**Lives On Hold**

There is a generation in Ireland right now whose lives are on hold.

Much has been written on the housing crisis, the cost and affordability of buying or renting a home, on homelessness. But very little is written on the wider social impact of this crisis.  
David McWilliams opened the debate in an Irish Times article in May of this year. He spoke of meeting two Irish women in the immigration queue in Dublin airport who had moved from Ireland, one to Vienna, one to Berlin and how they laughed at his idea of saving for a home here.

It is a rite of passage, part of the social contract, for young people to move from the nest, to live alone or with a partner, to establish themselves, to mature. And, usually, to raise a family.

It seems now that this essential milestone is blocked from many. The shortage of housing has led to exorbitant rents. That means that a young couple paying rent cannot afford to save for a deposit.   
That in turn has led to couples sharing apartments, unable to afford their own space to be together.   
young people not alone sharing houses or apartments, but in a lot of cases sharing beds with complete strangers.   
And what is known as “Concealed Families” young parents unable to find an affordable place to live on their own who are living with their parents, unable to forge an independent life of their own.   
And their parents too, who looked forward to sharing quiet time with each other at that stage.

The last generation expected to have flown the nest and be established by their late twenties, thirty at the outside. School, college, a job, a promotion or two, probably a steady relationship, all achieved.

This generation will have to push that expectation back by a decade and that will have its own impact on their mortgage lifetime. Many will be forced to rent for their lifetime, especially those unfortunate enough to have bought at the wrong time and find themselves in permanent negative equity.   
And who will pay the rent when they retire?   
Spending more on rents and mortgages will also have an impact on providing for a pension in their old age.

There is an enormous generational social cost to this housing crisis that has not been publicly discussed and has not, to my knowledge at least, had the focus it deserves from our politicians.

The previous Ministers with responsibility in that portfolio, Hogan, Kelly, Coveney laid successive trails to this crisis. It is up to this government to lend all of its resources to fix it.