Concept and Design

In order to meet all the requirements, the project proposal has presented a set of simplified elements that had as main priority its relationship with the monastery (visual and volumetric) as well the embedment of the monument in the design of the square as a "Square-Monument":

1. The creation of a new place to stop and sit and, at the same time, a space flexible enough to accommodate different uses and programs (such as small markets, weddings and other local events). The main goal was to create a space that did not overlap the monastery. The proposal should be designed as a "garden" extension of the monastery (looking for a future similar tree density as in the Monastery). This "garden" extension should be mainly composed with a meadow and several autochthonous species and vegetation from northern Portugal.

Thus, the final design was the result of the usually pedestrian flows already present in the site to cross between different places and streets (maintaining the crossing flows but also creating opportunities to stop). In the center was created an empty space (the square) through an oval shape with a larger and a closer area, providing space for different appropriations and usage. Also, to avoid specific urban furniture and its consequent rigid use and place definition, the entire perimeter is made out of a continuous concrete bench. This allows people to sit anywhere they wish, facing the square or the green areas. Also, the 80cm wide of the bench allows people to lie down or stretch their arms back.

2. The **Monument** to the soldiers was integrated in the design of the square through two distinct elements:

1. A corten steel plate runs diagonally the square with all the collected 235 soldiers numbers carved on it (the numbers to include in the monument were collected through an open call during the project detailed design).

The numbers are ordered through dates following the war conflict until reaches its end, in 1974. There, a mark in the concrete bench was made to identify this moment (the end of the war and the liberation from the authoritarian regime: the symbolic liberation “april carnation” was pre-molded between the concrete bench and the corten steel ending).

2. In the pavement were designed and cut out the scaled borders of the countries involved (former colonies): Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau. The cut-out shape was made with grey granite cubes and the space between them was made with white limestone cubes.

This approach freed the space of the square. The monument is visible, but detached from its rigidity and authoritative presence, so common in the past authoritarian regime. Thus, no physical boundary and hierarchy was established between the use of the public space and the monument. It's at the same time a place to play, a place to sit, a place to cross and a place of memory without being a self-contained object detached from the place daily life, or a place to return just on specific moments.