RESEARCH ARTICLE / Araştırma Makalesi

Generation-Units: A Theoretical Discussion and Some Historical Evidence from the European Avant-Garde Art Movements

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Abstract

This study provides a discussion on the term generation-unit, which has a central position in Karl Mannheim's sociology of generation, with its theoretical implications and with some examples on European Avant-Garde art movements in its historical dimension. Generation-units are defined as integrative attitudes that bring members of generations together. Generations consist of social groups of differentiated tendencies competing with each other. The generational identity is formed and represented by the dominant generation-units within a generation. Generation-units are discussed mostly through historical and intellectual movements because of the intensive inner-generational diversity and antagonism. In this study, the European Avant-Garde art movements are evaluated as one of the historical examples in which generation-units are embodied. European Avant-Garde art movements, with an influential critique to modernity, manifest themselves through differing generational experiences in Western and Eastern Europe. The Western European Avant-Garde emerges as a generation-unit that has been decisive for many generations in field of art, politics and social theory, from the late nineteenth to the mid twentieth century. The Eastern European Avant-Garde, represented by the Russian Avant-Garde, is a shorter-lived generation-unit and is significant in its conflict with the political generation-units of the Soviet revolution generation and its extinction by them.

Keywords: Generations, Generation-Units, Mannheim, Avant-Garde, Art.

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Kuşak-Birimleri: Teorik Bir Tartışma ve Avrupa Avangard Sanat Hareketlerinden Bazı Tarihsel Kanıtlar

Özet

Bu çalışmada, Karl Mannheim'in kuşaklar sosyolojisinde merkezi bir konuma sahip olan kuşak-birimi kavramı, teorik gönderimleriyle tartışılmakta ve tarihsel boyutuyla Avrupa Avant-Garde sanat hareketleri üzerine bazı örnekler ile ele alınmaktadır. Kuşak-birimleri, kuşakların üyelerini bir araya getiren bütünleştirici tutumlar olarak tanımlanır. Kuşaklar birbiriyle rekabet halinde olan farklılaşmış eğilimler etrafında bir araya gelen toplumsal gruplardan oluşur. Kuşakların kimliği, kuşak içinde baskın olan kuşak-birimleri tarafından oluşturulur ve temsil edilir. Kuşak-birimleri, kuşak içi politikaları beraberinde getirmesi anlamında daha çok tarihsel örnekler üzerinden tartışılmaktadır. Bu çalışmada, kuşak birimlerinin somutlaştığı tarihsel örneklerden biri olarak Avrupa Avangart sanat hareketleri değerlendirilmektedir. Avrupa avangard sanat hareketleri, Batı ve Doğu Avrupa'da farklılaşan kuşaksal deneyimlerle kendini göstermektedir. Batı Avrupa Avant-Garde'ı, on dokuzuncu yüzyılın sonundan yirminci yüzyılın ortasına kadar sanat, siyaset ve toplumsal teori alanında birçok kuşak boyunca belirleyici olan bir kuşak-birimi olarak ortaya çıkmıştır. Rus Avangardı tarafından temsil edilen Doğu Avrupa Avangardı, daha kısa ömürlü bir kuşak-birimidir ve Sovyet devrimi kuşağı içindeki politik kuşak-birimleriyle çatışması ve onlar tarafından yok edilmesi bakımından önemlidir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kuşaklar, Kuşak-birimleri, Mannheim, Avant-Garde, Sanat.

1.Introduction

Today if we asked people what they can tell us about the Movement of 68, they would have two different answers to this. The answer would be either Hippies at the Woodstock or the student protests in the French universities. One is highly political and the other is highly culturally experimental. Now, does that mean there were no hippies in France, or does that mean there weren't any political movements emerged in USA in that time? Of course there were but because of the anti-communist politics in USA, the hippies represented the Generation of 68 in a cultural way and because of the high political tension in France, the European franchise of the movement raised many political leaders. Today, we remember these very examples under one name: The Generation of 68' (Turner, 2010). Although every country met this generation, the political tension constituted the social visibility of it. As a unique way of social manifestation, generations take advantage of the most appropriate representation way. Since this is the matter of cultural and political possession of social locations, that does not happen by the hand of all members of a generation. In other words, there is a selection on whom or which group will represent an entire generation. This brings up a kind of conflict within the generation itself.

We claim that the historical examples of inner-generational conflict make the way to understand today's generational politics. Because of that, this study aims to apply Karl Mannheim (1952)'s historical understanding of generations to a very example for the historical Avant-Garde movements. In the beginning of the twentieth century, art movements were able to find a way to express themselves and a space in which to implement their vision. Before the World War I, European Avant-Garde art movements, based on the criticism of modernity and bourgeois culture, brought a new perspective to the culture-politics relationship. Avant-Garde, which came to the fore with many alternative movements in this process, has a unique place among the generational formations of the period. It is

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noteworthy that there are art movements competing with each other in terms of art techniques within the Avant-Garde generation throughout Europe. However, there was a consensus on the critique of modernity among artists from rival art movements. In contrast to the artistic diversity of the Western European Avant-Garde, The Eastern European Avant-Garde is characterized by the conflict between cultural and political generation-units. In this sense, Mannheim's generation-unit approach is discussed in the context of the political and social differentiations of Avant-Garde art movements and their internal interactions.

2. Generation-units: Who Represents a Generation?

Studies on generations mostly focus on how a generation differs from another. This is result of the fact that there is a main concern in the humanities on the possibility of a new type of relationship between generations and social change (Alwin & McCammon: 2003, p. 28). Along with the twentieth century, various disciplines have tried to formulate a generational alteration process and prove that social changes clearly have an effect on generations[1].

When Margaret Mead advocated her theory of generational conflict, her premise was that there is a major gap between generations. In her inspiring book *Culture and Commitment* (1970), Mead formulates generations as family units because the transition of cultural heritage between family members by birth. With the changes in life styles and cultural habits, young generations tend to have less commitment to former older generations. This defines the generation gap and requires a time span along two generations' life.

> There are no elders who know what those who have been reared within the last twenty years know about the world into which they were born. The elders are separated from them by the fact that they, too, are a strangely isolated generation. No generation has ever known, experienced, and incorporated such rapid changes, watched the sources of power, the means of communication, the definition of humanity, the limits of their explorable universe, the certainties of a known and limited world, the fundamental imperatives of life and death—all change before their eyes. They know more about change than any generation has ever known and so stand, over, against, and vastly alienated, from the young, who by the very nature of their position, have had to reject their elders' past. (Mead, 1970: p. 60-1).

Mead's perspective that formulates generations as age-groupings was foreseen by S. N. Eisenstadt. In his work *From Generation to Generation* (1956), Eisenstadt focuses on the structural functionality of age groups in modern societies. Based on anthropological justification, his work ignores internal differences and treats generations as functioning systems. Eisenstadt compares primitive tribes and traditional communities with modern

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[1] Although the between-generation differentiation is a highly popular theme in current sociological researches, the frequently chosen research topic is generally limited to birth cohorts such as Generation X, Generation Y and Generation Z. This makes the problem of generations very difficult to be analyzed sociologically. What ought to be prioritized in sociological meaning is the question on how generations produce themselves (Eyerman & Turner, 1998: p. 92). In order to approach generations in a wider perspective, this study follows the tradition of formal sociology that formulates generations as social categories. For a fruitful review on different traditions in generational research, see White (2013).

(universalistic) societies. In social systems, age-grading and grouping subsystems function as role allocation mechanisms:

> For the social system it serves as a category according to which various roles are allocated to various people; for the individual, the awareness of his own age becomes an important integrative element, through its influence on his self-identification. The categorization of oneself as a member of a given age stage serves as an important basis for one's self-perception and role expectations towards others (Eisenstadt: 2003: 37).

In Eisenstadt's understanding of generations, biological factors -time criteria regarding chronological years of life and organism's stages of existence- determine social processes. In this formula, becoming a member of a generation occurs automatically through the socialization process (Alwin & MacCammon, 2003: p. 36). Being in the same age provides individuals with common life experiences because of being in the same socialization stage (Eisenstadt, 2003: p. 59). Based on the elemental sociological assumptions, Eisenstadt's approach offers a general answer to the question of under what conditions individuals become members of a generation, but it is far from explaining how members of a generation produce a common consciousness. While the former is related to social structure, the latter has a pure cultural content. In other words, this approach does not provide a sufficient explanation of how generations culturally produce themselves. Moreover Eisenstadt, in one of his later works, argues about the student movements of 1960s by following this structural-functionalist framework. He emphasizes the effects of structural changes and discontinuities on older generations, but does not mention the self-production of young generations, actors of student movements. He focuses on education, especially higher education to underline the differentiation between older and young generations. He describes the student movements as "an attack on universities" (Eisenstadt, 1971: p. 76).

When we speak of generations in historical sense, the time criteria evolves to inner-generational politics that makes one member group much more effective to determine generation's identity than others. In short, historical generations can be analyzed in the context of representation issue, by applying within-generation differences instead of between-generation differences (De Martini, 1985: p. 3).

In Mannheim's sociology of generations, this inner-generational conflict makes a historical sense and is met by the term generation-units. Mannheim wrote his paper *The Problem of Generations* (1927) willing to create a class-alternative stratification theory and formulated generations as social locations[2]. In this manner, generations differ from the tangible unities of social interaction, namely social groups- (families, tribes, sects, etc.).

> The generation is not a concrete group in the sense of community, i.e. Group which cannot exist without its members having concrete knowledge of each other, and which ceases to exist as a mental and spiritual unit as soon as physical proximity is destroyed. In

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[2] Mannheim follows the Weberian heritage and compares generations with social classes not in dichotomic but in analogical manner: "The fact of belonging to the same class, and that of belonging to the same generation or age group, have this in common, that both endow the individuals sharing in them with a common location in the social and historical process, and thereby limit them to a specific range of potential experience, predisposing them for a certain characteristic mode of thought and experience, and a characteristic type of historically relevant action" (Mannheim, 1952: p. 291).

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the other hand, it is no way comparable to associations such as organizations formed for a specific purpose, for the latter are characterized by a deliberate act of foundation, written statues, and a machinery for dissolving the organization -features serving to hold the group together, even though it lacks the ties of spatial proximity and of community of life. (Mannheim, 1952: p. 288-9).

To determine who represents a generation, one should look into the term generation-unit. As Mannheim stresses, there are many social groups sharing the same consciousness specific to a generation. But Mannheim insists on not naming generations as concrete groups. Following the Weberian class interpretation, he inspires from the cultural formations of classes and formulates generations with the abstract notions of status and location. Here concrete groups of social interaction are not directly addressed but rather implied. Thus Mannheim states that generation-units are particular integrative attitudes which come into being within concrete groups: "(w)ithin any generation there can exist a number of differentiated, antagonistic generation-units. Together they constitute an 'actual' generation precisely because they are oriented toward each other, even though in the sense of fighting one another." (Mannheim, 1952: p. 306-7). Building on Mannheim's definition, Laufer and Bengston (1974) introduce four generation-units: Radicalism, Freakism (or Bohemianism), Communalism and Revivalism. These ways of thought operate as nucleus that bring different concrete groups of a generation together and that makes it possible to raise generational awareness. On the other hand, various researchers noted that Mannheim applied the term generation-unit in order to distinguish it terminologically from other types of social interaction. For instance, Eyerman and Turner (1998: p. 100) state that "Mannheim used the term 'generation-unit' as a means of dealing with the problem of subgroups and subdivisions within an age cohort". Similarly, Schatz (1991) has employed the term to identify the generation of Polish-Jewish communists in 1920-1960. His research uses the term to define sub-generational groups but comes with an objection to the insufficiency and ambiguity of it (Schatz, 1991: p. 328).

Mannheim's class-mimicking generation approach should be analyzed deeply to understand generation-units more precisely. According to Mannheim, individuals in the same age, share the same generation location as well. That does not mean they share the same role in the social transformation. Generation locations are potential and neutral positions that are given by birth. The term generation location seems to be similar to class in itself (an sich) in the cultural sense of obligatory membership to a class, or in this case, to a generation (Johnston & Dolowitz, 1999: p. 137). Hence the question should be asked here's when does a generation evolve to class for itself (für sich) form? Mannheim meets this with *generation as an actuality*. Individuals become members of a generation as an actuality only when "they participate in the characteristic social and intellectual currents of their society and period, and in so far as they have an active or passive experience of the interactions of forces which made up the new situation" (Mannheim, 1952: p. 304). In this formulation, the only way for a generation to appear as an actuality is generation-units (Laufer & Bengston, 1974: p. 195). As mentioned before, a generation can succeed to lead social transformation processes only

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when its members assemble in the level of consciousness[3]: "The generation-unit tends to impose a much more concrete and binding tie on its members because of the parallelism of responses it involves" (Mannheim, 1952: p. 307). The identity of a generation is built by its generation-units. In this way, the determinative elements of generational identity radiate from one concrete group to whole generation.

Another way to elaborate generation-units theoretically is to think of them as elite groups. In fact, that a generation consists of numerous competing generation-units is consistent with the premise that every society has elite minorities who dominate the resources of power and direct public opinion (Eyerman & Turner, 1998; Schatz, 1991). These elites may front the political, intellectual and cultural fields. As the classical elite circulation theory formulates, elites divide into two groups as political elites and non-political elites. While well-known elite theories focus on how modern societies divide political power, Jose Ortega y Gasset focuses on elites with their cultural characteristics. Following Nietzsche's philosophy of life[4], Ortega (1961) considers elites as historical generations. Elites are representatives of a generation and may succeed to pioneer social change. A generation-unit -or an *intelligentsia* in Ortega's thought- is a member group of generation who has the will to reach beyond time and distinguishes with a historical mission from the other members in the generation as whole.

For the purposes of this study, it seems productive to mention Wilhelm Maximilian Pinder's term entelechy. Pinder has found a suitable model for the problem of generations in the history of European art movements (Jaeger, 1985: p. 281). In his work *Das Problem Der Generation in der Kunstgeschichte Europeas* (1926) [The Problem of Generation in the History of European Art], he argues that intellectual movements correspond to certain generational formations. But Pinder states in his another work:

> "Generations" are abstractions. In every minute a new generation is born. But in order to escape from the chaos of too much, a possibility there, of bringing together certain groups of people of approximately the same age and giving them the name of a "generation." Anyone who works in this way will see history unfold in a new direction (Pinder, 1926: p. 6).

Generations as abstractions, then, cannot provide an adequate explanation for the cultural transition between groups of people in different ages. Pinder suggests that a particular way of thinking comes from a generational subgroup, not from an entire generation. He stresses this situation with the formula of "non-simultaneity of the simultaneous" (Schwartz, 2001: p.

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[3] To get the theoretical analysis on generations further, the terms generational awareness and generational consciousness could be investigated with the different interpretations of class-consciousness, for instance, the historical and ideological examination of bourgeois culture. In order to avoid reaching out of the boundaries of this study, it seems enough to mention class consciousness superficially here. For a methodological interpretation of class consciousness, see Lukacs (1972).

[4] In Nietzsche's philosophy, people are not existentially equal because of their differentiation of having will of power. Some people who have the will to power can reject given values and create new ones. While every society has very few of such people, there is a pile of ordinary people. In this sense, that every society has elite minorities which have control over masses is logically natural. Ortega inherits this thought of Nietzsche and applies to the problem of generations. For the Nietzschean foundation of Ortega's philosophy, see. Stern, A. (1975). Ortega Y Gasset and the modern world. *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, *13*(2), 255–269. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2041-6962.1975.tb01228.x

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61). This is the reason why Pinder applies Aristotelian notion *entelechy* in order to distinguish generation-units (as Pinder conceptualized, *Generationsgemeinschaften*) from birth-cohorts (Pinder, 1926: p. 8). The term entelechy refers to specific groupings of coevals which occur in a definitive time period and in an intellectual basis (Jaeger, 1985: p. 281). Like his contemporaries Mannheim and Ortega, Pinder has searched for generations in intellectual movements as well. Especially the art movements provide a very productive explanation on generations because of the fact that the analysis of the intellectual profile of certain elite groups of a certain time period requires both historical and social relations and conflicts. (Pinder, 1926; Eyerman & Turner, 1998).

3. Historical Evidence for Generation-units: Art Movements of 20th Century

The theoretical implications on generation-units can mostly be derived from the analysis of historical examples, as a result of the fact that it is very difficult to indicate breaks and deviations in the longitudinal patterns of collective behavior of living generations[5]. As mentioned before, all of the pioneer theorists of generations such as Mannheim (1952), Ortega (1961) and Pinder (1926) have put forward their theories based on historical data. When we consider the empirical applicability of historical data in conjunction with the intellectual movements (in the context of this study, art movements) we may succeed in moving the discussion on generation-units forward (Jaeger, 1985: p. 291).

The pioneers of the sociology of generations have driven attention to nineteenth century because of the intensive generational activities (Eyerman & Turner, 1998). The social problems brought by the modernity after the Industrial Revolution emerged dramatically in the second half of the 1800's. Along with macro social transformations, different social strata have experienced many inequalities. On the threshold of twentieth century, these inequalities have observed in both national and international levels. What consequences these have brought to generational activity is a variety of intellectual groupings in and between countries and this provides a very productive ground to distinguish generation-units.

In the beginning of the twentieth century, the generational activities followed two themes: the international tension on the political dimension and the Avant-Garde art movements on the cultural dimension. The transitivity between these dimensions makes this historical period very noteworthy. Avant-Garde art movements represent a unique combination of political and cultural processes. For this reason, it provides a comprehensive example not only of generational formation in terms of unique reactions to social events, but also of how diverse these reactions can be within themselves (Laufer & Bengston, 1974).

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[5] Jaeger (1985) warns that the use of historical examples and perspectives in generation research conflicts with current methodological trends based on statistical analyzes of historical data. However, the generation phenomenon still manifests itself in intellectual movements and traumatic events. For this reason, instead of shallow studies that focus on generational differences of the most recent past where younger generations are separated from older generations, researches that examine historical examples from current sociological perspectives will be more productive to understand generations. For more recent discussion on generational analysis, see Buss (1974) and White (2013).

Sociologically, the Avant-Garde Movements are analyzed in the sense of their timeless and utopistic visions. The term Avant-Garde is a word of French origin and etymologically means "pioneer". As Doorman (2003: p. 55) states, "[t]he term itself stems from French military vocabulary dating from the end of the eighteenth century, and had already been used metaphorically during the French Revolution to describe progressive social tendencies". While the early uses of the term implied political tendencies, it later came to describe other social trends such as fashion, architecture, music or consumption choices. Aside from its popular meaning, the Avant-Garde refers to artistic trends of certain period.

Historically, emerge of the Avant-Garde was merely inevitable for Europe. Especially in the end of the nineteenth century, Europe witnessed many changes both political and social. Not only triggering effect of industrialization, but also the wave of change brought by colonialism, nation-state, and liberalism paved the way for Western civilization to evolve into its current form. Despite the enormous change, consequences were destructive internationally. Because while many developments were happening, the political tension between nations was rising. It was clear a worldwide War about to explode. Almost every country faced this thread and generational activity occurred in high level.

The Avant-Garde perspective to social functionality of art places it as a pioneer in social change. In other words, art is not an autonomous or a non-political activity. This gives art the role of not contributing politics but directly producing them. The Avant-Garde emphasizes that the art itself should not only express human reality but also constitute it by creating imaginations. With this, the Avant-gardistes reject all the traditional non-political trends in art. They suggest that what artists do is highly political thing and cannot be separated from politics. Because life is political, art has to be political too. As Peter Bürger puts it as follows:

> The European Avant-Garde movements can be defined as an attack on the status of art in bourgeois society. What is negated is not an earlier form of art (a style) but art as an institution that is unassociated with the life praxis of men. When the Avant-gardistes demand that art become practical once again, they do not mean that the contents of works of art should be socially significant. The demand is not raised at the level of the contents of individual works. Rather, it directs itself to the way art functions in society, a process that does as much to determine the effect that works have as does the particular content.(Bürger, 1984: p. 49).

In the light of the theoretical findings on generation-units and the discussions on the historical and sociological background of Avant-Garde art movements, it can be said that there are three reasons for sampling generation-units through Avant-Garde art movements. The first is that Avant-Garde art movements emerged in a period of intense traumatic events that pointed to important social transformations, as will be discussed in the example of Western Europe and Eastern Europe. In Mannheim's founding generation theory, the premise that traumatic events act as the catalyst for generation formation in the context of their impact on social groups is of central importance. Based on this, it can be said that Avant-Garde art movements are also an important part of generational movements due to the multitude of traumatic events at the threshold of the twentieth century.

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The second is the possibility of considering generation-units as elite groups. Although generation-units are positioned as determining tendencies in Mannheim's theory, it is only theoretically possible to investigate the impact of these tendencies on sub-generational groups. In contrast, it is possible to formulate certain elite groups as generation-units, as Ortega's notions of intelligentsia and Pinder's of entelechy show. In addition, it is noteworthy that Pinder directs his attention to only a part of generations and not to the whole, especially when considered in the case of art movements.

Thirdly, from a broader perspective, generations are expressed as social actors with historical missions, both by theoretical and empirical approaches. In the example of Avant-Garde art movements, it can be said that this historical mission is to express the balance sheet of modernity through works of art. Many historical and sociological transformations, including the Industrial Revolution, which heralded the birth of modernity, are considered as traumatic as well as revolutionary for Europe. The traumatic evolution that dragged Western societies into the experience of two world wars is an important reference for European Avant-Garde movements. The differing experiences in Western and Eastern Europe make this period unique in terms of generational movements and therefore of interest to classical generational theory. In this sense, following the theorists of the classical generation, the Avant-Garde movement will be evaluated here in the context of Western European and Eastern European experiences.

3.1. Generation-units in the Western European Avant-Garde: Diversity

Robert Wohl writes about the traumatic period of World War I and focuses on generational activities in his book *The Generation of 1914* and claims that the rivals in the World War I had a powerful support coming from national generations. Wohl (1979) describes the Generation of 1914 with its generation-units. In intellectual basis, for example; in France, Action Française (French Action Movement); in Germany, German Youth Movements; in Spain, The generation of 1898 of which Ortega was a member, the Italian generation with Antonio Gramsci can be mentioned as the generation-units of *The Generation 1914*. On the threshold of the World War I, the responds of intellectuals have shaped the public opinion over political problems and have led countries get involved in the total war (Wohl, 1979: p. 207).

For the side of art, this traumatic period reflects a feeling that the expectations about modernization or social evolution were in vain. Constitution of an evolved society did not come from politics and this way of thinking made a specific group of artists develop an alternative. The Avant-Garde found the solution in the technology however (Bloch, 2000: p. 12). As Ziarek (2001: p. 89) states "The defining moment of the Avant-Garde, especially in its early stages, is the reimagining of art specifically through the intersection of technology and the everyday". Using technological imaginations, they embraced the optimism of future. One of two notions representing the future could be mentioned here is machine as inhuman. Similarly the other one is geometrical shaping. These two notions make sense because of the skeptical Avant-Garde attitude about the human nature. The reservations on human nature were replaced by smoothness of technological productions (Murphy, 1999: p. 62).

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One can say that the reference point of the development of Avant-Garde art movements in Western Europe was the criticism of modernism and, in a broader sense, the compromise of trust in human nature (Bürger, 1984). Sociologically, it is not a coincidence that the Avant-Garde emerged in the western lands of Continental Europe. To point out a specific historical period, the first half of the nineteenth century appears as a period when Western Europe encountered the demons of modernity. Another thing that is not a coincidence is that Europe was aware of these evils and produced new tools, such as social sciences, to combat them. In the middle of all this, there is an enormous international tension. As colonial activities, another face of modernity, have turned into a competition between Western states, it seems that political tension is high. Therefore, one can say that intellectual movements, social explosions and international tension took place at a high level in the historical, political and sociological atmosphere in which the Western European Avant-Garde was formed.

Within the framework of his social and political program, the ideas of Saint-Simon, who is considered the pioneer of positivism, and those who followed him, distinguishing industrialized society and class division, are important basis for the Avant-Garde (Corrigan, 1973: p. 33). The emphasis on the fact that industrialization took class differentiation to a new dimension and the definition of the working class in a very broad sense including artists are the basis for the emergence of the Western European Avant-Garde in the way Bürger (1984) described. With the claim that traditional art legitimizes the existing inequalities of society, Avant-Garde advocates a political art and sees artists as actors of social change. This is the first and best-known interpretation of the Western Avant-Garde.

In its early periods the Western Avant-Garde manifests itself with a political opposition. There were reactions to the conformism of the classical or academic understanding of art, which was dominant especially in France and was based on the technical execution of bourgeois art. The first criticisms towards bourgeois art were expressed in the realism movement, which emerged as a reaction to the classicism and romanticism movements and was represented in painting by Gustave Courbet, Honore Daumier and Jean-Francois Millet; in literature by Honore de Balzac, Gustave Flaubert, Charles Dickens, Leo Tolstoy and Thomas Mann. The nineteenth-century Avant-Garde continued later with Impressionism, which was based expressing the impact of concrete everyday life on the observer, represented by Claude Monet, Eduoard Manet and Edgar Degas; and Fauvism, founded by Henri Matisse and seen as a successor of Impressionism (Singsen, 2020).

By the twentieth century, it can be seen that the Western European Avant-Garde became increasingly diversified with new movements. Particularly in this period, political antinomies that were a precursor to the First World War began to manifest themselves within the Avant-Garde. For example, expressionism, which emerged in Germany at the beginning of the twentieth century, criticized nineteenth-century realism and focused on the inner world and emotions of individuals rather than the real world. It is not difficult to anticipate that this perspective stems from the effects of political and economic tensions on people (Szabolcsi, 1971: p. 61). Similarly, the Cubism movement represented by Pablo Picasso and Paul Cezanne relied on geometric drawings and designs to emphasize the superiority of reason in Europe, which was about to be reshaped on the eve of the First World War. With the outbreak of the First World War I, diversity within the Western Avant-Garde began to gradually increase. The

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most serious criticisms of modernity were put forward by the movements of Dada, Surrealism and Futurism, which can be called the Avant-Garde of the Avant-Gardes. Especially the Dada movement, represented by world-famous artists such as Andre Breton and Marcel Duchamp, expressed great disgust and anger towards bourgeois values and culture. The effect of the World War II on the Avant-Garde was much more dramatic (Singsen, 2020). In the period after the war, a major introversion in the field of art is noticeable. As a result of the great destruction caused by the war, the interest of the generation of Avant-Garde artists in social problems began to decrease. For the Avant-Garde generation that came in the following period, stylistic debates come to the fore in art instead of social problems (Cunningham, 2006: p. 271). For example, with the 1950s, abstract art and conceptual Avant-Garde movements, and later genres such as pop-art and cyberpunk, which can almost be described as anti-art, stand out.

In the light of the discussions given so far, it can be said that the intellectual group consisting of Western European Avant-Garde artists constituted an influential generation-unit within the intellectual generations that started in the late nineteenth century and continued throughout the twentieth century. The Western European Avant-Garde offers an effective critique of modernity through the numerous art movements it created. The influence of the generation-unit of Western European Avant-Garde artists in the twentieth century has spread from the field of art to the field of social theory since the 1950s. So that, many commentator argues that Avant-Garde art, as seen in the example of Western Europe, takes a stance against art itself, and moreover, through this opposition, it enters into a search for a new modernity (Szabolcsi, 1971). While Jean Baudrillard (2005: 51) described this search as the "death of art", along with many Frankfurt School members (Murphy, 1999: p. 286), theorists known as post-modernist and post-structuralists such as Walter Benjamin, Guy Debord, Jean-Francis Lyotard, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, interpreted this development of the European Avant-Garde as the harbinger of a new social formation that was in the process of formation (Cunningham, 2006: p. 161).

3.2. Generation-units in the Eastern European Avant-Garde: Conflict

On the Eastern European side of Avant-Garde movement, Russian Avant-Garde artists played in pioneer positions. In fact, emerge of the Russian Avant-Garde had happened before the Bolshevik revolution. One could accept that the Soviet Avant-Garde inherited the Russian heritage of art. In the beginning of the 20th century, a socialism-inspired political trend has been affecting the entire Europe, not specific to Russia. However, Berger (1997) states that Russian Avant-Garde Movement was significantly different from the other European similar. What different about their Avant-Garde side was that they declared with a consistent and enthusiastic attitude.

> ...their backwardness had become the very condition of their seizing a future, far in advance of the rest of Europe. They could transcend the European present, the present of dehumanized bourgeoisie. Instead of a present, they had a past a future. Instead of

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compromises, they extremes. Instead of limited possibilities, they had open prophecies." (Berger, 1997: p. 32-33).

The Russian Avant-Garde is known for its extreme diversity in its early period. Among various trends brought about by the Avant-Garde, Cubism and Futurism stand out.[6] Berger (1997) states that the trend that expressed the Russian Avant-Garde before the revolution was Cubism. Artists, who think that they have gone beyond temporality with their enthusiasm for change, have tried not to reach the future with the forms of the present, but to capture the forms of the future in the present. Buck-Morss (2000: p. 62-63) states that such a perception of time later contradicted Lenin's perception of time and brought about the Avant-Garde being accused of being anti-revolutionary.[7]

During this period; in painting, Vasiliy Kandinsky, Kazimir Malevich, Vladimir Tatlin, Isaak Brodsky (Berger: 1997); In sculpture and architecture, names such as Aleksandr Rodchenko, Tatlin, Lissitzky, Konstantin Melnikov, Yakov Chernikov, Georgi Krutikov and Anton Lavinski (Buck-Morss, 2000) and in the field of literature, names such as Aleksandr Blok, Sergey Yesenin, Vladimir Mayakovsky and Aleksandr Bogdanov stand out (Laursen, 2013). It is possible to describe these names as a generation-unit consisting of artists of the generation that pioneered the new Soviet society.

It is seen that Avant-Garde artists, who had wide freedom of movement before the revolution, participated in propaganda activities during the civil war. In this period, modernization tendencies manifest themselves. Futurist studies, especially in the field of architecture, are most clearly moving towards the construction of the newly formed Soviet society from the perspective of socialism. Lenin's efforts to historicize the revolution through monumental statues during this period are remarkable (Buck-Morss, 2000: p. 56). In order for the proletariat to have a socialist lifestyle free from the influence of bourgeois culture, it is possible to see the influence of Avant-Garde futurism in the design of objects, clothing and accessories, buildings and other public structures designed for use in daily life.

The Russian Avant-Gardes are in the cultural side of Bolshevik revolution. In this sense, following Ortega's thought on generations, the Russian Avant-Gardes could be considered non-political elites. The question here is who the political elites are in the Bolshevik

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[6] Cubism is an art movement based on the assumption that objects are constructed in the human mind. This movement, which emerged in the field of painting, involves conveying the new world of thought of the industrialization period with geometric lines. Cubism, which later merged with Futurism, became the expression of utopian ideas. Futurism is another art movement and emerged in Italy. The main emphasis of Futurism is the rapid social change created by technological development. In this sense, futurism, which emerged in the early twentieth century and stated that technology and especially the "machine" paved the way to the future, was the source of the Supremacism movement in Soviet Russia. Although these two art movements are not the main subject of this study, it seems useful to summarize them here in the context of art terminology. For further information see Erjavec, A. (Ed.) (2015). *Aesthetic revolutions and the twentieth-century Avant-Garde movements*, Draham & London: Duke University Press.

[7] It is an important contradiction that the extraordinary perspective brought by the Soviet Avant-Garde was initially adopted and included in the process of social change, but was evaluated as a threat after the revolution. According to Herbert Marcuse, this contradiction arises from a special kind of ethics developed by the generation that carried out the October Revolution. Soviet ethics interpreted the problem of freedom in its own way and thus tried to resolve the conflicting aspects of individual freedoms and Soviet ideology (Marcuse, 1985: p. 207). For the entire discussion on Soviet ethics, see Marcuse, H. (1985). *Soviet Marxism: A critical analysis*. New York: Columbia University Press.

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revolution (Buck-Morss, 2000). The answer is the Communist Party government led by Lenin, indeed. This two generation-units came together and formed the Bolshevik generation.

During the propaganda period following the revolution, the relationship between art and politics was handled in a special way by the Party. The newly established government's view of the Avant-Garde and art in a broader sense is significant in terms of its contribution to modernization efforts (Clark, 1997: p. 87).

The relations of generation-units of Avant-Garde artists with other ones are predominantly in the form of conflict. One can mention the establishment of many art schools in the years following the revolution. These schools can be described as concrete groups of the generation-unit consisting of Avant-Garde artists that emerged within the October Revolution Generation.[8] The tension between the generation-units of Bolshevik experience shows itself in the propaganda process. The party thought of propaganda as agitation. By doing this, they wanted to manage the awareness of proletariat and get them in line literally. What is significant here is that they planned to take advantage of art in propaganda-making. Anatoly Vasilyevich Lunacharsky, the head first Soviet People's Commissariat for Education (Narkompros) stresses the dynamism that art brought to the agitation process. He argues that the Communist Party must be armed with all the tools of art as a powerful source of agitation (Lunacharsky, 1965: p. 12). However, despite the fact that Avant-Garde artists held many crucial chairs and critical positions in the newly established government, it is known that the political elites and authority holders of the Soviet government did not trust the artists and their worldview. In the years following the revolution, it seems that a centralization attempt emerged for highly diversified art schools and movements. Here, the tendencies of various art movements to be suppressed by the party through academies and central organizations and to be rendered "harmless for the revolution" come to the fore.

The most appropriate example for the conflict between the generation-units of October Revolution Generation is the *Proletkult* organizations founded by Aleksandr Bogdanov, one of the first representatives of the Soviet Avant-Garde in literature (Laursen, 2013: p. 13). What makes the Proletkult case important for this study is Bogdanov's conflict with Lenin, his colleague from the Party, and rise of whom to prominence as a leader. Buck-Morss (2000) claims that the conflict between Lenin and Bogdanov was the result of antagonistic understandings of them on art and on the construction of Soviet society. Founded in 1917, Proletkult brought various art trends together and ensured their dissemination. According to Sochor (1988: p. 127), emergence of Proletkult occurred in the period after 1909, when the disagreement between Lenin and Bogdanov become clear. During this period, while Lenin devoted himself to Party affairs, Bogdanov focused on proletarian art and culture –as the Avant-Garde did before the revolution. After Proletkult organizations began to be institutionalized, they began to move in a separate line from the Party. This line stems from Bogdanov's goal of a proletarianism that is autonomous from the party, and more clearly

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[8] Among the schools formed by Avant-Garde artists, Buck-Morss (2000) counts the experimental groups, such as the suprematist-oriented UNOVIS (New Art Proponents), founded by Kazimir Malevich and Lazar Markovich Lissitzky in 1920 and the constructivist OBMOKhU (Society of Young Artists) founded by Alexander Mikhailovich Rodchenko and Varvara Stepanova in 1921.

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from politics, and his desire to implement an understanding of culture based on building the proletariat culture through experimentation by the proletariat itself under the "proletkult leadership" (Gloveli & Biggart, 1991; Dobrenko, 2005: p. 12; Kolakowski, 1978: p. 438). According to Bogdanov, Proletkults would function like "living laboratories" and play a key role in revealing the mysterious power of the proletariat (Sochor, 1988: p. 128).

As the Soviet Government centralized, the impatience with the Avant-Garde began to increase (Kolakowski, 1978: p. 444). The criticism of elitism directed at the Avant-Garde, especially by Lenin (Buck-Morss, 2000: p. 62-3), was later concretized by accusing Avant-Garde artists of being anti-revolutionary (Mally, 1990: p. 38). This tension turned into an aggressive attitude towards Avant-Garde artists and Proletkult, as it was the largest organization founded by whom, since 1920. Finally, in 1921, Proletkult was affiliated with the People's Commissariat of Education, along with other art schools.[9]

4. Conclusion

In this study, the concept of generation-unit eas tried to be examined through intellectual movements, on the example of European Avant-Garde art movements, following the theorists of the classical sociology of generations. As concluded here, generation-units are key in the context of generations producing and reproducing themselves culturally, and they also clearly reveal the role of generations in the process of social change and cultural transmission. The collective identity and cultural heritage of a generation is determined by generation-units and are passed on through generations. With the aim to emphasize this situation, European Avant-Garde art movements were evaluated in this study in the context of their differing generational experiences.

European Avant-Garde art movements formed generation-units with quite different characteristics in Western and Eastern Europe. The generation-unit in Western Europe, represented by Avant-Garde artists who agreed on the critique of modernity but competed in their understanding of art, played a decisive role in the collective identity of its generation by presenting a social and artistic manifesto. With this feature, it has been influential in the cultural construction of the generations that lived in the twentieth century. In Eastern Europe, the generation-unit consisting of artists belonging to the Russian Avant-Garde was defeated in the struggle with a different generation-unit that was much more influential than itself, and was even destroyed by it. Avant-Garde artists who participated in the enthusiasm of the October Revolution in the early twentieth century were seen as dangerous by the Bolshevik Party cadres and were purged after the revolution. Therefore, they were unable to have a say over the collective identity and legacy of the generation that could be today named the October Revolution Generation. As a result, when the Soviet Union is mentioned today, what comes to mind is a rigid and cold military society, not cultural products that are ahead of its time.

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[9] As Sochor (1998: p. 154) and Dobrenko (2005: p. 21) argue, the innovative culture and artistic understanding that Bogdanov provided to the Avant-Garde through Proletkult was deemed so dangerous that not only were the Proletkult organizations taken under control, but Bogdanov's own works were also forgotten. Bogdanov was remembered only as a politician, not as an artist, for example, his utopia titled *Red Star* (1908) was not even included in the Soviet literature for a long time.

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The methodological importance of the concept of generation-unit in the sociology of generations, as emphasized in this study, stems from the determination that generations are not a homogeneous social reality, in other words, they are not a formal structural element, and that in order to understand generations, it is necessary to focus on the mutual interactions of the elements that constitute the generation. The way to subject the cultural and historical identities that societies have built by the hand of generations to sociological analysis is generation-units.

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