A CONTEXTUALIZATION TOOL FOR FREE SPACE
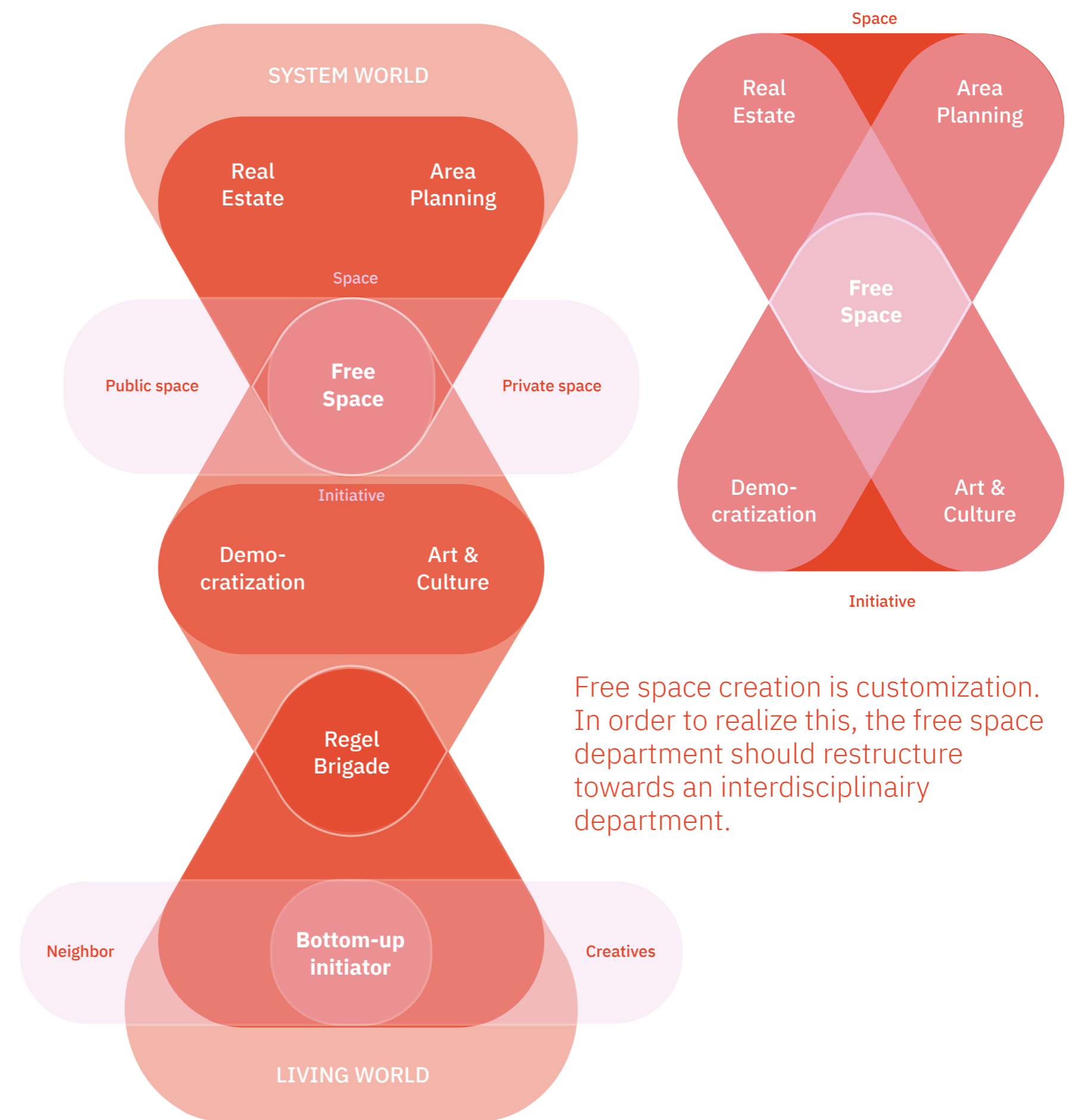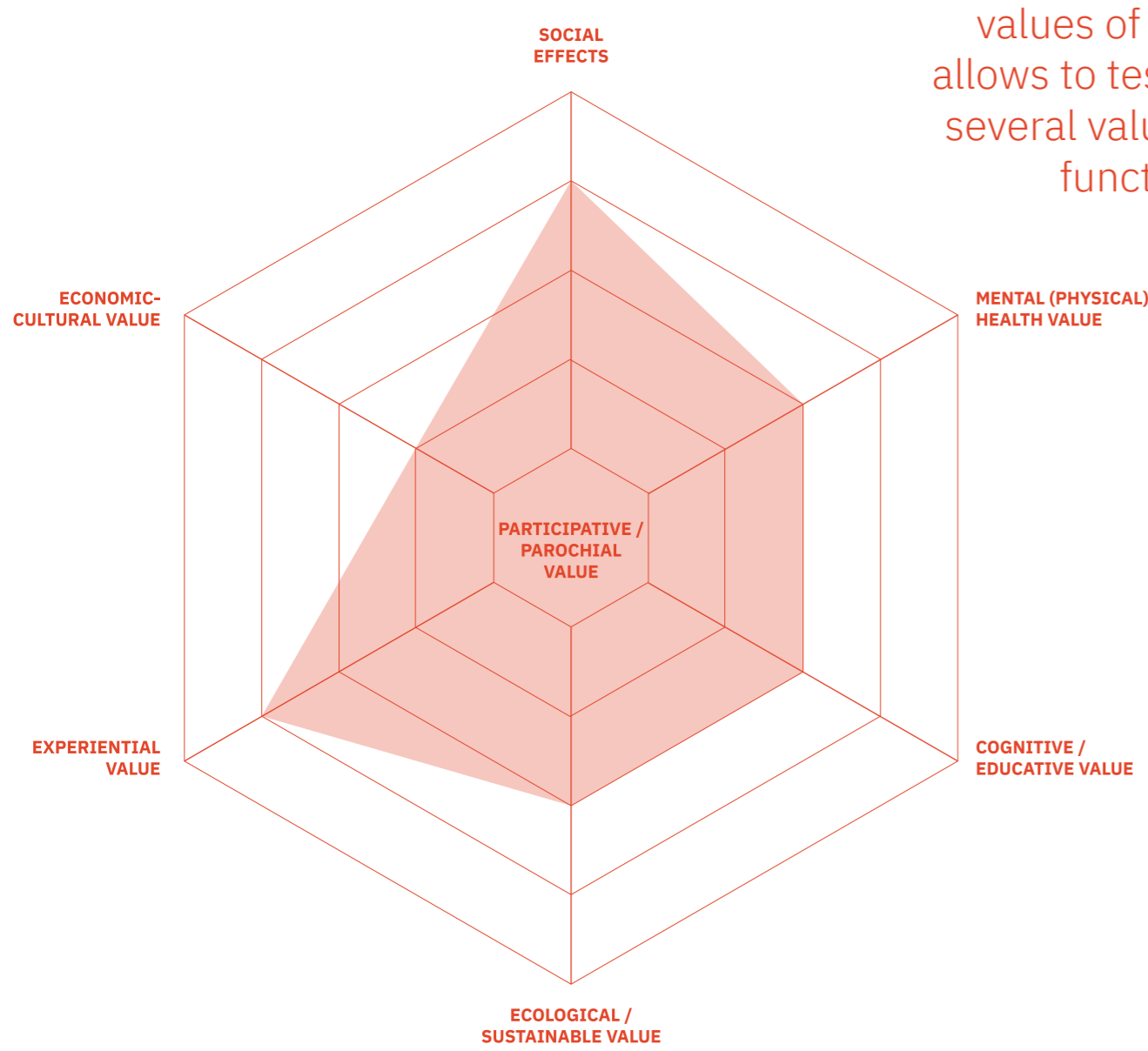
PLAN THE UNPLANNED NATURE OF FREE SPACE

Free spaces find its origin in the squatters' movement. The social bottom-up places that often are a result of counterculture have an undefined and boundless character. Free spaces are a characteristic of the Amsterdam identity. However, due to the scarcity of space and the pressure of the commercial market, these creative, free-spirited, subcultural places are pushed to the abyss. Amsterdam seems to be losing its distinctive and diverse character The municipality of Amsterdam wants to secure these places and create room for new spaces.

The character of a free space has changed over the years, alongside with the prevailing mindset of the people and politics, changing its functionality. The significance of a free space to the city therefore depends on the type of space and the initiative that takes place. Variable conditions on an individual, collective and contextual level influence how this place is implemented and generates value for the city. This clarifies the undefined, transformative character of free space. **But in order to become part of the regular area planning, the question arises; how do you plan this unplanned nature of Free Space?**
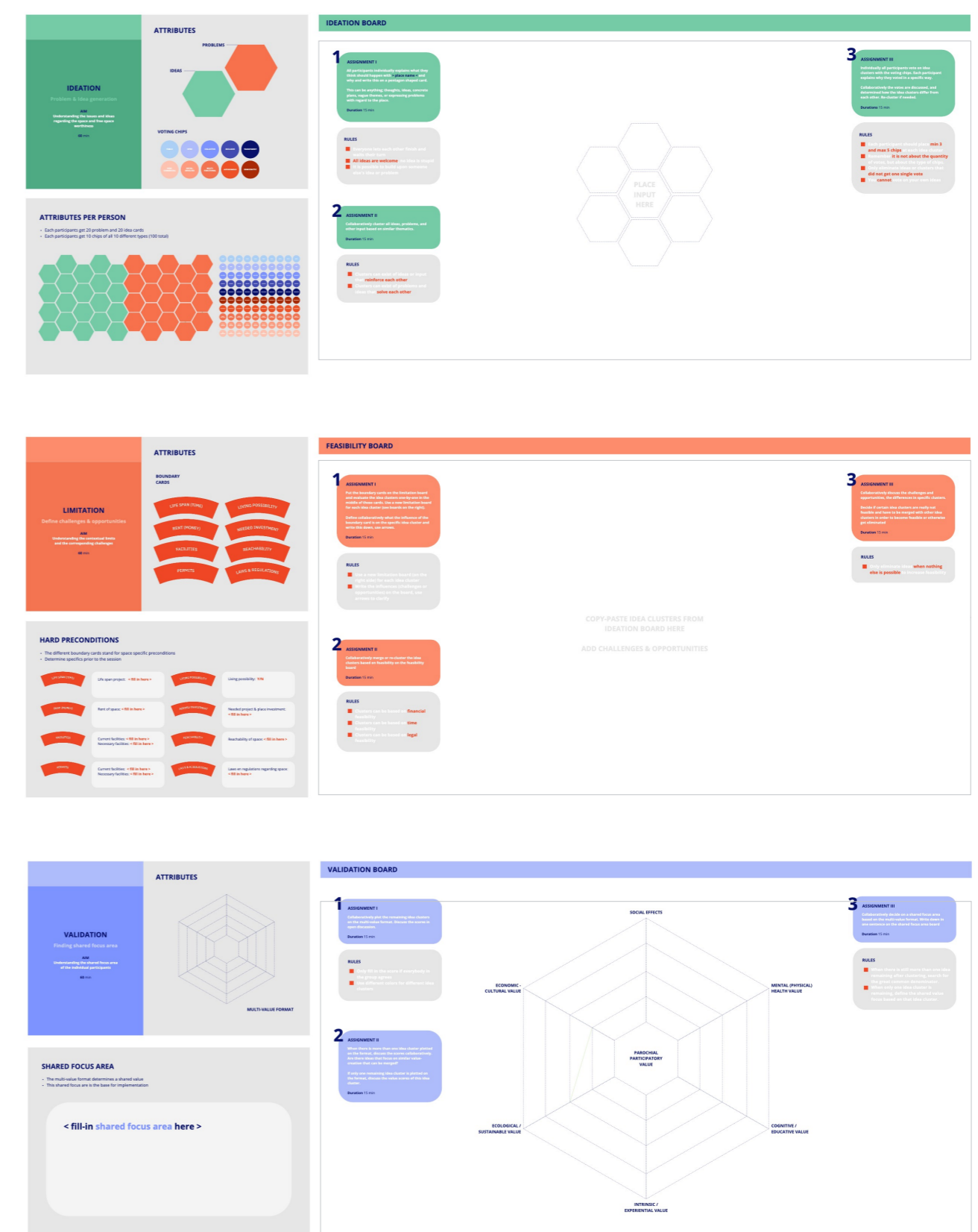
Framing or demarcating free space under certain policy goals or standardized procedures, detracts from the multifunctional and hybrid character of free space. In addition, it reduces the chance of free implementation by bottom-up initiators. Using contextualization gives a more comprehensive definition of free space. Contextual variables on an individual, collective and contextual level, bring understandance in the concept of free space, while clarifying the specific function and value proposition, without steering on implementation.

A multi-value format to establish the shared values of the initiative regarding a project, allows to test simultaneously on the basis of several values, instead of purelu on a single functionality; value contextualization.

Free space creation is customization. In order to realize this, the free space department should restructure towards an interdisciplinairy department.

Contextualizing free space and establishing the inherent values of initiatives is a new mindset within the municipality, and opposed to the current rectilinear test frameworks. However, in discussions with external parties, these current assessment frameworks often turn out to be the bottleneck for bottom-up initiatives, which cannot be captured in a framework. There is therefore a need for new methods, contextualization can play a role in this transition. To make the tool implementable and actionable, a digital tool in the form of a workshop in Miro is created. This allows the municipality to test the toolkit further while making it open and accessible to possible external parties. In this way, the tool can be used in future projects, while data can be generated and stored quickly in order to identify patterns. This is a stepping stone to a possible open source free space mapping tool.

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A contextualization tool for Free Space
June 7, 2022
IDE Master Graduation Project
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