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## Special Economic Zones: Challenges and Opportunities for Territorial Development

*Michele Pigliucci (Ed.)*

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### 5. The “touch” of Tangier. Free zones as globalised islands in a saturated region

*Giovanni Zanaroli<sup>1</sup>*

#### *Abstract*

Since the creation of an International Zone in 1923, the Moroccan city of Tangier has been a centripetal pole for people and for businesses. This was facilitated by the city’s strategic location right at the intersection between the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea, but also by other factors such as the favorable customs regime. Today, after the closing of the International Zone in 1960 and some decades of economic stagnation, Tangier embodies the fast-growing economy of the country and a sea of opportunities in terms of jobs and investments. This research individuates a factor of success and attractiveness for the area in the creation of free zones, given their contribution in attracting foreign direct investment, diversifying the economy and stimulating investments in infrastructure. However, it has been pointed out that establishing free zones is linked to a deep transformation of the region and to a variety of negative impacts. Social, urban and environmental aspects are

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taken into account by using a territorial-relational approach. Being connected with the world but fundamentally disconnected with the area and with local people, the free zones in Tangier have been defined as globalized islands within national territory and their convenience has been critically discussed.

### ***Keywords***

*Tangier; Morocco; Free zone; Globalization; Territorial-relational approach;*



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