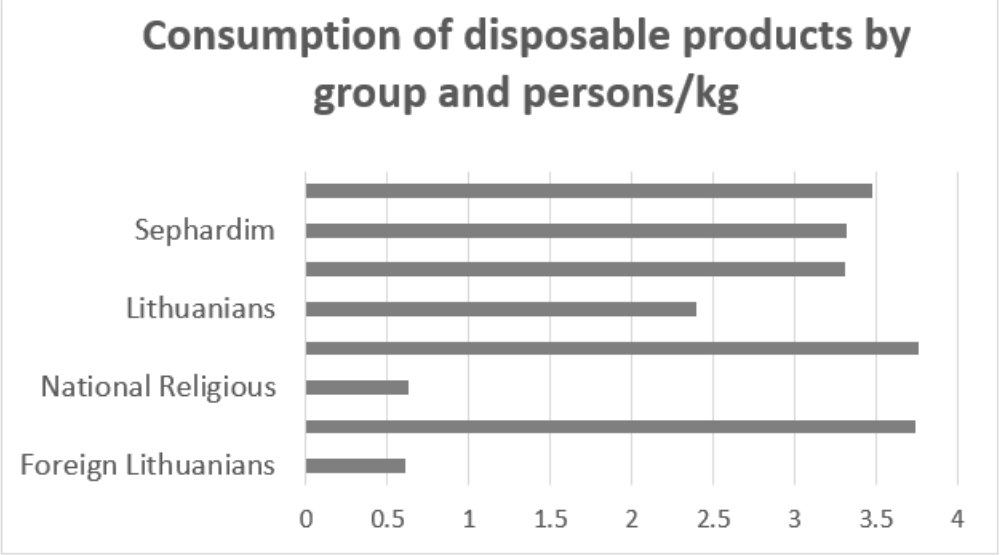

Figure 4. Consumption of disposable products by group and persons/kg 2011.

Figure 5 describes the use of plastic utensils based on the education type and level of the household head. 1 describes a lack of education beyond the primary level, 2 describes religious education usually within the community including a Yeshiva setting or Kollel for married students (called Abrachs) who continue to study Tora after marriage, 3 describes vocational education that prepares people to work as a technician or to take up employment in a skilled craft, 4 describes secular education and includes core studies such as math, science and English, and 5 describes higher education leading to award of an academic degree. Those with a religious education are most likely to use disposable utensils (400 units per household), followed by those without education and those with vocational education. Those with a secular or higher education report relatively little consumption, about 120 units per household. The reason for this may be the level of exposure to the environmental meaning and impact of consuming plastic utensils.

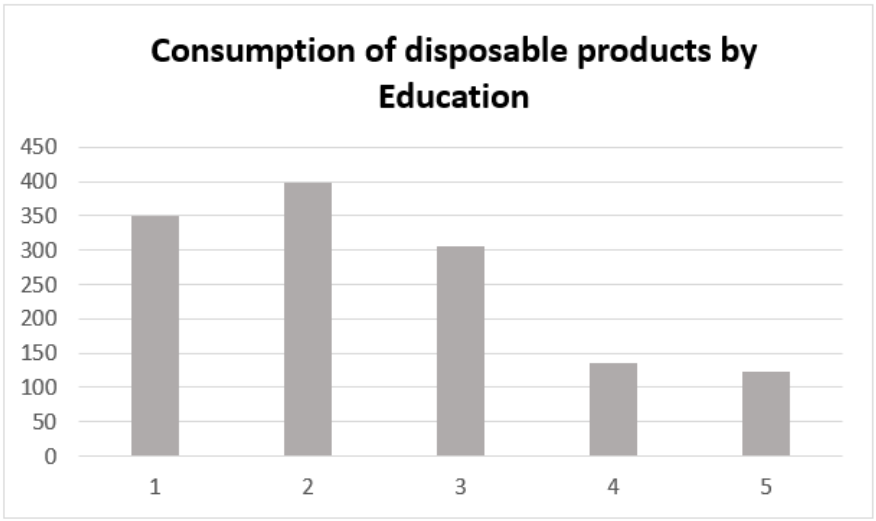

Figure 5. Consumption of disposable products by education, 2011.

An examination of the relationship between income levels (1 minimal, 2 below average, 3 average, 4 above average, 5 high), household size and plastic utensils (Figure 6), reveals a surprising inverse relationship. Even when this ratio is normalized by the average value measured, those who declared a relatively low income clearly consume a higher amount of disposable utensils (about 360), and those who declared a relatively high income declared a relatively low amount consumed (about 250) and those who declared an average level declared the lowest level—240 plastic utensils per month. This finding is surprising because we would expect those with low incomes to avoid spending on disposable products.

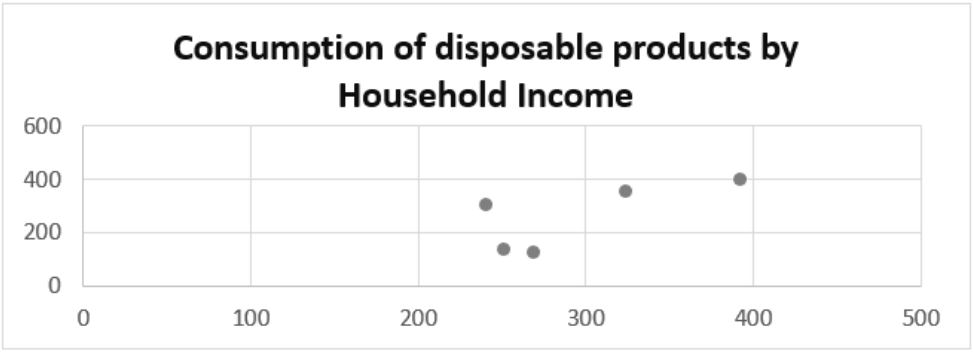

Figure 6. Consumption of disposable products by household income, 2011.

Due to the typical size of family households in the neighbourhood, a distinction was made between (1) one to three persons, (2) four to six persons and (3) seven persons and above. Figure 7 reveals that medium-sized families (four to six persons) tend to consume the lowest amount of plastic utensil products. Relatively large households consisting of seven persons and more tend to consume the highest number of plastic utensils per person. It is possible that this figure can be explained by the effort required to feed large families.

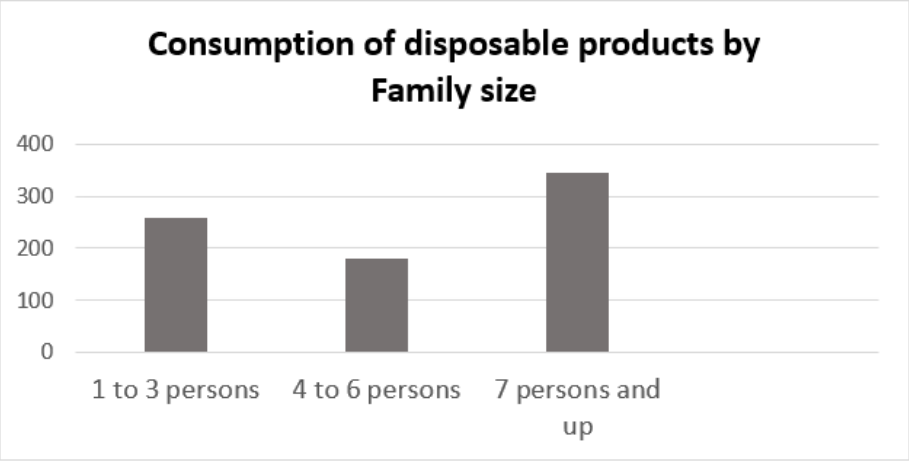

Figure 7. Consumption of disposable products by family size, 2011.

5.4. Consumption of Electricity and Water

The examination of the average monthly household electricity consumption by group, reveals a relatively high consumption among National Religious families and nearly half for Litvish families. Medium-sized families (four to six people) consume more electricity per capita than smaller and larger families. The reason for this is that the cost is spread among a larger number of people when relatively small apartments are highly occupied. Higher education is associated with an 18% reduction in electricity consumption, compared to a lack of education and primarily vocational education. There is a direct correlation between the declared level of income and the level of electricity consumption.

The examination of the average monthly household water bills by group, reveals a relatively high consumption among Sephardim families and nearly half of Litvish families. Relatively small-sized families (one to three persons) consume more water per capita than smaller and larger families. In line with electricity results, higher education is associated with a 24% reduction in water consumption compared to a lack of education and mostly vocational education. Again, there is a direct correlation between the declared level of income and the level of water consumption.

5.5. Consumption of Transportation

According to transportation consumption data, most households own at least one vehicle, and some own two. It may seem surprising considering the need to have a valid Israeli license and your data being held by the state authorities, which closed communities often avoid. However, the location of the neighborhood, which until recently (2022) was detached from the Haredi center in the inner neighborhoods, may explain this. In terms of public transportation use (Figure 8), all groups except Foreign Litvish use it heavily. This figure may be explained by language difficulties. The residents of the neighborhood often travel in taxis, especially Neturei Karta, Hassidim, and Chabad families. Litvish and Foreign Litvish are much less likely to choose this way of travelling. There is a high rate of flight travel among all groups, but particularly among Chabad. Considering the flight costs, especially for large families, this figure might seem surprising, but it is explained by extended family ties abroad.

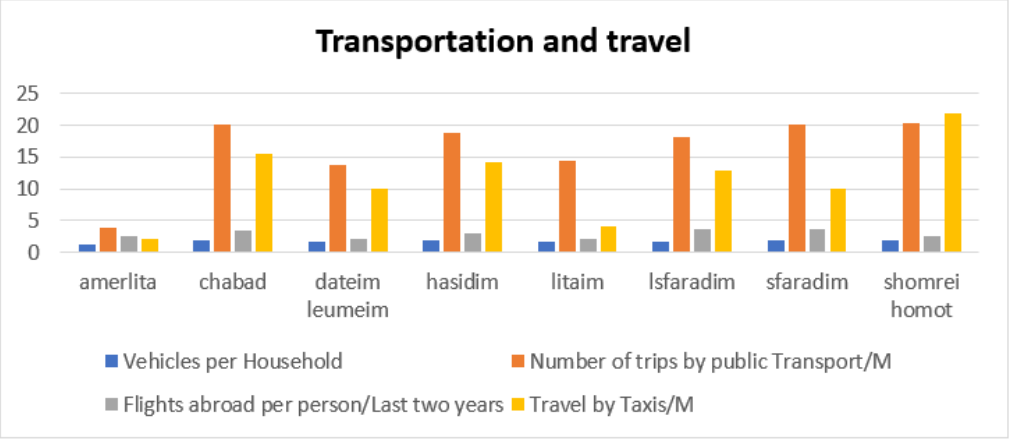

Figure 8. Consumption of Transportation, 2011.

5.6. Recycling

The passing of clothes within the family is very common, particularly between children of the same gender. The Neturei Karta are more likely to exhibit this tendency (3.8 out of 5) than Foreign Litvish (2.1 out of 5). There were no significant differences between the level of education of the parents and the tendency to pass clothes in the family in any of the groups. Only minor differences were found between the declared tendency to recycle and family size or education level. A preference for recycling is characteristic of those with a relatively high level of income (2.3). There is no correlation between lower income levels and preference for recycling.

5.7. The Use of Disposable Utensil

Another question traced the motives for choosing disposable utensils, and distinguished between reasons arising from (1) cost; (2) ease of use; (3) Kosher issues; (4) fashion; and (5) other. Most residents (1445) stated that they used disposable utensils because of the ease of use. As a result of the need to feed large families while separating dairy and meat dishes, this answer is not surprising. Separating dishes requires at least two sets, along with storing and washing them after use.

Fashion (272) and price (237) followed with a large margin, indicating conformist consumption behaviour and a cheap product. Indeed, on the website of one of the leading, but relatively expensive, brands with two branches nearby, a case of 50 plain, white plastic disposable plates costs six shekels (less than $2). A pack of 100 disposable PP plastic cups 180 mL costs 6 NIS, as well as a pack of 100 forks, knives, spoons, or spoons for 5 NIS.

It is surprising to find out that 81 people claim kosher issues are the reason for choosing disposable utensils. It is surprising that this finding occurred among a religious population that is aware that disposable utensils have nothing to do with kosher issues. We can assume that the intention is regarding the hospitality of people who keep kosher under different supervision than the hosts, as in hosting those who do not observe the same number of hours between milk and meat or kosher eating.

In order to understand the circumstances under which residents might consider reducing their use of disposable products, we tried to understand the residents' viewpoint and distinguish between: (1) a significant increase in disposable utensils prices; (2) the presence of more sustainable products at similar prices to plastic disposals; (3) a rabbinical instruction prohibiting the use of disposable items; (4) The consumption of plastic utensils is replaced by the consumption of recycled utensils, such as glass plates, or more environmentally friendly products (e.g., bamboos).

5.8. Awareness of the Link between Plastic Use and Climate Change

The survey found that 1217 respondents were aware of the link between disposable utensils and climate change, while 1860 were unaware. The Hassidim reported the lowest level of awareness, followed by Neturei Karta. Foreign Litvish (0.9), Sephardim (1.0) and National Religious (1.1) showed the highest awareness levels. The lowest level of awareness was reported in those who declared themselves uneducated or who received religious education in their communities (1.4). Those who received secular education had the highest level of awareness (1.0). There is a slight tendency towards higher awareness among higher income earners (1.2) and vice versa (1.4). The analysis of the relationship between the size of the families and the level of awareness revealed that medium-sized families (four to six persons) tend to have slightly higher awareness (1.3) than large (seven persons and above) families (1.4). The number of small families is relatively negligible.

In our survey, we also asked about the residents' awareness of climate change in their immediate environment. Although most respondents (799) to this question claimed that they had not noticed any climate change, others indicated that they had noticed more severe winter storms (51) and more frequent heat waves in recent years (38). Two interviewees referred to fires in the nearby forest as evidence of climate change. Those who indicated a lack of education reported a high level of awareness. Interestingly, higher educated respondents showed low level of awareness. There was no significant difference between family sizes or income levels.

5.9. Habits Regarding Disposable Utensils

According to the collected data, most of the residents without education (57) and those with religious education (1042) grew up in homes where disposable utensils were prevalent, followed by those with vocational education (814). Disposable utensils were less common in families with parents with secular education (76) or higher levels of education (191). Those who declared a relatively low income most likely grew up in families that used disposable utensils (1067), compared to those who grew up in more affluent families (49). We found this figure particularly interesting since it suggests a connection between multigenerational consumption habits of disposable utensils and low incomes in the second generation. According to another interesting statistic, the majority of large families with over seven people (1036) used disposable utensils in their homes when they grew up.

We attempted to quantify the level of attractiveness of disposable utensils products. Our survey asked residents to rate the relative importance of (1) the price of the product; 2) ease of use, and 3) "environmental friendliness". When it comes to disposable products, 1261 residents said that ease of use is the most important factor. The price was the most appealing factor to 671 residents. The level of environmental friendliness of the products was only indicated by 196 residents when they purchased the products. It is important to note that there were no differences in preferences among the various groups. Furthermore, families of seven and over indicated, to a considerable extent, that environmental friendliness is important to them.

Residents were asked about their subjective costs of single-use plastic utensils and their efforts to obtain them based on their level of education, income, and family size. In the neighbourhood, 594 families said they believed that plastic utensils were reasonably priced, 909 said the price was moderate, and 613 said it was expensive. Studying the correlation between an individual's level of education and the subjective cost of plastic utensils revealed that those with higher education stated that the price is relatively low. As for the rest of the respondents, they thought the price was high or average. Studying the correlation between an individual's level of income and the subjective cost of plastic utensils revealed that those with higher incomes stated that the price is relatively low. As for the

rest of the respondents, they thought the price was high or average. The correlation between the size of the family and the subjective cost of plastic utensils revealed that those with a large family thought the price was relatively high.

Based on their level of education, income, and family size, residents were asked about the type and quality of disposable utensils they purchased. In the neighbourhood, 1141 families said they usually purchase cheap plain utensils, while 792 families usually purchase the mid-range and 257 stated that they usually purchase high-quality utensils. There is a correlation between an individual's level of education and the stated quality of disposable utensils purchased, as those with a lower level of education stated that they usually purchase cheap plain utensils. The quality of utensils purchased increases with education level. The quality of utensils purchased does not correlate with family size or income.

The outcome of these practices is a high level of consumption which is amplified in certain groups within the Haredi enclave. Moreover, these preferences differentiate the local consumption patterns from those of the general population, lead to poor health and poverty, limit the chances of the groups to experience cultural-environmental assimilation in the wider society, and negatively impact the environment and quality of life in the long run.

6. Discussion

In this article, new, interesting aspects have been revealed about the relationship between Haredi ethnocultural norms and consumption patterns in densely populated urban area. The neighborhood of Ramat Shlomo provides a relevant example of the impact of consumption, both as a social practice and as a response to trends in a traditional urban society like demographic pressure and the sharing economy, on the household's choices. Throughout the research, relationships between individuals and groups, consumption patterns, and consumption decisions were revealed as typical tendencies.

Based on the stated data, interesting differences were discovered between the consumption tendencies and characteristics of each group living in the neighborhood. The National Religious group consumes the most canned goods, vegetables, and fruits, as well as vegan/plant-based milk. In comparison to the other groups, members of this group consume fewer soft drinks, concentrates, pasta, rice, and flour as well as bread, pita bread, and rolls and less wine. The Litvish group consumes fewer canned goods and oils in comparison to the other groups, members of this group consume fewer canned goods and oils. Foreign Litvish consumes the most wine compared to other groups. Members of this group consume fewer unhealthy products, fewer snacks, fewer soft drinks, fewer concentrates and relatively little meat and eggs. Sephardim consumption is characterized by a large number of unhealthy products, meat, eggs, and dairy products, as well as pasta, rice, flour, bread, pita bread, and buns. They consume relatively little oil and vegan/plant-based milk. Sephardi-Litvish groups consume a large number of unhealthy foods, in addition to pasta, rice, flour, bread, pita bread, and buns. Vegetables and milk of plant origin are relatively rare in their diet. In the Hassidim group, vegetables and fruits are rarely consumed. There is a high consumption of meat and dairy products in Neturei Karta, and a low consumption of vegetables and fruits. Food consumption among Chabad is characterized by heavy consumption of meat, eggs, dairy products, oil, while low consumption of fruit and vegetables. Therefore, the analysis of the stated preferences indicates that different groups are characterized by certain consumption characteristics of essential products.

Essential food consumption is correlated with the consumption levels and types of disposables purchased. As far as disposable products are concerned, the survey indicates that there is a similar and uniform consumption of disposable items among the Haredi groups. Only the Foreign Litvish and the National Religious consume less. Disposable utensils are frequently used by those with a religious education, those with low incomes,

and those with large households- of 7 persons and above. People with secular or high education, high incomes, and middle-sized families tend to use fewer disposables.

In terms of electricity consumption, a high level of electricity consumption is characteristic of National Religious households and middle-sized families with low education. A relatively low level of electricity consumption is characteristic of those with high education, as well as Litvish, small, and large families. When it comes to water consumption, high water consumption mainly characterizes Sephardi households, those with small families and those with low education. The highest water consumption is primarily found in Sephardi households, small-sized families, and households with a low level of education. Litvish families, large families, as well as well families with high education levels, consume relatively less water. As far as transportation is concerned, most families report having one vehicle. These statements contradict accepted data regarding the Haredi populations. We may assume that the relative remoteness of the neighborhood probably explains this report. Compared to the other groups, Foreign Litvish use relatively less public transportation. Taxis are frequently used by most groups, especially Neturi Karta, Chasidim and Chabad, but Litvish and Foreign Litvish use them less frequently. The Chabad community consumes the most flights per capita. It is common for members of all groups to pass clothes within their families, especially among Neturei Karta and Foreign Litvish. Education level, family size, and income level have no influence on the preference to pass clothes within families.

Further questions explored the motivations and experiences of families with regard to disposable utensils. The majority of the 1445 residents commented on its ease of use. Fashion 272 and price 237 were the second and third reasons for using disposable utensils. Kashrut was chosen as the reason for using disposables by only 81 people. Based on the biblical commentary, Midrash Kohelet Rabbah "Do not spoil or destroy my world; otherwise, there will be no one to repair it", Yoreh [41] argues that the existence of a prohibition against wastefulness (Bal Tashhit; Deuteronomy 20:19–20) in Judaism may lead one to assume that observant Jews minimize consumerism and wastefulness to the maximum extent possible. A qualitative survey of Israeli Haredi communities [42] notes that approximately 50% of respondents would recycle if rabbinical leaders requested it. During that survey, there were no local recycling facilities in the surveyed neighborhoods, making this commitment all the more impressive and indicative of the monumental role faith leaders play. Haredi communities, however, do not apply this prohibition to consumerism, and environmentalists and religious communities interpret the prohibition's parameters differently. According to Yoreh, wastefulness is considered commensurate with idolatry, thus, sinful; however, environmentalists are associated with nature worship and are therefore advised to avoid it at all costs, resulting in a disinterest in environmental issues, which leads to wasteful behavior. In addition, there are indicators that rabbinical role models also influence plastic consumption in the national religious sector [43]. Although the national religious sector is less tied to religious hierarchy than the Haredi, rabbis are still respected, and their sanction has a strong impact on their followers.

The present study contradicts the previous findings. We found that less than a quarter of households (448 households) were willing to reduce disposable product use after receiving rabbinical instructions prohibiting their use. This is significantly lower than the 925 households that would be more likely to reduce their use of plastic utensils if disposable utensils made from environmentally friendly materials were similarly priced to non-biodegradable ones. In second place stands the statement that only a significant increase in plastic utensil prices would motivate them to reduce their use. According to our interpretation, the influence of demographic, social, and economic pressures has reduced the involvement of leaders in daily life in communities. In recent decades, the 'leftovers' of the inner city`s communities have been driven to relocate far from their original enclave, and the geographic separation that is created between the generations threatens community continuity. The population living in the original enclave is ageing, and in Ramat

Shlomo, as elsewhere, the lifestyles in the new communities tend to adapt to the new conditions. Regarding the weakness of the leadership to enforce group discipline in the disposable area in accordance with the values of Bel Tashhit, it can be estimated that this value is less important than other important values, some of which are related to survival, and strengthening the strength and status of the community as a whole. When significant values are at stake—and ecological footprint does not appear to be one of them yet—leadership can mobilize a skilled and dedicated workforce to protect them [44].

According to the survey, most of the residents without education (57) and those with religious education (1042) grew up in homes where disposable utensils were prevalent, followed by those with vocational education (814). Family households with parents who had secular education (76) or higher levels of education (191) were less likely to use disposable utensils. People who declared a relatively low income were more likely to grow up in families that used disposable utensils (1067), as opposed to those who grew up in more affluent households (49). A particularly interesting aspect of this figure is that it shows a link between multigenerational consumption habits of disposable utensils and low family incomes. Another interesting statistic shows that most large families with over seven people (1036) used disposable utensils during their childhood. An attempt to quantify the attractiveness of disposable utensils products revealed that 1261 residents ranked ease of use as their top priority. The price of the products was the most attractive factor to 671 residents, while environmental friendliness was only indicated by 196. The correlation between the size of the family and the subjective cost of plastic utensils revealed that those with a large family thought the price was relatively high. The rest of the respondents thought the price was average.

An attempt to quantify the attractiveness of disposable utensils products revealed that 1261 residents ranked ease of use as their top priority. The price of the products was the most attractive factor to 671 residents, while environmental friendliness was only indicated by 196. The correlation between the size of the family and the subjective cost of plastic utensils revealed that those with a large family thought the price was relatively high. The rest of the respondents thought the price was average. Disposable utensils purchased by those with a lower level of education tend to be cheaper and plainer in quality, in accordance with the level of education of the individual. However, utensil quality does not correlate with family size or income.

7. Conclusions

Different religious communities seem to tell different tales about the influence of consumption on the ecological footprint, and the boundaries created between consumption and places. Ramat Shlomo, separated into subgroups, functions as an urban laboratory and offers us a unique opportunity to examine how lifestyles and habits in closed and diverse communities contribute to the production and maintenance of ecological footprints.

The article examines consumer habits in a close-knit community in descriptive terms. The study is based on 2011 data, considered outdated and can not necessarily be generalized to today's society. Despite that, Haredi communities preserve their way of life for many generations, including distinctive clothes, customs, and language specific to the sub-groups. Moreover, lifestyle characteristics that prevent the economic advancement of most Haredi households in Jerusalem create an internal Haredi market, free from general economic and geopolitical dynamics: They were hardly affected by the economic crisis of 2008, but their commitment to communalism (for Torah studies) even during the closures resulted in much higher mortality rate due to COVID-19 in the Haredi than in neighboring populations in many cities around the world. There is no research or literature on micro-level consumption for these communities. Moreover, some of these close-knit communities prefer to be separated from general society so revealing these preferences and tendencies in such detail is also a novelty. Given the large average household size of nine people, their influence in Israeli society is expected to increase, hence the importance of this study.

Although most studies that examine essential food and disposables consumption and ecological footprints focus on one issue, such as one type of plastic disposable, our extensive data provide an overview of their interaction. Food consumption and disposable utensils are correlated, showing a less tendency to recycle among individuals who consume less healthy food. The data hints at a link between multi-generational consumption habits of certain essential products, including unhealthy food and disposable utensils and low family income, health, and environmental impacts. The data on disposable utensil consumption in the second generation is especially significant in Haredi communities, where marriage ages are relatively young and families are large. The daily use of disposable utensils, for example, harms both the individual and the environment.

Aside from affecting an individual's health, these choices also have a greater footprint. As the Haredi demographic becomes more prominent in Israeli society, its influence on the environment grows. Our findings support previous studies' arguments that lifestyle characteristics and habits are not merely a product of limited resources and that residents may prefer to consume low-quality foods or spend money on plastic even when they can afford other alternatives. Such preferences at the household level affect the larger components of the neighborhood and the city as a whole. However, although there is a considerable preference for unhealthy and non-ecological consumption, it is possible that if the price of these products increases significantly and healthier and cheaper alternatives will become available, healthier and more environmental choices may be made. It is expected that larger family units living in segregated sub-neighborhoods will have more difficulty adopting healthier and environmentally friendly behavior than nuclear families and individuals.

From the studies to date, it is clear that some important gaps in existing literature remain. Close-knit religious communities are often in disadvantageous positions because they are under-exposed to the issues of health and responsible consumption, which may have implications for their well-being. Data did not allow us to assess changes in preferences and external influences on them. However, self-justification has likely played a role as well, as some people might make a virtue out of necessity. Consistent with other studies [44–46] which provide policymakers, government agencies, and NGOs with a better understanding of the meanings and consequences arising from it for the person and his environment, we argue that planning policy should address ecological footprint as an outcome of both preferences and constraints, with a more flexible differentiation between habits and lifestyles, some of which can be influenced. Adequate explanations of the constraints they face and their preferences are essential for formulating appropriate policy regarding the consumption habits, health, quality of life, and ecological footprint of close-knit communities.

Over the years Haredi parties rejected legislation banning or taxing disposables, and demographic trends and the growing power of the Haredi community make regulation unlikely to reduce disposables [47]. Understanding this scenario suggests the adoption of 'soft' regulations that replace or supplement 'hard' regulations in order to reduce disposable consumption, based on Pe'er et al.'s (2019) [48] findings that Haredi support prosocial nudges less than their respective social majority. However, the high prevalence of irresponsible consumption raises a need for greater awareness and taking personal responsibility for consumerism, even within Yeshiva and Kollel institutional frameworks [49,50]. Influence and adaptation of consumption characteristics based on the intended audience—which can be tailored to specific populations living in the various sub-neighborhoods—with an in-depth understanding of respective groups' preferences and needs can contribute to reducing their ecological footprint [51,52]. Such policies could promote better use of infrastructures and affect the entire urban matrix as well. The implications of such a consumer-planning intervention could be relevant to other dense urban areas. Since groups with a higher number of persons per household tend to concentrate in specific neighborhoods, we can expect this mechanism to operate in segregated urban centers due to people's need to feel comfortable in their living environment. Further research may

reveal the extent to which green consumerism is a more general mechanism for neighborhood change.

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