Social housing settlement Poljane is located near a busy crossroads on the outskirts of Maribor. It consists of four buildings (2 slabs + 2 towers), a total of 130 social apartments. Project – limited with the existing rigid urban plan of the area, which had to be followed to a dot – replaces the missing exterior public spaces with collective areas inside the buildings.

Vast empty spaces – public ‘rooms’ – are carved out of the volumes of the blocks and designated for public programmes. These spaces are either covered – designed as covered open-air playgrounds or open – as roof gardens oriented towards the sun.

The apartments, arranged around the central communication core are of a standard typology, but their individuality is expressed with colourful balconies, inserted into the apartment plans. The balconies appear in different positions on the façade and work as accents which give the whole settlement a dynamic character.

Successful or not?
Having public ‘rooms’ within the structure is a brilliant idea; it gives the residents options whether to go outside or be in the building and hangout. There is a downside to that, what if the noise levels within the public ‘rooms’ are too loud and other residents are trying to sleep.

How it addresses the three primary goals of affordable housing?
With the placement of the new resident complex, it provides living space that would be adjacent to exterior public spaces, like the soccer field, which is convenient for parents if they ever want to take their kids to a play sports.

How it feels to live in this environment?
It seems very comfortable, the goal of the living space were to be very well lit, with enough natural light enter the space. It also provides well secure private spaces, where a family can live comfortably with out any safety problems.

How does this precedent study fit into its environment (or not)?
This project gives its environment a sense of development and progress. On this site there was nothing but empty space. So, it is a recuperation to this environment.

Bondy Social Housing - Europe
Location: Paris, France
Project year: 2010
Architect: Atelier Du Pont

A project of 34 housing units on an island site bordered by a gymnasium, a school and suburban housing, on avenue Henri Barbusse. In the background, low-cost housing from the 50s which will be demolished.

Urban and user-friendly at the same time, the building emphasises its two-way orientation, onto the court and onto the road, or again onto itself and onto the outside, through a white terracotta finish facing the road and on the exterior elevations of the U contrasting with a wooden look for the elevations facing the court.

The living rooms are glazed, wide sliding windows providing natural light and maximum sunlight. Finally, the communal parts are almost all naturally lit and painted in a monochrome of greens which contrast with the bright orange of the stairways. The choice of a simple quite compact shape without any frills has made it possible to emphasise the quality of the materials and their use. Exterior insulation and a generous provision of natural light mean that the building very easily achieves the Very High Environmental Performance grading, which was the aim of the client when the work was put out to tender.

The project owes its image of a large house largely to its double pitched roof, which echoes the style imposed by the suburban architecture while revising it radically through the device of changing the look of the elevations to roof, eliminating all distinction between elevation and roof.

Successful or not?
Its unique design, definitely separates it from the typical residential apartments.

How it addresses the three primary goals of affordable housing?
This residential project is brilliant because it is in a site where there are near by institutions where a typical person would go to, such as, Gymnasium and school.

How it feels to live in this environment?
The hallways seem long and compact but I imagine after going into the actual units, the sense of small and long, would be dismissed by the space that the units provide. Also, the units recieve good amount of natural light.

How does this precedent study fit into its environment (or not)?
This project gives a contemporary effect to its enviroment, i imagine the near by house/apartments to have more of a traditional design. So, this project projects how flexible the environment can be. Also, it would give people the desire to come live in this neighborhood with new contemporary apartments.

Guidelines: To settle the 100 families of the Quinta Monroy, in the same
5,000 sqm site that they have illegally occupied for the last 30 years
which is located in the very center of Iquique, a city in the Chilean desert.

If to answer the question, one starts assuming 1 house = 1 family =
1 lot, we were able to host just 30 families in the site. The problem with
isolated houses, is that they are very inefficient in terms of land use. That
is why social housing tends to look for land that costs as little as
possible. That land, is normally far away from the opportunities of work,
education, transportation and health that cities offer. This way of
operating has tended to localize social housing in an impoverished urban
sprawl, creating belts of resentment, social conflict and inequity.

Goals: achieve enough density, (but without overcrowding), in order to be
able to pay for the site, which because of its location was very expensive.
To keep the site, meant to maintain the network of opportunities that the
city offered and therefore to strengthen the family economy; on the other
hand, good location is the key to increase a property value.

The provision a physical space for the “extensive family” to develop,
has proved to be a key issue in the economical take off of a poor family. In
between the private and public space, we introduced the collective space,
conformed by around 20 families. The collective space (a common property
with restricted access) is an intermediate level of association that allows
surviving fragile social conditions.

due to the fact that 50% of each unit’s volume, will eventually be
self-built, the building had to be porous enough to allow each unit to
expand within its structure. The initial building must therefore provide a
supporting, (rather than a constraining) framework in order to avoid any
negative effects of self-construction on the urban environment over time,
but also to facilitate the expansion process.

Successful or not?
It is successful on providing enough space for the amount of people
without having a congestion of people in one space. What is not successful, is
privacy. Since these are rows houses, sounds will travel very easily through
partitions.

How it addresses the three primary goals of affordable housing?
These row house provide the basics living standards for the people, it
has enough space to live comfortably, healthy conditions are excellent, and a
central space so that all the neighbors can share is also provided.

How it feels to live in this environment?
The environment feels overwhelming and compacted. It seems at times it
will get very noisy and uncomfortable.

How does this precedent study fit into its environment (or not)?
The environment is plain with a leveled topography, which is convenient
because the architect can duplicate the design throughout the site. The project
was design so that it could compromise as less land as possible. So,
within this environment many small of this complexes can be replicated and
bring homes to low-income families.